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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 27 October 2025

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 27 octobre 2025

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUPPORTING CHILDREN AND STUDENTS ACT, 2025 LOI DE 2025 SUR LE SOUTIEN AUX ENFANTS, AUX ÉLÈVES ET AUX ÉTUDIANTS

Resuming the debate adjourned on June 5, 2025, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 33, An Act to amend various Acts in relation to child, youth and family services, education, and colleges and universities / Projet de loi 33, Loi modifiant diverses lois relatives aux services à l'enfance, à la jeunesse et à la famille, à l'éducation et aux collèges et universités.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member for Ottawa West–Nepean.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I'll be sharing my time with the member for London West.

It's an honour to rise once again on behalf of the residents of Ottawa West–Nepean. I had the opportunity to begin speaking to this bill back in June before the House rose for the summer. When I was speaking about this government's track record for democracy, which this bill is a part of the context of, I couldn't have known that my speech was about to be interrupted by a 19-week summer break. The government cancelled the first seven weeks of the fall session, which kind of makes my point about a disrespect for democracy and the rights of people's voices to be heard by their government and to know that their government is making decisions that reflect their concerns and priorities.

But what that very long break from the Legislature allowed me to do, Speaker, was to spend a lot of time speaking with parents in Ottawa West–Nepean and across Ontario. I can say, fundamentally, that nobody in Ontario is asking for this bill. Nobody in Ontario is asking for the government to take away the rights of parents and communities to have a say in our local schools. What parents desperately want to see is funding to address the many challenges in our education system. They want to see investments that replace the more than \$6 billion that this government has taken out of our schools. More than 40% of boards are running deficits under this government, and

that number is going up every single year because of repeated education funding cuts.

You can't take \$6.35 billion out of an education system, Speaker, without having significant impacts on our kids. We're seeing those impacts every single day with larger class sizes, a crisis in school violence. According to the Auditor General, reports of violent incidents have increased 114% since this government came to power, and that's just the incidents that are being reported. We know that many of them go unreported, either because the education workers and teachers feel like nothing happens with their report, so there's no reason to bother submitting those reports or because those violent incidents are happening so frequently that they could spend all of their time filling out paperwork and they need to just prioritize the most egregious incidents.

We know that our kids are facing a mental health crisis, and yet only one in 10 schools has regularly scheduled access to a mental health professional. Half of our schools have no access at all, which means that our young people, our youth, are being brave enough to say that they need support, and that support is not there for them. They step forward and say, "I need somebody to help me through this challenge," and we're leaving them hanging, sometimes until the next school year.

Our kids desperately need more caring adults around them to provide support every single day. We need an emergency plan to end school violence, like the one that the NDP developed in consultation with education workers and teachers who came to us and told us what they need to see in order to tackle the problem of violence in our schools.

Instead of taking that step, what the government is doing, Speaker, is spending only 15.4 cents per student, per day on student well-being at a moment when we have a crisis in violence. They are only spending 22.9 cents per student, per day on mental health and not even all of that money is going into front-line supports in schools. That's not how you address a mental health crisis for our kids.

These are the challenges that parents and communities want to see this government addressing. They want to see those funds coming back into our schools. They want to see qualified teachers, education workers and mental health professionals. They want to see smaller class sizes.

Instead of that, what this government is doing is trying to distract from their record. They are trying to dodge accountability for what they are doing. Instead of taking these steps that parents desperately want to see, they are conducting a blatant power grab trying to centralize power over our local schools here in downtown Toronto. They

are attacking the rights of parents like me, like you, to have a say in what happens in our children's classrooms. They are attacking the rights of communities to participate in decision-making about our local schools.

This is why local decision-making matters so much, Speaker. You cannot have a minister in downtown Toronto making decisions for students in communities in Kenora, in Cochrane, in Ottawa, in Minden, in Owen Sound and Amherstburg. These regions, these communities, are all so different. They are fundamentally different from downtown Toronto, and they are very different from one another.

We know what we need in our communities. We know what the local concerns and priorities are. We know what programs would benefit our kids. We know how these schools could meet the needs of our community. The minister in downtown Toronto has no idea. What is he doing trying to impose his power grab on our schools, to take away our rights, to say, "This is what our kids need; this is what our community needs"? That is fundamentally undemocratic.

Just to give you an idea of what kinds of decisions the minister is giving himself power over, Speaker, it's where schools are located; where they're being built in the first place; which school your kid goes to; what the school boundaries are; what the bus routes are; how your child is going to be able to get to school and how long they spend on the bus; what programs are offered; whether or not they'll have access to French immersion; whether or not they'll have access to arts courses and enrichment programs; what resources they'll have; whether or not they have access to an educational assistant; whether or not they will have access to a small class size for children with disabilities and special needs. They will decide who is actually even in the classroom, who is hired by the school board and where they are sent by the school board.

Those are all decisions that would be made from downtown Toronto instead of from people who are in the community, who know the community, who are consulting with people in the community and who are accountable to people in the community.

There's a reason why we have school boards, Speaker. They are actually the oldest form of elected representation that we have in Ontario. They date back to 1816—so over 200 years. Because, for over 200 years, we have recognized the importance of local people, of parents, making the decisions for our kids.

But this Minister of Education thinks that we have democracy only because he lets you have it. This is a quote from the minister's speech in June: "To be clear, school boards exist because Parliament allows them to exist. That is all." The Minister of Education thinks that your right to have a say exists solely because he allows it to exist. He is fundamentally disrespecting parents and fundamentally disrespecting democracy by saying he's letting you have a say. He can take away that right to have a say any time he wants because it exists only because Parliament allows it to.

If this bill passes, the minister will be able to shut us out from having a say entirely. This bill gives the Minister of

Education the power to hand-pick a supervisor to sweep away all democratically elected trustees. These supervisors would get 100% of the power over the decision-making affecting our kids with 0% of the accountability. There is no mandate in this bill that this hand-picked representative of the minister has to consult with parents or members of the community. There is no requirement in this bill that these supervisors have to make their decisions in any way that shows transparency to the public, that allows the public to know what criteria they are using to make their decisions. In fact, there's no requirement that they even allow the public to know what decisions that they are making.

And they are completely, 100% unaccountable to the public and to parents. We cannot vote them out of office. In fact, Speaker, we cannot even challenge their decisions in court. They are like kings—kings who have unlimited power over our children, and there is absolutely nothing that we can do about their decisions.

In attacking trustees and allowing the Minister of Education to sweep them away with the stroke of a pen, the government is also taking away a fundamental source of advocacy and support for parents. Because elected trustees don't just make decisions, they help parents and families to navigate the education system. They are a source of advocacy who help families receive the supports that they need for their children.

0910

The Ontario Autism Coalition did a survey of parents of kids with disabilities, and they found that, just in the last school year alone, there were 100,000 kids with disabilities in the province of Ontario who received their supports in school solely because of the advocacy of a trustee. That is what we are talking about losing when we lose democratically elected trustees. We are talking about losing an advocate, a source of support that parents know. They know who their trustee is, they know where to turn to find them. They are publicly present in the community. They are attending schools. They are attending parent council meetings. And they are also a voice demanding better funding in the system, Speaker. I think that might be why the government is attacking them and trying to take away that voice of advocacy on behalf of students and families and on behalf of our public education system.

Et pour la communauté francophone de l'Ontario, c'est encore pire, parce que le droit de gérer leur propre système d'éducation, par et pour les francophones, c'est un droit constitutionnel, pas juste un cadeau du gouvernement. Même le fait que ce droit est reconnu par la Constitution, ce n'est pas quelque chose qui a été donné par le gouvernement. Ce n'est pas juste parce que le gouvernement est sympa qu'ils ont reconnu le droit constitutionnel des Franco-Ontariens; c'est un droit qui a été acquis après des décennies de bataille acharnée. Les Franco-Ontariens ont dû descendre dans les rues pour avoir leur droit reconnu et le droit de gérer leur propre système d'éducation.

Ils demandent plusieurs choses, madame la Présidente. Avoir le droit de gérer votre propre système d'éducation, ça demande le droit de choisir vos propres représentants. Ça

demande le droit d'être consulté sur les décisions concernant vos écoles et vos enfants. Et ça demande la responsabilité, la redevabilité des représentants—que les représentants soient responsables envers vous pour les décisions qu'ils prennent.

Ce que le gouvernement, ce que le ministre veut faire, c'est de remplacer les représentants qui sont choisis par la communauté, qui sont responsables pour la communauté, qui consultent la communauté, avec un superviseur qui est redevable seulement au ministre. C'est le ministre seul qui choisit le représentant. Le représentant n'a aucune obligation de consulter la communauté et il n'est pas responsable envers la communauté. La communauté ne peut pas le remplacer et ne peut pas contester les décisions du superviseur.

J'ai beaucoup parlé avec des parents francophones dans ma circonscription pendant les dernières semaines et j'ai entendu beaucoup de colère qu'encore une fois, la communauté franco-ontarienne doit se battre pour leurs droits. J'ai parlé à un parent à l'école Mamawi qui m'a dit qu'elle a dû quitter le système francophone après la deuxième année parce qu'il n'y avait pas assez de cours pour obtenir son diplôme si elle continuait dans le système francophone. Elle a pensé que ce serait différent pour ses enfants, que leurs droits seraient respectés. Et au lieu de ça, elle est dans une situation où son droit de participer dans la gestion des écoles francophones peut être retiré à n'importe quel moment. Elle m'a demandé : « Pourquoi est-ce que nous devons nous battre toujours pour nos droits? »

Ce n'est pas juste une question de participer dans les décisions qui concernent leurs enfants, madame la Présidente. C'est vraiment le fait que le système d'éducation francophone est une pierre angulaire de l'existence de la langue française et de la culture française en Ontario. L'éducation, c'est une garantie d'un avenir fort de la langue française en Ontario. C'est d'abord le seul service qui est garanti en français, mais c'est aussi le lieu de transfert de la langue, de la culture et du sens d'identité et de fierté. Nous savons que si un enfant va à une école anglophone, il est beaucoup plus apte à perdre sa langue, de ne plus parler le français. Donc c'est très important à la survie de la communauté franco-ontarienne en Ontario.

Surtout, c'est la communauté qui sait ce dont elle a besoin, pas ce gouvernement et surtout pas ce ministre qui menace de mettre les conseils scolaires sous supervision s'ils continuent à insister sur leurs droits.

Let's talk about what this bill includes and what it will mean for kids and communities. As I said, Speaker, this bill allows the Minister of Education to sweep away democratically elected trustees to take over a school board at any moment for any reason that the minister wants. The bill says that the minister can do this for a matter of public interest—and how does it define “public interest”? It says public interest is anything that the minister decides it can be.

The minister can literally feel that public interest is, did a trustee say something mean to him? And that counts. Did a trustee insist that the rights of children were not being respected? The minister can say that's a matter of public

interest, and the rights of parents and communities to have a say in their local schools is gone, Speaker. This power is completely unlimited, it's completely unchecked and it's completely unacceptable.

When the minister makes that decision that he's going to put a board under supervision, the minister gets to pick the supervisor. Parents and communities no longer get to participate in the choice of who is going to make the decisions for their kids. And there's unlimited power for this hand-picked puppet to make all of the decisions for our kids about what our kids need, what our kids get, what will be available and accessible in our community.

And we can see already what our future holds from what's happening in the four boards that the minister put under supervision in June and from the board that the minister put under supervision earlier this year. That's boards in Toronto, in Ottawa, Dufferin-Peel and Thames Valley. The supervisors that the minister has selected are not people who have extensive experience in education. They are not people whose careers have demonstrated an interest in children and their well-being. What the qualifications of these supervisors seem to be, Speaker, is their ties and connections to the government.

We have a former Conservative MPP who is also a campaign manager; a former federal Conservative candidate—a serious donor; thousands of dollars. We have a former federal Conservative candidate who has also made extensive donations to the government. We have a Conservative donor who's given thousands of dollars but also happens to be a buddy of the Minister of Education, Speaker. And, finally, we have a former adviser to Stephen Harper who advised on how the former Prime Minister could privatize public assets and take things that were owned by the people of Canada and hand them over to private interests to make profit off of. He was also a member of Tony Clement's leadership campaign.

You can see the through thread here, Speaker, that it seems to be donations to the Conservatives. It seems to be running for the Conservatives, representing the Conservatives and an interest in privatizing public assets. These are people who will always pick up the phone if it is a Conservative calling to offer them a lucrative public-paid position. But apparently, they can't pick up the phone when it's a parent calling.

These supervisors—again, hand-picked by the minister—are making decisions in the dark. There is no public process. They are not sharing with people what decisions they are considering. They are not holding public consultations to allow parents to have any input into these decisions. Some of the supervisors are not even posting decisions that they are making publicly, so parents don't even know what they're deciding.

In the Toronto District School Board, the supervisor is only posting the decisions that he's making because the democratically elected trustees got together and sent a letter to the ombudsperson to say that there is a fundamental principle of transparency, and parents should at least know what decisions are being made about their children's

education. The supervisor is still taking his own sweet time to post those decisions.

This refusal to demonstrate any transparency or any accountability extends to refusing to attend the committee meetings that are still taking place in public. There are three committees that are mandated to continue meeting—the audit committee, the parental involvement committee and the special education advisory committee—but the supervisors aren't bothering to show up at the special education advisory committee meetings, even though these committee meetings discuss the conditions that are affecting our most vulnerable children in the system. They just can't be bothered to attend those meetings and to hear what parents have to say.

0920

In fact, it's not just a matter of not being bothered to participate in meetings where parents are present, but they're trying to make it harder for parents to participate in those meetings. The supervisors have banned live-streams, which have been a way that, for years, parents have been able to use to participate in public meetings of the school board, particularly for the special education advisory committee, Speaker.

This is incredibly important because parents are doing a million different things: We don't always have time after a school day—in between trying to get supper and homework done, take kids to a sport practice—to actually make it out in-person to a meeting. That doesn't mean we don't want to participate in these meetings. But for parents of kids with disabilities, it's even more difficult, because it's more difficult for these parents to find somebody who can come in and provide the care that their child needs while they go to attend a meeting. These livestreams are fundamentally about equity—equity of access to the decision-making that is affecting their children, and this government has banned that. These supervisors who are selected by the Minister of Education do not want that to happen. The supervisors are making misleading statements about what things are actually happening, what decisions that they're actually making. They are refusing to answer questions.

The supervisor in the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board told parents that, after extensive consultations, he had decided he was going to eliminate the changes that were resulting from the program review. Immediately, parents across Ottawa said, "What consultations? I wasn't consulted. I don't know anything about consultations." There was no public invitation to participate in a consultation. There was no invitation to submit written comments to this consultation. For 10 days, Speaker, parents were asking, "What consultations was this based on?" For 10 days, parents were asking, "What changes is the supervisor actually going to make?" Because the supervisor didn't just say he was cancelling program changes, he said he was going to make some of his own. And parents I was talking to said, "I don't even know what school I should be sending my child to. I selected the school that they're at because of the program changes that were coming; now, I don't know if they're at the right school anymore. I don't

know if my kid is going to need to change schools again next year. I don't know if I should be changing schools for my child right now."

The supervisor didn't think that parents deserved any clarity on that, Speaker. In fact, he didn't just refuse to answer questions from parents, he refused to answer questions from the media and he said publicly that he did not have to answer questions. He told parents at the parental involvement committee, which he had actually deemed to attend, that they could submit questions in writing, the small problem being that the supervisor was not responding to peoples' emails. He told the media that he had no mandate to answer their questions and therefore did not need to respond to them.

Finally, after 10 days of parents demanding better, the supervisor managed to send us an email with some further information about the program changes that he was considering and, in that email, he admitted that he had not conducted any consultations. He was basing his decision on the previous consultations, in which he did not participate. He did not tell us how he reviewed any of those consultations, whether he was reading all of the written submissions that were sent in, whether he was reading summaries of the public meetings that took place, which, of course, would have included meetings that were held by trustees in their communities that were not part of the large public meetings that were held. The supervisor didn't tell us any of this, but what was clear was that he had not consulted, despite what he had said in his previous email.

We've had supervisors who are going to great lengths to hide their email addresses. Parents have had to engage in detective work to try to find out the email addresses of supervisors so that they could reach out to them with their questions and concerns. When people were able to find one of the supervisor's email addresses, he told people, "Don't use it. I don't want you to email me at this address." They have refused to answer phone calls from questions.

The supervisor in Ottawa also made another misleading statement, claiming that he had met with every parent who had asked for a meeting. Immediately, Speaker, parents said, "I asked for a meeting three or four times and I didn't even get a response." He had clearly not met with every parent who had requested a meeting.

They are hand-picking who they are actually meeting with, in fact. The Ottawa-Carleton supervisor this week is having a meeting with parent council representatives, but he sent an email to parent councils telling them that they can select one person to meet with him, who has to be a member of the parent council, and they have to RSVP with the email address that he sent the invitation to. So this is a very representative meeting, a very representative consultation, since he's basically hand-picking who he will meet with and closing the door to everybody else.

