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Mardi
6 mai 2025

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 6 May 2025

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 6 mai 2025

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PROTECT ONTARIO THROUGH SAFER
STREETS AND STRONGER
COMMUNITIES ACT, 2025

LOI DE 2025 POUR PROTÉGER L'ONTARIO
EN RENDANT LES RUES PLUS SÛRES
ET LES COLLECTIVITÉS PLUS FORTES

Mr. Downey moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 10, An Act to enact the Measures Respecting Premises with Illegal Drug Activity Act, 2025 and to amend various Acts with respect to public safety and the justice system / Projet de loi 10, Loi édictant la Loi de 2025 sur les mesures visant les lieux où se déroulent des activités illégales liées à la drogue et modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne la sécurité publique et le système judiciaire.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the Attorney General.

Hon. Doug Downey: Good morning, Madam Speaker. I would like to begin by noting that I will be splitting my time with the Solicitor General and the Associate Attorney General this morning.

I am pleased to rise in the House to open second reading debate for the Protect Ontario Through Safer Streets and Stronger Communities Act, a bill that would, if passed, strengthen our justice system, protect our communities and help keep repeat violent offenders behind bars.

Before I begin, I must acknowledge and thank my colleagues and their teams at the Ministry of the Solicitor General and the Ministry of Transportation. I also want to acknowledge my colleagues and their teams at the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, and the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming for all of their work related to measures that supported the significant efforts in this legislation that helped deliver on our government's commitment to public safety and protecting communities in Ontario.

I also want to thank some of the many stakeholders who have provided meaningful input that supported so many of the proposals that I'm about to speak to. We've talked to justice partners over the last, quite frankly, more than a

year on some of these items. We've gone after the federal government to do their part, and we will continue to do that.

But I'd also be remiss if I didn't mention my own team. Thank you to the excellent professionals at the Ministry of the Attorney General and my outstanding ministry team itself within my office. It's been a significant push and a phenomenal effort, and everybody's worked so hard to help put this together.

Madam Speaker, just two months ago, our government received a very strong mandate from the people of Ontario to protect the people of Ontario. It's a mandate to protect our workers and businesses from tariffs and economic uncertainty, but it's also a mandate to protect our communities and make our streets safe. The proposed changes and related measures that we're introducing today build on our government's ongoing work to strengthen public safety and protect Ontario communities. We will spare no expense to keep our communities and kids safe today, tomorrow and into the future. There's no place for gun violence in our communities or any other illegal activity anywhere in our province.

Gun and gang activity is on the rise in Ontario, and we need to take significant steps to combat this disturbing reality. Drug, human and gun trafficking are fuelling gang activities and operations, and they continue to recruit at-risk youth and young adults. Our message to gang members and violent criminals across this province is clear: The violence must end.

We are taking action to keep the people of Ontario safe from the continuing threats of gun violence and gang activity. That's why we've invested in initiatives under the Guns, Gangs and Violence Reduction Strategy to further expand our dedicated guns-and-gangs units in targeted regions of the province. It will deal with the cross-border import of illegal firearms and it will deal with gang activity and many other gang-related atrocities in our community.

At the same time, we're announcing measures to address the pervasive problem of auto theft in the province. Drivers and families across Ontario need to have the peace of mind in knowing that their vehicles will be left right where they left them. We hear too many stories about people feeling unsafe with the growing threat of auto thieves in communities across the province.

We know more needs to be done to protect communities and keep people safe. That's why we're proposing measures in this act to hold offenders accountable, recover stolen vehicles and disrupt and dismantle organized crime. These new measures build on our ongoing work to tackle auto theft, stop criminal activity

before it even happens and support victims in this province.

For example, last year, we amended a regulation under the Victims' Bill of Rights to make it easier for victims of auto theft and other crimes to sue convicted offenders for emotional distress and related bodily harm. What that means is that if somebody is a victim and the perpetrator is found guilty, that victim doesn't need to go through a process in a civil suit to re-prove their trauma and the impact of the crime on themselves, mentally or physically. We also issued a prosecution directive to ensure consistency in the prosecution of serious crimes, including carjacking, to help protect victims and the public. I know my colleagues are going to provide more details on our initiatives to combat auto theft in Ontario.

Whether it's on the streets or in the digital world, our government is doubling down on our commitment to protecting Ontario and keeping communities safe.

The rapid advance of cyber and digital technologies is changing the world and, with it, public safety. Criminals are moving heinous criminal activity online to evade detection and to evade justice, and to money launder and do other things that perpetuate gang activity. Every day, there are new reports of data breaches and new kinds of online frauds, and, let's face it, even though cybercrime happens online, the effects are no less real and no less destructive.

That's why we're creating the first cybercrime and cryptocurrency prosecution team in Canada right here in Ontario. We're the first among the provinces to lead the charge and will set an example for our nation. Premier Ford's commitment to public safety is unwavering, and our government will never rest as we work to protect Ontario.

This cybercrime and cryptocurrency prosecution team is a first, but it will match resources that are happening already with the Solicitor General in the policing world, where they're already tackling online crime and harm. This will allow the prosecutors to work alongside them to help guide and assist to make sure that we're getting the criminals who are doing this heinous activity in jail, behind bars and out of the computers of our communities.

Our government is going to do whatever it takes to keep our communities safe, all at the same time while we deliver meaningful solutions to improve quality of life. We are going to hold offenders accountable and we are going to put them behind bars. We're doing everything in our power to strengthen bail and keep criminals off the streets.

I've heard directly from leaders, communities, victims and many more who have asked for change, notably to our bail system. In fact, we hear almost daily how the current bail system is failing expectations. Revolving-door bail policies from the federal government have led to violent crime in our communities. We need to keep violent repeat offenders off our streets.

That's why we're introducing a three-pronged, tough-on-crime strategy to strengthen our justice system and improve the existing bail system. We are giving prosecutors the tools they need to hold violent and repeat

offenders accountable. That means stronger bail teams, tighter monitoring and faster action in the courts. These new proposed measures build on the \$112 million that we are investing over three years to ensure that high-risk and repeat violent offenders comply with their bail conditions.

Just over a year ago, we launched new bail teams made up of special prosecutors, and they are already producing results. This is in addition to the police officers, the boots on the ground, that are doing follow-up to make sure that people are doing what they're supposed to be doing in the places that they are supposed to be. We need accountability in the system and this is where it starts. But these special prosecutors then do the follow-up. If somebody isn't where they're supposed to be or they're doing something they're not supposed to, and the police are able to detect that, then the prosecutors step in. Our teams have been involved in more than 3,000 cases, helping keep people accused of serious crimes behind bars and helping resolve these cases faster than ever before. That's why we're introducing changes to make these dedicated intensive serious violent crime bail teams permanent across Ontario.

0910

Speaker, we will continue working to ensure the justice system works to protect Ontario, support victims and keep communities safe. Our government has stepped up by hiring new judges and prosecutors that can support workers in supporting our police officers. But more needs to be done. That's why we're also improving and increasing the collection of forfeited bail money from people who breach their bail conditions and their sureties. We're also launching a comprehensive overview of the bail system to ensure it is effective and consequential—as consequential as possible.

Madam Speaker, it's well known within the system that often somebody will step forward as a surety and they really don't think there is a consequence. They don't do the supervision, and often the money isn't forfeited; it's not collected. That's not acceptable. We built capacity in the system to do the things that the Ontario people expect us to do so that we will be in a position, and we are in a position, to follow up: that if somebody is a surety, if somebody is posting money—a pledge, more importantly—for bail, that means something, that it actually has a consequence if bail is breached.

I am committed—we are committed—to making sure that people are held to account for their actions or inactions, because sometimes there is a positive obligation as a surety to do the follow-up, to make sure that you're actually doing the supervision, and if that's not happening, you need to know there will be a consequence.

Part of this is GPS monitoring, otherwise known as ankle bracelets. We're working to establish a new user-fee system for people who were ordered to wear an ankle monitor as a condition of their release or their sentence. Our plan will have those accused or convicted of a serious crime cover the cost of these monitors, rather than putting the costs on the taxpayers. This means the proceeds will

cover the costs of the ankle monitoring program, or it will support victims of crime.

We're doing whatever it takes to make our streets, our homes and our communities safe again, but we cannot do it alone. We continue to call on the federal government to pull its weight and deliver real change to the bail system. Bring in stronger penalties and more restrictive conditions for bail so repeat violent offenders stay behind bars and off our streets and out of our communities.

It wasn't that long ago that the Premier wrote a letter—all of the provincial Premiers and territorial leaders signed on to that letter—and it was to the federal government saying, "We need reverse onus for serious and repeat violent offenders." Reverse onus is, instead of the crown prosecutor having to show why the person should be held behind bars until their hearing, the onus is on the accused, the person who is the alleged perpetrator, to prove why they should be let free. And these are for repeat violent offenders.

Well, that was January when the Premier sent that letter, co-signed by all the Premiers and territorial leaders. And very shortly after that, I happened to be at a graduation with the Solicitor General when I got a call from my federal counterpart, Minister Lametti at the time, saying, "Hey, would you be willing to have an FPT—federal, provincial, territorial—meeting on this?" And I said, "Absolutely. You name the time and the place." So on March 10, we went to Ottawa—all of the Attorneys General and Ministers of Justice from across the country—and we had a conversation about reverse onus as it relates to repeat violent offenders. Shortly after that—I give them credit, the federal government—they brought legislation to do what we had asked them to do in that first instance. And not only did they bring that legislation, it was supported unanimously within the federal Parliament. It was such an obvious thing that needed to be done.

But why does the Premier of Ontario have to tell them how to do their job? I don't know, Madam Speaker, but we have a longer list than that, and we will be engaging with the federal government. I look forward to Prime Minister Carney's cabinet, so that we know who is playing what role and we can engage with them to make further change. We will ask them to do their part while we're already moving and doing our part.

Part of it is the pressure on the courts; it continues to grow. We need to support our judiciary by taking steps to help keep pace with the complex and rigorous work being done by prosecutors in the courts to hold offenders accountable, protect victims and uphold the law. We also know that more needs to be done to help our hard-working police officers investigate and arrest those who break our laws. That is why we are introducing new tough-on-crime measures to help strengthen our justice system.

We are proposing new changes to the Courts of Justice Act to streamline the judicial appointments process and speed up the appointments of judges to the Ontario Court of Justice. Shifting to a pool-based recommendation process would increase the number of candidates available to be selected for various judicial positions. One of the

hallmarks, though, of the Ontario Judicial Appointments Advisory Committee is the interviews that are done of applicants. That's something that Ontario does that the federal government does not do, and I believe it makes it a better system. It's a feature of our system that will be retained; even though we're moving to pool-based, it will allow us to move faster.

The Judicial Appointments Advisory Committee would also be required to use criteria that I, as Attorney General, have established as part of the criteria it uses to review and evaluate judicial candidates. We will continue to ensure transparency in the recommendation process. We may hear from some saying, "But what kind of criteria?" And the answer is, it will be public, whatever it is. Because up until now, the judicial appointments process is very much a black box, even for lawyers who are interested in it, and I have been talking for years about shining a light on the process so that we encourage the best and brightest to come forward, understand what the process is and apply. We need more applicants, Madam Speaker. We need to reach throughout the bar, continue to do the phenomenal diversity that we've been able to expand and make sure that we have the best and the brightest on the bench. That criteria will be published on a website for all to see, so that people know what it is that is important to our government.

I can tell you some of the things that I anticipate will be on there. It will be a sense of community. It will be understanding the perspectives of victims. It will be things like making sure that you have some connectivity to the space that you're going to be in. So we'll go through that, we'll make it public and hopefully encourage others to apply because the system is a little more demystified than it has been until now.

These changes are going to support our plan to deliver faster access to justice for victims of crime and help them avoid the grief and anxiety that come with long delays. We will continue working to address backlogs and delays in the Ontario Court of Justice, as we work to modernize the system at the same time and support victims of crime and their families.

Last year, our government made history by significantly increasing court capacity at the Ontario Court of Justice with a \$29-million investment to add at least 25 new judges to the court. But, this year, we are going further. I'm proud to announce that we're allocating an additional 17 judges to the Ontario Court of Justice, for a total of 42 new judges in a system that had a complement of 300. This is historic progress, and as we work to reduce pending cases before the courts and ensure they're resolved in a timely manner, it's all part of our plan to increase court capacity to protect Ontario.

And it's not just judges, Madam Speaker; when we add a judge, we also add crown prosecutors, victim service workers, navigators, court clerks. We make sure that the capacity of the system grows across the administration to support that judge and the work that they do. So it's not just 42 new judges; it's 42 new judges plus staff to go along with each.

I've been talking a lot about how we're addressing crime in Ontario. I want to now turn our attention to how our government is supporting victims. We've heard disturbing stories about the rise in human trafficking here in Ontario and across the country. There is no place for this in Ontario. You have spoken, Madam Speaker—you were the driving force behind so many initiatives to support victims of human trafficking, and you continue to be, and for that, I thank you.

0920

To combat human trafficking in hotels and the short-term rentals sector, our government will bring into force the Accommodation Sector Registration of Guests Act on January 1, 2026. This will provide police with the tools they need to help investigate human trafficking, as they could more easily obtain related information from hotels and other prescribed businesses. We're also proposing to proceed with consultations on regulations to support the implementation of Bill 41, the Protection from Coerced Debts Incurred in relation to Human Trafficking Act. This would reduce the financial hardship survivors face because of human trafficking and allow them to make progress on their path to recovery.

We need to do more to stop intimate partner violence and protect victims. The victims and vulnerable persons division is part of my ministry, and they do such great work with so many outstanding agencies in the province who deal with many heart-wrenching stories. We honour the work of many of these victim services agencies and other volunteers during the Attorney General's Victim Services Awards of Distinction. These are coming up at the end of this month.

As you know, we saw a significant upswing in intimate partner violence during the pandemic. That's why we continue to make changes to legislation that will improve the outcomes for victims of IPV and their families.

I know that the Associate Attorney General is going to give you more details on our initiatives here, so I'll stop on that, but understand that we are committed to doing everything we can to protect vulnerable Ontarians. Vulnerable people, including those with addiction issues, will not have a blind eye. In fact, the Associate Attorney General will tell you more about some of the measures we're implementing to combat it.

Just before I wrap up, Madam Speaker, I want to tell you about justice centres. You've heard about them before, but we now have several set up in Ontario, and the number is going to increase. But what is a justice centre? A justice centre empowers the community it's in by moving justice out of the courtroom into the community. So instead of being able to put all the social services into the courthouse, we're putting the machinery of the courts into the space of the social services. Individuals are still held to account, but we can meet their needs—not just what they did but why they are there. It's a way to approach justice from a community-focused lens and address issues in a way that reflects the community's values and needs. They have been very successful. That's

why they're expanding. We have the stats and the data to prove it.

I'll give you one: In the 12 months after their appearance at the downtown east justice centre—that's downtown Toronto. They're not all in Toronto; they're in London, Kenora and around—active clients incurred fewer criminal cases than they did in the previous 12 months, with 77% demonstrating improvement in reoffending. So I'm thrilled to report that we're planning on expanding them to even more communities. We'll talk about that more in the future. It will help the victims of crime, because there will be less crime.

I've talked a lot about significant issues in the legislation. I want to thank the House for indulging me as I speak to the new tough-on-crime measures proposed in this legislation. If passed, the initiatives in the Protect Ontario Through Safer Streets and Stronger Communities Act would strengthen our justice system, protect our communities and keep repeat violent offenders behind bars. These will also help strengthen our courts and correctional systems.

I will now turn things over to the Associate Attorney General, Michael Tibollo. Thank you. Merci. Meegwetch.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Laurie Scott): I recognize the Associate Attorney General.

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Good morning, Madam Speaker. I'm very proud to be here alongside my colleagues to support changes our government is making to get tough on criminals and, crucially, to support victims of crime.

The Attorney General just outlined some of the initiatives in the Protect Ontario Through Safer Streets and Stronger Communities Act that we're introducing to help protect children and youth, support victims and survivors and keep repeat violent offenders off our streets.

Since 2018, with support from the federal government, Ontario has committed over \$358 million up to 2028 to combat gun and gang violence. This is all part of our plan to protect Ontario from violent gang members who threaten people with illegally obtained firearms. Disrupting gang activity is crucial to cracking down on crime in neighbourhoods throughout this province, and that's why we're expanding our dedicated guns-and-gangs units in targeted regions of the province. This will bolster our border security by addressing the impact of illegal firearms coming into Canada. These units have expert prosecutors that work with provincial and municipal police forces to tackle the challenging nature of gang activity, to identify and disrupt dangerous gangs and deter young people from getting involved. They have led the investigation of 34 major projects, leading to hundreds of arrests. As part of their work, they have also seized \$5.4 million in property and cash. This expansion will build on the excellent work that these units are already doing across the province.

Speaker, violent crime is on the rise, and we are doing whatever it takes to keep people and communities safe. I want to address a type of crime that is affecting communities like never before. We've all heard about it, we've

read about it and probably know someone who has been directly impacted by it; in fact, it might have already happened to any one of us. I'm speaking about auto theft.

I know the Solicitor General is going to have more to say on this topic, but let me top-line this for you: Car owners across Ontario need to have the peace of mind that their vehicles will be safe wherever they park them and if their vehicle is stolen that law enforcement has the tools they need to investigate this crime.

The greater Toronto area is facing some of the highest rates of auto theft in the entire province, but our government is announcing measures that put those committing these crimes on notice. We are making the dedicated major auto theft prosecution response team permanent, with a focus on crime spots like the GTA, Ottawa, London and Windsor.

The prosecution team provides legal advice, helps dismantle organized crime networks and offers specialized prosecution expertise to support the provincial and municipal police investigations. This includes those conducted by the OPP organized crime, towing and auto theft team, as well as auto theft and car-jacking teams within municipal police services.

These new and permanent measures are holding offenders accountable, giving police the tools they need to stop thefts before they happen and keep our communities safe.

Speaker, criminals are increasingly using keyless entry technology, like illegal key fob programming devices, fob scanners and some smart phone applications, to steal cars from unsuspecting victims. That's why we're proposing changes to the Highway Traffic Act to give police the authority to search for and seize electronic devices that are intended to be used for vehicle theft. These changes would provide law enforcement with stronger tools to keep keyless devices off the streets and out of the hands of would-be criminals. By cracking down on the unlawful use of these devices, we're disrupting criminal activity and giving police the tools that they need to stop thefts before they happen and keep our communities safe for everyone.

Passing these measures will support law enforcement in safeguarding our streets and making it easier to stop car thieves in their tracks.

Whether it's on the streets or in the digital world, our government is doubling down on our commitment to protecting Ontario and keeping communities safe. Cybercrime is on the rise throughout our country, and it's fuelling major crime and gang-related activities. Now, when most people think about cybercrime, they think about hacking, ransomware and data theft, but the reality is much darker. These criminals are involved in human trafficking, cryptocurrency payments that are extremely difficult to track, marketplaces that facilitate the sale of illegal firearms and drugs, and digital child sexual abuse.

There are real people involved behind the computer screen, and they're committing real harm. That's why we are creating the first cybercrime and cryptocurrency prosecution team in Canadian history right here in Ontario. Our government is leading the charge across the nation,

expanding the efforts and taking meaningful steps to protect communities. The cybercrime team will work directly with police services at the federal, provincial and municipal levels. This collaboration will be essential. Team members provide advice to police at the investigative stage to help make sure cases are managed and prosecuted effectively. This is crucial, because cybercrime cases tend to be large and complex.

Once charges are laid and cases move into the justice system, crown attorneys, the cybercrime team and the police involved with these files make sure they are prosecuted fairly and effectively. Because whether it's cybercrime or auto theft, it has devastating effects on the people of this province. People should live in safety, free from intimidation or violence. Violence is not confined to distant, hidden places. It can occur right within the home.

0930

Our government is delivering greater access to justice for those who have been victimized by heinous crimes, including intimate partner violence. We understand from survivors that this abuse could be physical, emotional, mental, or it could be all three, leaving victims feeling powerless and alone. Unfortunately, this type of destructive violence is on the rise in our province and that's why we're amending the Family Law Act and the Children's Law Reform Act to increase accessibility to restraining orders for people who are scared for their safety and scared for their lives.

Our proposals build on what our government is already doing to address intimate partner violence, initiatives like the Domestic Violence Court Program in each of the province's 54 court jurisdictions. This program allows police, crowns and Victim/Witness Assistance Program staff to work with community partners to coordinate support for victims. There is also the Early Victim Contact initiative that provides timely outreach and support to the victims of intimate partner violence, and domestic violence high-risk committees that identify and proactively provide an additional layer of case management and monitoring of high-risk intimate partner violence while they are going through the criminal justice system.

I would also like to mention the Partner Assault Response Program that provides specialized group education for intimate partner violence offenders, as well as support, referral and safety planning for victims. Our government also supports Indigenous-specific intimate partner violence prevention programs and other culturally responsive programs to support Indigenous persons in contact with the justice system, victims, their communities and their families. These initiatives clearly demonstrate that intimate partner violence is a grave issue that our government is dedicated to tackling head-on. Nobody should have to live in fear. Everyone has the right to live in safety, with dignity, free from intimidation and the threat of violence.

That's why we're also updating the general regulation under Christopher's Law—a law that requires sex offenders to register with the police in their community. We're strengthening this crucial law even further so that

child sex traffickers are also included on what will now be known as the Ontario sex offender and trafficker registry. This will make it easier for our police services to keep our communities safe. I know the Solicitor General will have more to say on this shortly.

This is another instance where this bill builds on government commitments already in place. We're dedicated to ensuring that victims receive the assistance and protection they need, no matter where they are in the province. And as part of last year's budget, our government is providing an addition \$6.4 billion over three years to child victim/witnesses and independent legal advice programs. This sustains and expands supports for victims of crime and survivors of sexual violence. Through the Enhancing Access to Justice Act, our government made changes to the Victims' Bill of Rights. Together with regulatory changes, the act now makes it easier for victims of crime to sue convicted offenders for emotional distress and related bodily harms for more crimes.

The Ministry of the Attorney General also offers a broad range of court-related supports and legal services that assist those who have been victimized or affected by trauma to meet their unique needs. This includes supports for victims and witnesses of crime to help them understand and participate in the criminal court process. There are also specialized legal support and information services available for victims of sexual violence and human trafficking. In addition, we have culturally appropriate justice services delivered by Indigenous communities and organizations throughout the province.

Speaker, I understand the connection between mental health and public safety, especially within the justice system. In my previous role as the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, I had the opportunity to work on a strategy that supports people struggling to find the help they need when experiencing a mental health or addiction challenge. Patients wait too long for urgent care and services are unequal and inconsistent, with too many gaps. The Roadmap to Wellness is a strategy to answer for those who have faced these challenges for far too long and want action. That's why our government has committed to investing \$3.8 billion over 10 years to develop and implement a comprehensive new mental health and addictions system. Our Roadmap to Wellness strategy will help improve mental health services for communities across Ontario and support the people and families living with mental health and addiction challenges. We are doing that by building on existing mental health and addictions services to create a system where people of all ages have convenient access to the highest-quality mental health and addictions support and care.

I want to close today by telling you about a provincial success story. We launched Ontario's first justice centre, in London, Ontario, in 2020. Justice centres empower communities by moving justice out of the traditional courtroom and into a community setting. By doing this, they bring together justice, health and social services to target the root causes of crime and break the cycle of offending and reoffending.

Justice centres don't let offenders off the hook by avoiding consequences of their actions—quite the opposite. They hold them accountable for their offences while at the same time connecting them to services that can help them so that they have the supports they need to reduce their risk of reoffending.

Justice centres also support communities and victims harmed by crime by stopping the revolving door of repeat offenders through our system of policing, justice, health and corrections.

It's no wonder that around the world justice centres have been shown to reduce crime rates, support front-line officers and contribute to healthier and safer communities. They also make our justice system more effective by working to increase capacity in local courthouses. When capacity increases, that means there can be more focus on prosecuting the most serious crimes, including violent firearm offences, while offering off-ramps for less serious offenders to end their constant involvement with the criminal justice system.

In Ontario, the justice centres have launched in London, Toronto northwest, Toronto downtown east and Kenora and have become vital means of protecting and promoting public safety and supporting victims in communities harmed by crime. That's why I'm happy to announce our justice centre expansion plans. The London Justice Centre is going to be housed in a new dedicated facility that will include a young adult integrated intimate partner violence model, and another dedicated facility will be established for the Toronto Downtown East Justice Centre. This will be a first-of-its-kind hybrid health and justice centre providing supports for people experiencing homelessness, mental health and addictions challenges.

We're also working with our partners at the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services to create a new youth justice centre model in Toronto to process all youth, with satellites in high-need communities. We'll be opening a new justice centre in Barrie, and in northern Ontario, we will explore options for a justice centre in Timmins. The Kenora Justice Centre will also benefit from an Indigenous-led community kitchen and employment skills training program to help create pathways out of the criminal justice system.

Madam Speaker, we know the devastating impact that crime has on our communities. That's why justice centres are a success story that we can and want to celebrate.

In closing, I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to discuss this legislation. We're going to do what we can to protect Ontario communities, support vulnerable people and improve their access to justice. If passed, the Protect Ontario Through Safer Streets and Stronger Communities Act would help protect children and youth and establish targeted measures to support victims. Today's proposed changes would show our government's commitment to a system that prioritizes justice for those who have been victimized by heinous crimes and need our support.

Thank you for listening. I'll turn over things to the Solicitor General. Thank you. Meegwetich.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Laurie Scott): I recognize the Solicitor General.

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: I want to acknowledge my colleagues the Attorney General and the Associate Attorney General for their comments.

It is overwhelming, firstly, Madam Speaker, to rise, to be re-elected by my constituents of York Centre who sent me back here to do their work. I think of them every day. There is nothing more important to me than the concerns of my constituents of York Centre.

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Madam Speaker, when we look historically—and we don't have to go back that far, just to June 2018, when Ontarians sent Premier Ford together with his then-elected members of our government party to represent them and to govern here at Queen's Park. Ontarians did the same thing in June 2022, and they did the same thing this past February, in 2025. Ontarians understand, like we do, that when we have safe communities to live in, we have absolutely everything.