Besides this lack of transparency, what we're seeing is supervisors making decisions that are already harming our most vulnerable children. The very first thing that the Toronto District School Board supervisor did was to increase class sizes for kids with special needs, a measure that trustees had voted against after consulting with

parents and experts because they knew the harm that this would cause to these kids. The supervisor didn't care. The very first thing he did was take away supports for kids with disabilities and special needs, impacting their ability to actually learn while they're at school and to keep them safe while they're at school.

In the Thames Valley District School Board there are kids with disabilities who are sitting home right now—they are not attending school—because the supervisor can't be bothered to consult, can't be bothered to conduct the needs assessments to even figure out what measures they need in order to be able to be at school, let alone provide those measures so that these kids can be at school safely.

We can also see from other provinces what happens when you take away democratically elected trustees. Parents in Nova Scotia and Quebec, where this has happened, are experiencing incredible frustration. They cannot find somebody who will even answer basic questions.

I held a town hall this past week and Jesse LeGallais, who is a parent in Halifax, attended, and he spoke about the fact that a new school was supposed to be built for his school district where his son attends. That school building was supposed to be opened for September this year. It is not open, but nobody would even provide a straight answer to these families. And they had nobody to turn to because there's nobody who is responsible to parents for these decisions. There's nobody who's consulting with parents on these decisions. It's a black hole and parents get informed—the school building is open; the school building is not open—that's the full extent of the public engagement.

The majority of parents there want to see school boards reinstated because their level of frustration is so high. They have lost a voice of advocacy and support.

We are also seeing that there's an interest already in closing schools and selling off school properties. The supervisor in Ottawa has already said he's selling off a school property. I think when you see people appointed who have no experience in education but have experience in privatizing public assets, that certainly suggests that's what's coming. So are we going to see the land from under our kids' schools just sold out—from right under our kids' schools?

Another part of this bill allows police forces—not parents or experts or communities or democratically elected representatives but police forces—to make the decision about whether or not there will be school resource officer programs. I just want to be clear, Speaker: We do have a violence problem in our schools, but policing kids is not the answer. Supporting and investing in them is. We have a violence problem because of the cuts that have come, because our kids aren't receiving the supports that they need academically, emotionally, psychologically. When you don't have mental health supports, when you don't have special education supports, when you have large class sizes, kids get frustrated, and a frustrated child may react violently. The answer to that is not to punish them for failing when we set them up to fail. The answer to that

is to provide the supports that they need. It's not to put them in handcuffs after a violent incident; it's to prevent the violence from happening in the first place. It's to help dysregulated kids regulate their system. Police officers don't have that experience in helping a dysregulated child. They're not mental health experts. They're not academic experts. They're not education workers. They can't replace any of that.

This part of the bill fundamentally disrespects communities, because there are communities across Ontario who have been very clear that they do not feel safe with police officers in schools; that their children do not feel safe. This government is completely overriding those communities, taking away their right to have a say in the decisions that affect their children and that affect their schools.

0930

Even the Ontario Human Rights Commission is saying this is incredibly problematic because parents in communities and experts should be involved in these decisions. What the expertise and what the evidence shows is that police in schools are not the best solution to challenges of violence. They cause disproportionate harm to students with disabilities and students who are Indigenous, Black, racialized, LGBTQ. Just over three weeks ago, we celebrated the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation; it is not a step towards reconciliation to put police officers in schools when Indigenous kids are saying they do not feel safe with them there. We need to respect the voice of communities.

Another thing that's kind of shocking about this is that this would make the police the only service or agency that schools are mandated to work with. Public health agencies in Ontario are mandated to work with schools, but schools are not in return required to work with them. So we're not prioritizing the health of children to the point where we say, "Yes, the school board has to work with them," but somehow we're prioritizing police officers in that way. This is just not how we address the well-being of our children, Speaker.

The last measure of this bill on K-to-12 is about school names. This allows the Minister of Education to sign off or not sign off on any school name—new schools; re-naming. This is completely and utterly ridiculous, Speaker, when we have such massive challenges in our province and in our education system, that one of the burning priorities for this minister is that he gets to participate in the naming of every school. I guess it's a good thing that there are already so many St. Pauls. Maybe we'll see more. But maybe we'll also see more St. Dougs. I'm not Catholic, so I actually don't know if there's a St. Doug.

But this is an utterly ridiculous thing for the Minister of Education, in downtown Toronto, to be spending his time on when we have a mental health crisis and a violence crisis. Let's let communities decide who they want to honour and what is the appropriate name that reflects the priorities, the values, the culture of their community. This is utterly ludicrous when we're talking about \$6 billion taken out of our education system, Speaker. Talk about red tape.

There are many other sections of this bill that also cause incredible harm to our children and youth. I'm not going to go into all of them now, but I'm going to turn it over to my colleague from London West to talk about the incredibly harmful components of this bill addressing post-secondary education.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I want to start by recognizing the 10,000 support staff at Ontario's public colleges, who went on strike this fall to stand up for publicly funded, post-secondary education in Ontario. Let's keep in mind that these are the college workers who keep our institutions functioning. They work in IT. They work in libraries. They work in academic advising, the registrar's office, career counselling, accessibility services. When these workers lose their jobs, students feel the impact by the lack of access to those critical services.

But in our colleges, Speaker, we are seeing job loss at an alarming rate. We know that there are already 10,000 college workers who have been laid off or are about to lose their jobs. We know that more than 650 programs have been cut. We have seen campuses closing in Perth, in Barrie, in Orillia, and there is definitely more to come.

That has an impact, Speaker. It has an impact, as I said, on students. It has an impact on employers who look to those colleges to fuel the local economy and provide the graduates that in-demand sectors need. It has an impact on communities. These post-secondary institutions are anchor institutions across the province in terms of access to employment and also participation in community initiatives. And, of course, it has an impact on the economy.

But the crisis in post-secondary is not just being felt at the college level; it's at the university level as well. This government well knows that its own hand-picked panel of experts pointed out that at least \$2.5 billion was needed to stabilize the sector—and that was before the federal government announced the changes to international student admissions, which have had a very serious financial impact on the sector.

In 2023, in response to the blue-ribbon panel's report, this government provided short-term funding that was less than half of what was recommended by the blue-ribbon panel. We always have to keep in mind that Ontario provides the lowest per-student funding in Canada: just 44% of the Canadian average for colleges and just 57% of the Canadian average for per-student funding for universities.

The result is that right now in Ontario universities we have 28,000 unfunded domestic students. These are students who are attending and there are no dollars attached from the province to provide their education. This is not sustainable, Speaker. You can't expect colleges and universities to operate at a loss to accommodate the domestic students who want to attend post-secondary—and we want them to attend post-secondary as well. We want them to graduate and come into our workforce.

The Council of Ontario Universities has sounded the alarm, pointing out that there are 80,000 Ontario students

who won't be able to get a seat at university over the next five years because those 80,000 spaces that are needed received no funding whatsoever from this government, and certainly we know that any concerns about students not being able to access post-secondary education have directly to do with the lack of funding. It has nothing to do with admissions policies, which is one of the key measures in this bill, and I will get to that shortly.

So does schedule 3 of Bill 33 do anything to address the very serious issues that we are seeing in the post-secondary sector? The answer is absolutely not. What it does instead is offer a distraction from the funding crisis. It's like this government wants to pretend the funding crisis doesn't exist and, as I said, the issue is around admissions policies for colleges and universities, or the issue is around the ancillary fees that are charged for students when they go to attend post-secondary education.

What this bill does instead of addressing the real issues: It centralizes power over our post-secondary sector in the hands of the province. It grants the government the ability to dictate admission policies and the management of student fees. We have heard from experts—Glen Jones; anybody who's involved in the post-secondary sector knows him as a very highly respected expert. He has described it as "one of the most egregious interventions in university autonomy we have ever seen in Canada."

It's not too often that legislation comes forward—actually, it is, unfortunately, too often under this government that legislation comes forward where stakeholders unite in opposition to what government has proposed, and I just want to share some of the commentary that we have heard from stakeholders that are involved in the delivery of post-secondary education in Ontario.

The Council of Ontario Universities says that Bill 33 "risks undermining institutional autonomy, eroding student services and duplicating existing accountability structures. Rather than imposing new administrative burdens and red tape, the government should work in partnership with the sector to address the real barriers facing students—especially the urgent need for sustainable funding, expanded enrolment capacity and continued support for a secure and world-leading research ecosystem."

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OCUFA, the union that represents university faculty in Ontario, raised concerns that "rather than supporting Ontario's universities amidst mounting financial uncertainty," Bill 33 amounts "to yet more costly red tape and bureaucracy, creating potential distractions from the core mission of our publicly funded universities." They repeat the call that COU had put out for an increase in the number of funded domestic student spots; for increased long-term, stable funding for universities; and for increased access to funding supports for students, including converting more student loans to grants.

And it's not just university faculty and administrators who are concerned about Bill 33. Student organizations in the province are very concerned about the impact of the measures in Bill 33 and what it will mean for post-secondary education.

I just want to go in some depth on two of the three main components of schedule 3 of Bill 33. The first is around merit-based admissions. The government has announced with this legislation that admission to college or university in Ontario must be based on merit.

Now, I don't know if the government understands this, but decisions about admission to post-secondary education in this province are already based on merit. No student is admitted to a college or university in Ontario without meeting the academic qualifications for the program to which they are applying. There are robust admission policies already in place.

At the university level as well, Speaker, governing legislation for each individual university in Ontario gives universities the autonomy to determine their own admissions criteria. This is consistent internationally. This is a best practice in higher education governance, to allow institutions to determine their own mission, to determine their own mandate and to determine what admission criteria they will set to not only ensure that students are academically qualified for the programs to which they are applying, but also that the mission of the institution is advanced. There is detailed information already available about admission criteria. It is published on institutional websites, academic calendars, print materials and other places.

So one has to wonder why the government introduced this new provision about merit-based admissions when that is already how institutions govern themselves in this province. There are some legitimate concerns that have been raised—concerns that I certainly share—that this is a way for the government to narrow access for historically marginalized groups who want to be able to pursue post-secondary education. It is very much an echo of what we are seeing down south in the United States with the attack on diversity, equity and inclusion.

Speaker, we know that it is important to ensure that there are pathways for students who are under-represented in our academic institutions. So Indigenous students, students with disabilities, mature students, youth in care—our institutions have an obligation to make sure that pathways are available for those students when they are academically qualified to get into the programs that they are applying to. But this bill would regulate those pathways potentially out of existence.

I want to spend some time on the ancillary fees part of Bill 33, of schedule 3 in this legislation. The legislation allows the government to determine what ancillary fees can be charged to students when they are attending post-secondary and what ancillary fees can be made optional so that students can, when they get enrolled in a post-secondary institution, say, “No, I don't want to pay that fee.”

Unfortunately, Speaker, what we are hearing overwhelmingly from both students and institutions is that this measure poses a significant risk to services offered on campus, organized by student unions and student associations, that provide a direct benefit to students. I held a town hall. We had representatives from over 30 colleges and

universities in Ontario attend the town hall. They detailed for me what programs and services are in jeopardy if this goes through and if the government decides that no ancillary fees can be charged or they're going to be significantly limited. The services include mental health and counselling—there's peer counselling for mental health—transit passes; food banks; health and dental benefits; grants and bursary programs; laptop rental programs; clubs and activities funding; co-op housing partnerships; campus radio and newspapers; sustainability initiatives; legal aid services; health centres; tax aid clinics; subsidized, student-run restaurants on campus; LGBTQ+ services. They have also pointed out that the loss of these services also would mean a reduction in opportunities for leadership and employment for students.

If these services are no longer offered on campuses because this government has decided to completely destabilize the funding that is available to student unions, it means that there will be increased pressure on already overextended community-based services. We have post-secondary students as one of the fastest-growing groups of food bank users in Ontario. In Toronto, one out of every three food bank users is a student. There are campus-run food banks on every institution in Ontario, and without access to food on campus, these students are, of course, going to turn to the community to address growing food insecurity.

There's also concerns about the increased pressure this is going to put on community mental health supports, housing advocacy, our health care system. These are all areas in this province that are already struggling to keep up with demand. With such a serious funding crisis facing our institutions, with layoffs of staff in many areas of post-secondary education, it will increase the pressures on our post-secondary institutions to fill some of the gaps and ensure that students get the supports that they need on campus.

0950

I want to point out to the minister, who has said that we need these changes to the governing of ancillary fees because we need more transparency—that's what the minister has said. I want to make sure that the minister is aware that there is already, just like with admissions policies, complete transparency at the post-secondary level as to what ancillary fees are charged and where the ancillary fee dollars that are collected go. Most, if not all, student associations already show students exactly where their money is going. There are publicly available fee breakdowns that describe exactly how many dollars of ancillary fees are going to which services. Most fees offered by student associations are passed via democratic vote of all students or passed by a council, a representative body of elected students and/or the board of directors at a given student union. So students already have a say in what ancillary fees are collected and what those fees are used for.

I know that this government had a go at this back in 2019 with the Student Choice Initiative, when they tried to do the same thing through ministerial directive and allow

the government to determine which fees students could opt out of. The Supreme Court struck down the government's action, and the Supreme Court, in the ruling, had some advice that I really encourage this government to listen to.

The Supreme Court ruling noted that, "Mandatory fees for student associations—collected by universities and remitted to the student associations—have been in place in universities since the 1960s." They go on to say the existing "funding structure has permitted student associations to play important roles in university governance...."

"Indeed, given the role played by student associations in university governance, the framework is a profound interference in university autonomy—not a mere fettering of the universities' discretion, as the minister submits."

The students who attended my town hall also shared that some of them had some institutional knowledge of the fallout of the Student Choice Initiative back in 2019. They told me that the result was that many students opted out of services without really any understanding of what those services were for. This resulted in many students being excluded from campus services and programming after their parents had opted out of fees on their behalf. And student associations were unable to do any long-term planning because they had no idea how much money they would be able to collect in a given year, and that had many impacts on the delivery of programs that they were involved in.

Speaker, one does wonder why the government is attacking student organizations in the province of Ontario. Some people over there may have received a fundraising letter from the Premier back in 2019 when the Student Choice Initiative had been introduced. The Premier defended the attack on student organizations, defended the attempted defunding of student organizations in the province by saying, "I think we all know what kind of crazy Marxist nonsense student unions get up to. So, we fixed that." That's what the Premier said at the time.

Speaker, I do not think that student unions are up to "crazy Marxist nonsense." I know that student unions in Ontario are directly involved in the provision of vital student services for college and university students so that they can be successful in their academic program and they can graduate and fuel our economy.

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

M^{me} Lucille Collard: I want to thank my colleagues for that hour leadoff that certainly underlines very convincingly some of the pitfalls in that legislation.

To me, the most concerning aspect is really the centralization of powers here at Queen's Park, which seems to be a trend. That will have some negative effect on our education system.

So to my colleague from Ottawa West–Nepean: Can you point out those negative impacts that risk very much falling from that centralization of power here at Queen's Park?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Thank you to my colleague from Ottawa–Vanier for the excellent question.

We are already seeing what kinds of negative consequences the centralization of power in Toronto will have for our children in boards such as the Ottawa–Carleton District School Board, where the minister has already swept away democratically elected trustees. We are seeing cuts to programs and supports that allow our most vulnerable children, kids with disabilities, to actually be at school and to receive academic support so that they can learn. We are seeing program changes announced with zero consultation, without any clarity or even answers for parents about what those changes will mean for our kids. We're seeing decisions made in the dark, without those decisions ever being shared or being shared with any kind of clarity or straightforwardness to parents. We're seeing parents barred from participating in public meetings.

This is not how you make decisions in the best interests of our children and in the best interests of our communities.

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

Mr. Billy Pang: Parents deserve confidence that school boards are making decisions in the best interests of their children's education. This is why we are strengthening accountability and transparency across Ontario's education system, to ensure that every dollar invested delivers real results for students. These new measures build on our previous action to improve governance, enforce compliance and focus school boards on what matters most: supporting students, parents and teachers. We are making it clear that school boards must put students first, not politics, not bureaucracy, and that we will act decisively when we fall short of that responsibility.

When there are school board trustees who burned millions on lawsuits and internal investigations over trustees' misconduct, why does the opposition believe school board trustees should be above basic accountability?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: What we're seeing already from this government's hand-picked supervisors—who, again, have zero qualifications in education and have demonstrated zero interest in the well-being of our children—is that they are not putting our children first, Speaker. In fact, they are making decisions in the dark that are harming our children every single day.

But you know, it's funny that the member opposite would speak about accountability, because what this government has just done is shovel hundreds of millions of dollars out the door to their PC donors, to organizations that are connected to this government, to people that the Minister of Labour is partying with at the George V in Paris. This government seems to be all about: transparency for me, accountability for me, but not for thee.

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

Ms. Jessica Bell: It's also interesting that the member for Markham–Unionville criticizes school board trustees when your very own Premier is under RCMP criminal investigation.

My question is to the member for London West and it's about tuition costs. I recently had a town hall that I attended in my riding. It was hosted by the Graduate Students' Union at the University of Toronto. We heard students talk about the impact of this bill.

They emphasized to me that students already decide the student fees through a democratic process, through referendum. They emphasized to me the programs that student fees support: food banks, the legal clinic, the radio, the newspaper, mental health programs. And they also emphasized to me that the cost of student fees is minuscule—minuscule—compared to the cost of going to school at the University of Toronto. It's absolutely minuscule.

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So my question is to the member for London West. Can you outline to me how high tuition fees are these days and why are they so high?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thank you very much to my colleague from University–Rosedale for the question. Ontario for decades had the reputation of having the highest tuition in Canada, as well as the lowest per-student funding. This government's decision to cut and then freeze tuition fees back in 2019 had a little bit of an impact on that. We are still at the bottom, but we are not the worst in Canada in terms of tuition, but there's no question that tuition is a barrier for many students, particularly under-represented students.

That's why the Ontario NDP has been pushing so hard for the conversion of student loans to grants, so that any student in financial need is able to attend without worrying about carrying a huge debt burden after they graduate from post-secondary.

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

MPP Stephanie Smyth: This is for the member from Ottawa West–Nepean. I just wanted to ask you about a bit more about this bill and how it could be disguising underfunding and what we're seeing in the school system right now with the real issues plaguing education or the underfunding of schools and post-secondary institutions, and not only that, ignoring staffing crisis. We're being told, "Look over here," but all this continues to grow. Can you talk more about that?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Thank you to the member for Toronto–St. Paul's for that question. This bill is fundamentally about the government trying to distract from their record on funding and all of the challenges that that has created for our children every single day in school.

The government has taken more than \$6 billion out of the education system since they came to power. Let's be honest, it's not like the system was perfectly funded when they came to power, which means that our children are dealing with severely negative consequences every single day because of the government's cuts—large class sizes, a shortage of qualified teachers and education workers because 45,000 teachers have left the education system because of the working conditions this government has created, far too many kids without access to special education supports or mental health needs, crumbling

school buildings. They can't even have the school buses running on time because they've cut funding for that as well.

This is fundamentally not about supporting our kids. It is about a power grab by this government and a refusal to take accountability for their own decisions and actions.

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

MPP Bill Rosenberg: My question is to the member from London West. As this government continues to make strategic investments into our world-class institutions, we are ensuring that the most qualified students will be fuelling the workforce of tomorrow. Through Bill 33, we will be consulting with the sector to understand all of the current admission policies and how we can provide better transparency for prospective students looking to study in Ontario. The NDP have made their stance on this item clear, calling it "US-style rhetoric," when in reality that could not be further from the truth.

My question to the member is, will the member opposite support Ontario's most-qualified students by voting in favour of a more transparent admission process to colleges and universities?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm not sure if the member was listening to my remarks, but I did point out that there is already almost complete transparency over admission criteria at our public colleges and universities.

In terms of universities, here's some of the information that is published on university websites or provided in written materials: Students know what historical admission ranges are. They know the required high school courses or equivalents. They know what additional application materials are required: for example, if they need to provide a portfolio for the program that they're applying to. They know if there are supporting documentation requirements. Do they have to show, for example, an English proficiency test if they're an international applicant? And they also have a range of other pieces of information to assist with their application. There's no problem with transparency in admission practices.

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

M^{me} Lucille Collard: I will start my remarks by indicating that I will be sharing my time with the member for Ottawa South.

I'm standing here on behalf of the people of Ottawa–Vanier to talk about this education bill, Bill 33. I have to admit that when the minister introduced the bill back in the spring, I was actually hopeful. I mean, I should have known better by now, but I actually did hope that, given the state of our education system with all the dire needs that exist within our system and in all our schools, the minister was going to come up with some good measures to help in those areas.

I was hoping that the bill would address the important and concerning shortcomings of our education system, such as the shortage of teachers, for example. It exists in our anglophone schools, but in the francophone schools, it's a crisis and it does affect the quality of education.

I was hoping that there would be some measures for mental health support, because all of the children in our schools are being challenged. They're going through a lot of hardship and, post-COVID, that has become even worse. I do have four children in our school system, and I can tell you that it doesn't matter what kind of household that they live in or the income that their parents might have—mental health support is so important. Right now, that capacity doesn't exist in our schools. There is simply no service available. The only thing that you can do if you want help for your child, you actually need to go to the private sector and hope that you will find somebody good enough to help your child.

And what about our crumbling infrastructure? There are many schools in Ottawa–Vanier that are very old, that don't have air conditioning, that are overcrowded with portables all over the schoolyard. And yet, we don't see any significant investment in our school infrastructure. And I was certainly hoping that the minister would recognize that and do something meaningful in that regard.

Again, there is not enough support for special needs in our schools. Teachers are left struggling with trying to teach and helping every student in the classroom, without the adequate support.

So no, this bill doesn't do any of that. And because of that, I'm very disappointed. Because what this bill does is—while the government frames it as a measure to support children and students through accountability and oversight, we must not allow that language to mask a sweeping power grab. It is a trend. We've got many examples of that. The question before us, therefore, is not merely about oversight, but about who holds power, who gets to decide and whose voices will be heard.

I come to this debate from a Franco-Ontarian perspective in a riding where French-language education and community institutions are vital and where local autonomy and cultural rights matter deeply. The concern over centralization is really great, but what also concerns me a lot is the lack of consultation that conducted to the drafting of this bill because I haven't heard people in school boards, I haven't heard teachers, I haven't heard school staff saying that they wanted that centralization.

Now, I do understand that there's been some concerns with some school boards in the province, but why punish everyone? Why not recognize those school boards who have excellent governance practices, that don't get into trouble, that look at their finances in a professional way, in an accountable way?

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But no, we see something that is disturbing in some areas, and then we unfold a blanket that will apply to everyone with the negative impact that this may comport without regard to the school boards that are doing well.

I'm just going to summarize this very quickly, what Bill 33 introduces in terms of significant changes, and those are in three main spheres.

Obviously there's education, with the new ministerial powers over school boards through financial reviews and through interventions by the government.

We haven't talked about it that much, but there's also child welfare that's being affected. The bill is enabling direct oversight and funding control and intervention in children's aid societies.

Finally, post-secondary: The bill is prescribing that admissions be merit-based, granting cabinet authority to override institutional policies and ancillary fees, and deem them non-essential, with the risk to marginalized and minority-language students.

So at face value these provisions may appear to improve transparency and accountability. But the centralization they push is alarming and carries significant risk. Regarding our school boards and local democracy, what we see is the erosion of local authority.

Trustees and locally elected school boards are meant to represent the voices of parents, educators and communities. Bill 33 undermines that by allowing ministerial intervention, bypassing consultation and imposing directives. In many cases, boards already operate under funding constraints. We all know that. That's why they can't do as much in the classroom as they would like to do. But adding top-down mandates without tailored flexibilities may hinder—not help—performance. Unfortunately, that's what this bill is proposing to do.

Now, I've mentioned a bit the francophone school boards, and they are at risk in this bill. French-language school boards serve smaller, geographically dispersed populations, often with fewer resources. The imposed directives from Queen's Park may not reflect their realities. Decisions such as program offerings, staffing, special services or language supports could be overridden, weakening the unique identity and capacity of Franco-Ontarian education.

The risk is the marginalization of French-language governance under the guise of uniform standards. So that's the point I was referring to: When we want to uniformize practice, we may not take into account some specificities that need to be taken into account.

On the child welfare powers, is it really oversight or is it overreach? The bill allows greater ministerial control over children's aid societies, including supervisory appointments and withholding funds. But many CASs are already under strain, particularly in Indigenous, racialized and francophone communities. Systemic issues such as poverty, mental health and housing cannot be solved by top-down interference.

Madam Speaker, effective change requires investment in prevention, community-based supports and collaboration, not heavier oversight without resources.

Now I want to turn to the post-secondary education and how the interference and merit-based admissions may have a negative impact on our colleges and universities. The notion of merit-based admissions sounds fair, but merit is not value-neutral. It often privileges those with more preparation, more—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I apologize to the member, but it is now time for members' statements.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: Madam Speaker, General Motors CAMI plant has been a proud backbone of the Ingersoll community since 1989. For more than three decades, hard-working men and women from across my riding have built GM vehicles, powering our local economy and putting Ingersoll on the map as a leader in auto manufacturing.

Unfortunately, GM's decision last week has put a pause on this success and brought the economic uncertainty of Trump's tariffs close to home.

Our government is in close contact with GM and our labour partners, and we are using every tool we have to protect and support the workers and their families. GM knows that their Ontario operations are crucial to their success, which is why they are exploring new opportunities for the CAMI plant.

As we face a once-in-a-generation threat from south of the border, our government will always stand for the workers in Oxford and across Ontario. We will continue working to position the community for growth and prosperity for decades to come.

HOUSING

MPP Robin Lennox: Over this past weekend, I had hundreds of emails—as I'm sure many of my colleagues did—from people who rent their homes terrified about the implications of Bill 60 and what it would mean for them and their ability to stay housed.

I heard from one senior in my riding who was spending 70% of her monthly income on rent, and without rent control and security of tenancy, she was at risk of losing her home. I heard from a single parent working two jobs just to get a two-bedroom apartment in downtown Hamilton, and a group of tenants who are fighting their second above-guideline rent increase this year, despite their building falling into disrepair and corporate landlords raking in profits.

Bill 60 is the opposite of what a real response to the housing crisis should look like. We need more affordable housing, more affordable rental units. We need non-market housing options and supportive housing so that we can end encampments in a way that is safe and dignified for everybody. Above all else, we need to protect tenants' rights with stronger rent control, banning AGIs and protecting tenants from renovation.

My hope is that this first action by the government to walk back its horrible proposed policy on security of tenancy is that this government will commit to meaningful action in addressing the housing crisis instead of continuing to show your disregard for tenants across this province.

EGLINTON CROSSTOWN LRT

Mr. Adil Shamji: My constituents in Don Valley East are frustrated. They are frustrated at how difficult it is to

access health care, at how unaffordable a home is and how unsafe their communities feel.

But if there is one issue that cuts through our riding—both literally and figuratively—it is the unending delays, lack of accountability and relentless frustrations surrounding the Eglinton Crosstown. It has inflicted irreversible damage to businesses and caused untold levels of congestion. Furthermore, we have not seen the promised community benefits or quality jobs that were promised.

I have personally witnessed traffic accidents at Metro-linx construction sites amidst the chaos and am mortified that there have even been occasions when ambulances with emergency lights activated have been stuck in traffic.

Last week, we learned of even more delays, and we know that more chaos awaits with construction on the Ontario Line.

That is why we in Don Valley East are demanding four things:

- (1) a public inquiry into how this catastrophe has unfolded;
- (2) a mechanism for compensating businesses and businesses and neighbourhoods that have been impacted;
- (3) meaningful, binding community consultation into the remaining stages of construction that also informs future Ontario Line work; and
- (4) a timely, transparent mechanism to rapidly fix problems that arise after the Crosstown opens to minimize community disruption.

My community and constituents deserve nothing less.

PETER HAYES

Mr. Ric Bresee: Speaker, today I rise to honour volunteer firefighter captain Peter Hayes, a veteran firefighter and an amazing community volunteer and advocate.

For more than 37 years, in Greater Napanee and the township of Stone Mills, Pete was that steady voice on the radio, the first to shoulder the heavy work and a mentor to recruits.

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He helped launch the local charity car wash, decorated and drove trucks for the Santa Claus parade, supported the "touch the truck" events and captained the assistant safety crew at the demolition derby. As a captain in Newburgh, he kept training the next generation. He drove the engine on Canada Day and was a fixture at Canal Bash, proudly peeling about 700 pounds of potatoes for French fries every year.

Speaker, in 2023, while fighting colorectal cancer, Pete asked our government to strengthen support for the firefighters facing illness from years of exposure, and he lived to see those improvements in the Working for Workers legislation. Unfortunately, Speaker, on August 17, 2025, Peter succumbed to his cancer.

He often said that he had no regrets about serving. May his memory be a blessing and an example to us all. Today I'm honoured to share that his widow, Louise McKee, is in the gallery with us. I want to thank Louise for sharing

Pete with us for all those years and honour Pete for his tremendous service.

Applause.

INJURED WORKERS

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Injured workers are demanding an immediate audit of the WSIB, following a report that confirms what injured workers already know: WSIB's so-called surplus has been created through systematic denials of compensation and benefits. Over \$20 billion in corporate rebates and premium cuts have been issued while thousands of injured workers remain in poverty.

Following the same pattern we are seeing with the Skills Development Fund, the Ford government is using WSIB dollars as a political slush fund, rewarding business allies instead of restoring justice to injured and disabled workers.

It is in this context that I want to recognize an incredible warrior for workers, Moses Sheppard, who passed away this month. Moses led the investigation into workers with lung cancer made ill while working in mines in Timmins, Cobalt and Kirkland Lake. This resulted in significant compensation awarded to survivors and their families.

A navy and air force veteran, Moses volunteered his time to represent injured workers at appeals and tribunal hearings because he was appalled at the treatment so many workers received at the hands of the WSIB.

I can't use one of the words Moses asked to be put on his gravestone, but I can deliver the censored version: Don't let the so-and-sos get you down.

Thank you for your inspiration, Moses. We will never stop fighting for justice.

GERMAN CANADIAN CLUB HANSA

Mr. Deepak Anand: Madam Speaker, Ontario's story is the story of immigrants, people who came here seeking opportunity to build a better life and to raise their families. Through their hard work and generosity, while building the province, they created spaces for everyone to cherish.

In Mississauga-Malton, one such community landmark is the German Canadian Club Hansa, called Hansa Haus. For over six decades, it has been a place where culture, friendship and community have thrived. As a non-profit organization, Hansa Haus promotes understanding and connection through cultural events and charitable work.

Sitting on six and a half acres of land, it features a banquet hall for up to 400 guests and outdoor spaces for festivals and community gatherings. Conveniently located off the 401, it is an ideal venue for weddings, cultural events and social occasions. Considering that land is scarce, it is six and a half acres, which makes it easy for outdoor events. Hansa Haus welcomes everyone to join its public events, no membership required. Every last Friday of each month, one cherished tradition is Schnitzel Friday.

I want to thank president Karin Walter-Muller and vice-president Ekko Hildebrandt for their leadership and for creating a space where people come together to celebrate

and connect. May God give you all the strength to keep supporting the community.

CENTRETOWN CITIZENS OTTAWA CORP.

MPP Catherine McKenney: I rise today to recognize the outstanding work of the Centretown Citizens Ottawa Corp., known locally as CCOC, in addressing Ottawa's affordable housing crisis. For over four decades, CCOC has been a leader in creating safe, affordable homes for Ottawa residents. This community-driven organization has developed more than 450 affordable housing units across Ottawa's diverse neighbourhoods, providing stable homes for seniors, families and individuals who might otherwise face housing insecurity.

What sets CCOC apart is their holistic approach. They don't just build housing, they build community. Their properties include community spaces and programs that help residents thrive, not just survive. Recently, CCOC has continued to expand, developing new affordable units, even as construction costs soar and funding challenges mount.

Speaker, organizations like CCOC are essential partners in our efforts to ensure every Ontarian has access to safe, affordable housing. Their dedication, innovation and compassion deserve our recognition and our support. I ask all members to join me today in thanking CCOC's staff, board members and volunteers for their tireless work in building not just homes, but hope for our community.

QUINTE BUSINESS ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: It is a pleasure to rise in the House today to congratulate all of the award winners from Friday night's Quinte Business Achievement Awards. All of the award winners and nominees are truly outstanding in their respective fields.

Without further ado, here are the winners:

- for retail business of the year, J&B Books;
- for hospitality and tourism business of the year, Chilangos Mexican Restaurant;
- for regulated professions business of the year, Chad Buell and Associates Inc., Co-operators;
- for specialized services business of the year, SafeStart, a division of Electrolab Inc.;
- trades and construction services business of the year, Strong Bros. General Contracting Ltd.;
- manufacturing business of the year, Donmac Precision Machining;
- young entrepreneur of the year, Marley McFaul;
- new business of the year, Alliance Patient Transfer Inc.;
- not-for-profit of the year, Trenton Memorial Hospital Foundation;
- tech sector business of the year, Big Red Bow Digital Marketing;

- business person of the year, Jeff McKerracher from A1 Plumbing;
- agribusiness of the year, Eco Mulch;
- health and wellness business of the year, The Gym in the Armoury;
- sustainability of the year, Rocia Naturals;
- trailblazer of the year, Wander the Resort; and
- the business excellence award this year went to BCS Automation Ltd.

Congratulations once again, and thank you all for the great work that you do in our community.

ERIN FALL FAIR

Mr. Joseph Racinsky: I had an incredible summer and fall visiting dozens of community events and festivals in my riding, listening to the concerns of residents in Wellington–Halton Hills. A highlight for me was the opportunity to attend all of the fall fairs in my riding. These are special celebrations of our rural way of life and of our heritage.