Madam Speaker, I have said it before and I will say it again: When we have safe communities, we have a place that we can wake up our kids in the morning and see them off to school, we can check in on our seniors and loved ones, we have a place to go to work, we have a place to come home to and shop and play in the park, and, as others will appreciate, we have a place to pray. This inherent right is something that is equal, not one person greater than the next. I will always do everything that I can as a member of this Legislature, as a proud member of this government, as a proud member of Premier Ford's cabinet, to ensure that those inherent rights of our public safety are treated with the highest priority.

Madame la Présidente, comme je l'ai déjà dit ici, rien pour moi, en tant que solliciteur général, n'est plus important que la sécurité de notre province.

I'm rising, Madam Speaker, to talk about Bill 10, and I'll give a highlight further to what my colleagues did a few minutes ago. But I also wanted to give some context of a North Star. Madam Speaker some of us, you included, are part of a generation that will remember 1967. That was Canada's centennial, and the government of Ontario, under the leadership of the then Premier John Robarts, commissioned a song to capture the energy, the creativity and the dynamism of our then-growing province. People will remember what that song is because it says it's, A Place to Stand. It was a long time—100 years—for somebody to create a song that represented the fact that Ontario belongs to all of us, that our greatest asset has always been our diversity, and we're coming forward again today with Bill 10 to recognize that we can't stop.

We can't stop for a minute. When others told us to stop, Madam Speaker, I said they were dead wrong. When it comes to being innovative and imaginative, when it comes to being bold, when it comes to creating the best ideas that have to flow from this Legislature in Ontario, this is the place where debates occur.

I want to talk about why Bill 10 is so important today, and I'll go through some of the comments. Some of them were already raised before.

We're fighting human trafficking by strengthening Christopher's Law. That is the Sex Offender Registry. You have to go back in time, and I know the member from Oxford was here, but I don't know if anybody else was here when Premier Harris led this government that came forward with a bold idea. You talk about being bold and innovative—that was Premier Mike Harris, somebody that we hope will continue to have a long and exemplary life, which he has had in leading Ontario. Some 25 years ago, Premier Harris understood that we had to come forward to protect those most vulnerable. Today, as we go back in time and we look at Christopher's Law and where we are today, we know that the changes we are making today as part of Bill 10 will add child sex traffickers to the registry, as well as those convicted of voyeurism.

We'll provide our police services with critical information to combat crimes, and, as the Associate Attorney General said, we will bring into force the Accommodation Sector Registration of Guests Act, 2021, which will provide police with the tools to combat human trafficking in hotels and short-term rentals.

We're making further changes to the Community Safety and Policing Act, 2019. I want to talk for just a minute about this act, because my predecessor the Deputy Premier and Minister of Health did a lot to bring that act to where it was. I took it forward, and I brought it to fruition, to enactment and to proclamation. I've gone around Ontario to police services all over the province, talking about why it was important that the Community Safety and Policing Act come into force—because you have to go back in time—maybe not to 1967, Madam Speaker, but you do have to go back to when Premier Rae was in government, because that's the last time Ontario had a policing act that governed our community safety.

The changes that we're making specifically to the Community Safety and Policing Act, or the CSPA, are to protect police, protect our fundamental rights. It talks about making some changes to the special constable roles, the ability to request assistance, the inspectors general, the ability of the Solicitor General to request interim measures.

I want to also mention my colleague the member from Milton, our associate minister of auto theft and bail reform, who will continue with the same focus and exuberance as my former associate minister, now the Minister of Multiculturalism, the member from Brampton North, did.

We're also going to hold landlords accountable for knowingly permitting the manufacture or sale of illicit drugs. That's very important, knowingly permitting the manufacture, or knowingly renting a premises to them, because they can't get away with it.

I want to talk again about some perspective of the times that find us in a world that, when you look at the face value of it, has changed. The relationship that we have with our closest partner south of Canada, the United States, has changed, and yet I have seen an unleashing of Ontario

pride, something that I have to honestly say I have never seen in my generation. It's a place to stand and a place to grow. The pride perhaps that I may have had—although I was really young in 1967—is something that we see now. That's why as we're unleashing everything that we are in Ontario, everything that we have become, we have to do so in a community that allows us to live safely.

I'm very proud to stand alongside Premier Ford and celebrate the accomplishments we have done just in the past few years. When we looked at putting more boots on the ground, it didn't take that long for Premier Ford to say, "Go ahead and do it. Figure out a way to get double the number of cadets/recruits graduating at the Ontario Police College."

So when I come to see our new Minister of Emergency Preparedness and Response—when we go to the OPP graduations in her constituency, we see the difference in the class sizes. When we go to the Toronto Police College and everywhere—2,100 new boots on the ground coming out of the Ontario Police College is proof in the pudding, as we colloquially say, that our measures are paying dividends today.

But we didn't stop there. We came forward and said it's unacceptable that people are stealing our cars or breaking bail conditions. As the Attorney General said, we're coming forward and representing to the federal government that they have to change those laws, because that's their jurisdiction, to make sure that people are not out on bail eight, nine and 10 times.

Premier Ford has led in every respect. The police officers; the firefighters; the corrections, probational and parole officers; the animal welfare inspectors; the special constables; the auxiliary officers; the 911 call operators—you name anyone in public safety who keeps us safe, and they will know one thing: Premier Doug Ford and this government will always have your back. It says a lot.

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That's why, again, we're here today. Whether we're talking about ways to combat human trafficking, the proposed Protect Ontario Through Safer Streets and Stronger Communities Act includes several proposals led by different ministries, because that's how our government under Premier Ford works. We're not an island unto ourselves. We listen to our colleagues in other ministries—how can we collaborate and work together? And that's what happened when it came to strengthening Christopher's Law.

Why is this so important today? Because any person who has been convicted of a designated sex offence must register with the Sex Offender Registry, and this includes individuals who have been convicted of sex crimes in other provinces or outside Canada. It gives police services access to the information and the investigative tools that they require to prevent and solve these awful crimes.

I remember when we talked about this and made the announcement last year. One thing that I remember distinctively was that the technology has changed a lot in 25 years. We have something now called social media, which wasn't then so prevalent. So this concept of

empowering the investigative tools and making them available to the police is so important. That's why we're strengthening Christopher's Law, and we'll continue to look at it to make sure that our population that's the most vulnerable understands that the government will always be there to protect them.

I mentioned in my cover remarks—if you call them that, Madam Speaker—that we're moving to strengthen the Community Safety and Policing Act. This is very, very important. The Community Safety and Policing Act is a living, breathing document, just like any acts of the Legislature are. They have to be revisited over time. They have to be constantly looked at. What can we do to strengthen our public safety? And this was, without a doubt, our government's signature piece of policing legislation. It replaced, as I mentioned, the Police Services Act that goes back to 1990.

Since the CSPA came into force, the ministry has engaged in ongoing discussions with police services as well as other stakeholders across the province. Through these engagements and through the implementation of the act, we've identified some operational issues that need to be addressed. The proposed amendments are necessary to provide clarity and align with the overall intent of the act.

I'll give a brief synopsis of what the amendments are, and specifically with regard to special constables. I want to give the special constables a real shout-out. Most recently, when I was at the Ottawa Police Service, I had the privilege of meeting the latest class of special constables from Ottawa. I would say, without a doubt, one of the greatest privileges of being the Solicitor General—something that I take with great respect every day—is to go out and to meet with our stakeholders, to see the strong bond we have with the associations. I can't thank the leadership of the PAO and the OPPA and the TPA enough for working so collaboratively with our government, led by Premier Ford.

But in Ontario, Madam Speaker, special constables are considered sworn peace officers who are granted limited police powers depending on their role. Special constables are employed, as we know, in areas of public transit, on university campuses, in community housing and by police services or by our government in various roles. The proposed Protect Ontario Through Safer Streets and Stronger Communities Act includes an amendment to the CSPA which will provide greater clarity that the special constables can only be employed by an authorized special constable employer or a police service in Ontario. Minister's regulations made under the proposed amendments would also allow for the discretion to provide special constables with the ability to carry and use firearms.

And the next amendment would make improvements to how police services can make requests for temporary assistance from non-Ontario police services or others governed by the law of another Canadian jurisdiction.

We count on our police services to be able to handle any situation that is a threat to the public safety in our community. The fact is that occasionally there are

circumstances where our police services need to request assistance from other police services. Under the CSPA, Ontario police services can currently request temporary assistance from other Ontario police services, but this act includes an amendment that the CSPA will allow chiefs of police to request temporary assistance in prescribed circumstances from entities outside Ontario that are prescribed by the minister. These entities, as an example, may include the RCMP or provincial or municipal police services from elsewhere in Canada. The proposed amendment would ensure that Ontario's police services can request assistance from an expanded source of resources without forcing them to choose between being in non-compliance with the law or failing to provide adequate and effective policing.

Madam Speaker, again, what we're doing in this act, from the perspective of the Ministry of the Solicitor General, is to be practical. It's to look at the CSPA, the Community Safety and Policing Act, and say, what more do we need to do?

Here's something else: There's an amendment under the CSPA which relates to the Ontario Provincial Police detachment boards. I want to congratulate all members who serve on a police service board everywhere in Ontario. You could be on a municipal police service board—and, by the way, they're great. I've been to almost every single municipal police service in Ontario. I have two to go. I will get to Deep River, and I will get to Saugeen Shores, hopefully this summer, but I've been everywhere else. I've been to many of our First Nations police services as well; I want to acknowledge them.

But let me talk about the individuals that serve on police service boards. These are people that bring their love for their community and their respect for our police services to the work that they do. So this amendment will amend subsection 68(1) to clarify that the OPP detachment boards must participate in the OPP commissioner's selection of permanent OPP detachment commanders in accordance with the process established by the commissioner, because it's the OPP commanders all over Ontario in the detachments that have their pulse on the community.

Madam Speaker, although I have not visited every OPP detachment in Ontario, I can tell you this. I've been to a lot of them. I've knocked on the door, just popping in to say hello, and I can tell you that it is a wonderful experience to listen to the local commanders to see what is going on in their communities, and how proud I am of the OPP.

The OPP is nothing short of a flagship service, led by an incredible individual, Commissioner Thomas Carrique.

I also want to acknowledge the Deputy Solicitor General—that's Mario Di Tommaso himself, a lifelong police officer who we are delighted to have in this role—our retiring Deputy Solicitor General for corrections, Karen Ellis, and to welcome our newest Deputy Solicitor General for corrections, Erin Hannah. I wish her good luck in her new role.

Madam Speaker, when it comes to talking about why we've come forward so bold today and innovative today,

it's because we are a government that is practical. We are a government, whether we're talking about strengthening Christopher's Law or updating parts of the CSPA, whether we're looking at ways to hold people to account—and that's making sure, again, that if you're renting a facility, knowingly, to somebody that is contravening the laws and engaging in manufacturing, as an example, illegal drugs, or carrying on otherwise, you too have to be held to account.

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Ontarians have looked to us and our government, led by Premier Ford; and to my colleague the associate minister, my great friend the member from Milton; my great friend the Attorney General; and the Associate Attorney General to make sure that, on the enforcement and prosecution side of our rights to live safely in our own homes and communities, we will leave no stone unturned.

Just this past Sunday, I had the privilege to gather with my colleagues to attend the police officers' memorial to see the names that are engraved on the wall: "Heroes in Life, Not Death." I said in my remarks, Madam Speaker, that our heroes in life, not death, lived. They lived so we can live. And while they are not here to see fruition of a government's commitment to keep them safe—I would add, Madam Speaker, a government's commitment that is absolute and constant, a government's commitment that has no equal, a government that understands that protecting Ontario does not mean anything; our government, led by Premier Ford, says protect Ontario means everything.

To that, I am grateful to have risen today and contributed to this debate. Thank you. Merci beaucoup. Meegwetch.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Laurie Scott): Questions and responses?

Ms. Jessica Bell: My question is to the member for Barrie–Springwater–Oro–Medonte. As of late 2024, the majority of court cases in Ontario are delayed and held because of unreasonable delays. People never have their day in court.

I recently read about Emily Quint, whose sexual assault case was delayed after a three-year wait. She quotes that she never would have come forward if she knew that that's what the experience was going to be.

This government is taking a tough-on-crime approach, but it gets flimsy if offenders are charged but they're less likely tried and they're rarely convicted due to administrative backlogs. What is the plan to address the court backlogs?

Hon. Doug Downey: I do appreciate the opportunity to answer that question. We're building court capacity to make sure that we have the judges, support staff, clerks and everything else. But in terms of stats—now, one is too many. There is no question. I had opportunity to speak directly with Emily and gain her perspective and hear her journey and story. It was very, very powerful. So one is too many. But I can tell you that those cases dismissed for delay are less than one tenth of 1%. It's almost one twentieth of 1%. So we are making good progress in terms of achieving a zero number.

That's exactly what this bill is about; it's about building capacity to make sure that victims are protected and that their matters are heard. That's why we've added 42 judges along with the requisite staff in the hundreds, whether it be prosecutors, victim support workers, court clerks, navigators and others. That's what we're doing about it, and we are aligned with the member opposite on the urgency and the necessity of doing exactly this.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Laurie Scott): Questions?

M^{me} Lucille Collard: I'll direct my question to the Attorney General. He knows I have a big interest in this bill. I want to ask him about the function of the Judicial Appointments Advisory Committee. It is a respected organization and its role is to protect the independence of our judiciary. I would like you to explain why the government is eliminating the ranked short-list requirement, because it's one of the key safeguards against politicized appointments, and how does that removal of this requirement enhance this integrity and independence of the judiciary?

Hon. Doug Downey: Thank you again for the opportunity to address the change.

It is an advisory committee; it's right in the name: the Judicial Appointments Advisory Committee. The way that it currently functions is the Chief Justice will say we have a vacancy in place X. That letter then goes to the committee—that will not change. The committee will advertise for that location, be it—I will just pick on Windsor—and so they will advertise for Windsor. People will apply to Windsor. They will decide who they are going to interview, under the current system, and those interviews will happen and names will be recommended.

Then, while that's happening, there may be a vacancy in London and the same process will happen in parallel. The committee will receive individual applications for that and they will assess who they are going to interview, and they're doing two set of interviews for these two different locations. It's very cumbersome and it takes a very long time by the time they do the interview and they do the recommendations back. The change is a pool system so that if they apply to Windsor or London they end up in the same pool. They only need to be interviewed once, and the committee can assess them as recommended or not recommended. If they're not recommended, I don't see the names. That will not change either. So it will speed up by having a pool to draw from instead of these individualized interviews.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Laurie Scott): The member from Burlington.

Ms. Natalie Pierre: Good morning and thank you to my colleagues for their remarks earlier. My question is for the Associate Attorney General. During their remarks, he talked about justice centres and I'm wondering if the Associate Attorney General can just take a few moments and tell us how justice centres differ from traditional courtrooms and why the government is expanding justice centres at this time.

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Thank you for the question. Justice centres really are an innovation that have shown

and proven to be very beneficial. It doesn't take away the gravity or the seriousness of the crime of the individual, but what it does is it brings justice into the community. A lot of it is very similar to what we were doing when it came to mental health and addictions, to try to create a continuum of care, an organization, a structure that allows people to get help where they need that help the most, and provide them supports and resources to make sure, one, that an individual who has committed a crime has the opportunity to rehabilitate, but also to provide opportunities for victims of crime to get support and help that they need.

By creating this integrated opportunity to bring justice to the people, it makes it much more accessible to the people to get the support they need and also reduce recidivism rates. It's a proven evidence-based structure that we are looking at and that we have implemented and that we are looking to expand, because again, it does reduce recidivism rates which takes pressure off the court system. By taking pressure off the courts, it allows the courts to deal with the more heinous crimes that should be dealt with in a courtroom.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Laurie Scott): Questions?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is for the Attorney General. As this government well knows, in 2022, the Renfrew county coroner's inquest released a report with 68 recommendations specific to the province of Ontario. Many of which have yet to be implemented including the number one recommendation, which is to "declare intimate partner violence as an epidemic."

The government had an opportunity to make that declaration as part of this bill and as part of the changes to the justice system that are being proposed, but they did not. We are looking at a period right now of significant financial stress on families in this province. We know intimate partner violence rates are only going to go up. Can the government explain why, when there was such overwhelming support for the declaration of an epidemic when 100 municipalities have made that declaration, why is the government not recognizing intimate partner violence as the epidemic that it is?

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Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: Our government believes in action. Our government believes in standing with the survivors and the victims. Our government believes in supporting victims' services, which we've done. Our government believes, every single day, that we will not accept this as a norm and that we will hold people to account.

So, Madam Speaker, our government believes in action and not words, and our government will continue to act.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Laurie Scott): Questions and answers?

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Again, regarding judicial independence, I'm sure the Attorney General has read the letter from the Chief Justices of this province expressing concerns about depoliticization of the judicial appointment process. This bill clearly gives more discretion to the Attorney General in the judicial appointment process.

So how does this added discretion align with the principles—those very important principles—that the Chief Justices have expressed concerns about?

Hon. Doug Downey: I have both read the letter and I have spoken with them. The letter does not address this bill or what's happening in this bill. The letter addresses a different matter.

Madam Speaker, I can tell you that there is no expanded discretion in this bill. It does allow me to put forward criteria but, quite frankly, that's saying the quiet part out loud. Every Attorney General, with their obligation to make appointments, has criteria that they're looking for and that they're looking at, whether it be protecting a victim perspective, whether it's being connected to your community or any number of things.

I'm committing to change the process to bring more light to it, more transparency and more predictability; to tell people what it is that I'm looking for so that they can apply and have some encouragement that they may be able to meet the criteria.

But there is no expanded discretion outside of an obligation on me to say what it is that I'm looking for, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Laurie Scott): Questions?

Mr. Brian Riddell: My question is for the Attorney General. The bail system is a shared responsibility between the federal government and the provinces and the territories. What changes can we make without federal approval?

Hon. Doug Downey: We can improve the system and make sure people are where they're supposed to be and doing what they're supposed to be doing.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Laurie Scott): Thank you for that short answer.

We are now proceeding to members' statements.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

MEMBER FOR KITCHENER SOUTH– HESPELER

Ms. Jess Dixon: It was my birthday a few days ago. My mother has an odd sense of humour, and she celebrated by bringing over the original laundry basket that she put me in when she brought me back, along with the blanket and everything.

In our household, my birthday is always followed shortly thereafter by Mother's Day, which is approaching this weekend. I wanted to take a minute to celebrate all the mothers out there, but of course especially mine.

Everybody in this chamber knows how challenging this job is, and the fact that we're only able to do this job with its crazy hours and its pressures and its occasional psychological pressures because of the people that keep the home fires burning. In that case, that is undoubtedly my mother.

I'm an only child, and I think I've said this before, but it bears repeating: I think I am actually a much bigger source of stress and anxiety and work to my mother now as a politician than I ever was as a child or a teenager. Nevertheless, she puts up with me. The things that she has to hear about now require a great deal more understanding than just complaining about homework and friends.

But I know that everyone in this chamber knows how much the work of our mothers matters. Thank you to all the mothers but thank you very specifically to mine.

NATIONAL NURSING WEEK

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I rise today to honour and celebrate National Nursing Week across Canada. This week we recognize the extraordinary dedication, resilience and compassion of nurses all across this province. Whether working in hospital, long-term-care homes or providing critical care in home settings, nurses are the heartbeat of our community and our health care system. Nurses have answered the call during times of crisis, through pandemics and even quiet moments when care is needed the most. They hold hands in hospice, visit homes to ensure dignity and administer care in emergency departments when our health care system is in complete shambles.

Too many health care workers are overworked and underpaid and burnt out. The staffing shortages we see today are not sudden, Madam Speaker; they are results from years of past governments under-investing and policy choices that have pushed workers to the brink. We need legislation that ensures safe staffing levels and offers fair wages reflecting their value and their work.

When constituents share the horror stories of waiting 16 hours in the ER, they quickly point out how amazing their nursing staff was. Ontarians recognize that nurses are doing their best, and the state of our health care system is not on their shoulders. Let us deliver the policies, protections and respect they deserve.

To all the nurses in Ontario: We see you, we value you and we stand shoulder to shoulder with you.

MEMBER FOR MARKHAM–THORNHILL WORLD ASTHMA DAY

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: I rise today with deep gratitude to thank the residents of Markham–Thornhill for placing their trust in me once again. It's truly an honour to serve our vibrant and most ethnically diverse community in all of Canada. I want to sincerely thank the volunteers, supporters and community members whose dedication powered our campaign. Your passion and belief in our shared vision made the victory possible.

I also extend my warm congratulations to all my colleagues and across the aisle. I look forward to working together to build a strong Ontario.

Today is also World Asthma Day, a reminder of the 3.8 million Canadians living with asthma, including many in

my riding. I personally witnessed the impact of asthma: My mother and my grandmother suffered through their entire life. I commend the organizations like Asthma Canada and our doctors and health care professionals for their tireless work in treating asthmatic patients in care.

Let's continue to support clean air initiatives, medical research, asthma education and open conversations that help people, especially children, manage their chronic condition with confidence.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: If it seems too good to be true, it's probably a scam. There is no shortage of vile, insidious ways to trick good people out of their hard-earned money, which often target seniors.

Residents in my riding of London North Centre were sent cards claiming \$50,000 was available from the government of Canada from an organization calling themselves Ontario Benefits. The card promises support for some of the most common medical conditions and hundreds more. I was glad my constituent Jan dropped this off, and I want to thank them for bringing this to our attention.

The CRA, the government and your bank would never ask you to start contact with them by text. Please keep that in mind.

I had my team dial the number to request an information package. To my profound surprise, Ontario Benefits sent my office a package of official CRA forms. The documents also promise a personal contact person to help with the completion of the documents. How helpful of them.

What is deeply disturbing is that this company uses legitimate means to not provide resources to you but to effectively take them away, administering your benefits to you. If you sign these forms, Ontario Benefits could take 30% of all your benefits, current and future. Any late payments are subject to 2% per month, or 24% per year. There's no additional \$50,000, and you'll be paying them forever.

Despite the claim of the original card, the follow-up contract states, "I understand Ontario Benefits is not from the government nor is this a mandatory program."

I encourage everyone to always be vigilant with your personal information. Ask a friend, ask a family member, ask a co-worker, contact your MPP or MP.

If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.

MOTHER'S DAY

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: I rise today in recognition of Mother's Day and to pay tribute to the incredible mothers and mother figures in our lives. Mothers are the heart of our families and the backbone of our communities. They nurture us, guide us and sacrifice endlessly to ensure we have every opportunity to succeed. Their strength, compassion and resilience inspire us every single day. Whether it's late-night conversation, a warm home-cooked meal or

an encouraging word in difficult times, the care of a mother leaves a lasting impact on who we become.

1020

Madam Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to thank all the mothers across Ontario, including the hard-working mothers in my riding of Brampton West, for everything they do. Your love and commitment shape not only your families, but the very fabric of our province. To all the mothers in Brampton West and across Ontario being celebrated this weekend, thank you. Your love and dedication do not go unnoticed.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. John Vanthof: If there's one thing that President Trump has done, he has galvanized Canadians and Ontarians to work together and to build our country. We want to work with the government to do that, and we're all looking at where the weak links are in the chain. And there's one very weak link in the chain in Ontario.

Everywhere else in Canada, we have a divided four-lane highway to cross this country so goods and people can travel freely across the country. That's becoming even more important. The one place that doesn't have that? Ontario. The Trans-Canada Highway in Ontario is an undivided two-lane where northerners are regularly run off the road. It's time that the government—or we, as the governing people of this province—actually take this seriously.

The Premier wrote a letter to the Prime Minister about five projects. One was a deep-sea port. Great, but you don't even have a road capable of getting stuff to that deep-sea port. So how about we make one of the projects to actually have a divided four-lane highway across this country, including this great province? Because we're the only province in the country that does not have a divided four-lane highway for goods and people.

ATTACK IN VANCOUVER

MPP Andrea Hazell: Today I stand before you to salute and mourn with my Filipino community of Scarborough–Guildwood, a vibrant community and home to a significant population of Filipinos. Ontario has the largest Filipino population in Canada, with over 355,000 residents.

It is with a heavy heart that I honour the lives lost during the tragic Lapu Lapu Day festival in Vancouver where 11 lives were senselessly taken, leaving dozens injured. These individuals gathered to celebrate their culture and community, surrounded by family and friends, only to have their joy shattered in an instant. Each of those lost was a cherished member of their community, filled with dreams and aspirations. Their absence leaves a profound void, especially for their families, who now face overwhelming grief. We must honour their memories by standing with the Filipino community during this difficult time.

As we reflect on this heartbreaking moment, let us unite in support and compassion. We must amplify the voices of the Filipino community and strive for a future where everyone can celebrate their culture safely. Together we mourn, together we stand and together we will move forward with strength, love and unity.

ICE STORM

Ms. Laurie Scott: I rise today to recognize the incredible strength and resilience of the people of Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock in the worst ice storm our region has ever experienced.

On March 29 and 30, a devastating ice storm swept through our communities, toppling trees and hydro lines, knocking out communications and blocking roads. As we all struggled to get out from under the ice, it was astonishing to learn that 90% of our riding was without power and states of emergency were being declared.

Hundreds of Ontario hydro workers answered the call to help us. Soon joined by crews from Saskatchewan, Quebec and New Brunswick, they grew to over 1,000 workers per day being deployed. Together they worked tirelessly to replace hundreds and hundreds of broken poles and rebuild power grids. It was incredible to see.

I want to issue a heartfelt thank you to our hydro heroes. Thank you to all the municipal leaders, emergency personnel and volunteers who stepped up to support those in need. We are grateful to Ontario Corps, the Red Cross, neighbouring paramedics and EMS services. We also appreciate the Premier and the minister of emergency management and preparedness for visiting our communities to show their support and thank our front-line workers.