Today, I wanted to specifically congratulate the Erin Agricultural Society for a successful event, which was their 175th Erin Fall Fair. This milestone was celebrated earlier this year as well in July with a tractor parade from Hillsburgh to Erin village.

From music to dog shows, there is always so much to see at the Erin Fall Fair. The home crafts displayed were a dizzying array of baked goods, vegetables, antiques and, of course, quilts. Thousands of residents came out to see the demolition derby, and a personal highlight of mine is all of the animals and livestock that are there.

Events like these are vital for our community and they run on volunteers. I want to say thank you to the board and all of the volunteers that make this event possible. You are what makes our community so special. I want to encourage residents new and old to get involved, so that we can see this incredible event continue for years to come. Thank you once again to all of the volunteers and I'm already looking forward to next year.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Joining us in the Speaker's gallery today, we have the Honourable Yasir Naqvi, who was the member for Ottawa Centre in the 39th, 40th and 41st Parliaments, but his most important job is as the father of page Rafi Naqvi. Welcome back to Queen's Park.

Mr. Robert Bailey: With me today in the east members' gallery are guests from the Sarnia Lambton Chamber of Commerce and other organizations: Carrie McEachran, chair of the Sarnia Lambton Chamber of Commerce; Shauntelle Sandrin, also with the Sarnia Lambton Chamber of Commerce; Sue Burgel, Express Employment; Matthew Slotwinski from Sarnia-Lambton Economic Partnership; and Shauna Carr with Sarnia-Lambton Economic Partnership. They're here for the next

two days and they're serving breakfast in rooms 228 and 230.

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Ms. Marit Stiles: I want to start by welcoming Leigh Sandison, Sara Restani and Tommy Wharton, who are here from KidSport today. I look forward to meeting with you this afternoon.

I'd also like to take a moment to welcome USW National Local 1944 president Michael Phillips and lead organizer Corey Mandryk, as well as Kim Hume, my good friend from the USW National office, who joined us this morning in the media studio, calling attention to ongoing job losses and the impact on worker

Ms. Laura Smith: It is my very great honour to welcome the team from Mackenzie Health. I just got back from Mackenzie Health. I want to thank them for their great service.

I want to welcome the wonderful leadership team, Mary-Agnes, David, Allison, Greg, Bill, Julie and Christina, all up in the gallery in front of us. Thank you so much for all that you do.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: I would like to formally welcome page Finley Booker, who's here from Thunder Bay–Superior North, and his sister Lisa Booker and his mom Felicity Booker. Welcome to your House. I look forward to meeting with you later.

Hon. Graham McGregor: I'm introducing some visitors on behalf of the member for Cambridge this morning, namely the Harris family: Lorraine Harris, Michael Harris and Given Messam-Harris. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I'd like to welcome my best friend Rebecca Reaume, and her mom Sue Cook, who are here to celebrate page captain Simone Reaume.

Mr. Deepak Anand: I'd like to welcome Erika Hildebrandt, Ekko Hildebrandt and Amjad Rana from German Canadian Club Hansa for the first time at Queen's Park. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'd like to welcome Jean Ardila and Fabian Ardila to the House, as well as my long-suffering husband Dale Fife.

Hon. David Piccini: It's a pleasure to welcome Marc from Building Up to Queen's Park today. Marc does an incredible job at inspiring the next generation to enter rewarding careers in the skilled trades.

I also want to welcome Michael, Terrance and Glenda from Merit Ontario, also doing a phenomenal job to support our construction shortfall.

Hon. Nolan Quinn: I'd like to welcome representatives both from Brock University and Niagara College that are here for today for meetings as well as the Niagara reception this evening.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I'd like to recognize April Jeffs and Dan Grubb from Brock University.

I also want to welcome everyone to Niagara Week and the MPP reception at Queen's Park this evening. I'm sure there's going to be some local wine from Niagara. It's 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. tonight. Welcome, all residents from Niagara region.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to welcome members of Life Sciences Ontario: Mark Smithyes, James Brodie and Dr. Jordan Thomson. We had a great meeting this morning. I invite everyone to visit their reception at 5 p.m. in the dining room.

MPP Wayne Gates: I'd like to welcome April Jeffs, who I know is here from Brock University, having a meeting at 1 o'clock, and my good friend Josh Upper, who has worked in my constit office; he is now working with Niagara Health. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: I would like to welcome Life Sciences Ontario, including my constituent Mark Smithyes. I look forward to meeting you later today.

Hon. Sam Oosterhoff: I would mention Daniel Grubb and April Jeffs from Brock University as well Mabel Watt from Niagara College, but a couple of people already have, so I won't welcome them.

But I do want to welcome Michelle Seaborn from Niagara region, Albert Witteveen from the Niagara region, Pat Chiocchio from the Niagara region and Tim Whalen from the city of Niagara Falls. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Everyone else, join us for Niagara Week reception tonight from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. It's going to be a good time.

JIM BRADLEY

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member from St. Catharines on a point of order.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I rise today to ask for unanimous consent for a moment of silence to mark the passing of Jim Bradley, regional chair of Niagara and long-time MPP for St. Catharines. Jim Bradley dedicated over four decades to public service representing his community with integrity and deep respect for this Legislature.

In recognition of his lifetime service, I ask all members to join in a moment of silence in his memory.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The member for St. Catharines is asking for unanimous consent for a moment of silence to mark the passing of Jim Bradley. Agreed? Agreed.

The House observed a moment's silence.

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

QUESTION PERIOD

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Marit Stiles: Good morning, Speaker. It's been quite a week since the Legislature finally resumed after that very long break. Last week, the Premier repeatedly refused to fire his Minister of Labour or hold him accountable, and we still have no answer to the questions that we raised. So today my questions are going to be to the Minister of Labour, and I hope to finally get some answers.

Let's review what we know, shall we? The Auditor General reported that staff in the minister's office misrepresented the scores of some applications to the Skills Development Fund, presenting them as higher-scoring applications when they were low- or medium-scoring. The Minister of Labour then admitted that he hand-picked winners and losers, backing low-scoring applications over the higher-scoring ones.

So Speaker, did the minister or anyone in his office direct staff to interfere or alter the rankings?

Hon. David Piccini: Speaker, that's incorrect. When we look to worthwhile projects to support Ontarians with training, we assess it based on a variety of factors, things like: Does it support our infrastructure bill, \$200 billion to actually build a better tomorrow—roads, hospitals, schools—Speaker? Does it support the Housing Supply Action Plan by my colleague here to build more affordable rental units? These are the priorities that we look at when we assess projects—projects that are transforming lives.

We're joined here by Marc from Building Up, who is doing an incredible job inspiring a next generation—predominantly under-represented groups—entering the skilled trades to build.

We know the opposition doesn't support building. They're against mining. They're against building. They're against building highways and roads. How did that work out for them in Brampton, Speaker? They didn't win a single seat when they opposed Highway 413 and the Bradford Bypass.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Supplementary?

Ms. Marit Stiles: You know what we're against, Speaker? We're against corruption. How about that?

The minister says one thing one day, another the next. One day it's yes; the next day it's no.

I want to tell you: In one example that was cited in the Auditor General's report, a project that scored 47 out of 100 was rewritten as a high-priority application and then approved for millions of dollars. Another ranked near the bottom was bumped up in an official briefing note after ministerial staff—the minister's staff—noted that it now suddenly fit government priorities. That's from the Auditor General's report, Speaker.

This sounds like a deliberate manipulation of official records to funnel public money toward politically connected projects. Who authorized the applications to be re-ranked?

Hon. David Piccini: Speaker, when we talk about projects, worthwhile projects for funding—the Auditor General noted the strength of the KPIs and how we assess that.

Let's talk about projects, Speaker. We've got incredible projects supporting a next generation of electrical workers. The only political linkage there was that Chris Borgia and Jamie Nye both ran for the NDP, but that doesn't matter. It doesn't matter, Speaker, because the incredible work they're doing bringing mobile training into Indigenous communities is supporting a next generation of tradesmen and women.

We're prioritizing that. They don't support this kind of stuff, because they don't support building. They were very clear when they had the opportunity, holding up the previous Liberal government. They didn't support building highways. They didn't support building roads, bridges or anything of the sort. That's why they lost every single seat in Brampton when these members campaigned on the 413 and the Bradford Bypass. We need men and women to build these things, to get this stuff done, and that's what we're focused on, Speaker.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Desperate, desperate responses over there, Speaker.

The minister said himself previously that he ranked these applications. The Auditor General has confirmed already that these were altered rankings, and they weren't isolated incidents, but they were part of a pattern of political interference in decision-making.

And you know what's really too bad, Speaker? It's that the minister's actions are casting a shadow over the entire application process and fund. It is like déjà vu all over again. They have learned nothing from their greenbelt scheme. Once again, political interference from the minister's office is putting insiders ahead of Ontarians.

If the minister thinks this is really the right thing to do, then he should release the scorecards that they used to determine how they distributed that \$2.5 billion in taxpayer dollars. Or will this minister keep treating tax dollars like a friends-and-family fund?

Hon. David Piccini: Speaker—full of inaccuracies. We don't rank applications. What we do is we review them and assess them against government priorities like our Housing Supply Action Plan, like our plan to mine critical minerals in northern Ontario to make sure we're supporting worthwhile career opportunities in the north.

They don't support that. They voted against mining in the north every time we've brought it to the floor of this place. They don't support those workers.

They don't support us building a self-reliant economy, being energy independent, because what else don't they support? They don't support new nuclear, like our plan to build new nuclear, like our plan to build small modular reactors. Well, guess what? All of those projects are going to take a next generation of young men and women in rewarding careers. They're against all of that, and it's not surprising. They voted no every single time.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Marit Stiles: If they didn't stack the deck with their friends, why not open the books? What do you got to hide?

Let's get a little more specific, shall we? Because I'm having a hard time understanding why the minister decided to bump some of these projects up, aside from their connections to the Premier's campaign manager or his buddy the Paris groom.

I'm going to give you an example here: The Ontario Harness Horse Association received over \$6 million through the Skills Development Fund over multiple rounds of funding. My question to the minister is, before political staff from his office got their hands on that application, did it score high or low?

Hon. David Piccini: When we select these projects for funding, as I said, we assess it against the criteria of priorities of this government, Speaker—things they don't support. They don't support mining. They don't support building.

But you know who else supports the work we're doing? Gemma Hall, who is an NDP candidate for Windsor-Tecumseh. She's director for Women's Enterprise Skills Training, who received \$700,000 to help train women in the skilled trades, in air conditioning, refrigeration and sheet metal work. All of these concepts are foreign to them because these are the unions that turned their back on that party because they don't support the men and women earning rewarding careers in these trades.

We also have Amanda Robertson, who ran for the opposition in the Bay of Quinte. She's a board member and treasurer for the John Howard Society, doing remarkable work.

Again, Speaker, none of that matters. It's about the scoring and it's about the incredible work being done to train a next generation of young men and women. This is what we look to when we make these remarkable investments that are changing lives. It's a shame they don't see that.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Supplementary?

Ms. Marit Stiles: The minister seems to be spending a lot of time doing research. Maybe he could save some time by just opening up the books. Just share it with us. Just show us everything.

But here's the thing, Speaker: This organization, the Ontario Harness Horse Association, is represented by StrategyCorp. That's a lobbying firm whose roster—and they would know this—includes former senior government staffers, Conservative Party insiders, campaign advisers.

There are nearly 800,000 Ontarians out of work in this province, and at a time when we should be going all in for workers, the minister is backing the wrong horse. He is focusing on insiders and lobbyists over workers and their families.

Can the minister tell us how many workers were trained through the \$6 million that went to the Ontario Harness Horse Association?

Hon. David Piccini: All the guidelines, all the program criteria are public. They're public for everyone to see. It's there online, Speaker. It's a real shame.

Let's look at another worthwhile project. One of the NDP candidates for Markham-Stouffville is a social worker at Community Living York South-Weston. They received more than \$129,000 through the Skills Development Fund to support high school internships including for individuals with intellectual disabilities.

These are some of the priorities and important projects that we're funding. We review them, we assess them to

make sure they're supporting adults with intellectual disabilities. They're supporting our Housing Supply Action Plan.

These are important projects, and it's a shame they're denigrating it, but, you know, it doesn't matter that a whole wide variety of their former candidates support SDF-funded projects because we assess them on their outcomes and their merit and the ability to change lives. That's what we're investing in when we—

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: The minister doesn't want to talk about the results, doesn't want to talk about this project. Why? Why? What is he hiding?

The thing is, Speaker, it's not about the applicants. It's about the politicians. And I've got to tell you, they have sent a pretty clear message to people out there, to their insiders, their campaign managers: Pony up. That's what they're sending the message about.

This association received millions while public colleges and trade programs struggle just to keep the lights on. The association's president, their general manager, their executive director have all donated to the Conservative Party, Speaker. Their president and his family donated about \$43,000 to the Conservatives—wow.

My question to the minister—you've got one more chance, Minister, to actually answer the questions this time—how can Ontarians trust this government when they keep seeing insiders get the fast track while they fall behind?

Hon. David Piccini: I just got something sent to me. One of the members of the harness horse racing association with their arm around former MPP for Essex county, Taras Natyshak, who, of course, left. He left that party because they turned their back on rural Ontario. They turned their back on worthwhile, important drivers of rural Ontario—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Order.

Hon. David Piccini: —things like harness horse racing and other drivers in rural Ontario. They could care less. They turned their backs on those members of rural Ontario. We won't, Speaker. We'll make investments in worthwhile careers that support a vibrant economy in rural Ontario, and we're not going to apologize for doing it.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. John Fraser: My question is for the Premier. But you know, if you watched the World Series this weekend, you would have learned two things: It's going to be a really hard-fought series, and you would also learn how much the Premier loves to spend money on television ads to make him look good. So \$75 million for two spots—that's got to be a record. It's not as much money, though, as the Minister of Labour likes to dole out to insiders, friends and donors.

So, Speaker, through you, which does the Premier prefer: spending hundreds of millions of dollars on ads that

make him look good, or his Minister of Labour doling out funds to his friends?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Madam Speaker, number one, it wasn't hundreds of millions of dollars. It wasn't \$75 million. Our intention was to get the message out. It was the most successful ad in the history of North America—not just here. We had over one billion impressions, meaning one billion views—and it's still counting—from around the world. I was getting calls from people who had relatives in India, in Portugal, in Italy, in Scotland, over in the UK. Every outlet—small, large, medium—in the US was talking about the conversation about it's better to get rid of any of the tariffs.

President Trump wants to attack our country, but the leader of the third party, the minivan party, he has no solutions. He believes in raising taxes, making us less competitive.

We believe in lowering taxes, creating an environment for companies to come here and thrive and prosper. But I'm never going to take a back seat to President Trump, never take a back seat to our opposition. We're going to continue working for the people—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Question?

1050

Mr. John Fraser: Back to the Premier: I just want to say that if Kory Teneycke is listening, Kory, please, on behalf of all Ontarians, please don't let the Premier have matches or run with scissors anymore.

Because here's what Mark Carney said this morning: That there is a series of detail-specific “comprehensive discussions, negotiations ... up until the point of those ads running ... take the President at his word” as to why the talks ended and tariffs went up—the ad. Those in the room exchanging term sheets had been making progress, and then the ads came, and we're here.

Speaker, I don't think the Ontario taxpayer should be funding this Premier's desire to become the Prime Minister of Canada. He's doing damage, so will he stand down and stop doing this?

Hon. Doug Ford: After earning about \$300 million to \$400 million of earned media—and for the people watching, that's free media—we've been waiting for this deal month after month after month after month. We've been waiting for this deal.

But this deal has nothing to do with protecting auto workers. We're here to protect the auto workers, and I don't think a fair deal is that the Americans charge us a 50% tariff on steel. We charge them a 25% tariff on steel.

My job is to protect the people of Ontario. That's exactly what I'm going to do. I'm going to continue protecting the people of Ontario.

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

Mr. John Fraser: Speaker, Ontarians paid for those ads, and that's \$300 million to \$400 million of unearned media. Well, Ontarians paid for those. They are going to pay for them with their jobs.

The Premier has decided that he wants to be Captain Canada and that he's going to do whatever he wants. I don't know who is speaking over there, but we're dealing with Donald Trump. So you want to attack—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The Minister of Energy and Mines will come to order.

Mr. John Fraser: What did you get, Premier—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The Minister of Energy and Mines will come to order.

Mr. John Fraser: —and the tariffs went up. Good job, Premier.

Ontarians are paying with their jobs for what you just did.

Hon. Doug Ford: The tariffs aren't going up, and they aren't going to go up. We want zero tariffs. That's what I'm fighting for.

But what it did do, Madam Speaker, is it created a conversation with every Republican and Democrat governor, Congressperson and senator. That's what it created.

As we're out there fighting on the front lines, you're sitting back, and all you do is criticize. Why don't you join Team Ontario? Why don't you join Team Canada like the rest of the Premiers? Why don't you get onside? Like my good friend Wab Kinew is onside, or Premier Eby from BC who's onside? I spoke to every single Premier. They're onside. The exact words are, "Don't stop; keep fighting for Canada." That was a message I got from all the Premiers that I spoke to.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. John Fraser: I don't know if I want to join the Premier's team because I know he knows that there's no I in team, but he knows there's an M and an E, and that's evidently what happened here.

Let's just recap what we went through last week. We learned that the Auditor General said that the Skills Development Fund was neither accountable nor fair nor transparent. And we know that the minister awarded a \$7.5-million contract to a company that was being represented by his close, personal friend. There was a Paris wedding. There were Leafs tickets. The minister's riding association donations went from \$50,000 to almost half a million after he was made minister. And we know that in the latest round, \$345 million, 63% of that went to people who donated \$1.3 million to the PC Party.

So Speaker, is this minister getting fired, or is the Premier going to keep him just to keep the gravy train rolling?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Minister of Labour.

Hon. David Piccini: Speaker, again, let's summarize what we saw last week from the opposition. They went against David O'Neil, who ran for them in the last election, who is of course on the board of the Quinte Economic Development Commission, who have supported folks getting into the manufacturing sector.

But there's a cognitive dissonance there because they didn't support the manufacturing sector. That's understandable: They drove hundreds of thousands of manufacturing jobs out of this province. So it's not surprising that they're not supporting projects that are getting people back into manufacturing. It's not surprising that they don't support projects that get people into construction.

They are turning their backs on the workers of this province, the workers who will build Highway 413 and the Bradford Bypass, the workers who are joining the ranks of the new manufacturing jobs created because we created a low-tax environment to attract investment. These are all things that they could have done when they were in government. They never did. They drove out jobs. We're turning the course, investing in workers, creating a stronger Ontario. And we're going to keep working—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Supplementary?

Mr. John Fraser: We also know that \$27 million went to bars, restaurants and nightclubs in downtown Toronto with connections to the Premier. It went to law firms, it went to vet clinics, it went to dental clinics, to a harness association—the list could go on—all with deep connections to the Premier or one of his ministers.

So the rot runs deep in the Skills Development Fund. It's the same rot we saw in the greenbelt, MZOs, Ontario Place. Speaker, this government's not open for business; it's for sale.

Hundreds of millions of dollars went to companies represented by the usual suspects: Kory Teneycke, Amin Massoudi, Nico Fidani-Diker, Michael Diamond. All the while the minister is shovelling money out the door to make already rich people even richer.

Speaker, is this minister going to get fired or is the Premier just going to keep him here so the gravy train won't stop rolling?

Hon. David Piccini: Speaker, every dollar went to training, worthwhile training. So while that member denigrates people who serve for a living, who clean rooms for a living, maybe he should consult a former senior Liberal staffer in Kathleen Wynne's government who works for that organization, the union who supports those workers.

But you know what, Speaker? I saw a remarkable young man standing up for men and women in the hospitality sector. I didn't give two hoots who he used to work for. I saw a worthwhile project helping women get employed, helping people who were underemployed find better employment, helping women rise through the ranks of the employment sector and supporting a beleaguered industry hit hard by the pandemic.

He can denigrate those workers all he wants. That's why these unions and the men and women who stand up for those remarkable workers are backing this Premier and this government, because we support them every day of the week.

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

Mr. John Fraser: The minister missed the point. I'm not denigrating workers. I'm just pointing out all this

money is going to make rich people even richer—friends of the government. We know those usual suspects. That's what's happening. It's been happening again and again: the greenbelt, MZOs, Ontario Place.

We did learn one other thing: The minister's fundraiser suddenly got postponed. In the heat of the moment, it got postponed. But I don't want Kory Teneycke or Amin Massoudi or Nico Fidani-Diker or Michael Diamond or any of the other hangers-on who do good business with this government to despair, because round 6 of the Skills Development Fund will be open on November 19 at the leader's dinner. So get your chequebooks out.

Speaker, back through you to the Premier: When is this minister going to get fired, or is the Premier just keeping him on to keep the gravy train rolling on?

Hon. David Piccini: Let's talk about another remarkable group supporting carpentry and welding. One of their staffers, one of their folks working and affiliated with that organization, is the Liberals' very own VP of fundraising.

We can play this game all day, but the bottom line is people have careers. The bottom line is this government looks to support rewarding training that's going to help people land a better job with a bigger paycheck.

Again, we can play this game all day—Joshua Bell. We could look to one of the members of your caucus who worked for Habitat for Humanity. They're supporting a next generation of workers into rewarding careers in the trades. MPP Tsao is right there, and he worked for Habitat for Humanity.

What I'm trying to establish is that when you support rewarding training opportunities to help people land a better job with a bigger paycheck, we build a stronger Ontario. And that's exactly—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Member for Sudbury.

EMPLOYMENT SUPPORTS

MPP Jamie West: My question is for the Premier. There are over 100 Ericsson employees in Ontario who are going to lose their job on Friday. Most of them are right here in the GTA. These workers perform critical telecommunication infrastructure work for Rogers. These workers have sent dozens of emails to the Premier's office asking for help, but no one replied, so today they came to Queen's Park to beg for help.

1100

My question, Speaker: Will the Premier call his donors at Rogers and Ericsson, demand that these workers stay in Ontario and save these workers?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the government House leader.

Hon. Steve Clark: I want to thank the member for the question.

As the Premier has said many times in this House, our government is laser-focused on jobs and job creation. I appreciate the fact that the member opposite has this group. We're always open to have those conversations.

I'd love to talk to the member after question period and get a little more information. Obviously, those folks are not from good old eastern Ontario, but we as a government are committed to ensuring, in the face of Donald Trump and in the face of all the tariffs, that no matter what corner of the province we're in, we want to make sure that we stand up for jobs and stand up for Canada.

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

MPP Jamie West: Back to the Premier, who seems laser-focused on his emails right now: Speaker, the Premier has been a jobs disaster. He talks a good game, but Ontario keeps losing jobs. There are 3,000 Stellantis workers in Brampton. There are 1,200 GM workers in Ingersoll. There are 160 Diageo bottling workers in Amherstburg. There are 160 sawmill workers in Ear Falls; 130 Halstead furniture workers in Lindsay. But unlike those companies, Speaker, Rogers and Ericsson aren't responding to tariffs. They're just making a quick buck. They're choosing to give these jobs away—good-paying Ontario jobs—to other countries.

My question is, this Friday, another 100-plus workers in Ontario will lose their jobs. Yes or no, Premier, will you save them?

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

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Madam Speaker, thank you to the member opposite.

Every job in this province matters, and that's why, since we got elected, we've created the conditions for almost a million new jobs in this province. That's a million people who have the opportunity to put food on the table, to pay the mortgage, to pay the rent.

Madam Speaker, under that Liberal government, supported by the NDP, we saw 300,000 tail lights go south of the border. We created the conditions that bring back manufacturing jobs, lower costs for people and for businesses. Madam Speaker, \$13 billion back in the pockets of every hard-working person in Ontario; \$12 billion back in the pockets for businesses through cuts of taxes and fees. That's why we have a \$1.2-trillion economy in this province from \$850 billion—one that they didn't support.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: Speaker, the Auditor General uncovered that more than half the money given out from the Skills Development Fund went to lower-scoring projects. She described the process as not fair, not transparent and not accountable.

We know that hundreds of millions of dollars were awarded to companies who were friends, donors or hired lobbyists who are friends of this government. Speaker, the government is planning to dole out another \$800 million in the next two rounds of skills development funding. And yet the Minister of Labour hasn't once apologized for passing over high-scoring applicants in favour of his

friends. We can't count on this minister not to once again reward those well-connected insiders.

So my question to the Premier: Will he fire his Minister of Labour?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The Minister of Labour.

Hon. David Piccini: Speaker, as I said, we've established that former candidates work for organizations that received SDF funding. They're VP of fundraising organizations that received it. That's not what this is about; what this is about is training folks for better jobs.

It's not surprising. They had the opportunity to create the conditions for job growth, for economic growth. They had the opportunity to lower taxes. They had the opportunity to back manufacturing workers in my riding.

Under their watch, Kraft left Cobourg. Under their watch, manufacturing jobs fled Ontario. All we could see were the red rear-view lights. That's their record, Speaker. They had the opportunity to stand up as a million more people entered this province and say, "Hey, we're actually going to build some roads and highways." They were against that too. That's why they didn't win a single seat in Brampton.

They're against mining in northern Ontario. They don't support nuclear. I don't know what they want us to heat our homes with—light a fire in the fireplace? We're supporting new nuclear. We're supporting SMRs. They want—

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

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: Speaker, we know exactly what this is about. We know the reason the Premier won't answer the question and doesn't want to fire his minister. It's because he thinks the Skills Development Fund is his government's own personal piggy bank to reward and enrich their insider friends.

Right now, over 700,000 people are looking for work. Excluding the pandemic, that's the most ever in this province. That means 700,000 families are worried about paying the rent and putting food on the table. There's another \$800 million on the line that could retrain those workers and help them find jobs.

My question, back to the Premier: Will he commit today not to enriching his insider friends, but to giving the next \$800 million in SDF money to high-scoring applicants so that the workers who need help can get it?

Hon. David Piccini: Speaker, I look forward to working with that member to get folks into rewarding careers.

Let's talk about numbers: 100,000 workers got a job within 60 days of completing their training, more than 8,000 workers are now apprentices and more than 260,000 workers are from marginalized communities. This is the track record. This is what our government is proud to do.

I think back to stories. I think about the Jennifer story that I've told in this House before. She's working on a mine in northern Ontario. She's breaking down barriers, saying to more women, "Hey, you can get in this career too." She's standing as a role model.

It's not surprising they don't support that; they're against mining. It's not surprising they don't support the next generation of millwrights, a project that supports a priority sector, our energy sector, because they're against that too. They wanted to shut down Pickering. They wanted to shutter our nuclear plants.

We're going to make sure we support these workers and the industries they work—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member for Whitby.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Mr. Lorne Coe: My question is for the Minister of Energy and Mines. As the world faces growing economic instability, Ontario must be ready to stand on its own. Donald Trump's threats of new tariffs and trade barriers show how quickly our economy can be put at risk. That's why building a stronger, more reliable energy system is so important: because when we power Ontario with clean and affordable energy, we protect Ontario jobs and our economy from outside pressures. Yet the opposition Liberals and NDP continue to oppose the very projects that keep our lights on and our people working.

Speaker, can the minister please explain how our government's plan to expand Ontario's energy grid is protecting jobs, families and our province from future global economic uncertainty?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member for Mississauga–Lakeshore.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I want to thank the great member from Whitby for that question. He is right: We are expanding our energy grid today to ensure that we meet the demands of tomorrow.

Unlike the Liberals and New Democrats, who would have rather seen 2,000 people out of work, our government reversed the decision to close the Pickering nuclear generation station, saving 2,000 jobs and ensuring clean, reliable and affordable energy for years to come.

We're also looking to build the largest nuclear generation station in the world at Wesleyville, which would have enough power for 10 million homes.

Madam Speaker, while we've made lots of progress, there is still more to be done, but under the leadership of Premier Ford and the Minister of Energy and Mines, we will continue to protect Ontario.

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

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

Speaker, Ontario's energy leadership is being recognized right across Canada and around the world. While others talk about clean power, Ontario is building it. From Pickering to Bruce to Darlington, our workers are leading the way and delivering clean, reliable and affordable energy. We're not just keeping the lights on, we're helping our allies to do the same.

But Speaker, while our government is taking action to protect Ontario's energy security and support jobs, the

opposition continues to vote against these important projects.

Can the parliamentary assistant please share how Ontario's nuclear partnerships with other provinces are helping strengthen our energy system and, Speaker, protect Ontario's future?

1110

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: Just last week, the Minister of Energy and Mines signed two landmark agreements in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. They will unlock the potential of Ontario's clean, reliable and affordable nuclear energy. They position Canada as a global energy powerhouse.

In Nova Scotia, our government signed an MOU to help deploy a small modular reactor. In New Brunswick, we signed a \$60-million agreement through Ontario Power Generation to help New Brunswick Power improve performance and operations at their nuclear generation station.

But it doesn't stop there, Madam Speaker. We're helping to move forward with small modular reactors in Alberta, Saskatchewan and countries around the world.

Ontario is ready to help ourselves and our allies so they too can benefit from our clean nuclear advantage. And I always say, the world is watching Ontario at the present time.

COLLEGE FUNDING

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Premier. Speaker, this Premier is a jobs disaster, and no one knows that better than the 10,000 college workers who have lost their jobs or will soon be laid off.

Chronic underfunding under both the Liberals and the Conservatives has caused a complete crisis in our college system. But instead of investing in our public colleges, this government is forcing colleges to compete with private colleges for access to skills development funding through a process the Auditor General has described as not fair, transparent or accountable.

Speaker, why doesn't this government just provide the public funding that our colleges urgently need?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the Minister of Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Nolan Quinn: I'd recommend the member opposite read the budget 2025. We've invested over a billion dollars this year alone into 100,000 new seats. Whether that's 20,000 new STEM seats, 75,000 for construction-related programming, 7,800 seats, \$56 million for nursing, as well as new teaching seats, Speaker, we've invested over \$2.3 billion into our publicly assisted college and university system right across the province in the last 18 months. It's a significant investment. That's on top of our \$5 billion we invest into the sector every single year.

Speaker, funding is higher than it's ever been in Ontario's history when it comes to post-secondary education. We'll continue standing by the sector to ensure that

we have a world-class education system for decades to come.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Speaker, I did read the budget, and I noticed a \$1.2-billion cut to post-secondary education over an extra year.

Speaker, we know from the Auditor General that the labour minister's office was directly involved in the selection of SDF projects for funding, with money doled out to Conservative friends and insiders even when projects ranked low and often when a paid lobbyist was involved. We know that several SDF projects involving private colleges have been approved, that the former labour minister's wife is the executive director of Career Colleges Ontario and the current labour minister's wife is a registered lobbyist for Career Colleges Ontario.

Speaker, will the Premier clear the air and tell us whether lobbyists and insider connections are the reason that private career colleges are getting SDF funding while our public colleges are being starved?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Minister of Labour.

Hon. David Piccini: Speaker, let's talk about what we know. Earlier today, they asked questions about the harness horse association. I just got an email forwarded to me about a fundraiser the harness horse association held for the NDP, with their former leader. So that's not what this is about.

What this government is fighting hard to do is to build infrastructure for a lasting future in this province: energy infrastructure that they fight against, Speaker; new nuclear infrastructure that they oppose; mining infrastructure that's going to unlock opportunities in the north to help us be self-sufficient—they oppose those miners, Speaker. New highways, roads to help moms and dads get home faster to be with their loved ones—they don't support those highways or those roads, Speaker.

They haven't offered a single—colleagues, I don't remember a single actual idea to build a stronger Ontario—a single actual project that they support, Speaker. They stand for the pictures with these SDF-supported programs, building key infrastructure, yet they oppose the very programs and legislation making it happen.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Ted Hsu: Let's talk about Noah the shipbuilder. Not that Noah; the Noah that the Minister of Labour put up—the minister has put up lots of workers in his own defence. I think it's a shame that he's using the good workers of Ontario to hide behind for political cover in this Skills Development Fund scandal.

What about workers with highly ranked applicants who are rejected by the minister's political staff? The Auditor General said that over half the SDF money went to applications ranked poor, low or medium. She said the

minister chose to fund them more than highly ranked applications.

What's going on? Well, more and more connections with successful applicants and PC Party friends, lobbyists and donors continue to be uncovered by investigative journalists.

This is about fairness—fairness for all workers in this province. The government's pay-to-play scheme is not fair.

Will the minister do the right thing and resign?

Hon. David Piccini: The program that member referenced—I had their executive director here last week. The member had an opportunity to sit down with her and understand what the program is doing, but of course he didn't, Speaker, because he voted against our shipbuilding strategy. Of course, he doesn't support shipbuilding. They voted against a \$200-million shipbuilding strategy to build a shipbuilding sector.

They're against all of these critical investments to build a stronger Ontario. They don't support these programs. They don't support these workers. They vote against them. Every time we bring these opportunities to the floor to build a stronger Ontario, they vote against it.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Ted Hsu: This government is in disarray. The Prime Minister of Canada is joking about whether the Premier is a friend or not. The housing minister just had to rescue the government from making rental housing tenants' lives more unstable and, on Friday, that minister got his announcement cancelled.

And that was all after the poor housing minister's Thursday event went off the rails when a journalist quizzed Walid Abou-Hamde, a former labour minister staffer, executive director of a construction advocacy group whose directors have donated over \$100,000 to the PC Party in the last decade, who got \$1.8 million in skills development funding.

This government is in turmoil when 700,000 people are looking for work in Ontario, and we must be ready to protect our economy. Would the housing minister agree that the labour minister needs to do the right thing, remove the distraction of scandal and resign?