I could not be prouder of how our community came together: neighbours helping neighbours, volunteers stepping up and workers pushing through fatigue to restore power and hope. This has been a reminder that in Ontario, when disaster strikes, we stand together, and together, we overcome challenges.

KING CHARLES III CORONATION MEDAL

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: In my community of Oakville–North Burlington, I was honoured to present the King Charles III Coronation Medal to six outstanding individuals whose lives have been defined not by titles or accolades, but by commitment, character and compassion. They are united by one powerful idea: that every person can make a difference.

Brad Flick, who has served his church and community with humility, faith and a generous heart; Don Foster, founder of the Compass Food Bank and a long-time champion of public health, youth mentorship and the arts; Warren Howard, a former councillor who champions community-focused development, is a trusted adviser on energy policy and a collector of Indigenous art; Santokh Pahal, a pillar of the community whose leadership brought

together the Sikh community to establish the gurdwara in the Halton region, and the first gurdwara in Toronto, with vision and devotion; Sonia Robinson, as a community advocate, played a key role in the passage of Keira's Law and leads grassroots efforts to safeguard Burlington's green space; and Xin Yi Zhang, an educator, author and school trustee who builds opportunity through learning, service and cultural connection.

Each of these individuals inspire us all, and their stories remind us that community isn't just a place we live, it is something we build through action and care. Today, I thank them once again for showing us what's possible when service comes from the heart.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): It is now time to move on to introduction of visitors, and I would like to begin by introducing five residents of Flamborough–Glanbrook who will be receiving the King Charles III Coronation Medal later today.

From Flamborough–Glanbrook: Pat Daly, Margaret Robertson, Drew Spoelstra, Peter Mercanti and Jim Whalen. Thank you for coming today.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Good morning. Today, I'm pleased to welcome three interns who will be working in my constituency office this summer. A warm welcome to Grace Dilawri, Stevie Steeves and Ciya Mehra. Thank you for making the trip down to Queen's Park, and I hope you enjoy your opportunity this summer.

MPP George Darouze: I'd like to recognize Hasan and Rumi Prince from my riding of Carleton Place here today. They lost their son, Rudhro—he was eight years old—in 2018, and are here to advocate with Asthma Canada. I want to thank them for being here. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: Good morning. I'd like to welcome all of the members of the Masonry Council of Ontario and, in particular, kreitmaker, who is based in my riding of Don Valley West in the Leaside Business Park.

Ms. Laura Smith: I want to welcome Ella Rozen, a dedicated and wonderful young volunteer and Thornhill resident. Welcome to the House.

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: I'd like to welcome to the House today the great mayor of Oshawa, Dan Carter; councillor from Oshawa, Tito-Dante Marimpietri; the CAO of Oshawa, Tracy Adams; and the commissioner from Oshawa, Anthony Ambra; as well as leading Toronto trial lawyer, Keith Smockum.

1030

MPP Mohamed Firin: Joining us today from Achēv for their advocacy day are CEO Tonie, Moya and Kristen Neagle. They will be having a reception this afternoon at 5 p.m. in rooms 228 and 230.

And from the Masonry council, who also have their advocacy day, we welcome Stephen and Emidio. They will be having a reception at 4:30 in the dining room.

Mr. Matthew Rae: In addition to my colleagues, I want to welcome the Masonry Council of Ontario here

today: Andrew Payne, the executive director, and David Lachapelle as well, the president.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: It is my pleasure to welcome members from Asthma Canada: Jeffrey Beach, president and CEO; Jenna Reynolds, director of programs and services at Asthma Canada; Jasmine Santos, certified respiratory educator; and finally, and probably most importantly, Hasanul and Rumi Prince, strong advocates who tragically lost their son to a severe asthma attack in 2018.

Hon. Kinga Surma: I just want to welcome a constituent of mine, Dominic Montemurro from Medi Group Masonry. He's here as part of their advocacy day.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: I want to wish a warm welcome to the grandparents of page Tej Gupta, who is from Ottawa–Vanier and captain today: Mr. Ankur and Anita Gupta; and uncle, Mukesh Gupta. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I want to wish a warm welcome to my executive assistant Brianna Robinson, and Emma Beaulé, who is a long-time Windsor–Essex resident. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Jess Dixon: It's my pleasure to welcome, from my riding and Arriscraft Canada, George Winsor and Scott Jeffries. Thank you so much, gentlemen.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS WEEK

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Point of order: I recognize the Minister of Emergency Preparedness.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: This week is Emergency Preparedness Week, which is an event that educates communities across the province about actions that people can take to be safe, practised and prepared for emergency situations.

You'll find in each of the lobbies a package for each member from Emergency Management Ontario with educational materials. These are just a sample of the many brochures that can be ordered or downloaded to share with your constituents.

I would ask all members: You're welcome to join me on the staircase after for a picture to celebrate and acknowledge this important week.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Folks, it is now time to introduce to you our pages.

From the riding of Markham–Stouffville, Manur Deva Balaji; from King–Vaughan, Massimo Capozzi; from Timiskaming–Cochrane, Isabelle Ducharme; from Durham, Aashman Garg; from Newmarket–Aurora, Isla Gunning; from Ottawa–Vanier, Tej Gupta; from Waterloo, Hayden Huang; from Dufferin–Caledon, Anhad Kaur; from Scarborough North, Arfa Khandaker; from Humber River–Black Creek, Shepherd Knight; from Thornhill, Sarah Mao; from Brampton West, Antoine Mariyanayagam; from Etobicoke–Lakeshore, Emily McLaughlin; from Brampton East, Shyla Naraine; from Pickering–Uxbridge, Eluckiya Sarmenthiran; from Burlington, Henry Sayle;

from Flamborough–Glanbrook, Daniela Turcios Regalado; from Windsor West, Zoya Villamizar; from Mississauga East–Cooksville, Stephaney Rui Jia Wang; from Ottawa South, Ivan Wong; from Kingston and the Islands, Cole Zelmanovits; and from Don Valley North, Edward Zheng.

Please stand and welcome our pages.

Applause.

QUESTION PERIOD

ONTARIO FILM AND TELEVISION INDUSTRY

Ms. Marit Stiles: My question is to the Premier. The film, television and digital production industry accounted for \$3.2 billion in revenue to the province back in 2022. It employs about 45,000 workers, not to mention the tens of thousands of spin-offs and dependent businesses.

Now, given President Trump's latest lobs, we are now seeing concerns that the President of the United States is going to impose a 100% tariff on film production from outside the US, and our domestic industry is reeling.

So my question to the Premier is, what does the Premier know about this latest tariff threat to one of Ontario's most important export industries?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Gaming.

Hon. Stan Cho: I'm glad the Leader of the Opposition brings up this important issue. There is no doubt that the creative industry in Ontario is a hugely important one and a massive economic driver: \$3.2 billion in economic spending, as the Leader of the Opposition mentioned, and 26,000 jobs, even in a year where there was an actors' strike—the year before that, it was over 40,000 jobs. And 2025 is on pace to be a record year for film and television in Ontario.

But, Speaker, it goes beyond just the economic impact. Think about shows like *Shoresy*, *Schitt's Creek*, *The Handmaid's Tale*, *The Umbrella Academy*: These are iconic shows and movies that we should all be proud of, and people are in their communities.

When I visited Sudbury and when I went to Powassan and saw some of the amazing films that are made over there, people take great pride in having these things right here in Ontario.

So our message to President Trump and Secretary Lutnick is very clear: We will do whatever it takes to make sure we protect film and television in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Supplementary?

Ms. Marit Stiles: I want to say—back to the Premier—the industry here is understandably anxious. I've been reaching out; they don't know what's coming, but one thing is very clear: A 100% tariff on film production will devastate Ontario's film industry. US industry production represents about 60% of the production here in Canada and in Ontario specifically. That means about 60% of those jobs that I mentioned would be cut, those direct jobs.

Now is the time to give our local production a boost, right? This would be the moment where we protect and support Canadian content producers, where we put in place more incentives to shore up the industry. That's how we tariff-proof our economy and this industry.

So back to the Premier: Has he been in touch with his US counterparts in the White House to find out what is in store for another vital industry under threat by this US administration?

Hon. Stan Cho: Our government is very clear: That's why, during the election, we put aside billions of dollars to say, "We will protect against the unknown." The uncertainty that is coming out of the President every single day, every single hour, seemingly—sometimes, that is changing hour by hour—we are ready for the unknown by putting aside those resources.

This creative industry that we speak of is massively important in Ontario for all the reasons we said. Whether it's building a car or an electric vehicle in Oshawa or whether it's creating the next hit show in Capreol, these are things that matter to this province. These are the things that move the dial on economic success and prosperity in this province.

1040

We are going to continue to fight for this province. We are going to continue to fight for creative industries. We have put over a billion dollars aside in tax credits to make sure that production stays right here at home. We will stop at nothing to make sure that we protect those jobs in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Final supplementary?

Ms. Marit Stiles: I want to say again that this seems like the government is approaching this a little bit like "wait and see." This isn't a "ship has left the dock" moment; this is a moment to stand and deliver right now for our domestic production industry, for the tens of thousands of film industry workers who are here and the many more—thousands of jobs and small businesses—that depend on that industry.

How quickly this Premier goes from "Protect Ontario" to "Let's see what Trump does." Letting Trump set the agenda over the fate of every important domestic industry is not a plan, right? "Wait and see" is not a plan.

Back to the Premier: What specific steps does the Premier have planned to defend our domestic film and television industry and the thousands of workers and billions of dollars that are at stake here?

Hon. Stan Cho: Speaker, wait and see? This government moved right away for the creative industries and introduced over a billion dollars in film and television tax credits that have led to great successes. These shows are world-famous and being filmed right here in our own backyard. We should be proud of that. That is a direct result of this government's investments, and that was done years ago.

You know what, Speaker? What I want to wait and see for is I want to wait and see if the Leader of the Opposition and the NDP and the Liberals actually vote in favour of it

this time around, because the last time they voted against all those measures to protect those jobs—union jobs.

This government will take no lessons from the Leader of the Opposition. We will stand, we will fight against President Trump and we will fight against any tariffs that are put on the creative industries. We've got your back here in Ontario.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Marit Stiles: Get that member an Academy Award right away, my goodness—my goodness; please. Listen, I will tell you this—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Stop the clock. I apologize.

I will allow you to start—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Come to order. Come to order, the government side, the ministers on my right.

I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I worked for many years in that industry, and that's what we would actually call bad acting.

Speaker, as we've been saying, the answer to strengthening Ontario is looking after people. The key here is getting our province building and growing our economy. I hear the Premier wants to talk about nation building. Nation building looks like investments. It looks like investments, yes, in critical infrastructure—and that includes transit investments, that includes things like highway investments—but the public deserves to know that multi-billion dollar decisions are based on evidence, not wasteful white elephant projects.

Back to the Premier: Can the Premier explain where the evidence is to support his \$100-billion fantasy tunnel under Highway 401?

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

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Here are the facts: We got elected on a mandate to build in this province: \$100 billion over the next 10 years will be spent on transit investments and highway investments. I can't think of a single project that the Liberals or NDP have voted to support, whether that's building highways in the north—Highway 11, Highway 17—whether that's the 413 or the Bradford Bypass, or whether that's public transit, like the Ontario Line that will move 400,000 people a day, get vehicles off the road.

Guess what, Madam Speaker? The NDP and Liberals have opposed every single one of those investments. They don't believe in building this province. They don't believe in getting shovels in the ground. Under the leadership of Premier Ford, we have all of our priority subway projects with shovels in the ground and building, and the opposition has done anything and everything possible to try to delay those projects and not get those shovels in the ground.

The people of this province elected us to get things done, to get projects built, and that's exactly—

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, I didn't hear an answer to the question. I didn't even hear the minister there reference this \$100-million fantasy tunnel obsession of the Premier's.

I'll go back to the Premier again: This government talks about nation building? Get real. Get serious. This study that they're proposing is going to take two years to tell you what everyone else is already saying: This is not a feasible priority project.

In northern Ontario, people are still waiting for the expansion of Highways 11 and 17, which is where all our national trade goes through. Folks in Guelph and Kitchener are still waiting for the expansion of Highway 7. Where are all these long-promised and long-delayed highway investments when we look at this list of priorities? They fall to the bottom every time.

So back to the Premier: Why are all of those projects falling to the bottom of the list while the Premier's \$100-billion fantasy tunnel project takes priority?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Let me make it clear: We will build that tunnel. It's going to support billions and billions of dollars of economic growth. It's going to support thousands of jobs across this province.

And guess what? When we came out with our priority transit projects in 2018-19, the NDP doubted us and said it could never be done. But guess what? Shovels are in the ground, Madam Speaker. There isn't a single project where the NDP or Liberals haven't opposed or objected, whether it's public transit, which is getting cars off the road and thousands of people to where they need to get to faster, or whether it's highway projects like the 413, the Bradford Bypass.

We want to talk about Highway 11, Highway 17? The NDP and Liberals have voted against our \$28-billion plan to build over the next 10 years in the north and across the province.

We will take no lessons from them. We will get shovels in the ground, and we will build this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Final supplementary?

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, we've got carnage alley between London and Tilbury, and all this government is focused on is building their tunnel of love. I mean, please.

I just want to say, going back again to the Premier, Ontario needs infrastructure. We need transit projects that actually get built, that actually open, not billions of dollars wasted on vanity projects of this Premier and this government. You are pouring money into another vanity project—

Hon. Kinga Surma: Subways are a vanity project—

Ms. Marit Stiles: —yes, to the Minister of Infrastructure, who's chirping away over there.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: We need actual infrastructure, not luxury spas, not tunnels that are fantasies of this Premier.

The only folks that are going to make any money off this feasibility study are the high-priced consultants that are looking into it.

So back to the Premier: Will he reverse this ridiculous plan and admit that the only people who are going to make anything off of this are those high-priced consultants?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Madam Speaker, let me just talk about some of our projects and the jobs that they support, every single one of which the Liberals and NDP oppose: the Ontario Line, close to 4,700 good-paying jobs that are supported by that project. Do you want to talk about the Scarborough subway extension? Close to 3,000 jobs annually will be supported through that project. Highway 413: 3,500 jobs that would be supported through the construction and building of those projects.

But guess what, Madam Speaker? Just like that member, the Leader of the Opposition, is doubting our plans to build that tunnel and to build Ontario, she doubted the 413, she doubted the Ontario Line, the Scarborough subway extension and all of our LRT and subway projects.

There would be no jobs in this province if it was up to the NDP, because they don't believe in building. They don't believe in getting shovels in the ground. There isn't a single transit or infrastructure project that they've supported, that this government has put forward, Madam Speaker. We will—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Questions?

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. John Fraser: Speaker, last week in debate about Bill 5, specifically in relation to special economic zones, the government's deputy House leader listed 20 countries that had special economic zones. The inference was we should be more like those countries—amongst them were Russia, Nigeria, China.

So, Speaker, does the Premier agree we should be more like China or Russia?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I will ask members on the government side to please come to order.

I recognize the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade.

1050

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, we've said this in this Legislature plenty of times now since these tariffs have begun: We are in a war. It's an economic war with the US, but make no mistake, we are in a war. It has never been more important to ensure that Ontario remains competitive and attracts and lands these job-creating investments around the world. We're facing a once-in-a-generation crisis with President Trump's tariffs. He's been clear: He's after our jobs; he wants our jobs. All of the industries that we've attracted here, \$70 billion worth of industries we've attracted in seven years, he wants every one of those industries to move to the States, and he wants all of those jobs.

So if we sit around and do nothing, as you're suggesting, we'll be handing our jobs over to the United States

on a silver platter. Speaker, we are going to do everything in our power to ensure that those jobs remain here and the new ones come here to Ontario.

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

Mr. John Fraser: Minister, you are right. We are in a war.

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

Mr. John Fraser: What I was suggesting was, is the deputy House leader suggesting that we should be allies with China or Russia in these trade things? That we should copy them, that we should follow them? That was my question. I think it's fair—check Hansard. Check the autocracy index of the 20 countries that he listed.

So with special economic zones—well, Ontario is a special economic zone, and it would seem to me, when I read this bill, that economic zones are a recipe to create the Wild West, where ministers get to do whatever they want—or actually, probably more likely, whatever the Premier asks them to do, because that's his record. So would the Premier agree?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: There is a chill on business around the world right now caused by President Trump's tariffs. There is so much uncertainty. Companies can't make investments because there's no clear understanding of what the political landscape is going to be. So that is a real challenge to us here in Ontario. But we view it as a window of opportunity.

This move to pause all investments means there's a huge buildup of capital around the world. When that capital is ready to be unleashed, it is going to need somewhere to land. We want it to land here in Ontario. That's why we've been moving forward with our legislation to show that Ontario is the destination of choice for all of that capital around the world looking to be put to use to build factories, to build plants and to create jobs.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Supplementary?

Mr. John Fraser: I think that the special opportunity is, in creating the special economic zones, that the government is just creating an opportunity for wealthy, well-connected insiders to get the inside track. So it's interesting that the government's first choice for a special economic zone is Ontario Place. That's the site of the Premier's latest backroom deal for \$2.2 billion of taxpayers' money and a 95-year lease to a foreign company with literally no money and no experience.

I guess my question is, is creating special economic zones just an opportunity for more scandal with this government?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: We've just returned from Japan and South Korea, and before that, we were in Germany. These businesses are grappling with the unprecedented amount of uncertainty in the global economy. They're looking for a place to invest. They're looking for stable, predictable, reliable partners who can give them that predictability.

We have told them Ontario is that partner. They want to know that their projects won't be held up in red tape,

bureaucracy and lengthy permitting processes. That competition to land these investments will be unlike any competition we face in the last generation. We need to show that Ontario is that place where you can land all of those investments and create all of those job opportunities.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. John Fraser: Anybody who reads Bill 5 objectively knows it's just a recipe for more backroom deals. You take terms like “special economic zones” and my favourite, “trusted partners”—we know this government and who their trusted partners are.

So when you couple this with unfettered and unchecked ministerial power, it feels to me like the greenbelt scandal. It feels like ministerial zoning orders. It feels like urban boundaries, where the trusted partners were wealthy, well-connected insiders who got a leg up on everyone else.

Does the Premier really think that Bill 5 passes that sniff test?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the Minister of Economic Development.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Over the last seven years, we have seen unprecedented levels of investment flow into the province. Over \$70 billion has come here: \$46 billion in auto and EV investment, \$6 billion in life science, tens of billions of dollars in tech investment. That has helped businesses in Ontario create one million new jobs since we took office.

Speaker, we are going to build on that progress, but we have to acknowledge the rules around the world have changed. We are facing a once-in-a-generation crisis, Speaker. If we don't adapt by cutting red tape, speeding up permitting and speeding up the approval processes, we're going to get crushed. We refuse to allow the US to take our jobs, take our industries, and that is why we're moving forward with this—such an ambitious agenda, and we hope that you will join us today in passing our bills to—

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

Mr. John Fraser: I think if you take a look at this government's record on following the rules, on wealthy well-connected insiders getting an inside track, I think Bill 5 is just a recipe for more wealthy well-connected insiders to get the inside scoop, an inside track, a leg up, because that's the Premier's record.

So, again, does anyone think in this Legislature that Bill 5 is not going to lead to more scandal, more wealthy well-connected insiders getting the inside deal because they know the Premier?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: The member talks about our record. Let's just flip that for a second and look at his record. We all watched as 300,000 manufacturing jobs fled our province. Now, there was no once-in-a-generation crisis then; there were no tariffs then, just the breeze created by 300,000 industrial workers leaving our province. It was the Liberal promise designed to push those jobs away and crush our goods-producing sector. Now

they want us to revert back to that Liberal playbook that saw us lose all those jobs.

Speaker, we will refuse to do that. We will not stand by idly as President Trump tries to decimate our jobs and our industries. We're going to do every single thing in our power to protect and build the economy that we've created here in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Final supplementary?

Mr. John Fraser: I'm old enough to remember back in 2010 when that party voted against supporting the auto industry. I also know that for five years leading up to 2018 Ontario led the G7 in jobs and growth. What's happening with this government right now? The highest unemployment rate in a decade, youth unemployment, 17%—great record, Minister—highest unemployment rate in 10 years.

Speaker, the government can tout its economic record, the stuff they like to look at. The reality is they're creating a bill that is going to legitimize the stuff that we've seen like the greenbelt, like the Therme deal—

Interjection.

Mr. John Fraser: —like MZO's, like urban boundaries, where insiders got the inside track because they could connect with the Premier and the Premier said, "Minister, do this." We know about that.

Hon. Kinga Surma: Let's talk about 2018—

Mr. John Fraser: I can hear the minister back there.

So my question is, does anybody over there actually really believe that Bill 5 is the right thing to do?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, our government's record on job growth comes directly from Stats Canada. One million more people are working today than the day we took office, Speaker—one million people. In fact, 55,000 new jobs were created in the very first two months of this year. We've lowered the cost of business by \$8 billion every single year, and we've seen these job-creating businesses come into our province. We've landed, as I said, \$46 billion in auto, \$6 billion in life science and tens of billions in tech.

1100

We're going to take this ambitious action to ensure that we remain competitive in these uncertain times. We're going to break down interprovincial barriers. We're going to continue to cut red tape. We're going to speed up the approval process for all of these strategically important projects. Speaker, we are going to keep Ontario competitive to keep those good-paying jobs here and create even more.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

MPP Wayne Gates: My question is to the Premier. The auto sector is in crisis due to Trump's tariff war and the Premier's lack of urgency. Auto workers from Oshawa, Windsor, St. Catharines and Brampton are worried about their jobs. We built cars in Canada for over a hundred years, and we buy two million vehicles yearly. This is our industry, and these are our jobs. Some 750 workers in Oshawa, 4,000 in Windsor, along with St.

Catharines, Ingersoll and Brampton are facing layoffs. These companies sell in Canada, and they need to build in this country.

Will the Premier stand with workers and join us in demanding that these auto companies commit to keeping these jobs in Ontario?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Minister of Economic Development.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, just yesterday, the Premier and several MPPs visited the GM Oshawa plant to meet with the workers. We met with the company, and we met with local union reps. The message from the Premier was very, very clear: As we fight this once-in-a-generation challenge from south of the border, our government will always have your back.

Now GM has reaffirmed their commitment to the Oshawa plant and will continue to build Ontario-made trucks for years to come. We're going to continue to do everything we can to support a strong future for that factory and its workers.

President Trump's tariffs, Speaker, are causing chaos. They certainly are. They're causing uncertainty all across the world. In the face of this unprecedented threat, our government will continue to fight every single day to attract new investment, secure those good-paying jobs and support the workers and their families.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Supplementary?

MPP Wayne Gates: Back to the Premier: Five years ago, when jobs in Oshawa were under threat, the Premier didn't act to save the jobs; the workers did, and their union did.

To the minister: Our advantage in Ontario over the US is clear. Publicly funded health care, our publicly funded education, a highly skilled workforce, high productivity and a low Canadian dollar at 73 cents give us an incredible advantage. We can't allow any car company to take equipment out of our plants and ship it to the US plants. Once the equipment is moved it's never coming back, and our jobs are gone.

Does the Premier—and what the Premier should have said yesterday to those auto workers—believe that auto companies that sell in Canada need to build in Canada? And if so, will they make it happen? So if you want to sell in this country, you've got to build in this country—

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

Hon. Victor Fedeli: It's very clear that that member understands how we saved the 100,000 jobs in Ontario's auto sector: because we have clean energy, because we have 70,000 STEM grads that we graduate every year, because we have the land available. We took an industry that was sliding downhill—just like it was in Australia. In Australia, they decided to go off the end of the cliff and get out of the auto sector. Premier Ford said, "Not in Ontario." We have turned that industry around. We have saved the 100,000 jobs that were at risk by the previous government, and, Speaker, we've added tens of thousands of new jobs: \$46 billion—that is unprecedented in Ontario—of new auto business here. That's on top of the

100,000 men and women who were already working in the auto sector.

Where were you when it came time to vote on all of these issues? You voted against every single incentive that we put on the table to save that auto sector.

CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: “The system is broken,” the Premier proclaimed in his now infamous rant about judges, bike lanes and Trump. During a press conference intended to address crime and violence, the Premier took time to rant about his personal frustrations over judicial consideration of the constitutionality of the government’s decision.

You’re right, Premier, the system is broken. It is broken that provincial leaders are interfering in municipal matters. It is broken that the government would rather remove bike lanes for double the installation costs than invest in transit and safe roads for all. It is broken that during an affordability crisis they are wasting tax dollars. And it is broken that the government conflates an infringement on Ontario’s right to safety with ideology. The Premier asked judges if they have nothing better to do than overturn his decision.

My question to the Premier: Do you have nothing better to do than to interfere with municipal bike lanes?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the Attorney General.

Hon. Doug Downey: You know, the Premier’s frustration is with different levels of government doing things that are just not what the people of Ontario want them to do, not meeting the expectations of individuals who vote for us, who gave us a strong mandate only two months ago on a variety of issues. They’ve asked us to fix the system when our federal partners and our municipal partners are not doing their part. And we will do that.

We will move forward with the priorities of the people of Ontario, and we will not apologize for that, Madam Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the member for Beaches–East York.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Getting home safely is a priority for most Ontarians.

The Premier claimed that judges have a sense of entitlement and admonished them for overruling the government. Hmm, that sounds familiar. This government massively overreached into municipal affairs when they decided to pursue the removal of bike lanes. The government ignored objections by Toronto city councillors and the mayor. And, despite being democratically elected and accountable to those voters, this government unabashedly disregarded the disapproval and outcry of thousands of constituents. Perhaps the Premier should look inward before he accuses others of entitlement and should fulfill his duties as an elected official before demanding that others adopt the standards he does not uphold for himself.

My question to the Premier: Will you listen to your provincial and municipal colleagues and your constituents

who have given you a mandate to protect Ontarians and protect all road users?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Madam Speaker, I don’t know where to start. The Liberals are so out of touch.

Maybe we can start with one of the comments made by the leader of the Liberal Party yesterday who actually doesn’t even think we’ll be driving vehicles in the future—so out of touch. Whether it’s bike lanes or highways or reducing congestion, the Liberals bring absolutely no solutions to the table.

Toronto has become one of the most congested cities in the world. It ranks top three when it comes to congestion according to TomTom’s study, and it’s because of radical policies that have been enacted that have destroyed our streets like the bike lanes on Avenue, on Yonge. These bike lanes on Bloor have made it so difficult for people to get to where they need to go that it’s impacting economic activity, not only on those streets and for those businesses—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The member for Beaches–East York will come to order.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: —that are located on those streets, but also in downtown Toronto.

We are going to continue to build this province. We are going to continue to invest in infrastructure, whether it’s transit, whether it’s highways, and we’re going to get those bike lanes removed.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Natalie Pierre: My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Every day, people across Ontario are stuck dealing with gridlock. Gridlock is not just a traffic issue, it’s an economic and quality of life concern, and it’s holding our province back.

I’ve heard from people in my riding who want to see new roads built. They want better highways, fewer delays and faster trips. That’s why I thought yesterday’s comments from Liberal leader Bonnie Crombie were ludicrous. She said that our government shouldn’t be building for the future because, “Who knows if we’ll even be driving vehicles or if there will be alternative methods?”

Speaker, can the minister please reassure the people of this province our government will continue taking action to address gridlock?

1110

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: I was equally shocked by the comments that the leader of the Liberal Party made yesterday.

While I’ll never say never, I can assure this place that we won’t be planning for people to take their jets and hovercrafts or Skypad Apartments to get around.

This is a government that is going to build, no matter how hard the Liberals or the leader of the Liberal Party tries, with a radical ideology, to stop this government from building highways, roads, bridges and public transit.

We will continue to get it done because we know that congestion and population growth is increasing, and we need to prepare for the future. We need to increase our capacity on our roads. That's why we are committed to building Highway 413, we are committed to building the Bradford Bypass and we're committed to building and investing over \$28 billion all across the province to support our highways, roads and bridges.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Question?

Ms. Natalie Pierre: Thank you to the minister for that response.

It's shocking to me that the Liberals think that flying cars from the Jetsons was a documentary and not a fictional cartoon. Maybe they believe we'll be flying hovercrafts instead of taking the highway or transit to get into town.

But here on earth, and especially for people in my riding, traffic is real. Gridlock already costs Ontario \$56 billion a year, and if we don't act, it could rise to \$108 billion in less than 20 years. That's why our government is building highways, tunnels and better roads.

But the Liberals and NDP keep voting no. Unlike the opposition, we know people want real solutions, not Jetsons fantasy.

Can the minister reassure this place that our government has a plan to keep our province moving?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: That's absolutely right. Unlike the Liberals and the NDP, this government has an actual plan to build that we've put to the people of this province. No, we're not going to be living in a fantasyland like the leader of the third party is saying, that we won't be needing cars in the future.

We are planning for the next 10, 20, 30 years. That's why we are going to be building a tunnel under the 401. That is why we are going to be building the 413, the Bradford Bypass but also investing over \$70 billion to support public transit across this province and get vehicles off the road where we can, like the Ontario Line, which will move 400,000 people every single day.

We will take no lessons from the radical Liberals or NDP who don't believe in cars, who don't believe in driving and who don't believe in getting people moving across this province. We will continue to get it done.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Chris Glover: My question is to the Premier. The former Liberal MP Adam Vaughan, who in 2019 was a vocal opponent of the mega spa scandal at Ontario Place, is now a paid spokesperson for Therme, which lied about its credentials, is receiving a \$2.2-billion taxpayer subsidy and received a 95-year lease in a process that the Auditor General said was not fair, transparent or accountable.

So my question is, now that the NDP is the only party in Ontario that's defending the public interest in Ontario Place, is the minister relieved to have the Liberals' support for this scandal?

Interjections.

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

Response? I recognize the Minister of Infrastructure.

Hon. Kinga Surma: Madam Speaker, with all of the booing, I just couldn't hear the very end of the question.

But I love that the member opposite is raising the fact that Adam Vaughan, the former councillor of the area where we're redeveloping Ontario Place and the Liberal federal candidate, was on Moore in the Morning. Guess what he said? He said that in 2018, under the call-for-development process that the Liberals ran, Therme was the winning proponent. Same process, same outcome: Therme was the winning proponent.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I apologize to the minister. Would the government side and the Liberal side please come to order?

Minister, you have the floor.

Hon. Kinga Surma: I thank Adam Vaughan for bringing that to light. Thank you, Adam, for that wonderful interview.

But what was also very important, what he said, was that, look, Premier Ford is doing something good for Ontario. Premier Ford is building 50 acres of—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Response.

Hon. Kinga Surma: —space. He's rebuilding the marina to make it more inclusive. There are going to be activities for families once again at Ontario Place. We're happy to receive Adam Vaughan's endorsement.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the member for Spadina–Fort York for the supplementary.

Mr. Chris Glover: The minister's response raises the question of whether there is anyone who supports the Ontario Place scandal who is not being paid by Therme.

The second part of my question is to the Premier: There is a connection between the Premier and Therme, and I want to give the Premier an opportunity to clear the air. The financial director of Ares Management became the CFO of Therme. After this, Therme was given the contract to redevelop Ontario Place, and Ares Management purchased the Premier's company, Deco Labels, in Chicago.

To the Premier, just to clear the air: Will he release his phone records of any calls that he had with the agents of Ares Management or Therme?

Hon. Kinga Surma: I would maybe like to remind the member opposite to read the ruling in the Integrity Commissioner's report. The NDP filed a frivolous complaint, and the Integrity Commissioner found no grounds to investigate whatsoever.

But what I will highlight is the fact that Adam Vaughan—the former local councillor for the area, the Liberal member—highlighted the fact that Therme was the winning proponent in the 2018 Liberal call for development. What Adam Vaughan also said was this was a great investment—

Interjection.

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

Question?

1120

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr. Ted Hsu: During the recent Ontario election, countless renters in Kingston and the Islands told me that their greatest concern was soaring rents; for them, a personal issue, more urgent than Trump's trade war. When the rental vacancy rate exceeds 4%, real rents typically decline, offering much-needed relief. Yet construction costs remain historically high, worsened by trade tensions.

We've asked for this already, but I need to ask again: Will this government finally promise assistance to municipalities so that they can lower development charges on smaller, modest homes for a sustained period of time to boost home construction, boost supply and provide much-needed rent relief?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Rob Flack: For the record, in 2025, rental starts year to date are up 10% compared to the same period last year in 2024, up almost 18,000 rental starts. That is the one sector of the rental industry, of the housing industry, that is working.

We continue to create the environment for more homes to be built, create the environment like getting fees lower, speeding up time with official plans, MZOs and, most importantly, keeping our talented labour pool in place to continue to build these homes. It's working in the rental market. We will continue to get the job done.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Hsu: I don't feel that my constituents who rent and can't face the next increase are feeling the job is getting done.

This provincial government has moved far too slowly on factory-built or modular home construction. Meanwhile, in the federal election, Prime Minister Carney committed a substantial \$25-billion investment to drive this industry forward, fortunately not waiting for Ontario to act. Factory-built housing economics dictate local production, creating plants and jobs province-wide, much like aggregate mining. For example, in Kingston, a company called Lodestar just built a modular building in the middle of Kingston, which is the new home of the St. Vincent de Paul Society.

Will this government finally support and grow this emerging industry by procuring factory-built homes, especially amid the ongoing trade war with Donald Trump?

Hon. Rob Flack: I know the Minister of Education visited the member opposite's factory in Kingston, and it's a very impressive site indeed. I will continue to travel this province and visit every potential modular builder, like I did when I was the associate minister.

Remember this when it comes to rental starts: more than double—188%—the annual average of the past decade, and the second-highest level annual rental starts on record. If you look throughout the province, you will see rental costs coming down. There's supply. It's working. We're going to get the job done.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade. Tariffs and global economic uncertainties have businesses and families worried about their future, and rightfully so. We've seen the chaos that has been caused by the President's actions. Businesses and investors are spooked, and this is having real-life implications for workers, not just in Ontario, but across the globe.

Amid all this uncertainty, we still see companies choosing Ontario for their long-term growth. Last month, the Premier and the Minister of Economic Development welcomed an important investment into the city of Brantford. Speaker, can the minister share more details on that critical investment?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Last month, we welcomed a \$445-million investment from Italy's Ferrero Group, one of the world's largest sweet-packaged food manufacturers. Ferrero is the largest employer in the city of Brantford, having been there for over two decades. Their investment will allow them to upgrade their facility to support production of new products, but more importantly, Speaker, they are adding 500 good-paying jobs for the region. Whether it's Ferrero Rocher, Nutella, Tic Tac or those cute Kinder Surprises, they're just some of the delicious products that are being made right there in Brantford.

These are the types of investments, Speaker, that underscore the confidence that businesses continue to have here in Ontario.

Thank you to Ferrero for doubling down on Ontario and bringing these good-paying jobs to Brantford.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Supplementary?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Thank you, Minister, for the answer. Ferrero's investment is historic for Brantford and the surrounding region, which, of course, includes Oxford. It is a testament to the workforce in Brantford and across the province. It also speaks to the quality of the business environment that our government has created.

Even as companies pause investment decisions to get a better sense of what the US will do with their tariffs, we still see companies choosing Ontario. There have also been positive investments that the province has landed in other regions.

Speaker, can the minister share with this House how even amid global economic challenges, companies are still choosing to invest in Ontario?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, in addition, Germany's Siemens announced a \$150-million investment in Ontario. Their investment will establish a global AI research and development centre for battery production in Oakville, Toronto and K-W. This investment is the result of many meetings between our government, Invest Ontario and Siemens, both in Germany and Ontario over the last couple of years. Siemens's investment will create 90 new jobs and drive innovation in both the auto and AI sectors.

Speaker, Ontario will not be immune to the challenges faced from the tariffs and economic uncertainty. But as these investments show, we are doing everything to ensure that we remain the best place for businesses to invest, grow and create more good-paying jobs.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

HOSPITAL PARKING FEES

Mr. Jeff Burch: Speaker, through you to the Minister of Health: The Welland Hospital is in urgent need of modernization and rebuilding. To even begin this process, Niagara Health requires a planning grant. Despite repeated requests, final approval for this pre-capital grant has not been given, creating anxiety about the future of the Welland Hospital.

Will the minister approve the request for the Welland Hospital renovation grant and support the transition of the South Niagara Hospital so that Niagara Health can begin the process of rebuilding the Welland Hospital in 2028 as planned?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: It gives me an opportunity to rise and talk about the South Niagara Hospital, one of our investments that we as a government have made—over \$50 billion to ensure that 50 capital builds are happening across Ontario. Of course, South Niagara is one of those that is moving and progressing very well, in no small part, of course, to the advocacy from our member—sorry, I can't find him—

Interjection: Right here. Niagara West.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: There you are—and ensuring that we have those capital builds happening.

Of course, with the coming budget there will be more good news to share, but I want to reassure the member that all of the capital builds that we are doing, we're working very closely with Infrastructure Ontario and, of course, hospital leadership to make sure that those plans progress.

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

Mr. Jeff Burch: My question was actually about the Welland Hospital, but I'll come back to the minister another time.

Tomorrow I'll be putting forward a motion calling for the elimination of hospital parking fees at Ontario hospitals. Increased hospital parking fees in Niagara and across the province have made life even more unaffordable and placed a painful and unfair burden on patients, families and front-line health care workers.

Nova Scotia Progressive Conservative Premier Tim Houston just eliminated hospital parking fees and is set to cover any resulting shortfalls in hospital funding in Nova Scotia hospitals. Speaker, it's time for Ontario to do the same. Will this government support my motion and eliminate hospital parking fees in our province once and for all?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Speaker, \$50 billion in hospital capital—new builds, expansions and renovations; \$108 billion to ensure that we have primary care expansion

across all communities. We announced, in February 2024, 78 new multidisciplinary teams, and we have 76 of those hired and bringing on new patients. Speaker, with the greatest of respect, we're going to invest in patients, not parking lots.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Jonathan Tsao: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. For years, Don Valley North residents have been promised a Sheppard subway extension. It's been announced, studied, re-announced and studied again, but still no timeline, no funding, no shovels in the ground. Speaker, my community deserves a subway, not delays. Will the minister commit today to a clear timeline and full funding to get the Sheppard subway extension built now?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Madam Speaker, that's rich coming from the party that built absolutely nothing for 15 years when they were in government. Whether it's Don Valley, whether it's Toronto, whether it's Scarborough—absolutely nothing to account for their 15-year record.

But here's the record of this government: We're committed to the Sheppard extension, Madam Speaker, as we have said in our campaign as well, and it's something that we continue to work on because the residents deserve that transit, and it's this government that is delivering historic transit investments across not only Toronto but across this province. Whether we talk about the Ontario Line, the Scarborough subway extension, our LRTs, the Yonge North subway extension, this is a government that gets shovels in the ground and a government that believes in building.

It's unfortunate that we lost 15 years to a government that built absolutely nothing in this province. Thankfully, we're going to continue on this plan to build over the next 10 years.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The member for Don Valley North.

Mr. Jonathan Tsao: Speaker, the minister's response won't reassure anyone in Don Valley North tonight who is sitting on a bus or in their car, stuck in traffic trying to get home to their families.

This Premier's mantra used to be “subways, subways, subways,” but now it's “delays, delays, delays.” So I'll ask again: Will the minister commit, yes or no, to a start date and full funding for the Sheppard extension now?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Madam Speaker, here are the facts: That extension—even the study that goes behind that extension—was put before this House in a budget, and guess what? That opposition and every one of those members voted against our plan, Madam Speaker—voted against our \$70 billion of investment into public expansion, including the Sheppard extension. That is a shame.

But you will have another opportunity when the Minister of Finance tables his budget for this year to step up for your community, step up for your commuters and vote for our budget that is \$70 billion in public transit,

whether we're talking about Ottawa, whether we're talking about Toronto, or the rest of this province.

The members of the Liberal Party have an option: They can abandon their 15 years of doing absolutely nothing or stand with this government as we build for the future and the next 10 years.

1130

SMALL BUSINESS

Mrs. Daisy Wai: My question is for the Associate Minister of Small Business. Small businesses in my riding of Richmond Hill and across Ontario are the heart of the economy. They create jobs. They support our towns and cities. These business owners work hard every day. They keep going, even when times are tough.

But, Speaker, US tariffs and economic uncertainty are putting a real strain on them. Costs are going up, profits are going down, and many are worried about how long they can keep their doors open. They need our help. They need our government to keep standing with them.

Can the associate minister tell us what steps we are taking to support small businesses during this difficult time?

Hon. Nina Tangri: I want to thank the great, hard-working member from Richmond Hill for that excellent question and for being such a strong champion for small businesses in her community.

There's no doubt the US tariffs imposed by President Trump are deeply concerning. Our government knows that small businesses need real support, not more red tape. That's why we're providing over \$11 billion in relief, including the deferral of select provincial taxes and \$2 billion in WSIB surplus rebates to schedule 1 safe employers.

We also introduced Bill 2, the Protect Ontario Through Free Trade Within Canada Act, a bold step to remove interprovincial trade barriers, expand market access and lower business costs.

And through our new Ontario Together Trade Fund, we're helping businesses scale operations, strengthen Ontario-made supply chains and reach more customers across Canada.

Under the leadership of the Premier, we're doing exactly what we said we would do: standing up for small businesses and protecting Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Supplementary?

Mrs. Daisy Wai: I want to thank the associate minister for her strong response. What a relief for businesses.

Speaker, small businesses are everywhere in Ontario. They run farms, shops, factories and family-owned stores. They hire local people and help our towns grow.

But these businesses are facing real challenges. They are dealing with rising costs, changing markets and unfair trade deals. Many say it's harder than ever to compete. That's why it matters that our government continues to listen to them. It matters that we continue to take action based on what they tell us.

Can the associate minister please share how our government is ensuring the voices of small business owners

are being heard and that their concerns are being addressed properly?

Hon. Nina Tangri: Thank you again to the member for the question and her advocacy and continued support for small businesses.

Speaker, 98% of businesses in Ontario are small, employing close to two and a half million people. Listening to them isn't just important, it's essential in getting things right. That's why I've travelled across Ontario, meeting directly with small business owners in sectors all the way from manufacturing to agriculture. Their feedback is clear: cut red tape, expand opportunities and be responsive to the real challenges on the ground.

We took that to heart with Bill 2, which removes outdated interprovincial trade barriers and helps small businesses grow beyond provincial borders. And with the new Ontario Together Trade Fund, we're providing targeted support to help businesses scale, access new markets and boost resilience in our supply chains.

Speaker, these conversations aren't just symbolic; they're shaping our approach every step of the way. We will never stop fighting to protect Ontario's small—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member for London—Fanshawe.

PENSION PLANS

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My question is to the Premier. People across this province are worried about their future. Trump's tariffs are threatening jobs, and another big company like the Bay is going bankrupt.

In 1980, Ontario implemented the Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund. This fund was to protect workers so that in the event of a bankruptcy, they would still receive their pension that they paid into. In the 45 years that the fund has existed, the pension guarantee has only risen by \$500.

Does the Premier believe that pensions should be protected in the event of an employer bankruptcy?

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

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Thank you for that very important question. Protecting workers is priority number one in this province. That's why we continue to have a framework for pensions right across the province that protects the solvency of those pensions, that protects the pension rights for our workers—not just for those employees, but employees right across Ontario.

Let me remind the member opposite that this party on this side of the House puts workers first, including this morning at the announcement that Premier Ford made along with a lot of our colleagues—the Minister of Labour and others—putting another \$1 billion into the Skills Development Fund, a fund which has retrained and re-skilled over 600,000 workers right across the province.

We're not going to rest until we have every single person in Ontario building the most competitive economy in the G7.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The member for London—Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: With the economic uncertainty, it is more important than ever that there is legislation that guarantees workers collect the pension that they earned. Today, the amount a pensioner would receive from this fund is less than minimum wage.

In 2018, the Premier made a promise to the people of this province to protect pensioners and go beyond the pension fund. He shamed his predecessor for playing politics with people's pensions and their hopes.

Premier, can you commit today and stand behind the pension promise you made to workers?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: There's no question that we're supporting workers' rights and pensions right across this province for all those hard-working people who, throughout their careers, worked very hard to help build this province.

Let me tell you another thing. Just yesterday, the Minister of Economic Development, the Premier, the Minister of Labour and myself went to Oshawa. We just had the mayor of Oshawa—he just stepped out—attend here today. We sat down with Unifor and the workers—the hard-working people who had a third shift just taken away from them.

Madam Speaker, I'll tell you this: We're working side by side with the great workers in Oshawa and the great auto sector workers right across this province, and we're not going to rest until we protect all those jobs and protect this economy against those tariffs.

DEFERRED VOTES

PROTECT ONTARIO BY UNLEASHING OUR ECONOMY ACT, 2025

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

Deferred vote on the motion that the question now be put 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 Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Call in the members. This is a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1138 to 1143.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Would the members please take their chairs? If you're not in your chair, you cannot vote.

On April 29, 2025, Mr. Lecce moved second reading of 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.

On May 5, 2025, Mr. Clark moved that the question be now put.

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

Ayes

Allsopp, Tyler	Gallagher Murphy, Dawn	Rae, Matthew
Anand, Deepak	Grewal, Hardeep Singh	Riddell, Brian
Babikian, Aris	Gualtieri, Silvia	Rosenberg, Bill
Bailey, Robert	Hamid, Zee	Sabawy, Sheref
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Hardeman, Ernie	Sandhu, Amarjot
Bouma, Will	Jones, Sylvia	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Calandra, Paul	Jones, Trevor	Sarrazin, Stéphane
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Jordan, John	Saunderson, Brian
Cho, Stan	Kanapathi, Logan	Scott, Chris
Ciriello, Monica	Kerzner, Michael S.	Scott, Laurie
Clark, Steve	Khanjin, Andrea	Smith, Dave
Coe, Lorne	Leardi, Anthony	Smith, David
Cooper, Michelle	Lecce, Stephen	Smith, Laura
Crawford, Stephen	Lumsden, Neil	Surma, Kinga
Cuzzetto, Rudy	McCarthy, Todd J.	Tangri, Nina
Darouze, George	Mulroney, Caroline	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Denault, Billy	Oosterhoff, Sam	Thompson, Lisa M.
Dixon, Jess	Pang, Billy	Tibollo, Michael A.
Dowie, Andrew	Parsa, Michael	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Downey, Doug	Piccini, David	Vickers, Paul
Dunlop, Jill	Pierre, Natalie	Wai, Daisy
Fedeli, Victor	Pirie, George	Williams, Charmaine A.
Firin, Mohamed	Quinn, Nolan	
Flack, Rob	Racinsky, Joseph	

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): All those opposed to Mr. Clark's motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gates, Wayne	Schreiner, Mike
Begum, Doly	Gélinas, France	Shamji, Adil
Bell, Jessica	Gilmour, Alexa	Shaw, Sandy
Blais, Stephen	Glover, Chris	Smyth, Stephanie
Bourgouin, Guy	Gretzky, Lisa	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Bowman, Stephanie	Hazell, Andrea	Stiles, Marit
Brady, Bobbi Ann	Hsu, Ted	Tabuns, Peter
Burch, Jeff	Kernaghan, Terence	Tsao, Jonathan
Cerjanec, Rob	Mamakwa, Sol	Vanthof, John
Clancy, Aislinn	McCrimmon, Karen	Vaugeois, Lise
Collard, Lucille	McKenney, Catherine	Watt, Tyler
Fairclough, Lee	McMahon, Mary-Margaret	West, Jamie
Fife, Catherine	Pasma, Chandra	Wong-Tam, Kristyn
Fraser, John	Rakocevic, Tom	
French, Jennifer K.	Sattler, Peggy	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day): The ayes are 70; the nays are 43.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I declare the motion carried.

Mr. Lecce has moved second reading of 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.

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

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

All those opposed to the motion will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1148 to 1149.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Members, please sit.

On April 29, 2025, Mr. Lecce moved second reading of 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.

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

Ayes

Allsopp, Tyler	Gallagher Murphy, Dawn	Rae, Matthew
Anand, Deepak	Grewal, Hardeep Singh	Riddell, Brian
Babikian, Aris	Gualtieri, Silvia	Rosenberg, Bill
Bailey, Robert	Hamid, Zee	Sabawy, Sheref
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Hardeman, Ernie	Sandhu, Amarjot
Bouma, Will	Jones, Sylvia	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Calandra, Paul	Jones, Trevor	Sarrazin, Stéphane
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Jordan, John	Saunderson, Brian
Cho, Stan	Kanapathi, Logan	Scott, Chris
Ciriello, Monica	Kerzner, Michael S.	Scott, Laurie
Clark, Steve	Khanjin, Andrea	Smith, Dave
Coe, Lorne	Leardi, Anthony	Smith, David
Cooper, Michelle	Lecce, Stephen	Smith, Laura
Crawford, Stephen	Lumsden, Neil	Surma, Kinga
Cuzzetto, Rudy	McCarthy, Todd J.	Tangri, Nina
Darouze, George	Mulroney, Caroline	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Denault, Billy	Oosterhoff, Sam	Thompson, Lisa M.
Dixon, Jess	Pang, Billy	Tibollo, Michael A.
Dowie, Andrew	Parsa, Michael	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Downey, Doug	Piccini, David	Vickers, Paul
Dunlop, Jill	Pierre, Natalie	Wai, Daisy
Fedeli, Victor	Pirie, George	Williams, Charmaine A.
Firin, Mohamed	Quinn, Nolan	
Flack, Rob	Racinsky, Joseph	

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

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gates, Wayne	Schreiner, Mike
Begum, Doly	Gélinas, France	Shamji, Adil
Bell, Jessica	Gilmour, Alexa	Shaw, Sandy
Blais, Stephen	Glover, Chris	Smyth, Stephanie
Bourgouin, Guy	Gretzky, Lisa	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Bowman, Stephanie	Hazell, Andrea	Stiles, Marit
Brady, Bobbi Ann	Hsu, Ted	Tabuns, Peter
Burch, Jeff	Kernaghan, Terence	Tsao, Jonathan
Cerjanec, Rob	Mamakwa, Sol	Vanthof, John
Clancy, Aislinn	McCrimmon, Karen	Vaugeois, Lise
Collard, Lucille	McKenney, Catherine	Watt, Tyler
Fairclough, Lee	McMahon, Mary-Margaret	West, Jamie
Fife, Catherine	Pasma, Chandra	Wong-Tam, Kristyn
Fraser, John	Rakocevic, Tom	
French, Jennifer K.	Sattler, Peggy	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day): The ayes are 70; the nays are 43.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

I recognize the Minister of Energy and Mines.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: For interior committee, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The bill will go to the interior committee.

We now stand in recess until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1154 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

CUTTING TAXES ON SMALL BUSINESSES ACT, 2025

LOI DE 2025 POUR RÉDUIRE LES IMPÔTS DES PETITES ENTREPRISES

Ms. Bowman moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 12, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to increase Ontario small business deductions / Projet de loi 12, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les impôts pour augmenter les déductions accordées aux petites entreprises exploitées en Ontario.

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): Would the member like a chance to briefly explain the bill?

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: Yes. Thank you, Speaker.

I'm pleased to rise today to reintroduce the Cutting Taxes on Small Businesses Act. This bill would provide essential tax relief for Ontario's small businesses by cutting the effective small business tax rate in half, from 3.2% to 1.6%, and by increasing the income threshold for this deduction from \$500,000 to \$600,000. If passed, this bill will be deemed to have come into effect on January 1, 2025, and will save small businesses up to \$17,900 annually.

PETITIONS

ASSISTIVE DEVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to recognize Mrs. Rainville from Hanmer in my riding for these petitions. They are called “Modernize the ADP”—the Assistive Devices Program.

Basically, assistive devices are essential to keep your independence, your dignity and your well-being, for people living with a long-term disability, and they help them live their lives more independently.