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

Hon. Rob Flack: It takes too long and it costs too much to build housing in Ontario. I am proud of the record this government has under its belt to create those conditions. As such, our skilled trades are a big part of that. That's a big threat to our province with the south of the border challenges coming from Trump. We have to protect those jobs, and that is exactly what this government is doing, that is exactly what this minister is doing and that is what we are going to continue to do.

We had a great bill launched last week. We're going to debate it later this afternoon. Bill 60 is going to create the conditions, cut red tape, cut costs, cut the time it takes to get shovels in the ground. Speaker, we're going to get this done.

SKILLED TRADES

Mr. Billy Pang: My question is for the Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development. Across Ontario, we are hearing growing concerns about economic uncertainty. Tariffs, trade threats and global instability and inflation are putting pressure on our workers and our industries.

While Donald Trump threatens Ontario jobs, the Liberals and NDP continue to play politics by voting against the very programs that protect those jobs. Instead of supporting Ontario workers, they criticize the very investments that help them succeed.

Our government knows the best way to protect Ontario's economy is to invest in people. Can the minister explain what he is doing to help people get a better job with a bigger paycheck?

Hon. David Piccini: Speaker, it's part of a plan. It's part of a plan that says to youth, "You've got a multitude of rewarding career opportunities." That's why we introduced the largest-ever skilled trades career fair in this province's history, helping tens of thousands of youths get real, hands-on experience in rewarding careers in the trades, Speaker.

1120

We've seen many enroll for apprenticeships. That's why we have a record number of youth today enrolling in apprenticeships. We've added new tech classes for young people in high school to get hands-on experience. We've made sure that the hours and work they're doing in high school can count towards a level 1 certificate of qualification. We're bringing exams closer to home, increasing the number of places we're administering exams for a certificate of qualification, all with a plan to get a next generation of men and women who will build a stronger Ontario. We're working hard every day to make sure we have the miners, the construction workers, the men and women in the nuclear sector, to make sure we have a stronger province.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the member from Markham-Unionville.

Mr. Billy Pang: Thank you to the minister for his response and strong leadership. We know that building a stronger Ontario means building a stronger workforce. As our government looks to grow the economy east to west and reduce our reliance on US markets, we must make sure that our workers have the skills to seize new opportunities here at home. Donald Trump's trade threats make it clear: Ontario must be ready to stand on its own two feet.

But while our government is training workers for good jobs, the Liberals and NDP continue to play politics and oppose the very programs that make it possible.

Speaker, can the minister tell the House, are there more people in apprenticeships today than when we first formed government?

Hon. David Piccini: I want to thank the member for his hard work to support a next generation of workers in this province, Speaker. The simple answer is yes, there's more today than at any point in modern history. We've seen a

doubling of the number of women's registrations in apprenticeships. We've broken down barriers to provide more accessible training to Indigenous First Nations.

The member talked about building a more self-reliant economy. When we took office and we were hit by a pandemic, did we or didn't we have a pipeline of reliant PPE from Ontario, built by Ontarians? We didn't. We were dependent on China. That's the record of the previous Liberal government: make us reliant on other countries.

We stood up. We have a stockpile of PPE made by Ontario workers. We're supporting an energy sector built by and for Ontario workers, a critical mineral sector by and for Ontario workers, and are also building the critical infrastructure for tomorrow's generation, again, by and for the incredible men and women we're signing up for apprenticeships today.

HOUSING

MPP Catherine McKenney: Speaker, this Premier has the audacity to blame renters for his failure to get more housing built and to make life more affordable. In 2018, he said, "I have criss-crossed the province, and from one corner to the other, the people of Ontario have told me they are struggling. I have listened to the people, and I won't take rent control away from anyone. Period."

To the Premier: Will you keep your word this time and listen to people who are struggling? Or is this another broken promise in order to benefit your wealthy corporate landlord friends?

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

Hon. Rob Flack: Speaker, we'll continue to advance common-sense reforms to the Ontario rental housing market, as we have been doing. But let's be clear on one thing: Costs of rent are coming down here in Ontario. We're creating the conditions to get more rental housing built. In fact—they don't want to admit this in the opposition—we have seen 17,000 new starts, year to date, after nine months, a record start in Ontario, up 38%—38%. Over the past three years, we have seen 52,000 new rental units, a record for Ontario.

The bottom line is this: We're creating the conditions. The more we build, the more affordable rents become. We're creating the foundation for success, like lowering the provincial portion of the HST on qualified purpose-built rentals. Those are the conditions that make it work. And it's working; we're seeing rents in this province drop.

We're going to continue to fight for renters in this province.

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

MPP Catherine McKenney: Just when we thought that this government could not get more vindictive to people who are struggling to stay housed, this Premier says, "Hold my beer"—no, "Hold my buck a beer," actually, because this is his cheapest shot yet at renters.

Again to the Premier: Will you show some compassion to the Ontarians who rent, who you were elected to represent, and choose instead to strengthen rental protections, build truly affordable homes and keep people housed across this province?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Response? The Attorney General.

Hon. Doug Downey: Everybody knows Ontario has been flooded by the federal government and increased need. We're hard at work building purpose-built rentals, but we also have to have balance. You can ask any of the number of landlords in your caucus how difficult it is to be a landlord. We have to have balance, because if we don't have landlords and housing providers, there is nowhere for the tenants to be and it drives up costs.

We are working very hard to bring the Landlord and Tenant Board back to balance, to create a level playing field and to allow landlords and housing providers to provide more stock so that there is more room for those who need a place to live and they can do it affordably.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: I love Halloween—ghosts, goblins, anything macabre—and this month has been very spooky. October 1, the Auditor General released her report on the Skills Development Fund, and let me tell you, there weren't enough treats for workers, but there were plenty of tricks. Recently, Ontarians have seen behind the mask of how this government actually works. If you're a close friend with the Minister of Labour, you can conjure up \$8.5 million in taxpayer money for your clients' low-scoring projects. If you're a lobbyist with close ties to the Premier, you can haunt the halls of power and walk away with hundreds of millions in public funds.

My question: Will the Premier finally admit that over half of the Skills Development Fund was just a slush fund dressed up in a bad Halloween costume?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The Minister of Labour.

Hon. David Piccini: Speaker, they don't need to dress up; Ontarians saw them as they were and it was scary enough, which is why they didn't vote for them.

They can joke around all they want, but when this government got elected, we took priorities to the people—priorities to build critical infrastructure, priorities to build housing, priorities to build critical minerals and unlock the potential of the north. Those are the government priorities we assess projects against, and we're going to continue to make sure we provide rewarding opportunities for our next generation.

I think to those stories I've often spoken about. Frankie's story in our own community: MPP Coe, for Whitby, has been an incredible champion to make sure everybody can enter the labour market, and we're supporting these rewarding careers that help people land a job with dignity. We're going to keep working on that.

Members of her very own party write letters to me to support these applications. We're going to continue working hard to provide these opportunities for Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Question?

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Speaker, half of the Skills Development Fund went to this government's friends and donors for low-scoring projects when there were plenty of high-scoring ones. Why is the Premier pretending not to get this? It is the same wilful ignorance that allows this government to claim that bike lanes cause gridlock and that green roofs hinder housing targets—ridiculous. The Premier and I worked together a long time ago at city hall, and I know full well his MO: When there's a scandal over here, he creates a shiny bobble over there.

The people of Ontario deserve real answers on what happened with the Skills Development Fund. My question: Can the Premier stop using a bunch of bogus new bills as a distraction and simply explain why his friends and donors received oodles of taxpayer dollars?

1130

Hon. David Piccini: Speaker, as we've gone through, we have support letters from members opposite for organizations whose principals are big donors to their party. We have rewarding projects whose executive members are former members of Kathleen Wynne's Premier's office. But none of that matters. What matters is rewarding training. What matters is the rewarding training opportunities that we're providing.

As I said, this government is going to stand up for men and women who work to build the roads and highways, men and women of incredible labour unions, non-labour unions—we're joined by Merit in eastern Ontario. Men and women who work on projects as both prime and subcontractors across Ontario—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Order.

Hon. David Piccini: They fight against those. They're against the widening of the 401. They're against the 413, Speaker. They're against mining critical minerals—

Interjection.

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

Hon. David Piccini: —they're against the Pickering refurbishment. They're against new nuclear. They need to come clean with workers of this province: Do you support them and the rewarding opportunities to earn—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Question?

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. John Jordan: My question is for the Associate Minister of Small Business. Small businesses are the backbone of Ontario's economy. They create jobs, drive innovation and support communities in every corner of our province. But today, small business owners face growing uncertainty. From rising costs to global instability, the impacts on our economy are real, including new tariffs and trade threats from Donald Trump. Ontario can't wait for others to act. We must take charge, support our entrepreneurs and protect the people who keep our local economies strong.

Speaker, can the associate minister please share how our government is standing with small business owners and helping them grow, compete and succeed in these challenging economic times?

Hon. Nina Tangri: I really want to thank the great, hard-working member from Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston for that very important question.

Speaker, our government recognizes that small businesses are what drive Ontario's economy. That's why we continue to invest in the small business enterprise centre network, which has 47 locations right across our great province. These centres provide tailored guidance, hands-on advice, mentorship and funding to help entrepreneurs start and grow their businesses.

Through the SBEC network, we also provide funding for training for new business owners and support students in turning their ideas into real-world businesses. Speaker, these supports are helping entrepreneurs gain the tools, skills and confidence they need to innovate, compete and thrive in today's economy.

Under the Premier's leadership, we are protecting Ontario's small business community, ensuring they have every opportunity to grow.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The member for Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston.

Mr. John Jordan: Thank you to the associate minister for her continuing leadership in helping small businesses.

Small business owners are the heart of our local economies. They work long hours, create jobs and give back to their communities. For many, their business isn't just a paycheque, it's their pride, purpose, passion and legacy.

But as many owners prepare for retirement, they face tough choices about what happens next. How do they pass on what they've built? How do they protect the workers and the communities they've supported for decades? That's why support for Ontario's new business succession planning hubs is so important.

Speaker, can the associate minister please share how this new hub will help owners plan for the future, protect jobs and keep our communities strong?

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

Speaker, our government is proud to continue investing in Ontario's small business enterprise centres. Announced in this year's budget, we are investing \$1.9 million over three years to establish a business succession planning hub within the SBEC network. This hub will help small business owners plan for the future, so when they're ready to retire or transition their business, those enterprises can continue protecting local jobs and community vitality.

Last year, we invested an additional \$6.8 million over two years to enhance grant funding and support for our entrepreneurs. This investment builds on our government's ongoing support for the Starter Company Plus Program and Summer Company program, ensuring entrepreneurs have access to mentorship, training and financial assistance.

Together, Speaker, these investments are helping small businesses grow, thrive and continue in communities right across our great province.

RENT REGULATION

Mr. Chris Glover: The Minister of Housing just called removing rent control a common-sense reform. This government has already removed rent control for renters in new buildings, and last week, the government announced that they're considering ending rent control on all units. Then, on Sunday, the minister backtracked and said that they would not end rent control because "now is not the time."

Why would the government think it is ever a good time to end rent control and to threaten to kick renters out of their homes? Can the Premier commit today to supporting renters by never ending rent control in Ontario?

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

Hon. Doug Downey: What my friend the member opposite, as a landlord himself, knows full well is that the cost of everything is going up, whether it be taxes, utilities and otherwise.

Now, what my friend the minister said was that we're not having that conversation. The party of no said, "Can we not have this conversation?" We said, "Okay," and they still won't take yes for an answer, Madam Speaker. So we will move on to constructive reforms and we will debate those this afternoon.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): There being no further business, this House stands in recess until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1136 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ONTARIO ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE,
TALENT AND INNOVATION STRATEGY
ACT, 2025

LOI DE 2025

SUR LA STRATÉGIE ONTARIENNE
POUR FAVORISER LE TALENT
ET L'INNOVATION DANS LE DOMAINE
DE L'INTELLIGENCE ARTIFICIELLE

Mr. Cerjanec moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 61, An Act to establish an artificial intelligence, talent and innovation strategy for Ontario / Projet de loi 61, Loi visant à créer une stratégie ontarienne pour favoriser le talent et l'innovation dans le domaine de l'intelligence artificielle.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. Rob Cerjanec: The bill would require the government of Ontario to design, implement and maintain a strategy around artificial intelligence, talent and innovation that would encourage the creation and growth of start-ups, support post-secondary institutions in research

and development, attract and retain our best students and talent, promote responsible AI development that protects the privacy and safety of Ontarians, ensure economic growth across the province and maintain Canadian control over critical AI infrastructure.

The bill would establish an advisory committee that brings together experts from business, industry, education, labour and technology, tasked with making recommendations, advising and consulting on AI issues, and publishing an annual report on Ontario's progress. The Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade would report to the Legislature on Ontario's progress.

The goal is simple: to make Ontario a leader in AI while creating new jobs and opportunities, ensuring that we can shape the future of AI instead of it shaping us.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Just a reminder: These are brief explanations.

PUBLIC HEALTH ACCOUNTABILITY
ACT (IN HONOUR OF DR. SHEELA
BASRUR), 2025

LOI DE 2025 SUR LA RESPONSABILITÉ
EN MATIÈRE DE SANTÉ PUBLIQUE
(EN HOMMAGE À LA DRE SHEELA
BASRUR)

Madame Gélinas moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 62, An Act to amend the Health Protection and Promotion Act with respect to the positions of Chief Medical Officer of Health and Associate Chief Medical Officer of Health and related matters / Projet de loi 62, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la protection et la promotion de la santé en ce qui concerne les postes de médecin-hygiéniste en chef et de médecin-hygiéniste en chef adjoint et des questions connexes.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: Every province and territory has a Chief Medical Officer of Health. Ontario is the only province where the Chief Medical Officer of Health reports to the House and is an employee of the Ministry of Health. The bill would change this.

The Chief Medical Officer of Health would be an officer of the assembly, and they would also provide for the appointment of a select committee in the event of a declaration of an emergency under the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act that relates to a public health event or a pandemic or has a health impact anywhere in Ontario.

It also brings the matter in which the temporary Chief Medical Officer of Health can be put into place in special circumstances. So it would bring us in line with the other provinces and territories of our country.

1581766 ONTARIO LTD. ACT, 2025

Ms. Clancy moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr16, An Act to revive 1581766 Ontario Ltd.

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

First reading agreed to.

STOP RIPPING OFF FANS ACT
(TICKET RESALE PRICE CAPS), 2025
LOI DE 2025 VISANT À METTRE FIN
À LA REVENTE ABUSIVE DE BILLETS
(LIMITE SUR LES PRIX DE REVENTE
DE BILLETS)

Mr. Cerjanec moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 63, An Act to amend the Ticket Sales Act, 2017 /
Projet de loi 63, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2017 sur la vente
de billets.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. Rob Cerjanec: This bill seeks to amend and reintroduce a provision in the Ticket Sales Act that was removed in 2019. The bill seeks to cap the price of ticket resales on the secondary market at no more than 50% above face value. The bill seeks to protect consumers and help families and friends go see their favourite artist or sports team without being ripped off by speculators.

PETITIONS

ROAD SAFETY

MPP Alexa Gilmour: Valdemar and Fatima Avila and Julia Cleveland—these are lives that are no longer with us, when a speeding car killed them in my riding of Parkdale–High Park. That is why Parents Against Speeding, Friends and Families for Safe Streets, and School Streets Ottawa have created this petition and are asking the government to reverse its position on speed cameras.

We know that decreasing speed by 45% is what's being asked for, when we talk about speed cameras. AMO, the chief of police, and many other organizations have asked for this.

It is my honour to stand with those families in Parkdale–High Park and sign this petition and deliver it through page Ollie.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady: I have a petition before me: "Reconstruction of the Argyle Street Bridge Is Well Overdue–MTO, Get It done!"

As I've told the House in the past, the Caledonia bridge, built in 1927, was deemed in a state of deterioration in

2001. As a result of traffic and weight restrictions, there are significant safety concerns with respect to the bridge, which make people of Caledonia and Haldimand county on the whole very anxious.

I have asked several questions in this House on when reconstruction of the bridge will begin and have not been given a satisfactory answer.

Therefore, thousands of residents in my riding have signed this petition which calls on the government to immediately announce and commit to a firm date to commence reconstruction of the bridge.

I wholeheartedly support this petition. I will affix my name to it and send it to the table with Orion.

INTERPROVINCIAL TRADE

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I have a petition to present today. I'd like to thank Anne Beckett Sinasac of Amherstburg, Ontario, for sending in this petition.

1310

This petition talks about trade barriers within Canada. Those are barriers that prevent trade or slow down trade between provinces. This petition asks us to tear down those trade barriers and unlock Canada's full potential. That's because Ontario wants to make sure that it supports the rest of Canada, and I'm sure that the rest of Canada wants to support Ontario too. We want to have mutual recognition with reciprocating provinces and territories so that goods and services can move freely within Canada—truly free trade between the provinces.

Madam Speaker, I support this petition, I will sign this petition and give it to this fine page, Rafi, to bring to the Clerks' table.

HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Ms. Doly Begum: I have a petition here for better staffing, better wages, better care in our Ontario public hospitals.

Speaker, registered nurses and health care professionals are the backbone of the public health care system, and they are the professionals who are fighting for better staffing, better wages and better care in our public hospitals.

The government has the power; they have the direct power to direct funding and prioritize Ontario hospitals and the Ontario Hospital Association in the process of making sure that they're well funded.

So I'm asking for the government, through this petition—this petition has been signed by hundreds and hundreds of health care professionals and community members—to support nurses and health care professionals and registered nurses in the process of making sure that they are well funded, so our hospitals are well taken care of.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Brian Saunderson: I have a petition to protect Ontario's automotive sector.

With President Trump's tariffs causing uncertainty and chaos in the North American auto sector, and in light of the incredible investment this province has attracted in that sector, we need to make sure we ensure protection of the plants as we see them temporarily shut down and workers laid off on both sides of the border, as a direct result of President Trump's tariffs.

The petition asks that the Ontario government protect Ontario businesses and workers who are being affected by the US's unjustified tariffs and continue to work to promote trade, free trade, and to restore free trade and to lift the US tariff barriers immediately.

I absolutely support this petition. I will affix my signature to it and give it to page Avery.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: This weekend was a very difficult one for renters.

This petition is on rent control.

Rent control is something that seniors, people living with disabilities, those on social assistance, young people, women escaping violence, new Canadians, and many, many more depend upon. Average rent has increased over 50% in the last 10 years. And this government has recently talked about removing rent control from long-term tenants. I think about seniors who have lived in their buildings for decades, people who are on fixed incomes, such as those on social assistance, young people, students, and so many more.

This petition calls upon the government to enact measures that were brought forward with my Rent Stabilization Act to establish rent control between tenancies, to make sure people are paying what the last tenant paid, to stop renovictions and end the Liberal loophole of vacancy decontrol. It's time; we need to make sure, during a cost-of-living crisis, that people are protected.

I fully support this petition. I will affix my signature and deliver it with page Tishe to the Clerks.

TENANT PROTECTION

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: I am proud to stand in this House to submit this petition. It's entitled "Withdraw Bill 60: Protect Tenants' Rights," and it's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

Whereas Bill 60, the so-called Fighting Delays, Building Faster Act, 2025, would actually accelerate evictions and reduce tenants' ability to defend themselves at the Landlord and Tenant Board—the government's technical briefing note suggests that there's a review of fixed-term leases that could end security of tenure, undermining one of the most fundamental protections for renters in Ontario.

The petition goes on to speak about how there is a massive and severe housing crisis in Ontario, with rents soaring, wages stagnating, and over 80,000 people who are already experiencing homelessness in 2024—this is a 25%

increase since 2022—and right now, over 800,000 Ontarians are struggling to find stable work.

Therefore, the undersigned are calling on this Legislative Assembly to reject Bill 60 and any related measures that will weaken protections for vulnerable tenants by doing the following:

- commit to protecting the security of tenure for all tenants and ensuring fair and accessible processes at the Landlord and Tenant Board;

- reinstate rent control immediately, as well as bring in vacancy rent control to prevent rent gouging and displacement; and

- strengthen municipal authorities to build and plan affordable housing and public and affordable transit.

I will affix my signature to this petition and send it back to the table with page Aditya.

I want to say thank you to this House.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Deepak Anand: Madam Speaker, I was just hearing some other petitions—it's something very similar, actually, talking about the tariffs and the uncertainty and the chaos that these tariffs are creating, especially for the auto sector, across the global economy. We've seen the layoffs and temporary shutdowns, the effects of these tariffs.

Thank you to the members who have signed this petition, talking about the government of Ontario, urging the government of Ontario to continue fighting against these tariffs and collaboratively work to make sure that these tariffs are removed immediately. So I want to say thank you to those who have signed it.

I am absolutely in favour of this. I'm going to sign and give it to wonderful page Ava.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms. Catherine Fife: This petition is entitled "Bring Back Rent Control."

I think what we learned this weekend is that when you destabilize those who are precariously housed in rental situations, you also destabilize the economy.

So I really want to thank ACORN and members from London North Centre for collecting signatures.

It is time for this province to control what we can control. Ensuring that people have a clean, affordable, safe place to live is the first step in building a strong economy and stabilizing the province of Ontario.

It is my pleasure to affix my signature to this petition to bring back rent control in the province of Ontario.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

MPP Alexa Gilmour: My petition here that I have before me is called "Bring Back Rent Control."

I want to thank the people of Parkdale-High Park for gathering these signatures. Long before they knew that Bill 60 was coming, they knew that what we needed was

not an increase in opportunities for landlords to evict tenants, but serious rent control, including a reversal on the rent control on buildings that were built after 2018.

They are speaking about the need for this, with 80,000 people in Ontario facing homelessness right now—up to 300,000 by 2035. We really need rent control for our tenants.

It is my pleasure to sign, affix my name and give it to page Rafi.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: It's an honour to rise in this house and to present this petition, which has been submitted by Dr. Sally Palmer.

This petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario is entitled "To Raise Social Assistance Rates."

Whereas Ontario's social assistance rates are well below Canada's official Market Basket Measure poverty line and far below anything that's adequate to cover the rising costs of food and rent—\$733 for individuals on OW and \$1,408 for ODSP.

This also accompanies a letter to the Premier and two cabinet ministers, signed by over 230 organizations, which recommends that social assistance rates in Ontario be doubled for OW and ODSP.

Whereas small increases to ODSP have still left these citizens below the poverty line, both they and those receiving the frozen OW rates are struggling to survive at this time of alarming inflation.

The government of Canada has already recognized that the CERB program during the time of the COVID pandemic, with a basic income of \$2,000 per month, was a standard support required by individuals who lost their employment during the pandemic.

1320

Therefore, the citizens who have signed this petition are calling on this government to double social assistance rates for OW and ODSP.

I proudly will sign this petition and send it back to the centre table with page Ollie.

INJURED WORKERS

Ms. Doly Begum: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly from workers who have been injured on the job.

About 200,000 to 300,000 people in Ontario are injured on the job every year.

A century ago, workers in Ontario who were injured on the job gave up their right to sue their employers, in exchange for a system that would provide them with just compensation.

Decades of cost-cutting have pushed these injured workers into poverty and onto publicly funded social assistance programs—a sad reality that many face even today—and have gradually curtailed the rights of injured workers.

Injured workers have the right to quality and timely medical care, compensation for lost wages, and protection from discrimination.

The workers and many community members are calling on the Legislative Assembly to change the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act to accomplish the following for injured workers in Ontario—first, to eliminate the practice of deeming and determining, which bases compensation on phantom jobs that injured workers actually do not have. The second ask is to ensure that the WSIB prioritizes and respects the medical opinions of the health care workers and health care providers who treat injured workers directly. Finally, they're asking for the government to prevent compensation from being reduced or denied based on pre-existing conditions that never affected the worker's ability to function prior to the work injury.

I fully support this petition. I will affix my signature to it and give it to page Bani to give to the Clerks.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

MPP Alexa Gilmour: I have in my hands a petition called "Reinvest in Post-Secondary Education."

We know that Ontario has the lowest per-student post-secondary funding, that funding colleges and universities is essential for building a strong, resilient, labour-ready workforce, and that we need this funding to ensure stable, sustainable, equitable access.

The members from Parkdale–High Park who gathered these signatures are petitioning the Legislative Assembly to direct the Ministry of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security to permanently increase base funding for Ontario's colleges and universities in order to stabilize the sector and to ensure equitable access for all.

I will affix my signature and give this to page Avery.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT MODERNIZATION ACT, 2025

LOI DE 2025 SUR LA MODERNISATION DE LA GESTION DES SITUATIONS D'URGENCE

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 23, 2025, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 25, An Act to make statutory amendments respecting emergency management and authorizing enforceable directives to specified entities providing publicly-funded community and social services / Projet de loi 25, Loi visant à apporter des modifications législatives concernant la gestion des situations d'urgence et autorisant la formulation de directives exécutoires aux entités publiques désignées qui fournissent des services communautaires et sociaux financés par les fonds publics.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Further debate?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I am glad to be able to take my place in this House and talk about being ready for emergencies. I had the opportunity, actually, to sit in the chair and listen to the debate, listen to the minister, and think about, in my own lifetime, all of the opportunities that we have had to maybe be better prepared. We have all maybe seen terrible things happen. If anyone watches the news or pays attention to the world—we are surrounded by emergencies, and changing emergencies, I would also add. So it is an important opportunity to stand here and be able to debate Bill 25, the Emergency Management Modernization Act. One thing, though, I'll say—not to be flip, but I learned this from the Liberals—if something is called “modernization,” that doesn't mean that it's going to be better. It often means we're going to be pulling it apart, perhaps, but not necessarily improving it. Modernization, in and of itself, does not mean improvement.

I wish that this were a bill about meeting the moment, making necessary improvements.

This is a bill that does not meet the moment when it comes to managing emergencies or preparing for or anticipating them. We heard lots of examples. We talked in the earlier debate about the ice storm of 2013. If there is time, I would love to regale the members of this House about my own personal experience with ice storm 1998, when I was a student in Kingston.

These are moments that make impressions on us, but this is also a chance for us to talk about what goes on behind the scenes and not what we see in the headlines, not what we experience in the moment.

A government is supposed to govern. A government should be bringing in legislation to fine-tune, make improvements, especially when this province and this country have had lots of opportunities to learn things the hard way. I'm thinking about pandemics. I'm thinking about wildfires. I'm thinking about, yes, the ice storm of 2013.

There's always an emergency on the horizon. With the changing climate, we're seeing worsening storm systems. We're seeing less predictable weather patterns, and there are things we can do to be more prepared.

Why are we here? Why are we talking about this? Ostensibly, it's because the Auditor General had done a value-for-money audit back in 2022; it was a value-for-money audit of the province's management of hazards and emergencies in the environment. It included a wildfire management plan. The original 2022 audit was withering and contained dozens of recommendations.

Flash forward to 2024: There was an update. The update highlighted that 50% of the Auditor General's recommendations from 2022 to improve the effectiveness of Emergency Management Ontario have not been acted upon. Despite worsening wildfire seasons, the government has not improved access or resources to municipalities to improve wildfire responses. And, unfortunately, this particular government has opted to not fulfill a number of the recommendations that the Auditor General made in 2022 involving things like sinkholes, closed mines and oil wells, leakage, things like that.

One would expect that this bill would be cleaning that up, would be meeting those challenges, meeting the moment, but it does not.

Speaker, as someone who lives in Oshawa and lives—not to give out my home address here in the Legislature or across the province, but I live where the train goes through my backyard. Anybody travelling to Bowmanville—oh, wait, you can't; sorry. We're still waiting for that train. However, if you were in a cargo container, you could wave to me at some point, but I won't tell you where. Why I tell you that is that every time I sleep, in the summer, with my window open, when trains are going slowly, it sounds like it's going to derail every night. It can be very loud and disrupt your sleep. We do know that bad things can happen. I am not hoping for a train derailment—in fact, just the opposite. But I live where I will be immediately notified of a train derailment, because it might come in through my back wall.

I also live where KI pills are distributed. I'm in the radius of KI pill distribution for Darlington. It has to do with the thyroid and has to do with if there's a nuclear emergency. I am in that zone.

I live in a lovely part of Oshawa, and I am very glad to call it my home, but as with many people—we live in communities where things can happen in a worst-case moment. So I would like to know that my city is prepared, my province is prepared.

I look back in time—and time is a funny thing; it goes by quite quickly. It seems like only yesterday, and I think it probably was closer to 20 years ago, when I was working in Kingston as a temp. I was doing secretarial and administrative work, and I had the opportunity—I think it was at CCAC, the community care access centre in Kingston. I worked for a woman who was in emergency management. It was a short stint, but man, things can make an impression on you. I learned about the municipality's responsibility for preparing for a mass casualty event. If we had a whole lot of dead bodies, where would we put them? In the arenas. I learned about how many days we would have of chlorine to keep the water potable in case of emergencies. I learned the kind of behind-the-scenes stuff which is terrifying. But it's also encouraging to know that someone is paying attention.

1330

Again, here we are at province level—and it's not at the municipal level of what to do in case of a localized emergency.

Wherever we look around the world right now, we see wildfires. My brothers who live in Oregon and have lived in California—I was glued to the TV. Every time there's a wildfire, I worry. We all are connected to folks in Alberta, or in California, or in any number of the places that are on fire in Ontario.

Jackson is a young man at my church, and his mother worries about him. All of us worry about him; don't tell him, though. I'm sure he will be fine. But he is a wildland firefighter, and we are equal parts grateful and always concerned.

I would like to see in this bill—except I don't—that we're doing something about the staffing shortages, or

about the aging equipment, about what it is that they are reaching for when they need it. We don't see that in this bill. Again, it's a missed opportunity. That's a provincial-level piece that is missing.

Speaker, this is a bill that has two schedules, so two sections.

Schedule 1 changes the authority to administer the act from the Solicitor General to the President of the Treasury Board. I will share what the government has told us in the compendium here: In schedule 1: "The schedule would amend the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act to add a purpose provision and add a new definition of 'emergency management.'" Okay, fine.

Hold on, I've got a whole whack of notes.

While it changes the authority, it does a bit more. It amends the act to grant the minister sole leadership and coordination over emergency management; to delegate responsibilities, including to manage emergencies.

We've heard a lot about the Ontario Corps in the House, but it's not in the bill. When we get to questions and answers, I hope that the government members can share a bit more about it. The Premier launched the Ontario Corps at a press conference. Apparently, the corps is to be a volunteer group comprised of skilled professionals. It's meant as a rapid response to natural and other emergencies. According to the government release, the Ontario Corps has a number of civic partners, like Feed Ontario, Ontario Search and Rescue Volunteer Association, the Salvation Army, and GlobalMedic. That sounds interesting. But where is it in this bill? It isn't here. We don't know anything more about it. I was hoping that, in the government debate and the introduction of this bill, they could get into that.

The new cabinet committee, created in this, is created for the purposes of the act. The Commissioner of Emergency Management will act as secretary to this body. As already exists, every municipality shall develop and adopt an emergency management plan—I mentioned when I was young and had an opportunity to learn a bit about Kingston's. I know Oshawa has one. We all live somewhere that has factored in emergencies. The change in this bill allows for the joint adoption of management plans by more than one municipality. I think that probably sounds forward-thinking.

That's schedule 1.

Schedule 2 is a bit differently challenging, because schedule 2—we're not sure what this government is really up to, I guess. The schedule amends the Ministry of Community and Social Services Act. Early reaction to this, when this conversation was first started—the changes have alarmed social service providers. The changes in schedule 2 were not anticipated by the sector. A memo has apparently circulated from MCCSS to service providers that receive funding, and it defines "extraordinary matters" as "extreme weather events, natural disasters, interruptions to essential services, or other matters of public interest." Members of the House might be interested to know what "public interest" is; I don't know. But "public interest" is causing alarm among service

providers. Schedule 2 of this bill, as I said, amends the Ministry of Community and Social Services Act. People are concerned. In a technical briefing, ministry staff were unable or unwilling to say if they have a definition of "extraordinary matters" or if that definition included matters broader than what is included in schedule 1. Matters such as encampments—is that included? Emergency matters such as children's aid society budgets—is that an emergency matter? Folks are quite concerned to know how this government would define "extraordinary matters." What are extraordinary matters? Are extraordinary matters encampments? Are extraordinary matters CAS budgets? We worry; we've seen that this government is quite comfortable with overreach, and so we have questions.

MCCSS-linked service providers and funding recipients are very concerned, as this language conceivably leaves open the door for the minister to force compliance or to reduce or end funding to groups or service providers where these groups have identified a crisis as varied as Community Living network housing providers that have identified chronic underfunding, or CASs that are in deficit placing children and youth in their care in unsupervised settings because other placements aren't there. There are a lot of emergency situations happening out there.

We wonder if the language in schedule 2 will compel providers to comply with actions against unhoused encampments as part of the government's stated crackdown on encampments. I don't know. The powers here are not directly legislating action on encampments, but they could act in concert or in harmony with those changes.

Folks are concerned and are seeking clarification. The fact that the government, at the briefing, is not admitting anything feels uncomfortable for me.

Some of the pieces that I would raise of what we're hearing broadly in the social services sector—the minister and commissioner seem to have more powers than in the existing act. The province traditionally does not take over, but here the language is ambiguous. Local providers will not want to have emergency response taken over to this extent.

This "extraordinary matters" language relating to MCCSS is way too broad. Emergency managers have asked for the act to be cleaned up, but the consultations were truncated over the summer, and what we have been told is that no one in consultation has asked for schedule 2. They asked for the OICs to be clarified and fixed, but no one asked for the ministry to be included.