They are many, many assistive devices that have been developed—many of them here in Ontario—by universities, by researchers, that help people be a whole lot more independent, able to stay in their own home, rather than having to go to a long-term-care home; not requiring home care anymore because they have those devices. But the Assistive Devices Program has not been modernized for a long time, so a lot of those new devices are not covered because they did not exist the last time the list of ADP assistive devices was put together.

The other big one has to do with hearing aids. Hearing aids are capped at \$500 per ear. It is impossible to find hearing aids for that price. Don't get me wrong, the new hearing aids are wonderful. They work well. People like them. They make a whole lot of people safer. But if you cannot afford them, it's all for naught.

The ADP is supposed to cover 75% of assistive devices. It needs to be reviewed. It hasn't been looked at in way too long.

I agree with the people who have signed this petition. I will add my name to it and ask my good page Shyla to bring it to the Clerk.

CANCER TREATMENT

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'd like to thank Melissa Maurice from Hanmer in my riding for these petitions. They're called "Coverage for Take-Home Cancer Drugs."

Basically, in Ontario, cancer care has changed an awful lot. It used to be that you would go into the hospital and you would be hooked to IVs and given all sorts of medications through means that have to be done in hospital. It's not like this anymore. For many, many cancers, you will be able to cure your cancer with a take-home cancer drug.

Unfortunately, if they don't have a private drug plan, a lot of people cannot afford the price of those drugs, so they go without. Going without puts their health and their lives at risk.

Many other provinces, including British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Quebec, cover take-home cancer drugs; Ontario does not.

It's time for Ontario to do what every other province has done: Add take-home cancer drugs to the schedule of benefits so that people who don't have a drug plan gain access to those medications in a timely fashion, to save their lives and their health.

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

CANCER SCREENING

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Bozena Dielak—she is a resident of Gogama, in the north part of my riding—for this petition. It's called "In Memory of Bishop Brigante."

I don't know if you remember, Speaker: Bishop Brigante was here last fall. He is a very well-known hip hop singer from southern Ontario. A friend of mine told

me to give him a call. I thought he was having problems with his care, but it wasn't that at all. Bishop was young, he had colon cancer, and by the time he got diagnosed, it was too late. There were very few treatment options available to him. So he started a petition to ask the provincial government to look at the body of evidence that supports lowering the age for colon cancer screening, based on recommendations from physicians and nurse practitioners.

Bishop was able to do something that very few people have been able to do: He was able to get close to 40,000 young people to care about colon cancer, to add their names to a petition.

Unfortunately, Bishop Brigante died on March 30.

In his memory, I am still reading some of the petitions that people are signing to ask the medical society to look at the body of evidence, to see if we can save more lives.

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

SOINS DE LA VUE

M^{me} France Gélinas: J'aimerais remercier Noëlla et Ronald Vaillancourt, qui demeurent à Chelmsford dans mon comté, pour ces pétitions qui s'appellent « Assurer une vision claire pour toutes les personnes aînées ».

On sait tous que la vision est une partie fondamentale de notre qualité de vie; on a besoin de voir. Ça arrive assez fréquemment que pour les gens de plus de 65 ans, même si, plus jeunes, ils n'ont pas porté de lunettes, ils vont avoir besoin de porter des lunettes. Et pour plusieurs d'entre eux, ils ne peuvent pas se les permettre. Donc, ils aimeraient que le gouvernement les aide financièrement—les personnes de plus de 65 ans qui n'ont pas les moyens de se payer les lunettes dont ils ont besoin pour continuer d'être sécuritaires—pour continuer d'être capables de conduire leur voiture, de s'occuper de leurs affaires, de demeurer à la maison, d'éviter de tomber, etc.

Il y a beaucoup, beaucoup de monde qui ont signé cette pétition—je suis rendue, là, à des milliers de noms—et qui veulent assurer une vision claire pour toutes les personnes aînées et que le gouvernement les aide, les personnes de plus de 65 ans à faible revenu, pour couvrir le coût des lunettes.

Je suis en faveur de cette pétition, je vais la signer et je demande à Shyla de l'amener à la table des greffiers.

LONG-TERM CARE

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Petitions? I recognize the member for Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you, Speaker. I would like to thank Cathie Koula. Cathie lives in Skead in my riding, which is not far from Capreol. I'm sure you know where that is. The petition is called "Time to Care."

1510

Basically, now, close to 82,000 residents of Ontario live in a long-term-care home. Oftentimes, the staffing levels in those long-term-care homes do not keep pace with the

increased acuity and growing needs of the people who are admitted into long-term care. Right now, the statistics show that close to 85% of people in long-term care have severe cognitive decline, half of them have a diagnostic of dementia, close to 40% of them have a diagnostic of Alzheimer's. They need an appropriate level of care in order to be safe in our long-term-care homes.

The petition talks about several coroners' inquests into long-term-care home deaths that have recommended an increase in direct hands-on care.

The level of violence in our long-term-care homes is also very high. If you look at the statistics from the Chief Coroner of Ontario, you will see that in 2019, 29 homicides—that is, murders—took place in our long-term-care homes; the following year, it was 19; the year after that, it was 13 people; the year after that, it was 16 people who were killed in our long-term-care homes.

Think about it: If we had a community of 82,000 people and every year there were dozens of people who got murdered, we would do something. Well, we have 82,000 people who live in long-term care. Many of them have their health and lives at risk because of the poor level of care.

I agree with the people who have signed this petition. It is time to care and increase the level of care available to the residents of long-term care.

I will sign this petition, affix my name to it and ask my good page Shyla, who is very patient, to bring it to the Clerk.

TAXATION

Mr. Anthony Leardi: Je vais donner à la députée de Nickel Belt une pause pour qu'elle puisse respirer un peu.

I have a petition here from people who are interested in small businesses and independent contractors. Of course, such small businesses and independent contractors depend on fuel to deliver their goods and transport materials. That's what this petition is all about. And of course, these goods and materials are sensitive to increases in costs in the price of fuel.

So, what this particular petition does is, it calls on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to permanently reduce the tax on gas, and that would assist in shielding the economy and protecting Ontario workers.

Of course, I support this petition. I'm going to sign it and give it to this fine page, Ivan, and Ivan is going to bring it to the Clerks' table.

Thank you, Ivan.

GASOLINE PRICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Roland Tessier from Hanmer in my riding for these petitions, and they're called "Gas Prices."

I would tell you that the people I represent, and everybody in northern Ontario, are still subject to wild fluctuations in the price of gas.

Don't get me wrong, when the tax was taken off, the price of gas went from \$1.60, \$1.70, all the way down to \$1.19 a litre. It was a beautiful thing. It lasted three days.

We are right back up where we were before, because petroleum companies sell at the price that the market can bear. The market in Nickel Belt, where everybody has to drive long distances to go to the different mines, means that you have the money to pay. They sell at what the market can bear.

They are asking Ontario to do what many other provinces and many other states do: to put a limit on the price of gas. They can sell cheaper if they want, but they cannot sell above a certain price.

I can tell you that I travel to come to Queen's Park, and I fill up in Toronto because it's 35 cents cheaper, and sometimes 40 cents cheaper, than filling up in my riding, in Nickel Belt. This is not right.

We could regulate the price of gas. Other jurisdictions do it, and it makes it a whole lot fairer.

I have, again, hundreds and hundreds of people in my riding who signed those petitions. I fully agree with them.

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

HEALTH CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Melissa Anderson from Val Therese in my riding for these petitions. They're called "Improve Access to Primary Care."

Basically, what the petition is about: Medicare is a program that defines us as Ontarians, as Canadians, where we get to see a physician, we get to go to the hospital, and it doesn't cost anything. But right now, 2.3 million Ontarians—and the number is rising—do not have a family physician, do not have access to primary care.

In Ontario, we have community health centres, we have Indigenous primary health care organizations, we have family health teams, we have nurse practitioner-led clinics that are all willing to take on new patients, if only they could get the money to do this. Most of them have not seen a base budget increase in about the last six years, which means that they pay their staff a whole lot less than what others—if you look at hospitals—are able to pay a nurse practitioner or a nurse or a physiotherapist. So it's hard for them to recruit and retain a stable workforce. But they have a lot of people who are interested in working for them, if they could have the money to open up new positions and if they could have the money to have parity so that they can offer better wages. And I can tell you that every single one of them has long wait-lists of people who would love to become their patients.

They signed so that the government immediately increases funding for community health centres, for Indigenous primary health care organizations, for family health teams, as well as nurse practitioner-led clinics, to give access to primary care to every Ontarian who needs it. Interdisciplinary care is the way to provide high-quality care. I fully agree with them.

I will affix my name to it and ask page Shyla to bring it to the Clerk.

CHILD CARE

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

A lot of child care centres are forced to limit enrolment due to staff shortages, aggravating the growing disparity between the demand for and the availability of child care spaces. Experts tell us that we need as many as 65,000 new child care workers to meet the demand for \$10-a-day child care. Without proper funding and a strategy to recruit and retain workers into the child care setting, it's really hard to do.

They want a decent salary, increased wages, better work conditions, so that every parent will have access to affordable child care so that they can go to work.

They ask to immediately establish an Early Years and Child Care Worker Advisory Commission to develop recommendations on how to support the early years and child care workforce, address staffing shortages, including through a salary scale, compensation and better working conditions.

I fully support this petition. I will affix my name to it and ask my good and very patient page Shyla to bring it to the Clerk.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SAFER MUNICIPALITIES ACT, 2025

LOI DE 2025 POUR DES MUNICIPALITÉS PLUS SÛRES

Mr. Flack moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 6, An Act to enact the Restricting Public Consumption of Illegal Substances Act, 2025 and to amend the Trespass to Property Act respecting sentencing / Projet de loi 6, Loi édictant la Loi de 2025 visant à restreindre la consommation en public de substances illégales et modifiant la Loi sur l'entrée sans autorisation en ce qui concerne le prononcé des peines.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the minister.

1520

Hon. Rob Flack: I'll begin my remarks by stating that I'll be sharing my time with the Attorney General and the Solicitor General.

I'm happy to stand here today to speak on the Safer Municipalities Act, a vital piece of legislation that is tackling a very real need in all of our communities across this province.

Let us be clear about why we are doing this. A park is not a home. An encampment is not a solution to homelessness. It is a public safety hazard that negatively impacts surrounding communities and residents. Public parks

should be enjoyed, not feared—period. They are for fun, not fear. That is why we are here today—to protect Ontario's public spaces and to ensure that public space is indeed for the public at large.

No parent wants to receive a phone call that their child was late to school because they were afraid to walk through a local park. Nobody should find or step on a used needle in a public space. No family wants to see their local park become an encampment. This is unacceptable, and this has to change.

During the last election, the people of Ontario spoke loud and clear. Enough is enough. This is not right. This is not the Ontario we know and love. Again, this has to change.

Ontario's cities, towns and hamlets are home to beautiful parks, playgrounds and public spaces that are cherished by families and communities at large. These areas are meant to be enjoyed by everyone, providing a fun place, recreation, relaxation and social interaction.

However, the rise of homelessness and homeless encampments has compromised the safety and accessibility of these spaces. We are committing to restoring spaces like this from encampments and illegal activities because we all know it has a profound impact on the overall quality of life for residents.

There are those on the other side who might say this action is cruel. To that I say, inaction is cruel. It robs residents of their green spaces, encourages crime and makes those who live nearby feel unsafe. And it does nothing to support our most vulnerable.

Creating an environment that permits the development and continuation of these encampments does not set homeless individuals up for success but, rather, creates an environment where dangerous behaviours are accepted as normal and continue in perpetuity. This is not a sustainable process, not for them and not for our communities—not if we want to see a better, brighter Ontario that remains an incredible place to live, work and play.

That is why we are taking a balanced approach—I repeat, balanced approach—one that ensures safety while supporting our most vulnerable. Everyone deserves to live in their community with peace of mind and public safety that's not at risk.

As I canvassed my riding in the last election, Elgin–Middlesex–London, my constituents were loud and clear on this issue. We need to take decisive action and tackle this growing trend head-on.

However, it's just not the voters in my riding and your ridings who feel this way. Across the province, Ontario municipalities have been very clear about their concerns regarding the rise in encampments and unsheltered homelessness in their communities.

The Association of Municipalities of Ontario, AMO, has noted that encampments have started springing up in all types of communities, not only larger urban communities where they have typically been located. In my riding itself, I can tell you that driving through the expansive riding—10 municipalities—we see more and more of them, and not just in the larger urban centres, as I

said a moment ago. They know encampments pose challenges to community safety. People living in encampments face health risks, including weather exposure and dangers from the use of heating and cooking devices within tents and other temporary structures, while illicit drug use within these encampments poses a danger to human health. They also know that they impact community access to and overall enjoyment of public spaces, creating concerns among residents and local businesses. They have asked the province for additional resources and support to address this issue, which is spreading.

We are answering that call. The Safer Municipalities Act, if passed, would protect Ontarians from the potential impact that these threats pose and maintain the sanctity and safety of our public spaces. We intend to implement these changes to provide municipalities with greater tools to end encampments in our parks and public spaces.

With expanded resources and funding and, if passed, the additional tools available through the Safer Municipalities Act, we aim to (1) return parks and public spaces to the people of Ontario to enjoy and (2), importantly, give a hand up to people experiencing homelessness.

It's important to expand on this very last point. We know that many of the people currently living in these encampments do so because they feel they have no other option. Know that we have no intention of taking action that would punish these individuals who are already down on their luck and in need of wraparound support. I know my caucus colleagues stand with me when I say we are committed to supporting everyone in our communities—I repeat, everyone—including those most in need, who lack a safe roof over their heads day in and day out.

To that end, our government has invested an additional \$75.5 million to help individuals living in encampments find alternative accommodations, including \$20 million to help create nearly 1,000 additional shelter spaces and additional temporary accommodation spaces; a further \$50 million to help create over 1,200 additional housing units; and \$5.5 million to the Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit, COHB, to immediately free up emergency shelter spaces for people living in encampments by helping approximately 1,000 people living in shelters move into longer-term housing. These are three distinct types of investments.

Temporary accommodation: The first \$20 million I spoke of is focused on temporary accommodation spaces. For example, the city of Pembroke in Renfrew county is using the funds for the Mesa Warming Centre, a 24/7 service hub located in its Ontario addiction treatment centre.

I have met personally with the folks from Pembroke, and Renfrew county officials, and congratulated them on the amazing work they are doing in combatting illicit drug use and providing wraparound supports for their homeless. If you want to see a great example of how this works, Renfrew county is a great place to go to listen and learn.

The warming centre provides a safe place to take shelter from the cold, have access to washrooms, and connect with a support worker. The addictions treatment centre is

fully engaged with supporting individuals experiencing substance use disorders who are seeking improved health outcomes. This is just one of the many examples of how our investment is helping people experiencing homelessness.

In all, this \$20-million investment is supporting 30 different encampment response initiative projects across the province, with funding earmarked for the creation of new physical accommodations and pay for staff and supplies.

The second type of investment is longer term. We have provided \$50 million to speed up construction of ready-to-build, affordable projects across the province—supportive housing. This means over 1,200 additional housing units will be available sooner to those who need them most.

Supportive housing can provide long-term solutions for individuals experiencing homelessness, including those living in parks and public spaces. Offering more than just a place to live, it is a lifeline for those who face significant challenges in their daily lives.

Supportive housing in Ontario is designed to provide both housing assistance, such as rent supplements, and services to individuals who need them, including those facing mental health and addiction challenges. The goal is to create a stable living environment where residents can receive the help they need to live as independently as possible. These services can include counselling, life skills training, assistance with daily living activities and behaviour supports that are tailored to the needs of each individual.

By addressing the unique challenges faced by each resident, supportive housing helps them live as independently as possible in their own communities. For individuals, it means having a place where they feel safe and supported while having access to the resources they need for their health and well-being. Why? Because everyone deserves the right to work hard in this province so they can earn the ability to live in a safe dwelling that they can call home.

Supportive housing also has significant benefits for our broader community. Number one, by providing stable housing and support services, we can reduce the strain on emergency services, hospitals and shelters. Secondly, we can help individuals become much more self-sufficient. These investments have made a real difference in people's lives.

1530

These programs are supported by dedicated professionals who work tirelessly to provide the best possible care and support, so I would offer them my thanks and appreciation for a job well done and for continuing along that vein of great support for the homeless. Their commitment and compassion are the driving force behind the success of supportive housing—no ifs, ands, or buts.

The COHB top-up: Finally, we added \$5.5 million to the Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit, to help people living in shelters transition to longer-term housing—another great tool in the tool box. It builds on the nearly \$400-million investment made between 2023 and 2024 through our partnership with the federal government. This will free

up emergency shelter spaces, providing a safe roof for those currently living in encampments. Again, it's not just about public spaces; about fun, not fear. It's about giving a helping hand up for those who need it most.

COHB provides improved access to housing assistance for households in need by reducing wait times for affordable housing units and enabling more housing choice.

Homelessness Prevention Program—we've talked a lot about this over the years. As impactful as this funding is, it is only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the actions we have taken to prevent homelessness and to support our most vulnerable.

We also have several ongoing programs. In 2022, our government introduced the HPP, or the Homelessness Prevention Program. The program goals are threefold: (1) prevent homelessness, most importantly, ensuring people at risk of homelessness remain housed and have connections to the support services they need; (2) address homelessness, helping people who are homeless and chronically homeless obtain and retain housing and support services; and (3) reduce chronic homelessness, reducing the number of people who experience long-term homelessness or have recurrent episodes of homelessness.

Chronic homelessness is frequently associated with challenges like mental illness, substance abuse, or disabilities.

Service managers play an important role and may use the Homelessness Prevention Program funding for programs and services that address and prevent homelessness in their communities, such as housing assistance, homeless shelter operations, community outreach and supportive housing.

As well, we provide nearly \$42 million annually through the Indigenous Supportive Housing Program, or ISHP, of which \$10 million is dedicated to mental health and addictions support.

Under these two programs, after a 40% increase in HPP funding introduced in 2023, \$700 million is dedicated annually to support immediate solutions to address and prevent homelessness, as well as long-term, stable housing for Ontarians.

This flexible and targeted approach has allowed service managers and Indigenous program administrators to develop initiatives that address their unique local circumstances and make significant strides in preventing and addressing homelessness in their communities. By providing stable housing and comprehensive support services, the program helps individuals achieve greater independence and improve their quality of life.

In fact, our government has invested more in supportive housing to eradicate homelessness than any government in the history of Ontario.

Supporting municipalities: Our government recognizes that municipalities are critical, very important partners in delivering important local services. Our priority is to work with municipalities to build more market, affordable and supportive housing, support economic growth and

strengthen Ontario's communities, which has led to record investments by this government in this sector.

In fact, from 2019-23, key provincial support to municipalities grew by over 45%. In 2023 alone, our government provided almost \$10 billion through a number of key transfers.

In 2025, we announced that the Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund will include an immediate increase of \$50 million, to provide \$550 million in unconditional funding to 390 municipalities. The \$50-million enhancement will be targeted to small, northern and rural municipalities and those with a limited property tax base to support municipalities in providing critical services.

We are also working across government to tackle the complex challenges related to homelessness, addiction and mental health.

In March of this year, my colleague Deputy Premier Sylvia Jones announced an investment of almost \$550 million to create a total of 28 Homelessness and Addiction Recovery Treatment Hubs, or HART hubs, across this province—nine which were originally planned have been implemented since April 1. This includes two Indigenous-led hubs to ensure the delivery of culturally relevant care pathways for community members. HART hubs will continue to connect people to a holistic approach to treatment, such as mental health and addictions support, as well as providing social services, employment support and supportive housing. HART hubs will add an estimated 560 highly supportive housing units, in addition to addiction recovery and treatment beds that will help people transition to more stable long-term housing.

As announced in the 2024 budget, Ontario is investing an additional \$150 million over three years to support individuals facing unstable housing conditions and experiencing mental health and addiction challenges. This funding will go towards a suite of supportive housing initiatives designed to bolster support for vulnerable populations.

In total, our government has invested \$2.3 billion in housing and homelessness support over the past two years, more than any government in the history of our province.

The people of Ontario have asked for this legislation. We're going to deliver this legislation, if passed, in this House.

Parks, playgrounds and other public spaces should be places where friends can connect, kids can play and families can spend quality time together. That is what they are meant to be. We're going to restore these spaces so that they can be used for their intended purpose.

Our government is also protecting Ontario by putting public safety first, while taking action to help those living in encampments find the housing and supports they need.

We will continue to stand with our municipal partners as we deliver on our promise to protect our communities while protecting our most vulnerable.

In conclusion, I would just say that we introduced this bill last fall, as I think everybody knows. We made a commitment to reintroduce it if re-elected—obviously, we were, and I'm pleased that we were able to reintroduce it last week and speak at second reading today.

I would emphasize, again, in conclusion: Public parks and spaces are meant for fun and not fear. While we always have to lend a helping hand to those most vulnerable, we have to protect those spaces for families, for parents, for grandparents, for kids, for cousins— whoever it may be—who want to enjoy our public spaces. That's what they're meant for.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): I recognize the Attorney General.

Hon. Doug Downey: I want to thank my colleague the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing for inviting me to share his time to speak to this very important bill. I was listening very intently to his speech, and it gives me great confidence that we are on the right track and that we are doing the right thing. It's helping people in the places that they are and preserving our communities at the same time.

He has outlined a number of the key investments our government is making to help those who are experiencing or are at risk of experiencing homelessness. Those investments into housing and homelessness prevention highlight the very importance of us being here today, speaking about the serious issue of encampments.

Our government knew it was critical that we reintroduce this bill because of the significance it holds to our communities. I want to stress that our government remains focused on balancing public safety with the safety and well-being of people currently living in encampments. These proposed measures are not criminalizing people who are homeless. And we know this is an issue that is difficult for all involved, which is why the proposed changes we are speaking to today are just one facet of a balanced, broader strategy to address this issue that includes homelessness and mental health supports.

These proposed changes will help us protect community safety in Ontario, in parks, public spaces and beyond.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, encampments and use of illegal drugs in public have become increasingly serious issues across the province. We've heard from our municipal partners about safety in their communities. Our government's priority is to protect all those who live in Ontario. So we took the time to listen to our municipal partners about what is going on in their communities and how the province can help.

1540

When we first introduced this legislation last December, many, many municipalities came out in support of our proposed changes. I'll give you a couple of examples.

Mayor Rob Burton of Oakville said, "The actions in this legislation are what we asked for. It feels great to work with a government that listens. We are united to support our most vulnerable and create safer environments for everyone."

Meanwhile, Mayor Drew Dilkens of Windsor said the tools we are proposing to enhance public safety would, if passed, "help make a positive difference in communities across Ontario."

It's not just a southern Ontario issue. Mayor Paul Lefebvre of Sudbury said he believes our approach "prioritizes the dignity and well-being of individuals in

need, while balancing other residents' right to feel safe in public spaces."

Those are just three mayors I have quotes for, but, of course, the great mayor of Barrie, Alex Nuttall, has been at the forefront on this.

Interjection: Hear, hear.

Hon. Doug Downey: Absolutely.

He has been a vocal voice for saying we need both—we need compassion, but we need tools. We need to make sure that the spaces are safe for families but that there is also appropriate care in the community for those experiencing homelessness and mental health and addictions.

I could go on and on. I know I only used a couple of southern Ontario ones—and as the member from Sudbury may tell us, Sudbury is really the middle of Ontario; it's not really the north, right? So there's a lot more north up there. And the challenges are across Ontario.

I talked to several mayors when we first introduced the bill, and some of them hadn't signed on to say something positive publicly, but as it came out, they slowly did, more and more, because they saw and they were able to acknowledge what was happening in their communities. They became more united with their councils, to be in the spot to ask us to do more—so we are.

Madam Speaker, I could go on and on, as you well know. It's sentiments like these that made us certain that we had to reintroduce this legislation as soon as the legislative session began. In fact, we stand by these proposed changes so much that we highlighted their importance in the throne speech delivered just a few short weeks ago. We stressed that we would provide municipalities the enhanced tools they need to end encampments, clean up our parks and public spaces, and use whatever legal tools might be required to help our municipal partners, because the amount of support from municipalities across the province regarding these proposed changes is unwavering. We continue to have that support and the call for action from municipalities to work with municipalities. The great Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing went through a number of those investments—some focused on northern and small, rural municipalities with a smaller tax base, as he mentioned, and then other tools, as appropriate, for other communities.

Before I get into the proposed changes to the Trespass to Property Act, I want to outline the purpose of the act itself. As the name suggests, the act specifically addresses prohibited entry onto property in the province of Ontario. But it's not limited to someone just stepping onto someone's property at any time; it's not that simplistic. The Trespass to Property Act addresses situations where individuals enter a property when unauthorized to do so. It also covers situations where individuals are doing things on property they are not authorized to do. These are activities that are often already signalled by signage on a property in question. We've all seen them. It can include a general no trespassing sign. It can also include signs that indicate the limits of accessing a property—such as limiting the entry of motorized vehicles, such as snowmobiles or ATVs or any other number of recreational vehicles. It

can also include signs that prohibit certain activities, such as skateboarding, maybe on a property as a whole, as well. These are just a few examples of some of the prohibited activities an owner of a property may signal.

The Trespass to Property Act also covers the failure to leave the property when asked. This can be through a verbal request or issuing a written notice to the individual who is trespassing or has trespassed on the property in question.

The act applies to property everywhere in the province. This can include residential homes, retirement homes, offices, stores, hotels, and the list goes on. It also includes parks, farms and vacant land.

The Trespass to Property Act is used by private individuals, businesses, organizations. It's also used by public sector entities, such as municipalities, school boards, hospitals. This means that property owners, tenants, and other authorized individuals like security guards can use the act to address trespassing.

Trespassing charges can be ticketed offences or prosecuted in the Ontario Court of Justice. The Trespass to Property Act includes a maximum fine of \$10,000 for those who have committed an act of trespassing. And if prosecuted, it's up to the courts to decide what kind of penalty is imposed during sentencing of an individual.

Now that I've outlined what the act does, I want to talk about why we're here today.

Our proposed changes to the Trespass to Property Act revolve around aggravating factors. An aggravating factor is a specific element in a case that revolves around either the offence in question or the accused individual themselves. Some examples of aggravating factors in the legal system, as a whole, include: playing a significant role in an offence, targeting vulnerable people, or the severity of harm caused. Courts have the discretion and will continue to have the discretion to increase sentences where aggravating factors are present.

Our proposed changes would, if passed, add two new statutory aggravating factors to be considered in sentencing related to violations of the Trespass to Property Act. I'd like to outline how these new aggravating factors that we're proposing work. The first would be continuing trespass. This is when a notice of trespass is given to an individual outlining when they must leave the property and that individual who is trespassing remains on the property after the specified period. This could be 24 hours or any longer period that's outlined in the notice. The second aggravating factor is proof that the accused is likely to reoffend. This is present when a prosecutor can show, at the time of sentencing, that the offender is likely to trespass in the future.

As I previously mentioned, the maximum fine is \$10,000 for offences under the Trespass to Property Act. If these proposed changes are passed, and if one or both new aggravating factors are present, the court could increase the penalty that would otherwise have been imposed had the new aggravating factor not been a consideration. In all cases, the court would decide on the appropriate penalty that falls within the existing limits. Of

course, we know in this context that those living in encampments may not have the financial means to pay these fines. Courts have that discretion, under the Provincial Offences Act, to extend time to pay or to order a payment plan for any fine that they do levy.

Madam Speaker, I want to stress that these proposed changes do not add a new offence under the Trespass to Property Act. If passed, it would not create an influx of new cases before the court. We are merely proposing to change sentencing guidelines for existing offences in the hopes that individuals will be discouraged from trespassing in the future. We know courts face significant pressures—we talk about that frequently in here—and we're taking steps to help the courts reduce and resolve cases.

That's why our government is committed to investing in our courts. In 2024 alone, we appointed 45 new justices to the Ontario Court of Justice. We will invest in more justice of the peace appointments this year.

And as you may recall, Speaker, last year our government made historically significant increases to court capacity at the Ontario Court of Justice. With a \$29-million investment, we said we would add at least 25 new judges to the court. This is to help the court keep pace with the growing number of complex cases, the volume of cases, and to address the existing backlog of criminal cases.

But more has to be done. We know this. We knew that.

That's why, just a few days ago—in fact, in my opening speech this morning for Bill 10, we announced that our government was allocating 17 additional judges to the Ontario Court of Justice, for a total of 42. At the time, we announced that we'll be proposing new changes to the Courts of Justice Act to streamline the judicial appointments process and speed up the appointment of judges to the Ontario Court of Justice.

This is all part of an ongoing process of our government taking time to update an outdated and slow judicial appointments process. Our previous changes included improving transparency around candidate diversity by requiring the Judicial Appointments Advisory Committee to publish detailed diversity statistics in their annual reports. They do this by using information that is voluntarily disclosed by applicants during the application process. I'll tell you, Madam Speaker, sometimes those diversity statistics—people disclose, or they don't disclose. It was only by reading an article after a particular judge had been appointed—I had not realized that, in fact, our government appointed the first Turkish judge to the Ontario Court of Justice, because their community was celebrating what an honourable achievement that was for the individual. So although the diversity statistics are there and they help us see trends, we are also just appointing the best people in the best places at the best time, and we're building capacity across the system.

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We've also expanded the function of the Judicial Appointments Advisory Committee. Instead of just providing recommendations to me on appointments, they can now

provide advice on the appointments process in order to leverage the committee's collective experience.

These collective changes will support our goal of providing swift access to justice for victims of crime. We also will help avoid grief and anxiety that comes with long delays. Whether it be for victims or accused, a long delay serves no one. We want faster, quicker—but fair—access to justice.

Our government will not accept the status quo when it comes to justice. That has been pretty clear since 2018. We're rethinking how justice is delivered in this province by building a modern, accessible and fair justice system that works for all Ontarians. We're working with our justice sector partners to achieve these shared priorities.

And we're making change in all parts of the justice system. We're not just adding more resources, whether it be in the police college—waiving tuition fees, subsidizing tuition fees, adding more boots on the ground to allow hiring of more police officers, putting more staff in policing across the province. It's adding judges, as I mentioned—42 new judges. It's adding crown attorneys. It's adding court service workers. It's adding victim services workers. It's adding navigators. It's adding court clerks and court registrars. It's making sure that we have more capacity to do more for the province of Ontario.

But we're not just adding more and doing more of the same, because, quite frankly, the status quo isn't working the way that we would like it to. We made changes in terms of how we focus those resources.

And we've added intensive bail review teams, which are, in my mind, kind of like SWAT teams of prosecutors, to go in and make sure that when there's a firearm and there's a bail hearing, we're putting our best foot forward—that we have the experts in that space.

We've expanded guns-and-gangs units. We're making them permanent. That will deal with cross-border illegal firearms. It deals with complex organized crime. It deals with human trafficking. It deals with all sorts of things that are complicated, across borders, across jurisdictions, whether it be policing services or otherwise.

We've added the first cybercrime and cryptocurrency prosecution team—teams of lawyers who are well versed and understand the complexities—to go after the gangs as they move money around from the proceeds of their crimes. And we're making sure that we're coordinated with the police on this, who have existing cybercrime units that are already in the field dealing with this kind of thing.

So we're not just adding more capacity; we're being smart about it—and we're making sure that they're targeted and that things are landing where they need to land. But that's not enough. We've had to change. We've had to overhaul how the court system works.

When I became the Attorney General and you walked into a courthouse and you wanted to file a document, you had to have a certified cheque from the law firm. You couldn't use a credit card. I said, "Why can you not use a credit card in a public service like this?" I could use a credit card at my library if I had to pay an overdue fine, which happens on occasion. I could use a credit card at the

airport when I'm trying to do something—pay for overweight baggage. I couldn't use a credit card in the courthouse. Well, nobody even remembers that anymore because we've had it in place for so long. These are the changes.

When I became the Attorney General, you could serve documents by telegraph, but you couldn't serve them by email. Can you imagine? I ask young students, I ask young lawyers if they've ever even seen a telegraph, and of course the answer is no. They've grown up with nothing but email.

Madam Speaker, we're revolutionizing and modernizing how the court system works—and they're in the middle of a process right now. It's a collaboration between our government and Chief Justice Morawetz, the Superior Court Chief Justice, on the civil rules. Justice Boswell and Allison Spiegel are co-chairing a review of the civil rules that hasn't been done in over 40 years.

We know the court system isn't moving fast enough. We know that it's being ground down in administration. We're changing that. It's moving at a great pace, and consultations are happening.

For any lawyers listening who are in civil litigation, you have until June 15 to get your ideas in, because we have proposals out there, and it will change how we do things.

It's not just that—

Interjection.

Hon. Doug Downey: See? From a lawyer who understands. He understands what this will mean, not for the lawyers and the judges—this is going to make change for clients. It's going to make change for the public. It will take costs out of the system. It will speed things up. What got me on this tangent was talking about court delays and how things take too long for victims, and that's the case across—whether it's civil litigation or whether it's criminal law.

I'm going to say one more piece—another big investment by this government. When we came to government, courts were over 80% paper-based. You would walk into a courthouse and there were stacks of paper everywhere. I was a court clerk before I was a lawyer, and I spent time trying to find a lost piece of paper that had fallen off the fax machine, under the cabinet. This happened all the time.

We've changed this. We're into an investment that will revolutionize how court documents move through the system. Everything from e-warrants, so police aren't having to drive hours to get a warrant signed and back—it's now electronic. We are changing it so that documents will flow, so that all the parties can get the documents in real time and so that when they're doing a hearing, they can all access the same stuff.

We are doing something that is cutting-edge in this country, with an investment by our government of \$170 million of new money to change how the administration of justice works across Ontario.

I'm super proud of all these changes. This is another way that we're changing things. We're creating capacity.

I would be remiss if I didn't talk about the really important part, which is the human resources, in here. It's

the court staff who make all of these machines run, who serve the public. They're the front line and the people in the back office who make all of this work. We could not do anything without the excellent court staff we have in the administration. MAG has quite a number across Ontario, and they're in all of our communities. Without them, court hearings couldn't proceed, matters couldn't be scheduled, legal documents couldn't be filed, and the impact on the lives of everyone who needs to access the justice system would be different.

That's why our government has prioritized the staffing of courtrooms. We've invested \$6 million in additional funding for this, and it's why we continue to work closely with judicial officials to ensure that matters proceed as scheduled.

In fact, since 2023, we have not only increased compensation for over 1,500 of our front-line court staff, but we've also undertaken massive recruitment efforts to grow the number of full-time, permanent court and client representative positions in courthouses across the province.

We've modernized attraction and recruitment efforts. It includes the launch of a new court jobs web page and the use of social media to advertise court jobs.

We continue to explore and implement process efficiencies aimed at reducing workload for front-line staff.

I mention all of this, as I want to stress how much work we're doing with our justice system to ensure cases, like those under the Trespass to Property Act, are seen in a timely fashion.

Back when I was a court clerk, before I was a court registrar, I would work three hours—perhaps if the court sat three hours—and then I was sent home; if they needed me for five, I would work five; if they needed me for seven, I stayed for the seven. It was unpredictable every day, because you don't know if the court is going to collapse. The judge may be doing settlement motions or settlement issues in chambers and doesn't need the clerk there—so I got sent home. We can't build a professional workforce on precarious work like that, so our government changed it to allow full-time—with benefits—professionalized work staff, and that's the 1,500 that we're talking about. It's creating a wonderful system.

We're here to talk about protecting Ontario's communities and taking further steps towards safety. I'm proud of the action our government is taking on these important and challenging issues. We're working across ministries, under the leadership of municipal affairs and housing and the wonderful minister who has taken strong reins in driving this stuff forward.

We're addressing encampments by tackling very complex challenges related to homelessness, addictions and mental health. We'll continue to work with our municipal partners on this issue.

The proposed changes that I was speaking about with the Trespass to Property Act would, if passed, help clear parks and public spaces of encampments. The proposals would increase penalties for people who deliberately and continually break the law, by adding new aggravating

factors of continuous trespassing and the likelihood to reoffend. When present, these factors could lead to tougher sentencing.

We need to protect our community safety in parks, public spaces and beyond. We need to protect Ontario.

I would now like to hand the floor to my colleague the Solicitor General of Ontario. Thank you. Merci. Meegwetch.

1600

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): I recognize the Solicitor General.

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: It is a privilege to follow my colleague the Attorney General and my great friend the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and speak again actually on public safety and why the bill introduced by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing is so important today.

Bill 6, the Safer Municipalities Act, reminds all Ontarians that parks are for people. We share our own experiences in this place, and as I welcome and as I've welcomed different members from our party and from the opposition that were fortunate enough to find themselves after the February election here in this wonderful house of democracy, what I say is, there are things that we bring from our communities here. We have to listen. We have to learn from our constituents who sent us here. There's nobody more important than the people that elected us to come here. For me, there isn't a day I don't think about my own constituents in York Centre, a north Toronto riding, a place that my family and I have proudly called home for 30 years. It's where we've raised our three kids, where they've gone to school and where we've played in the park.

When I go back to when my children were little kids—and I'm fortunate that as they go forward in their ages—they're all in their twenties now—what I can tell you is, fond memories of my wife and I taking our kids to the park, our local park, and playing with them there, playing with our kids there, I remember that. When we look forward, we're asking ourselves not only what happened to—in some cases, our parks have changed, but we've seen a lot of criminality enter our parks. It was never like that.

As I begin my remarks, Madam Speaker, I want to talk about our government's commitment to public safety. It is absolute and constant. I've said this before. I've said it all over Ontario. I've said it from Thunder Bay to Ottawa. I've said it in Timmins. I've said it in Cochrane. I've said it in Windsor: There has never been a government other than our government, led by Premier Ford, that has addressed public safety with such laser-focused priority. I want to thank the Premier every day for his leadership in making sure that Ontarians can wake up in the morning and go to work and go to bed knowing that we have a Premier that cares about our public safety.

Madame la Présidente, le soutien de notre gouvernement à cet égard est absolu et sans relâche. En tant que solliciteur général, je continuerai de travailler chaque jour pour assurer le bien-être de nos policiers et nos premiers intervenants. Pour le premier ministre de l'Ontario et pour

moi, c'est personnel. Tout le monde a le droit de se sentir en sécurité chez soi et dans leur collectivité, et je voudrais remercier chaque personne qui travaille fort pour assurer la sécurité de notre province.

We have to be thankful for everyone that keeps Ontario safe: our incredible police officers; our incredible firefighters; our incredible correction, probation and parole officers; those amazing 911 call operators—I'll never forget about them—our animal welfare inspectors; and everyone that is part of the safety of our province.

The reason we're here today on this Bill 6 is to understand that we have to not be static, that the Safer Municipalities Act, as we are reminded by the Attorney General and the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, is to remind people that where we live must be safe. My comments today on this bill are around our parks and how we are grateful to our first responders and making sure that, as they go to our parks to make sure our little kids and our seniors are safe in our parks, they have the tools to ensure that those parks are safe.

Just this morning, Madam Speaker, I was privileged, and I began the second reading of the Protect Ontario Through the Safer Streets and Stronger Communities Act, 2025, which itself was a series of broad amendments to existing legislation and proposed new legislation to help combat crime and protect Ontario's communities. Many government ministries have worked together to collaborate on this bill that we're debating today to propose the types of changes and new initiatives that will strengthen and support community safety and enhance our justice system to keep our communities safe.

Madam Speaker, just as our government's ministries must work together, so too must the different levels of government that serve our province. I have to thank the tremendous leadership that we have in hundreds of municipalities all across Ontario who have met with us at the AMO conference, at the ROMA conference—most recently here there was another conference. It's a privilege as Solicitor General to meet these delegations and to listen to the concerns of, in some cases, small-town Ontario. You know, Madam Speaker, people think when you represent a Toronto riding—I'll just single out the MPPs from Toronto—that we don't understand what rural Ontario is. Well, firstly, we have a lot of colleagues in the Legislature that remind us. Even those members from Ottawa may be accused of being out of touch because Ottawa is a large city too.

What I can tell you is, in my own case, my wife's family came from small-town Ontario, from South Porcupine, Ontario. When I went up there after I got married in 1996, it was honestly one of the first visits I ever had to northern Ontario, but to understand that northern Ontario and rural Ontario is majestic; it's special. Whenever I have an opportunity, either as Solicitor General or just as a private person, to go out to see Ontario, there's no place like home. I might add, Madam Speaker, how fortunate are we, not only to live in our province, but to understand that—withstanding what is going on in the greater world today and with our neighbours south of the border—there

is an incredible sense of patriotism, and it's everywhere in Ontario. I want to just thank our great municipalities for always working so collegially with us. It's amazing.

I also want to talk about the other level of government, because without them we also can't function. That's our federal government. Under the leadership of Premier Ford, we strive every day to have excellent relationships with our different levels of government and that's how you get things done.

As we look at this bill specifically, I wanted to cover off some important points that summarize the input that the Ministry of the Solicitor General assisted the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. We want to prohibit the use of illegal substances in public places with limited exemptions—as an example of a limited exemption, if there is a provincial or federal authority to possess the illegal substance in a public place. The act also ensures that individuals cannot be charged if they remain at the scene to assist anyone experiencing an emergency, assist the emergency service provider or receive emergency services themselves. I think this is very important.

The second point creates powers for police officers and any provincial offences officers prescribed in regulation to direct a person to stop using the illegal substances and leave the place and/or seize the illegal substance. This is very important. We don't want our police on the sidelines. We want them to make sure that not only does their presence in a park send a message that people should have that surety that the park is safe for kids and for seniors and for everyone, but they should have authority to act. I think that is very important.

1610

The third comment I want to make is—to create an offence if a person fails to comply with officer direction, with penalties of up to \$10,000, or six months' imprisonment, or both, if convicted. That is important. If we don't have deterrents in our society, what do we have?

I've said this many times: I've had the privilege of marching 12 consecutive times, from August 2022 to December 2024—I've attended, through that period, every march past ceremony at the Ontario Police College. The only reason I missed the march past on March 19, 2025, is that that was the day our government was sworn back into office, so I had a good reason to be absent.

What I want to say is that as people are graduating and wearing their uniforms and being badged, they have to have the support of the communities they are serving, to protect and serve.

I could tell you, Madam Speaker, having travelled throughout Ontario, that I only have two municipal police services to visit—because I've visited every other one of them. I have to still get to Deep River, and I have to get to Saugeen Shores, and I'm committing that I will do just that.

Even though I didn't go to the graduation on March 19, 2025, at the Ontario Police College, I went to speak to as many of the newest cadets as I could. And what I say to them is, "How grateful are we that you decided to say yes, to come forward, to have a career of meaning, to put on a

uniform each day? All we ask is that you should come home safely at the end of the shift. That's all we ask."

This past Sunday, many of us from the Legislature were right here, in front of the Whitney Block, as we participated in the annual police memorial.

Let me tell you, Madam Speaker, being Solicitor General in this day and age, you take things—as the Premier does—when it comes to public safety very seriously, and you should. We have to be grateful to everyone who keeps us safe. We can't just say—it is important for us to say, but it's not enough—"We will have your backs." We have to come forward with action, we have to come forward with legislation, we have to come forward with regulations that back up our words and our intentions, and we have to set a tone and expectation that public safety matters.

As part of the bill, we're also going to establish regulation-making power to allow an officer to take a person who has committed an offence under the act into custody and escort them to a location that provides health, community, social, housing, mental health or addiction or other similar services, instead of just charging them with a provincial offence. At the end of the day, a government has to be compassionate; a government has to understand that when people need help, we have to do everything reasonably, humanly possible to help. This distinction delineates the fact that we're not just telling police, "Go in and do this," or "Go in and do that." We have to do so with respect not only to our communities, with respect to the people who are in the park, but we have to be respectful to those people who may be suffering and who may have to go for rehabilitation as their next course.

Simply put, the proposed legislation would permit police officers and any other provincial offences officers prescribed in regulation to do the following as it relates to consuming illegal substances:

Number one, direct individuals to cease using illegal substances in a public place or leave the space. That's obvious. This is very important.

Number two, arrest and charge the individual for failure to comply with the officer's discretion.

The next one is to require the individuals to identify themselves for the purposes of issuing a provincial offence notice.

I think the last one, Madam Speaker, is very important. We want to get these drugs off our streets, and we want to get them out of the parks. So as part of this legislation, we will be able to seize and dispose of illegal substances found in plain view and, if needed, send them for analysis.

I think at the end of the day we have to go back to where we started. In June 2022, when I had the privilege of being asked by Premier Ford to be in this position, I committed to doing exactly what I told my constituents I would do when they sent me to Queen's Park for my first time: that I would listen, that I would learn and I would do everything that I could to lead.

When the Premier reminded me on my earliest days that we have to learn to have the backs of everyone that keeps us safe, that became ingrained in me. That was my North

Star. That was my credo every day of understanding that without public safety, we have nothing.

When others in other times and in other governments told us to stop—they said, "You're going in the wrong direction." When the Progressive Conservative Party would always stand up and advocate for public safety and others would say, "You're going in the wrong direction. We have to look at other ways of, in some cases, reducing the funding or abolishing the police," that's insane. So our government has stood forward and it has the backs.

I want to give a shout-out to the associations: to the Toronto Police Association, to the Police Association of Ontario, to the Ontario Provincial Police Association, to the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, to IPCO, which is the Indigenous police chiefs organization. The presidents that lead these organizations and the board members that are on them are some of the most committed individuals I have ever met in my life.

Our government not only believes that public safety and having the backs of everyone is just something we should treat as something, it's actually everything. And that's why the status quo cannot continue, because everyone has a right to live safely in our own homes and communities. Everyone has a right to see our kids off to school in the morning. Everyone has a right to go to work safely and to come home and to shop and to pray. But everyone has a right to go to their neighbourhood parks and to feel safe. We will accept nothing less than that.

Our inherent rights are based fundamentally on the values that we share in Ontario that bind us, regardless of our faith, regardless of how we got here, regardless of where our ancestors came from to call Ontario home. This is our home. It's a place where we all have a purpose. And I will do everything that I can as part of our government and to support our Premier morning, noon and night, and to support my colleagues, and to be guided by the voices of the Legislature. This is the House of democracy, the home of approximately 2,000 people, since Confederation, that found their place here. It's a place of immense honour. It's a place of immense respect.

We were told when we went for our orientation, however we were and whatever class we were here—the longest-serving member I think now is the member from Oxford, so he would remember the charge: "Come here. Be prepared to debate it. Be prepared to learn. When you speak, understand the issues because whatever you say will be recorded in Hansard forever."

So my message is simple today: Public safety matters. It's a priority for this government. We will continue to work every single day for the betterment of everyone in Ontario and fulfill the inherent rights that are covered under this bill that I was so proud to speak of today. We will do everything we can to make sure Ontario is safe for everyone. Thank you, merci beaucoup and meegwetch.

1620

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

MPP Catherine McKenney: I know that you mentioned that you're hearing from your constituents. Well,

I'm hearing from mine as well, as I'm sure you all are. They're telling me that this bill doesn't make anyone safer, but it does punish people, especially people who have lost their housing and are forced to live outside.

We also know that to meet the demand for housing here in Ontario, we need at least 1.5 million new market and non-market homes to be built by 2031, and, according to Scotiabank, we need to more than double our existing supply of non-market housing.

To the minister: As you're removing people from encampments, tents, the only places they have, and as shelters are well over—there's just no capacity. I just want to ask you where people are expected to go in—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Rob Flack: Speaker, through you: As I said in my talk, we are allocating, investing a lot more money for homeless shelters to support our homeless. Again, \$75.5 million was allocated to this program to help speed up, to build up shelters and wraparound support. I would also offer that the HART hubs that we are investing in, \$550 million, 28 throughout the province—nine have been implemented by April 1—are an additional part of what we need to do.

But the member is right: We are facing a housing crisis in this province. Market homes, supportive homes—we have to kick-start this housing economy, which we are doing. We are creating the conditions to get the job done, speed up permits, lower fees and keep the talent in place to get them built.

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

M^{me} Lucille Collard: I want to thank the member for Ottawa Centre for her questions, because I have the same concerns.

Based on your response, Minister, to the Speaker: While there's funding announced to build more housing and homelessness support, regardless of the amount, this will not materialize tomorrow. By the time this legislation is in force, there's going to be action taken for enforcement, and those people still are not going to have a place to go.

Is it the intention of the government to jail everybody in a system that is already over capacity, the same with the shelters? What are the government's practical solutions to deal with the aftermath of the situation?

Hon. Doug Downey: As the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing said earlier, this is part of a suite of investments through our municipalities to make our parks safer and also to move people out of the parks who are in encampments.

It's not to criminalize at all. These are offences that are in the discretion of the judge, that are in the discretion of the court. But for a continuing trespass or repeated trespasses, there have to be tools to move people along. At the same time, we're setting up HART hubs across Ontario to give wraparound services to help people with addictions and mental health issues.

So our investments aren't in silos; our investments are in communities to make the parks more friendly for the

families they were intended for and to move people out who were not meant to be encamping there in the first place.

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

MPP Robin Lennox: You spoke of concerns about our community members encountering public drug use or drug use equipment, like needles, in our public spaces. Supervised consumption sites address both of these issues. They bring people indoors, into highly regulated spaces, with trained attendants, and they're proven to reduce drug litter in the surrounding areas and reduce overdose in the surrounding areas. In fact, all harm reduction equipment used in supervised consumption sites is disposed of in supervised consumption sites.

If those are the problems you are trying to solve, why are you working so hard to close supervised consumption sites, to limit these life-saving services and to make our communities less safe?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: I think the Minister of Health has been bold, and I'd say to the member opposite, show me a government that has ever taken our public safety more seriously and I'll show you our government led by Premier Ford. Show me a government that wants to be bold and innovative when it comes to our health care and not go back in the past—this isn't like a movie from a hundred years ago; we're living in the here and now—I'll show you our government led by Premier Ford.

I think everything that we have done through the Minister of Health, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the Attorney General and others—we've worked across the ministries to say our government will be bold, our government will be innovative.

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

MPP Catherine McKenney: I want to go back to my question about people who are experiencing homelessness today and the numbers of them and the notion that we are going to start removing people from the only place they have. We know that homelessness is increasing; it's rising faster than ever. Shelters are over capacity. There are wait-lists for shelters across this country, and this government actually ignored the recommendations of their own Housing Affordability Task Force and instead focused on attacking the greenbelt.

So I would like to know, just simply, will you go back to that task force recommendation and start building the type of housing that we need in municipalities to be able to provide housing for people in both the market and non-market housing?

Hon. Rob Flack: Again, I appreciate the question, but I guess what I'm not following in her logic is that while we are investing, and I can go through the investments again, and we are seeing progress—it's a difficult subject. I would say for those that are experiencing homelessness, living in an encampment in a public park is not the place to be. It's not fair to our families, to our communities. And yes, we are investing in new housing, new initiatives, but surely you're not suggesting they stay in a public park. It's

wrong. The people of Ontario spoke about it. I heard it in my riding. We've all heard about it.

Speaker, a public park is not to be feared, and surely to goodness, everyone can understand that we are investing in supportive housing continually. I can go through the numbers and would be happy to go through the numbers again. It continues the work—but not in a public park.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I recognize the member for Brantford—Brant.

Mr. Will Bouma: Thank you, Speaker. It's nice to see you in the chair.

My question is for the Solicitor General. I know, because I've seen a little bit of his schedule, that he absolutely travels all over the province of Ontario speaking to our front-line emergency service providers, and specifically the police. He's done an absolutely fabulous job of that, and he knows what's going on and how we can best support our front-line officers.

I was wondering if the minister might be able to explain to us a little bit more about how what we are doing in this legislation mimics what he's been hearing from our front-line police officers on the ground, not just in the OPP, but also in our municipal police forces, as they strive to keep our communities safe.

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: Thank you and I want to just give a shout-out to my friend from Brantford—Brant and his great police service and his chief of police, Chief Jason Saunders. I want to answer him by saying that as part of this legislation, we're clarifying the ability for a police officer to keep our parks safe. We're not saying that this has to be something that they just have to go to the park and observe and take a note, but that they can take action. We have to make sure that, at all times, they look at the parks as what I said in my remark: Parks are for people. They must be kept safe, and our police officers always must be respected.

1630

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

MPP Robin Lennox: I'm glad to have the opportunity to address Bill 6. The government has said that this bill is an attempt to limit public drug use from occurring in public spaces. But like so many pieces of legislation from this government, what it states as its purpose publicly is very different from its actual intention and, most importantly, from the real impact that it will have on our communities.

We agree that people who use drugs should not have to use drugs outdoors in unsafe public spaces and that no one should have to sleep outside in a tent. But when we talk about reducing public drug use and unsheltered homelessness, we have to talk about how we got here and the strategies that will actually help us achieve that goal.

Over the past seven years of this government, we have seen an escalation of the toxic drug crisis to a public health emergency, but we're not acting like it. We've seen the highest rates of encampments and unsheltered homelessness ever reported across this province. Over 80,000

people in the recent AMO report were reported as being unhoused, and we know that this is likely an undercount.

The reason—

Interjection.

MPP Robin Lennox: I will interrupt myself to say that I'm sharing my time with the member from Ottawa Centre. Thank you.

The reason we're in this position is because our government has abdicated its responsibility to take care of people across virtually all sectors. The government has drastically underfunded health care services, including mental health and addiction services. This government has drastically underfunded housing and downloaded the responsibility of managing the homelessness crisis onto municipalities, who are now trying to shoulder the bill for shelters, supportive housing, social housing and encampment outreach. All of that responsibility is now being shouldered by municipalities because the province refuses to take a leadership role in actually managing the crisis.

We have seen the lowest housing starts on record and the lowest investment in supportive housing, and we are seeing more and more people unable to stay in their housing because of the erosion of tenant rights and protections. So, yes, we're seeing more people end up outdoors, having to put up tents in our communities. That is a shame for our government to carry, not for the people who are outdoors. And now faced with the visible consequences of their poor policy decisions, rather than actually doing anything to solve the root causes of the problem, this government is now trying to blame the people who have been made most vulnerable by our system's failures.

In addressing the issue of public drug use, we have to recognize that this is no one's ideal circumstance. I have had thousands of conversations with people who use drugs over the last several years, and what I can say definitively is that there is no person I have spoken to whose preference it is to have to use drugs outdoors, by themselves, in an unsafe circumstance. When I asked someone just yesterday, "What do you think would actually solve the problem of outdoor public drug use," what they said was, from their experience as someone who had been unhoused, as someone who had used drugs and as someone who has now been able to live for many years in remission from their substance use, their two solutions were supervised consumption sites and housing. It's simple, and it's within our control to do.

It's not safe for people using drugs individually to have to use drugs outdoors or in public spaces because, often, they're in a position where they're using alone, they're trying to stay hidden, they're trying to stay out of trouble and they're trying to avoid charges. As a result, they're using in circumstances that are riskier than they need to be. We know that this increases the risk of overdose and also means that they're often using in less sanitary conditions that increase the risk of infections and other complications related to drug use.

It's particularly baffling that this bill is being tabled just over a month after supervised consumption sites were

shuttered across this province, that were designed to address the very issue that this government says that they want to solve. Supervised consumption sites were designed as a response to the overdose crisis to save lives and reduce public drug use. This government's reckless legislation pushed people out of safe, indoor, highly regulated, highly protocolized spaces where trained professionals were able to help people access treatment and the essential services they needed. And now, having shuttered those spaces, the government is wringing its hands because those same people have now been pushed out into the community and public drug use is becoming an increasing concern—which, by the way, every expert and harm reduction worker could have told you would happen if you closed supervised consumption sites, but you didn't even bother to ask them.

Now we're in a position where we have to implement solutions that are going to work to both keep people safe who are using drugs while ensuring that our community spaces can be enjoyed by everyone. This bill will not accomplish either goal. This bill is essentially a performative tough-on-crime distraction so that the government doesn't have to take responsibility for the policy failures that have gotten us in this position in the first place. Instead of addressing this head-on by investing in supportive housing or by reopening the doors of supervised consumption sites, we are seeing our government proposing that we try to criminalize our way out of a health crisis.

In this legislation, our government has proposed that we hand out \$10,000 fines or offer people up to six months in jail if they are found to be using drugs in public. For my members across the aisle, \$10,000 might seem like just the cost of one table at a fundraising dinner, but for someone who is unhoused and suffering from severe mental health conditions, it's more money than you can imagine paying in a lifetime, so the fines essentially become meaningless. Every person I know who is unhoused has been given ticket upon ticket and fine upon fine and charge upon charge, and they're never going to be paid. They're just going to hang over people's heads and erode their dignity and distract resources from actually addressing the problem. It's ridiculous, and it's performative. It's our government's attempt to say that they are doing something while, in fact, they're doing absolutely nothing to solve the problem or generate any sort of real solution.

And then there's the threat of up to six months in jail. Drug possession is already a crime, and we have been criminalizing people for drug use for years. Somehow, that hasn't seemed to solve the problem of public drug use.

On that note, it's important to remember that the cost of keeping someone in jail is seven times higher than the cost of housing them. So why are we dedicating resources and expanding the occupation of our jails instead of actually housing people?

Not only that, we know that for people who use substances, incarceration is far from a benign experience. It is one of the riskiest times for people who use drugs. A study from researchers in Hamilton found that people who are incarcerated have a 30% greater likelihood of dying

from a drug overdose in jail than they do in the community. And for those who manage to survive their incarceration, 1 in 10 die of an opioid overdose within two weeks of release.

Why is that happening? Well, because many people in jail are not offered the standard of care for treatment for their substance use disorders. As much as our government may want it to be, jails are not hospitals, they are not clinics, they are not mental health services and they are not the correct place for people with substance use disorders and mental health conditions. And as they're not uniformly offered opioid agonist therapy, which is a life-saving treatment for people with opioid use disorder, they are often not given any kind of continuity of health care when they leave jail. They're often released without any supports to unsafe locations, and without any effort to try and ensure a safe and successful transition back to the community. If someone does use drugs after jail, the loss of opioid tolerance from the time that they did spend incarcerated puts them at extreme risk of overdose and death.

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Make no mistake: Putting people in jail will not promote treatment; it will not help people enter recovery. We know that statistically, time in incarceration is bad for your health. It costs our system tremendously and its impact on a person's life who is incarcerated will cast a shadow for years.

I'll share one story with you of a young man I met named Kevin. At the time I met him in hospital, he was recovering from a severe infection of his spine called osteomyelitis. It's an infection that you get when bacteria is introduced into the bloodstream, often because of injecting in unsafe conditions or if you don't have access to harm reduction equipment like clean needles. This young man had been unhoused for years. He had a very severe opioid use disorder, and he had very little support. But we were lucky because his antibiotics worked and he was able to be one of the people who didn't become disabled or have a life-threatening experience with this particular infection.

When he was released from hospital, we were able to find him a spot in an emergency shelter. From there he was able to continue treatment that he had started in hospital for his opioid use disorder. Eventually, he was able to move from that shelter into a residential treatment program. He did extremely well in the residential treatment program, and, after many months without using substances, he was able to eventually move into supportive housing. When he had supportive housing, he didn't have to worry about his daily survival, so he was able to think about what he wanted to do with his life. He decided that he wanted to enrol in school. He wanted to enrol in a program for social services because he wanted to be able to help people who might find themselves in similar circumstances to him.

He did incredibly in school. He got straight As and ended up on the honour roll. Our conversations became focused on what he was learning in school, what he hoped

to do with his placements and what he hoped to contribute once he graduated. His mental health was stable, his physical health was stable and he had safe, reliable housing. Everything seemed to be going in the right direction.

Then came time for him to finish school and try to get a job in the social services sector, a career helping people, like he intended. But he needed to complete a vulnerable sectors check. With that vulnerable sectors check, a criminal record came up from the time years prior when he was deeply unwell, unhoused, had no support and was just trying to survive while coping with a severe mental health disorder. Because of that record, he was unable to access the employment opportunities that he had been working to earn for years. He had done everything that we suggest people in similar circumstances do. He had accessed treatment. He had tried to build a new life. He had tried to find meaningful work and contribute to his community. He had done everything right, and yet his history of incarceration was holding him back at a critical turning point in his life.

We can't be doing that to other people. It certainly is not a strategy to address a public health crisis. On the topic of addressing the opioid overdose crisis in Ontario, we know that the Auditor General recently concluded that the Ministry of Health does not have effective processes in place to meet the challenging and complex nature of the overdose crisis in Ontario. Amongst the Auditor General's findings, they concluded that the 2016 opioid strategy the ministry is working off of is outdated. It doesn't have the strategies we need to address the current crisis that we're in.

That makes sense because in 2016 we had barely started to see fentanyl on the street. Now it drives the vast majority of deaths that we see in our communities. We need a new strategy that reflects the complexity of the crisis we face today, and our government has failed to present one. The Auditor General also concluded that the government did not consider the impact of closing supervised consumption sites in our communities or on the people impacted by the overdose crisis. This doesn't surprise me, because anyone who actually worked in the field, supporting people who use drugs or is a member of that community could tell you that closing supervised consumption sites in the height of a public health emergency is a bad idea.

In the 10 supervised consumption sites closed upon the passing of legislation, 1,500 overdoses were reversed in one year alone. Do you know where those overdoses are going to be occurring now with your passed legislation? They are going to be occurring outdoors in our community with no one there to provide an emergency response. Is that part of the plan to make our community safer and reduce public drug use? Because it certainly doesn't seem like it.

The Auditor General also found that the ministry did not conduct a thorough, evidence-based, business analysis for the HART hub model to ensure that they would actually meet the needs of Ontarians. In other words, in the face of a public health emergency, the Ministry of Health

is choosing to fly blind, relying on ideology instead of evidence and just hoping for the best.

So let's talk about what some real strategies would be to actually address substance use as the health issue that it is. The first thing we could do that I hope the government would agree on is to make treatment accessible to every single person who wants to access it. Did you know that as of today, if you go to an emergency department in Ontario after an opioid overdose, only one in 20 people will be offered or started on the treatment for opioid use disorder? That would be like going to the hospital with a heart attack and only one in 20 times being offered the gold standard of care. It is completely unacceptable. We know that treatment for opioid use disorder is a life-saving medication that not only increases rates of substance use remission but also reduces all-cause mortality. We could immediately scale up funding and resources to make sure that every emergency department across Ontario has a protocol in place for treatment initiation immediately after an overdose is reversed, but why aren't we focusing on that?

Even further, we can ensure that every hospital has the funding for an addiction medicine consult service, so that whenever people are admitted to hospital for any reason and are identified as having a substance use disorder, they can be provided with the treatment they need in the moment that they present to care. Addiction medicine consult services have been widely studied, and they're available in some Ontario hospitals. Where they exist, they're found to reduce emergency department visits, to improve initiation and retention in substance use treatment and reduce hospital readmissions. Aren't those outcomes worth working towards? Why aren't we seeing funding announcements dedicated towards initiatives like those?

While we're at it, why aren't we ensuring that everyone has access to a family doctor who has training in mental health and addiction care? Why aren't we ensuring that our youth have access to mental health care early, so that we don't see more and more young people in our community turning to substances to try to manage their untreated symptoms while they're on wait-lists for essential child psychiatry? Why aren't we seeing any legislation about that?

While our government likes to talk about treatment a lot, saying that we need more treatment and less harm reduction, we know that treatment and harm reduction exist on the same spectrum of care. We need more of both, not less of either.

Removing harm reduction services to try to expand treatment is like installing air bags in your car and taking the out the seat belts. It doesn't make any sense.

But if our government is going to choose to promote treatment only, then why aren't we able to access all of the Health Canada-approved treatments for opioid use disorder in the province of Ontario? As of now, there are two health care-approved treatments for opioid use disorder that are not available on the Ontario Drug Benefit Formulary. Those are injectable diacetylmorphine and injectable hydromorphone, both of which are evidence-based

treatments for severe opioid use disorder approved by Health Canada. They're available in other places in Canada, but not in Ontario. Why is that?

There is also consensus among addiction medicine providers in Ontario that this is a tremendous gap in care, and so in 2021 and 2022, I was among a group of addiction medicine providers who wrote to the Minister of Health and the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions asking for these essential medications to be added to the ODB formulary. We never received a response. And still today, those medications are completely inaccessible. When will we see this government expanding the Ontario drug benefit to include every single Health Canada-approved treatment so that we have every tool at our disposal to address this public health crisis?

1650

On the topic of expanding treatment availability, why are we still having to call residential treatment programs, looking for beds for our patients desperately wanting services, and being told that the wait-list is months? Why aren't doors being swung open to every form of treatment and every program in Ontario and wait-lists being whittled down so that people can have access in a timely manner to the treatment our government so strongly recommends?

This year, our government announced the HART hub model as its solution. It announced that it was going to invest millions of dollars into this model that even the Auditor General identified was designed without any expert consultation, without community consultation, and without any defined criteria for what these programs would offer, what their deliverables would be, and how they would measure the return on our investment. Our government said that 28 HART hubs would be operational by the time supervised consumption sites closed. But here we are, over a month out, and less than one third of the HART hubs have actually signed funding agreements or are even minimally operational. Some programs that are said to have opened their doors, that are counted in that one third, are only offering laundry services, meals or case management, not the comprehensive wraparound treatment and residential treatment that our government promised.

My question for our Premier is, how can you justify closing supervised consumption sites promptly on March 31, when you said you would, but now you're moving at a snail's pace to try to put in place the alternatives that you chose?

As the Auditor General confirmed, HART hubs were always a half-baked policy decision designed to distract from the brutal decision of our government to strip away life-saving, evidence-proven harm reduction services. But now that they're being given millions of dollars, we might as well make sure that they're the best that they can be. So I would ask the Premier, when will we get accountability for when they will open doors, what services will actually be offered and what outcomes will be measured? And how will we know if they're actually making an impact on the toxic drug crisis?

Again, it cannot be said enough that if we actually want to reduce drug use in our public spaces, we must reopen supervised consumption sites. Supervised consumption sites are designed specifically to address the very problem you are trying to solve, while also saving lives and increasing access to treatment.

When I worked in a safe consumption site and we first opened our doors, a huge part of our job was doing the outreach into the community, speaking to people who were using drugs in public and encouraging them to come inside and use in a safe indoor space. We did that not only because we agree that it would be better for people not to have to use drugs outdoors, but also because we simply wanted people to be safe. We wanted them to stay alive. And most of the people we talked to eventually walked through our doors because we built trust. We showed them that we cared, and we didn't try to intimidate or coerce them with threats of punishment or criminalization. It was a win-win scenario. We were able to bring people inside into a space that would better meet their needs while also reducing drug use from occurring in our public spaces. These are the kind of wins that we need to be pursuing if we want to make a real difference in the overdose crisis. This is the opposite of what our government is doing with this bill. This bill will not make our communities safer.

Just like this government used children and concerned parents as a shield to close supervised consumption sites, they are trying to use visions of our public spaces and parks as a shield to further criminalize our community members, because closing down supervised consumption sites was never about the kids. If it was, sites would have been given the opportunity to move and relocate outside of the 200-metre radius around child care centres and schools. Instead, the government snuck in legislation that not only prevented those sites from moving but also prevented any new site from applying to become a supervised consumption site at any location outside of that radius. Similarly, now our government is using our public parks as a similar shield. This bill won't make our community spaces any safer. It won't reduce unsheltered homelessness. It won't address the toxic drug crisis. It will just pour millions of dollars into criminalization and filling up our jails. It's shameful.

I understand that discussions about drug use make some members of this House uncomfortable. You're uncomfortable perhaps with the thought of someone smoking fentanyl or injecting drugs. You may be uncomfortable with the sight of someone living in poverty or sleeping outdoors. You might be so uncomfortable that you want the problem to go away—to go out of sight, out of mind—but turning away doesn't solve problems. It doesn't relieve human suffering, and it certainly doesn't make our communities any safer.

So, I'll tell you what I'm uncomfortable with. I'm uncomfortable with any more of the people that I care about dying preventable deaths from overdose. I'm uncomfortable seeing needle and syringe programs being closed and attacked, knowing that myself and my colleagues are going to be diagnosing more and more

people with HIV and hep C this year, which is also preventable. I'm uncomfortable knowing that more and more people in our community are going to be targeted, criminalized and stigmatized rather than offered health care or housing.

But ultimately this isn't about anyone's comfort. This is about doing our jobs, and what our job demands of us is that we see beyond our feelings and we act in the best interest of those that we serve: that we follow the evidence, we listen to the experts, we engage our communities and we act to improve public health. We are in a public health emergency, but our government doesn't seem to realize it. Doctors, nurses, outreach workers, harm reduction workers—we know it. We're fighting it every day, and if our government isn't ready to step up to do the same, then at least step out of our way.

My colleague will be sharing with you more about schedule 2 of this bill and the impact of criminalizing people who are unhoused. But I will share with you one story about what an out-of-sight, out-of-mind approach to addressing homelessness and substance use looks like in real life.

A couple of years ago, I was caring for a young woman I met on the sidewalk outside of a clinic where I worked. She had a chronic illness that, if untreated, is life-threatening but, if treated, is entirely manageable, like any other chronic disease. This young woman had been without medical care for a long time.

At the time that I met her, she was so weak from her illness and from malnutrition and living outdoors that she couldn't physically walk into the clinic in which I worked. So, instead of seeing her in the clinic, myself, our nurses and our peer workers would care for her outdoors on the sidewalk, on the edge of an encampment. When we saw her, we talked to her about what mattered most to her, about how she wanted to live and get well and how she was really scared of what was happening to her. She had tried and tried to get indoors into shelter, but there was no place for her to go.

For months, we did the same. We called every single shelter, every single supportive housing unit in Hamilton and there was never any space for her. And so, she slept outside on the sidewalk but, knowing she was there, we were able to connect with her every week. We were able to initiate treatment for her chronic disease and her opioid use disorder. We even found a pharmacist who was able to deliver her medication to her daily to her spot on the sidewalk. She was able to get nutritional supplements there and, with regular medical care, she started to get well. She was still outside on a sidewalk, but with medical care we at least seemed to be tipping the scales in the right direction.

But one week we came to her regular spot, as we did every week, and she was gone. The encampment had been entirely cleared out and everyone in it had been moved along. When you're a health care provider caring for someone at chronically high risk like that, and you don't see them in your usual spot one week, you're immediately

gripped with the fear that they are dead, but you keep searching anyway.

1700

For months, we looked for her, and we couldn't find her. But we knew she was no longer getting access to her medical treatment, because the pharmacist didn't know where to find her, we didn't know where to find her and we knew that she was too weak to be able to access health care wherever she was. So, sadly, the next time I saw her, months later, she was admitted to hospital in critical condition. She was admitted because of complications of the same chronic illness we had been treating her for, and by the time we saw her, it had progressed so severely that there was no hope of recovery. Had she been able to get her medication in those intervening months, probably she would have had a different outcome. But in the end, the most we had to offer her—the most our system had to offer her—was keeping her comfortable in her final days so that her family could say goodbye.

I would ask the Premier: At what point in her story would you have thought it appropriate if an officer had approached her armed with this legislation and handed her a \$10,000 fine—not housing, not an offer of safety, not food, not a kind word, even, but a \$10,000 fine for simply sleeping on the sidewalk, trying to survive? If you can't stand by that, how can you stand by this bill?

Thank you, and I welcome my colleague.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): I recognize the member from Ottawa Centre.

MPP Catherine McKenney: Thank you to my colleague.

The homeless crisis in this province is a housing crisis. You have failed on the housing crisis. And Bill 6, the Safer Municipalities Act, imposes the most punitive measures on residents of encampments for the simple act of being without housing or shelter. It targets people who are experiencing homelessness—people believed to be in possession of drugs in public—as a means to immediately evict them, arrest them, jail them or fine them \$10,000, which no person who is homeless today could possibly afford.

While incarcerating people living in encampments may reduce the visibility of unsheltered and unhoused individuals, it does absolutely nothing to enhance public safety. Instead, it destabilizes the most marginalized individuals in our province. It pulls them away from any social supports they may have, often causing them to lose their belongings, including essential identification. And this in turn makes accessing income and other supports almost impossible. It puts people back on the street or in a park or somewhere even less safe because there is simply nowhere else to go just to exist.

We agree; everyone deserves to enjoy parks and public spaces and that parks are not homes, tents are not homes. But everyone also deserves a safe, affordable and dignified home. Tents and prisons are not acceptable replacements for safe, affordable and dignified housing.

And in my riding, we had a consumption and treatment site close, and for the people who were being served in that

site, they're now outside, they're in front of storefronts and they are unwell. There is nowhere for them to go. What used to occur in a health care setting, where people were attached to supports, attached to workers—their health care workers—is now occurring outside. So your goal of public safety has had the opposite effect, and there is no doubt that there is a chill on harm reduction in this province. Reducing harm and healing is what we should be thinking about.

The best way to end homelessness is to actually keep people in their homes, with protection for renters, doubling ODSP and Ontario Works, providing real housing benefits to those at greatest risk of imminently losing their housing. And the best way to end encampments is to create supportive housing units, allowing people living in encampments or the shelter system to move into a safe, permanent affordable home while connecting them to mental health care, addiction treatment and other supports.

A recent article published by the Trillium in April highlights the critical role that well-funded supportive housing can play in alleviating pressure on both Ontario's housing and health care systems. A cost avoidance review commissioned by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing and completed by KPMG firm in 2022 found that supportive housing not only improves outcomes for vulnerable Ontarians—something we all want—but also that investments can yield an annual return of up to \$2 for every \$1 spent. This is done primarily through reduced hospitalization and emergency department visits.

A more recent report from Addictions and Mental Health Ontario found that nearly 10% of patients occupying mental health beds in Ontario hospitals no longer require that level of care yet remain there due to lack of appropriate housing. The financial implications are significant, with care for these patients costing up to \$1,200 per day, compared to supportive housing costs that range from about \$75 to \$150 a day.

Despite the clear economic and social benefits, demand for supportive housing vastly exceeds the available supply. Over 36,000 Ontarians are currently on wait-lists for mental health and addictions supportive housing, with fewer than 1,000 placed each year.

The Association of Municipalities Ontario has estimated that more than 80,000 people experienced homelessness across the province last year, and those mayors identified the creation of more supportive housing as a key solution to the growing homelessness crisis.

Yet, despite these urgent indicators, this government's response has been inadequate. Much of the new investments announced by the government are simply repackaged from previous commitments. The actual delivery of new units has fallen drastically short. And as part of its plan, as my colleague pointed out, to transition to a HART hub model for addiction and recovery, this government plans to create 560 new supportive housing units, which, if they do get built, would serve 1.5% of the estimated wait-list for MHA supportive housing.

They deserve a government that is willing to act boldly and invest meaningfully in supportive housing, not one

who seeks to criminalize homelessness through punitive measures like the Safer Municipalities Act. Instead, this bill is a misguided approach to public safety that punishes people who, as a result of failed policy and political decisions made in this Legislature, are homeless today.

Schedule 2 of this act, amendments to the Trespass to Property Act, amends the Trespass to Property Act by introducing aggravating factors that are meant to disproportionately impact homeless individuals who have nowhere else to go. The obvious comparison to this government's intended punitive approach in Bill 6 is the complete failure that is the Safe Streets Act, a Harris government holdover that we have always opposed. As of March 2024, there were \$28.9 million in outstanding SSA fines. That's because these fines are impossible to collect for all of the well-established reasons that unhoused populations have complex needs that cannot be addressed through the criminal sanctions system. What the laying of these offences does do is prevent people from securing housing and certain jobs by putting them into a debtor's prison. There is no net positive. This won't be a deterrent to a population that has complex addiction and/or mental health issues and is suffering from deep poverty.

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What this bill does not factor are the reasons that many unhoused people resist shelters in favour of living in tents. Unhoused people repeatedly cite dangerous conditions or prohibitive exclusions, such as splitting up couples. Municipalities and service providers will also point out that shelters in this province are well beyond capacity. There is no room at the shelter, and there is no housing. Unsurprisingly, this act does not speak to how someone would be forced to take a shelter space after they've been cleared from a proscribed place.

The simple math bears it out. A January 2025 report, again from the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, estimated that there were more than 80,000 people who experienced homelessness in Ontario in 2024. This was a 25% increase from 2022. AMO recommended greater investments, supportive housing and more support and resources for municipalities that have been left dealing with the consequences of the province's failure to adequately invest in affordable and supportive housing. So even if everyone in encampments today agreed to move into a shelter, there are three times more people who are homeless and unhoused than there are shelter beds. This act has the effect of penalizing people who cannot afford housing and cannot access shelter spaces because of the government's own failings. People are living in encampments, and there is a clear link between the levels of capacity, overcrowding and safety within the shelter systems and the emergence of the growth of encampments.

The Federal Housing Advocate's review of encampments interim report in 2023 summarized what they heard over the course of their public engagement about conditions contributing to the increase in encampments. This is input directly from people who have lived in encampments, from front-line workers, advocates, community members and from Indigenous people and their represent-

ative organizations. One front-line worker described the lack of shelter space as “a crisis,” noting that lack of space in winter means people are forced to remain outside, exposed to the elements. Some get frostbite, in some cases resulting in amputated fingers and toes. Some people have died from exposure: “We had to drop people off at emergency rooms to keep them alive.”

The advocate heard of the deep fear and exhaustion from advocates and individuals on the front line of the housing crisis who feel like they are “fighting a losing battle” as the right to housing becomes more and more out of reach for so many. They expressed frustration at the backlash to encampments because “there is no housing to offer people.” Participants in the review described the severe lack of supportive housing that meets the particular needs of people with active and severe addictions. This government wants people in treatment, but participants shared that “alongside a limited supply of detox and rehab programs, there are not enough housing options for people leaving those programs.” They will leave treatment programs and go back into homelessness.

People also face discrimination because of their low income, being unhoused or both. The advocate heard of an increasing trend of landlords not accepting tenants who rely on social assistance.

Some people seeking housing shared that the only housing options offered were uninhabitable. Participants described seeing violations of adequate housing standards so deplorable due to rodents, bedbugs and lack of running water that they would rather live outside.

For many trying to avoid a relapse into addiction, a shelter can also be triggering, as poor mental health is exacerbated by living in a dorm with no privacy.

We heard how shelters can sometimes be so unsafe that people will choose to live outside. Many of the participants who were consulted in the review said they face serious safety issues such as violence, gender-based violence and systematic discrimination and racism. For women and gender-diverse people, staying in shelters can expose them to violence, including sexual assault. Some noted that women, trans women and gender-diverse people are more likely to avoid shelters out of fear of violence, sexual exploitation and child apprehension and therefore have more difficulty accessing services.

The housing advocate’s review of homeless encampments also paints an alarming picture of the housing and homelessness crisis in Canada, particularly its devastating impact on Indigenous peoples. While the right to adequate housing is recognized in both domestic and international law, including through Canada’s commitment to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the reality on the ground tells a much different story. Indigenous individuals account for 35% of those experiencing homelessness nationally despite representing only 5% of the population, an alarming disparity rooted in Canada’s legacy of colonial practices, systemic underfunding and ongoing jurisdictional neglect. In Ontario, Indigenous people are not only overrepresented in encampments but are often failed by housing systems that

are neither culturally safe nor responsive to their specific needs.

UNDRIP affirms Indigenous peoples’ right to self-determined housing and urges governments to work in co-operation with Indigenous representatives, yet the provincial government often funnels funding to non-Indigenous service providers while Indigenous governments and urban Indigenous organizations remain under-resourced and sidelined. This has left many without access to culturally appropriate housing, particularly in urban areas where Indigenous homelessness is compounded by gaps in transition services, inadequate data collection and a lack of recognition for Indigenous jurisdiction.

This government must stop passing the buck. It has a clear responsibility to act by supporting Indigenous-led housing initiatives; aligning provincial law and policy with UNDRIP; and ensuring that all Ontarians, including Indigenous people living both on- and off-territory, have access to safe, adequate and dignified housing. The Safer Municipalities Act in front of us, which increases policing powers and paves the way for forced encampment evictions, runs counter to these principles. Instead of criminalizing poverty and displacing the unhoused, Ontario must invest in long-term, rights-based housing solutions that address the root cause of homelessness, especially those disproportionately impacting Indigenous communities.

I want to recount an experience in Ottawa in 2019. This was before the real explosion in visible encampments. There was a rooming house downtown that was home to 20 people. That rooming house caught fire in April 2019. Like all fires, it was in the news, and then it faded out of the news. By summer, we realized that those 20 people were still sleeping outside. Their home had burned, and there was nowhere for them to go. By late October and early November, they were huddled every night in the doorway of the community health centre, who just lost their consumption and treatment services. They were huddled in a doorway every night, most of them, still trying to stay warm. These 20 individuals never were able to access housing. They set up an encampment, the city shut it down, and they disappeared. I remember talking to one of them and asking them, “Do you have a housing worker?” He said, “Yes, I do.” I said, “Good. How is your housing worker going to get in touch with you?” He said, “I don’t know.” I said, “Well, do you have a phone?” “No.” “Do they know where you are?” “No.”

1720

That is the reality of people in encampments. They are completely detached. They do not have housing. They do not have access to shelter. They cannot go inside. Often, over a short period of time, you lose connection to them.

In my closing minutes here, I want to talk about an example of closing down encampments that is working. The government of Manitoba is also committed to ending encampments. Their plan focuses on their residents who are currently living in encampments. While they continue to invest in building housing—both social and affordable housing—their immediate priority is to house people in encampments by making suitable housing available to

people living there and by providing the addictions, mental health and primary care supports people need to successfully transition into housing. To meet this goal, they are actively acquiring and renovating apartment buildings to house people from encampments, and funding wrap-around staffing supports to support these new tenants as they move in.

I just want to quote from the report: “Working with” municipalities “and sector partners on a 30-day timeline, we will offer housing supports to everyone in a designated encampment and work to move people from the encampment into housing. This transition will be supported by a new navigation centre where people will be provided safe and comfortable indoor accommodations while their needs are further assessed and supports provided. Mental health and addictions treatment and other supports between the encampment and more permanent housing options will ensure that more people successfully make” a safe “transition from encampments into housing.

“When an encampment is empty, we will clean and decommission the site and take measures to monitor the location to ensure the space can be used safely by everyone without new encampments being established.” It can be done.

At the end of the next seven years, it is their ambition that everyone in the province has safe and secure housing, their neighbourhoods are safer, and sleeping in a tent is no longer an option because they can provide the housing and supports to help people find their way home.

Again, under their framework—because I want to be able to humanize the very people we are criminalizing here. When I read what the government of Manitoba is doing, by taking this immediate action to move unsheltered people into suitable housing—they also are implementing a plan to address the shortage of housing and supports needed to end chronic homelessness. They’re doing this by increasing the supply of social housing with wraparound services. They’re creating a housing-first program. They’re developing an outcomes-based framework. They’re addressing gaps that lead youth and vulnerable people into homelessness by reducing the number of youth entering into homelessness from the child welfare system. They’re ensuring people transitioning out of health care services and corrections systems do not end up homeless.

Lastly, they are inspiring hope and developing pathways to success. They’re doing this in two ways: family reunification, education, employment, and all the steps needed to ensure that those who have experienced homelessness can live the full lives that they have imagined; and for tenants in supportive housing facilities, this may include helping people pursue personal interests and hobbies, participate in meal and housekeeping services, and be able to attend cultural and recreational activities in their communities. They will provide training and employment opportunities available for trades and support services—because it’s a government that has recognized that these are people like you and me and the people in our lives we love and care for.

This is very similar to the NDP plan to end encampments by, again, investing in real housing solutions, giving people the support they need, doubling ODSP and OW so that people can afford to live in their homes, and stopping people losing their homes by bringing forward real protection for renters so people can better keep up with the cost of housing—and keep people in their homes.

We would create 60,000 new supportive housing units that allow people living in encampments or the shelter system to move into a safe and permanent home with mental health care, addiction treatment and other necessary supports. We would upload shelter funding to the province from municipalities and provide more housing benefits to keep people housed and allow them to move out of shelters and into homes.

I also want to share an experience, as city councillor in Somerset ward, which is part of Ottawa Centre. When COVID hit our community, there were many people who had absolutely nowhere to go. Many of them lived in overcrowded rooming houses. But for the most part, people really had nowhere to go. They had nowhere to basically even just use the washroom.

We opened up respite centres. This is key. We opened up respite centres, and because our recreation services had disappeared overnight—people weren’t accessing recreation services—we used recreation staff in our respite centres. These staff had previously—and they shared this after they had been doing this for about six months. Previous to this experience, if somebody had come into a recreation centre, an arena, and was acting in a way that made them feel a bit uncomfortable—somebody who looked like they might be street-involved—they would call security. What happened in these respite centres is that over the course of 12, 18 months, they got to know the people who were coming into the centres, who had been experiencing homelessness, and they understood what their absolute, unique needs were. They understood them as unique people. They understood that having big lists of people who may or may not be homeless was one thing, but understanding that this person in front of you really only needed to be reconnected with their family and this person over here only needed help to get housing—and they were successful in reducing the number of people in our community who needed housing.

1730

I’ll just leave you with this: What’s missing in this act is compassion—and this will remain the case until the government can demonstrate that it has the social infrastructure in place to provide permanent housing for people.

In this Legislature, we have the power. We are so fortunate to be here, all of us, and we have immense power to both harm and heal. I would implore all of us to do what is right for people who are unhoused and unsheltered and choose a policy that will not continue to harm them. They are unwell. They need our compassion. They need our help. We must choose a policy that will help to heal people, and we will all be better off for it.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Hon. Rob Flack: I appreciate both members' impassioned speeches.

Absolutely, we have to look after those in unfortunate situations when it comes to whatever circumstance they have in life—especially housing.

My question is very simple. Do you believe that encampments should stay in public parks?

MPP Catherine McKenney: Speaker, to the minister: We agree that a park is not a home, a tent is not a home. But without homes and without shelter space, we need to do what's right. We need to move people out of tents, out of encampments, as we are providing housing; not as we are providing prison or as we are providing a fine. What we need to do is be very, very determined, very specific about how we do that, and we can.

When we think about the number of people in encampments, the number of people who are chronically homeless, it is not insurmountable, in a province like Ontario, to be able to take people out of encampments and provide them with the housing that they need.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

M^{me} France Gélinas: My question will be for the member for Hamilton Centre. I really enjoyed—and I learned a lot—listening to what the member had to say. She shared with us first-line experience—working as a physician, helping people facing mental health and addictions, and what can be done.

What difference would having access to the mental health services and the addictions services that you need make if there weren't wait-lists, if there were treatments available—if there were services and care available to everybody who wants them, who needs them? What effect and what difference will it make on the number of people who are in the parks, who are in encampments?

I just want to know her opinion as to making those services available to all who want them and need them.

MPP Robin Lennox: I thank my colleague from Nickel Belt for the question.

We could do so much by increasing access to timely services.

For example, for many of these folks, you might encourage them to attend detox or a treatment facility. But I think what many people don't understand is that to get into detox, which is often your first step, you have to call every single day until there is a bed. Imagine if you are living in an encampment and you don't have a phone, you don't have the ability to walk to the detox every day to ask if there's a space. And then there's the effect of being told every day that there is no space for you—that even though you are asking for help, there is no one willing to actually open the door and give you that bed and give you that opportunity.

That is what we are seeing across this province—closed doors to detox, to treatment, to housing, to supervised consumption sites. We need to start opening doors and allowing people to walk through them.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): I recognize the member from Orléans.

Mr. Stephen Blais: I have a question for my friend from Ottawa Centre.

I'm glad you mentioned your work on Ottawa city council and the challenges. You certainly are a very passionate advocate for homelessness.

But too often, the advocacy and the rhetoric from members of the New Democrats, including this member, say one thing and the voting record says another. You yourself and New Democrats across the province have voted against new housing developments in the suburbs. You've voted against intensification projects in your own community. And in Ottawa, you voted against the creation of new shelter beds.

So if we're not going to build new houses for people to live in and we're not going to build new apartment buildings for people to live in and we're not going to build shelter spaces for homeless people to sleep in, I'm wondering where you and your colleagues in the NDP think these people are going to live.

MPP Catherine McKenney: Thank you for that question.

Well, people who are living in encampments certainly are not moving into homes in the suburbs, so I would dismiss that.

I will say this: I am not an advocate for building more shelters. Shelters take longer to build than housing. They're more expensive than housing. And it's how we got into this mess in the first place. For the last 30 years, we have invested in shelters and shelters. We have got to invest in housing.

So I agree with you. We do not want to continue to put money into shelter systems that take too long to build and are far more expensive than just giving people safe and dignified housing that they deserve.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I do see other jurisdictions taking a different approach. We see Finland and Houston and Winnipeg really diving deep into wraparound supports and housing solutions, and they're dramatically reducing homelessness.

I wonder if either of you could speak to what you've seen, a new—that approach taking and the actual positive impacts and solutions that come from that.

MPP Catherine McKenney: Thank you for that question.

I actually had the opportunity to meet with representatives from Finland who put in place what is called a housing-first model. We have that here in Canada. It was actually the Harper government who put in place the funding—At Home/Chez Soi. It was year-long funding to look at what works to bring people out of chronic homelessness and into housing.

With the housing-first model, what is important, and what Finland has done, is two things. One is, they divert from homelessness. If you are going to fall into homelessness, they do everything they can to stop that

from happening. So they divert you from shelter, and then what they do is, they provide you housing, scattered housing—so you choose which neighbourhood you want to live in. Perhaps you grew up in a certain neighbourhood, and that's where you want to live. Perhaps you've got family in another neighbourhood, and that's where you want to live. Once you're invested in that housing that you have chosen and you've got those wraparound supports, we see that the success rate in keeping people housed is over 90%.

So housing-first is the model that we should all be looking at. We've got the evidence.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Hon. Doug Downey: I was listening very intently.

As the members opposite know, the Trespass to Property Act has built-in penalties. They were there; they've been there for some time—the up to \$10,000 and otherwise, which they seem to have some issue with. So my question to the member opposite is, would you adjust those and take away the discretion of the judge for the individual who is coming before them?

MPP Robin Lennox: Thank you for the question.

As the member opposite has said, you're focused on fining people and what the right number is. We're not focused on asking people who are living outdoors to pay a fine; we're focused on housing them.

So, rather than tinkering with the numbers, I would ask you to commit to actually solving the root problem—to offering people supportive housing, to offering people health care. When you do those two things, it won't matter what the fine number is, because you will have actually offered people a way to a dignified, safe life that they deserve.

1740

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: You know, the homeless problem is not new in this province. It's now really grown so exponentially. I have to say, in the 1990s when the NDP government proposed social housing, geared-to-income housing and co-operative housing, if those plans had continued, imagine where we would be today when it comes to housing—and where we are today. Imagine where we are today as we're talking about giving people \$10,000 fines and putting them in jail for six months. I'd like to know, after they've been incarcerated and been fined, what's the plan when they've been released to actually get housing and treatment in this bill?

MPP Catherine McKenney: Well, thank you for that question. I think that there is no plan. I would suggest—I've read the act. I do not see a third schedule that explains what happens when people come back out of prison, have got a \$10,000 fine, are still unhoused, still have no shelter and still will be living in an encampment somewhere in one of our municipalities. Thank you for that question.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Further debate?

Ms. Lee Fairclough: I'll be splitting my time today with the member from Orléans and the member from Don Valley East, and each of us will be bringing some different perspectives to this issue.

Just to start, let us all be clear: I think that we all share a desire for our communities to be safer. I think the main question we should all be asking ourselves is whether this bill is actually going to achieve that for our communities.

In my own riding, we had 38 encampments of various sizes in the last year, including one very large one at the LAMP Community Health Centre in south Etobicoke. It was a challenging time for the community. It took some months for the city of Toronto to find shelter for everyone. Homelessness continues to grow in our community. As a member of that community, as a mother of two children, I sympathize that all are looking for safety and they are also looking for solutions to better support those that are forced to be living in encampments.

However, homelessness is growing. Irrefutably, it is becoming worse. It has become worse over the last seven years, and homelessness is no longer a problem for urban centres. Every community, including rural and northern communities, is struggling with the challenge. Unhoused people are members of our community, and they are the ones that are losing their homes. The Association of Municipalities of Ontario issued a landmark report in January citing an increase of 25% over two years, from 2022 to 2024, to 80,000 people unhoused across the province, 11% of which are children under the age of 15.

No one wants to live in a tent in a park. We know what works: income supports, ensuring they have affordable and supportive housing and making sure that people access care, including mental health and addictions care. That's how we keep everybody safe and that's how we build strong communities.

We know what to do about homelessness, and when I say “we,” I mean not only the experts, but I mean the public. Abacus Data recently published data on public opinion on homelessness. Their poll showed that 80% of Ontarians, including the majority of conservative supporters, know we need housing, mental health supports, health care and services. Only 20% support an enforcement regime that will send people who simply can't afford the rent and just need some health care into jails that are overcrowded, and will send them back to the streets, perhaps more hardened, perhaps with a newer, worsening addiction, making our communities less safe.

So, I think we've talked about this today, but housing is the only solution for homelessness. From the Everyone Counts Canadian survey, we know that the number one reason adults 25 plus lose their housing is affordability. ODSP recipients receive \$1,368 per month, at 60% of the poverty line, and they're losing their homes through renovictions, legal rent increases that are beyond the provincial guideline or any increase in their benefits. But the housing crisis is impacting people beyond those relying on social assistance.

In a recent gathering of constituents in our riding to talk about homelessness and talk about shelter planning, the

Daily Bread Food Bank spent time with us so that we could understand our situation in south Etobicoke. The Daily Bread Food Bank reported that 51% of new users are from households where one person is employed; 73% have a post-secondary diploma or degree. Rents have surged in Ontario by 54% over the last decade, more than three times the provincial guidelines of 16.5%, and 80% of food bank users are renters. And one in five are spending 100% of their income on housing.

Ontarians get it. Homelessness ranked as a top concern for Canadians, with 23% ranking it among the top three issues—placing it ahead of crime, actually.

The same Abacus poll showed an astonishing 61% of Ontario residents are concerned that they themselves could lose their homes with a change in financial circumstance. And when asked what impact the housing market is having on them personally, 35% reported that it's impacting their mental health. Housing, and the risk of losing it, is very personal and very real for 60% of Ontarians.

And they have a right to be concerned. Last week, the FAO released its very sobering findings on the projected impacts of Trump's tariffs on our economy. The report had me casting back to the Association of Municipalities of Ontario's report that, projecting an economic downturn, the number of homeless people could increase from 80,000 today to 300,000 in the next 10 years. We could be facing the perfect storm.

Protecting Ontario means protecting Ontarians. What is the government's plan to help people remain in their homes in the event of an economic downturn?

Last fall, the Premier said, "If there is anyone out there who maybe has mental health issues, addictions, has a disability, I am always going to take care of those people for the rest of their lives." It's actually time to make good on that promise.

Without real and meaningful provincial action, the quality of life and economic prosperity of Ontario's communities is at risk. We can solve this crisis, but we need to work together. It's time the government gets serious about housing and about income supports to keep people housed. The current provincial housing policy has meant that for every new affordable unit in Toronto that's built, we lose 15 private affordable units.

We also need to be talking about addictions and homelessness, given what's articulated in this bill. There are many people who are homeless who find themselves in the throes of addiction. I doubt, actually, that there's a single member in this Legislature who hasn't been directly or indirectly impacted by addiction in a loved one.

For those who lost their homes because of affordability, the risk of getting addicted to substances markedly increases once on the streets. Yet the unhoused are not the only ones in the midst of an addiction crisis. We know that 20% of high school students will have tried an opioid by the time they finish high school. Think about that. Think about the kids in your community: a basketball team of five kids, one will try; a rugby team of 15 players, three will try.

As the mom of teenagers who worked at a hospital that saw every day the kids that were in need of treatment and were succumbing to substance use, this is a very real issue. They were the same. They were kids just like my kids.

Many people today, children included, are being targeted by drug dealers. For those profiting off addiction, it makes sense to pursue strong criminal charges. I would agree with that. But for those who are both housed or unhoused, substance abuse is a health care issue. This is squarely the responsibility of the government, and we need to be doing more.

In terms of health care, instead of the provisions in this bill, another choice would be to increase support to those living rough that may be in need of care. The bill talks about how in regulations, you may be able to access services, but do we really feel those services are going to be there?

It's estimated that 60% of people living homeless have a mental health or substance use challenge. An additional 12% struggle with substance. Those that may be experiencing mental illness require active support through programs such as ACT teams. ACT teams are community-based health care teams that meet people where they're at.

This government will talk about the HART model. That's our solution to new mental health services. But in my view, it's an announceable response to the fact that there isn't enough mental health or addictions service in the system, and they are loosely formed at best. Developing proposals that have required no option to include supervised consumption—many have wondered what will be the reason that somebody might actually choose to walk into a HART hub to begin with.

1750

Basic disposal of used needles used to be the reason, actually. That was one of the reasons. Yet this government seems to have a problem with even this very basic community safety measure. They promise safer communities. The Premier describes hating finding needles in parks, and I do, too, actually. But they've actually implemented policy that will likely see that increase, not decrease, and I just don't understand it. It is very shortsighted. It doesn't make communities safe. Models that will actually go into communities, medically support people in the community, will be the only option, I think.

Now, in terms of corrections, there's a very pragmatic part of this bill that I couldn't understand. We have 80,000 people homeless. Many will be living in encampments with no other option. This bill will allow for their arrest and for them to be put in jail, assuming a \$10,000 fine is unreachable for someone who has no other option but to live in a tent. So they go into our provincial correctional facility. Genuine question: How?

Today the Toronto South Detention Centre in my riding of Etobicoke–Lakeshore is already full and beyond capacity. The facility holds 1,650 inmates. It's designed to sleep two to a cell, but they're already sleeping three to a cell. Where are people going to go? Most of the people in this jail are on remand awaiting trial. People then complain of the early release of people that have been arrested

multiple times. The courts are not able to process cases quickly enough, and some have been released because so much time has passed.

I will say I was happy to finally hear this week that there are 17 additional judges that have been hired. I'll be watching closely to be sure that happens. It's about time. But it feels like that will hardly scratch the surface of the backlog. In 2022-23, 80% of individuals in provincial custody facilities in Ontario were on remand and therefore legally innocent. Guidance from the Public Prosecution Service of Canada, which considers health and social realities of substance, suggests:

- criminal prosecution of possession of a controlled substance should generally be reserved for the most serious offence;

- alternatives to prosecution should be considered when possession relates to substance use disorder; and

- alternatives to prosecution should be considered when the offender's conduct can be adequately addressed through alternative means—approaches that will rescue the likelihood of recidivism.

The Premier's answer to this is to target judges, to say they're not doing their job, and like other government-funded programs like health care and education, the government starves them and then blames them for failure. So let's see those new judges. Let's see them address these cases.

I also have recommendations that if the government does go ahead with this bill, something needs to change in how health care and, more specifically, mental health care is provided within correctional facilities. During my time at CAMH, I became familiar with the forensic mental health program that operated both at Vanier and the Toronto South Detention Centre. In this program, psychiatrists, addictions medicine experts, social workers and mental health nurses work alongside the team at the facility to ensure everyone entering and/or on remand is provided care if it's needed. It's been studied for close to a decade, and it has shown excellent results.

Now that same model is being expanded into the community. It's called community FEIS, or community forensic early intervention. It acknowledges that the time of release, especially for those being held in remand, is one of the most vulnerable to overdose deaths, or at most risk for a return to unhealthy behaviour. Community FEIS ensures that care started continues and actively helps to connect people with primary care.

However, these programs have not scaled despite years of requests to scale them. The program is needed. It's evidence-based. If you move ahead with this bill and plan for an influx of arrests, I highly recommend you look closely at what is going to be needed in our overcrowded correctional facilities.

This is about priorities. The government has the wrong priorities. The Premier says he's protecting Ontario, but is he? Real protection means keeping people in their homes, raising incomes and funding health care that meets people where they are. But under this government, homelessness has jumped 25% in just two years. Children and youth make up almost 25% of the 80,000 who have been forced

into homelessness. Working people are now lined up at food banks, not because they don't want to work but because rent is rising faster than their wages.

This is solvable, and it's about political will. The Association of Municipalities of Ontario has conducted the most comprehensive work on this space. For \$11 billion over 10 years, we can end chronic homelessness. Meanwhile, the Premier submitted his wish list to Mark Carney yesterday for a \$120-billion tunnel under the 401.

In conclusion, as the Liberal critic for homelessness, hospitals, mental health and addictions, I can say that the need for the creation of this bill is a direct result of inaction by the current government on these issues over the last seven years. The fact that people are forced to be living outdoors on the streets is a failure of housing and affordability. The intensity of the drug supply and the impacts on people's health is a direct result—and now the lack of safety both within communities and for those addicted to such deadly substances as fentanyl and stimulants.

The Association of Municipalities of Ontario said that we have reached a tipping point for homelessness in Ontario. They have said that while they welcome some enforcement provisions, the small amount of dollars that the province has allocated to them is simply a drop in the bucket for what is required to get at the root causes of homelessness. We need to implore the provincial government to come to the table with a serious policy framework funding housing and health care, including mental health care and addictions care.

The municipalities have been shouldering the burden for this cost and human resources of dealing with these issues that are the responsibility of the province of Ontario. What this means is that municipalities are subsidizing up to \$5 billion a year that should be covered by the province.

The government has found \$2 billion to spend on a foreign-owned spa at Ontario Place. They spent almost a billion dollars to get beer into corner stores earlier, and now they're talking about, I'm told, tens of billions of dollars to build a tunnel under the 401. Again, it's a matter of priorities, and I hope that this government believes that it's fair to ensure that people who are housed can stay housed and that we can invest in affordable housing. We must build up our supply and repair our existing stock. This is a far more productive use of taxpayer dollars and will better support priorities, such as job creation.

I also urge the Premier to do what he said he would do, which is to take care of those who are disabled and unable to work by increasing their income supports so that they can remain housed.

It's time for the government, as we face Donald Trump's tariffs and the threats they pose, to ensure the economic well-being of our communities and families. The government has an opportunity to protect Ontarians, to create jobs and to stop and reverse the growth of homelessness.

So, in terms of this bill, I'll say again: It's really sad that we find ourselves needing to review such a bill. I'm sympathetic that people want communities free of encampments. As we discussed the need for shelters in my

own community, I see sympathy that they feel for those finding themselves homeless, because they are their neighbours. Speaker, 80% of Canadians don't think enforcement is the answer; it's all the other aspects of housing, health care and mental health care. Should this bill pass, our goal needs to be to minimize the times that it is actually used.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): I recognize the member from Orléans.

Mr. Stephen Blais: I rise today, and very likely obviously tomorrow morning, to speak to Bill 6, the Safer Municipalities Act, 2025—legislation that has sparked strong emotions, conflicting viewpoints, and I believe an

opportunity for us in this chamber to take a more honest and balanced approach to one of the most visible and painful issues in our communities today.

At its core, Bill 6 is about giving municipalities and law enforcement the tools to manage public drug use and dismantle encampments. These are not abstract concerns. These are daily realities for people across Ontario—

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Thank you. *Second reading debate deemed adjourned.*

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): The time being 6 p.m., this House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow, May 7, 2025.

The House adjourned at 1800.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Speaker / Présidente de l'Assemblée législative: Hon. / L'hon. Donna Skelly

Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

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Bell, Jessica (NDP)	University—Rosedale	
Bethlenfalvy, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (PC)	Pickering—Uxbridge	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Blais, Stephen (LIB)	Orléans	
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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
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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
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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	

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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
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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

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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	