Groups awaiting word for grants are quite concerned about retribution if providers speak out. We're seeing in this act that the minister can issue binding directives to funded organizations about extraordinary matters or the provision of services. What constitutes a directive from MCCSS? How much power are we talking about?

1340

The minister gained significant authority to oversee and enforce compliance among organizations that receive funding. These directives bypass the usual checks and

balances of the regulatory process, giving the minister more direct power. The fact that this is tied to the emergency management act is highly concerning. How is “emergency” defined? Could this be used to respond to an emergency that has been created out of the ministry’s lack of action or the ministry not fulfilling their role to serve everyone? When we think about complex needs of children, when we think about children’s aid doing their best to fill the gap—we have lots of social service emergencies. We’re not sure what this will look like practically, so we wish that the government would clarify.

Speaker, this bill misses the moment. I had the opportunity to meet with folks from Climate Justice Durham, a very active group in my neck of the woods, with young and seasoned environmental voices alike who are concerned on a number of fronts. One of the things that I will raise in this moment, because this is a missed opportunity, when here we are talking about emergency management and planning for the future—this from a piece by the Heat Collaborative, which is a network of organizations active in Ontario on the growing problem of heat and extreme heat and its impacts on vulnerable communities and individuals. This is an article: “Extreme Heat Is a Killer! The Heat Collaborative Calls for Action”—I’m putting this here for the government to pick up and incorporate into this bill as we plan for emergencies. They’re calling on the provincial government to make extreme heat a priority, to act urgently to protect the vulnerable now and in the future, to:

- implement a comprehensive, province-wide extreme heat awareness program to help Ontario residents be safe;
- track and publicly report heat-related deaths and hospital visits;

- measure heat in schools and child care centres and implement cooling to provide a safe environment for children on hot days;

- pass maximum temperature regulations for rental properties and farm worker housing to keep temperatures below 26 degrees Celsius;

- expand retrofit funding for landlords of private rental housing and other landlords with low-income tenants, incorporating strong tenant protections against above-guideline rent increases and anti-eviction conditions;

- pass protective heat stress regulations for the safety of workers who labour in hot conditions; and

- require municipalities to assess heat islands and implement urban cooling strategies and provide financial support for them to do so.

It was such a great meeting with Climate Justice Durham, but they’re just getting warmed up—pun intended—with changing climates, rising heat.

We know how important it is to make sure that people don’t freeze where they live in the winters, but we need to make sure that people can survive the heat that is changing and coming. So this is a proactive solution to look at what we can do to help people live safely and live well.

This bill misses the moment. There’s so much more we could do, and I am happy to be a part of that solution.

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

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: I’d like to ask the honourable member if she has any concerns about over-reach in this bill.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I do. As I shared in my comments, the social service agencies and people who receive funding are very concerned because in the, as I said, truncated consultations with them about emergency management and about their needs, they did not ask for what they now see in this bill.

We don’t know why the minister is going to have all of these phenomenal, cosmic powers; we don’t know what they’re for. We don’t know how to define “extraordinary matters.” We don’t know if that means encampments. We don’t know that if—if an agency that provides care and support, if they don’t comply with a government directive.

This is a pretty heavy-handed bill. When we have asked about the motives, when we have asked about what the real goal is, we don’t see any answers.

Do I trust this government not to overreach? No. In fact, I trust that they will. That’s kind of their MO.

I think in this case, we’d like to see them rein it in and maybe answer the Auditor General’s recommendations, instead of going so off script.

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

Mr. Joseph Racinsky: Thank you to the member for her statement. I listened very carefully.

In the beginning, you talked about modernization. One of the modernizations in this bill is that we’re cutting red tape to make it easier for municipalities to develop emergency management plans and also enable multiple municipalities to work together to create a single emergency management plan.

I just want to know if the member opposed that modernization.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Actually, as I mentioned, the ability for multiple municipalities to perhaps learn from each other or whatever—that actually makes a lot of sense. We don’t live in silos. We live in neighbourhoods, and we should learn from each other.

What is not in this bill—and I already mentioned it once—is the Ontario Corps. How much are municipalities going to be relying on that? We don’t actually know what that’s going to look like.

This bill does not provide information as to how municipalities or any other prescribed entities will be funded or resourced to be able to provide emergency management plans. I’d like to know, on behalf of municipalities, how the government intends to fund municipalities to do this work. That’s missing from this bill. Hopefully we can have that conversation. I know municipalities will be quite interested.

Everyone wants to keep their neighbours and community members safe. But there are real questions resulting from what we see here.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: Aside from this government having to consistently put out fires of their own making, creating made-in-Ontario emergencies on housing, health care, unemployment and mental health—any of them.

You choose the file; you've created a mess out of it.

I think the member really has underpinned her criticism of this bill—by the new culture of this government, which is one that is quite punitive and one that is quite, really, retaliatory to those social service agencies that are called upon to help in emergency sessions. These could be folks who are dealing with safe injection sites—oh, no, wait; you got rid of those—or food banks or housing.

Speaker, the bill does not address the new culture of this government, which is punitive, which is government over-reach—and has created a culture of fear, when the very agencies that we depend on to meet that moment in an emergency are afraid to speak out, because this government will hold them down on that.

My question to the member is, are you also hearing this from social service agencies in your communities? I know I'm hearing it from Waterloo.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I think everybody is nervous. There is a, where this bill is concerned—is just part of the broader conversation around anything to do with social service agencies. This government tends to be quite retaliatory, and so there is a culture of fear.

I think any opposition member knows that people who do very important work come to us and say, “You can't tell them that we told you this, because then they'll cut our funding,” or “Then they'll get mad at us,” or “You can't tell them where you heard this.” That is constant with this government, because people are so afraid that the very little bit of support that they have is at risk.

They did not ask for what they're seeing in the bill. The consultations that were had did not yield something that made sense to the folks who were a part of those conversations. Nobody knows what's really at play here. There are, like I said, major powers given to the ministry, and a lot of them to get folks in trouble if they don't comply. But if it has to do with encampments, a lot of the social service agencies are not sure what's coming with this government.

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

MPP Silvia Gualtieri: Thank you to the member of the opposition.

Our government has invested \$10 million in communities' emergency preparedness through the Community Emergency Preparedness Grant, helping equip them with the resources they need to respond effectively to emergencies.

Is the member aware of these investments in communities such as Batchewana First Nation, Niagara Falls, the county of Peterborough, and the other 224 recipients?

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Ms. Jennifer K. French: When bad things happen, we hope that government shows leadership. When municipalities are hurting and require funds, we hope that they happen in short order.

I sure hope that, for all of those grants you mentioned, the municipalities didn't have to wait too long for them.

Things are going to keep happening, and the government is going to have to step up.

There's nothing to do with what the member just asked me in this bill.

In fact, something else not in the bill is this Ontario Corps. That's what the Premier is talking about—volunteers and everybody helping out, as part of the Ontario Corps. There are no provisions in schedule 1 of this bill—that's not in here. So we would like to know what that looks like, because, yes, we all want to work together. We want to make sure that municipalities are whole when bad things happen.

I will remember this question the next time there is something that we should be preparing for and certainly helping those municipalities to serve their communities, to do the cleanup, whatever is required.

I hope that the government remembers this conversation about how much they're wanting to help, when push comes to shove.

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

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: To the member from Oshawa: Thank you for your statements on this bill. I noticed all the questions seem to kind of align with each other, and it all has to do with this government continuing to download on municipalities.

Within this bill, I see the onus is put back onto a municipality and that they are going to have to, basically, look for their own emergency response.

Why do you think this government is making municipalities feel that they're going to be kind of at risk for emergency response within their communities?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Municipalities always have a responsibility when it comes to emergency management. I would hope that they all do a great job. But when they require that provincial involvement and not just after-the-fact funding, they need government to get barriers out of the way so that they can do that. We did talk earlier about some of the fine tuning to allow municipalities to work together, but it's more the social service agencies that are the problem-focus in this bill.

The province, at any moment in time, can show leadership—and they're not.

In this bill, when we're talking about modernizing our approach to emergency management, I want to see a way better oil-and-gas-well strategy—as the Auditor General asked them. I want to see more investment and proper commitment, answering the needs for wildland fire-fighters—again, not in this bill. Ontario's track record, at the provincial level, leaves some things to be desired. Why isn't that in this bill?

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

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: I'm happy to stand before you today to debate Bill 25.

I have the experience to know how important emergency management is, and how crucial it is during

emergencies, because it needs to provide the structure and the coordination and the resources necessary to protect lives and property.

Effective emergency management ensures that preparedness, response and recovery efforts are organized and efficient, minimizing chaos—because there is lots of chaos in a disaster situation—and confusion when disasters strike.

I want to begin by first acknowledging the phenomenal work our emergency responders perform day in and day out. They are our neighbours, they're our friends, and they're our heroes.

Let me take a moment to talk about our emergency responses that I have experienced in Kanata–Carleton.

For three years in a row, from 2017 to 2019, my own riding saw two once-in-a-century floods: the Dunrobin tornado and the derecho. The West Carleton Disaster Relief team stepped up. People like Heather Lucente, who is the chair, and her amazing team were there day in and day out—all volunteers from the community. They coordinated activities like filling sandbags and feeding volunteers and looking after displaced families, working around the clock to help their community. They did phenomenal work. And the city stepped up in a big way and made every single available resource and manpower—made it available to us. The federal government stepped up, with support from the Canadian Armed Forces. And all together, we made a very tough situation better. We had volunteers, we had the city, and we had the federal government working together to manage an emergency and get people the help that they needed.

An interesting story: One person whose house was destroyed during the Dunrobin tornado was Paralympian sledge hockey player Todd Nicholson, a hero of mine. Between 1994 and 2010, Todd competed in sledge hockey at five Paralympic Winter Games, winning bronze, silver and gold medals. In the week following the storm, a person walking along the Ottawa River found Todd's Olympic medals up in a tree, 10 kilometres from his destroyed home. And I am so pleased at the work he did to help his own community come back to life after that tornado. He still lives there, and we're still proud to call him a neighbour and a friend. It was a feel-good story after a remarkably devastating event.

The Minister of Emergency Preparedness did say last week that a lot has changed in the past 15 years. That's true. This year alone, the minister highlighted that our province has already had 59 significant emergency events, with the Provincial Emergency Operations Centre being fully activated for 76 days.

I'm reminded of a familiar refrain from my farmers: "There's nothing like closing the barn door after the horse has fled the stable."

We have to take this seriously. We can't just do it lip service.

My colleague from Beaches–East York spoke eloquently about climate change and how little this government has done to even acknowledge its existence, let alone take the action required to address its impacts.

During the past seven years, Ontario has witnessed an unrelenting increase in the number of wildfires, floods, violent weather occurrences, drought—this year, it's drought—and pandemics. Problems are accelerating thanks to climate change. People are losing their lives, their homes, their livelihoods, their futures. Insurance is becoming impossible for many to obtain. This government has dragged its feet on addressing these very issues. To use just one example, poor pay and brutal working conditions are among the issues identified by government reports when it comes to recruiting, training and retaining firefighters. This has to change.

The municipalities that are on the front lines of emergencies find them increasing in frequency and complexity. Many small municipalities do not have the resources required to effectively respond to, mitigate, or even prevent disasters. Municipalities need a comprehensive, cohesive and inclusive approach to emergency management. It is true that, in this legislation and its predecessors, it states that municipalities can apply to the province for resources. However, given this government's favourite practice of downloading more and more of its responsibilities to the municipalities without providing the requisite financial support, I have no faith that this government will come through when Ontarians need them the most. I certainly hope that they prove me wrong.

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Rather than work with our municipalities, this government ignores and, in my opinion, disrespects them. Our local governments need partners, not a big brother to dictate and then desert them when the going gets rough.

Let me talk about another man-made environmental disaster in the making, and that is the land that is now the Kanata golf course.

Over 60 years ago, Bill Teron articulated a clear vision for our city, outside the national capital greenbelt, that included so much more than just suburban housing. He was decades ahead of his time. He promoted protected environmental spaces; accessible, open recreational space; and communities that lived in the great outdoors.

In 1981, the pre-amalgamation city of Kanata made an agreement with the landowner at the time, Campeau Corp., which wanted to develop a large expanse of farmland. The two parties contracted to leave 40% of the area as open space for recreational and environmental purposes, in exchange for the planning approvals that Campeau needed.

Of course, as we have seen too often, with enough money and resources, rich and powerful people can overcome any legal obstacle, and this is what's being tried at the present time.

What is at the actual heart of this issue? It's water management. Kanata is built on an outcropping of the Canadian Shield—solid rock, very, very thin topsoil—and so this Kanata golf course acts as the sponge of all the water when we get heavy rains. It's the sponge that keeps it and controls the runoff. If we replace that sponge, that green space, with houses and asphalt, that runoff is going to have nowhere to go, and we will cause future flooding

and heartache. So that volume of water that we've been dealing with—we had floods maybe 15 years ago in Kanata—very, very severe floods. We've learned from then what we needed to do, and that is preserve the green space. But now there's pressure to actually hand over the green space for development, and that would just lead to future heartache. In this area, there's also evidence of high mercury contamination. These levels also need to be well defined and investigated before any development proceeds. These decisions need to be made with the protection of the people of Kanata as the first priority.

Let me also highlight the incredible work of the Kanata Greenspace Protection Coalition. Remember Margaret Mead's favourite saying—I love it, even today: “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.” Well, this small group of wonderful neighbours is doing everything that they can do to change the world, and let me tell you, I'm with them every step of the way. They are such an inspiration. They are putting the needs of their community and their neighbours first and giving of themselves and giving of their own time to provide protection for many others. I am very grateful for all of their hard work over the years.

Getting back to Bill 25 now: The addition of “Minister's guidelines” will create apprehension in light of this government's willingness to take control whenever and wherever it can. Specifically, in section 9.2 (1), “The minister may issue guidelines respecting the development or implementation of emergency management programs and emergency plans, or any other matter related to emergency management.” So it is the minister's job to provide guidance. There's absolutely no doubt about it. But you would think, you would hope, that guidance would be developed in consort and in consultation with the municipalities.

We found that during the floods in West Carleton, it was the local people of West Carleton who actually knew where the homes were that were the most vulnerable, whose house would be impacted first, what wind would matter and how the flow of the river would matter, and they helped us prioritize our work. It's that local knowledge that is so important. If someone came down from on high and said, “No, just do what you're told,” you would miss all that important local knowledge. That local knowledge helped us save probably 50 to 100 homes, because they told us what needed to get done and why it needed to get done first. It was absolutely amazing. Thankfully, the city listened. The city listened to its volunteers, recognized the expertise that was available there and took great advantage of it.

My fear, of course, is that temptation of the minister and their staff to overreach and direct inappropriate courses of action, when local leaders have a much greater understanding of the local situation.

I'll give them credit. The announcement in July of the \$10 million in emergency preparedness grants is a good thing. Small municipalities don't have the money anymore. I know that I have volunteer fire halls in my own

riding that struggle with things like generators. How do they get their garage doors up when the power is out? We have a lot of power outages in West Carleton. They need the money in order to do that, in order to provide that kind of safety equipment. So that's a good thing.

Our volunteers do a lot of work with very little. We give them very little to work with, but, man, they make it work. I think that volunteer services, the Ontario Corps, can complement existing emergency services and volunteer organizations. But volunteers cannot be relied upon for critical tasks that require professional attention.

I just wonder sometimes—there was so much potential that could have been done in this bill to actually help municipalities deal with future disasters. But to me, in a lot of ways, it just seemed like a rejigging: move this sentence here and that one here, not a lot actually original or additional—no resources and very little in the way of concrete guidance, other than powers will be centralized and moved up to the minister. I don't think that's the kind of solution that we need. It needs to be distributed. It needs to be at the right level. But at least recognition of volunteers and recognition of the difference that they can make is a step in the right direction.

The government needs to address understaffing in emergency services right across the board. Whether we're talking about health care professionals, firefighters, first responders, they have to be part of this to have a genuine solution, rather than putting this demand on our volunteers.

I hope that the Ontario Corps won't be used to justify cuts to permanent, paid emergency staff, because that would just add to the disaster.

A coordinated approach for emergency response is critical to reduce injury, prevent loss of life and maintain critical services such as health care, water and power. Equally important, emergency management promotes resilience and promotes long-term recovery, because that's what we want. Through lessons learned and post-incident evaluations, authorities can improve future preparedness and strengthen infrastructure to withstand future threats.

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A well-planned emergency management system also fosters public trust.

Ultimately, effective emergency management not only addresses the immediate crisis, but over time it builds safer, more resilient communities that can recover and thrive even after disaster strikes. There's no doubt that emergency preparedness and emergency response are vital, given today's realities of climate change, changing social behaviour and cyber security. But an emergency plan cannot take the place of investing and funding our emergency management system, our first responders and our health care system. They need to all work together, hand in hand.

So I would say, firstly, let's work hard to prevent disasters from happening, where we can. We can't control it all, but there are some that we know are likely. Let's do the work we need to do now to update our infrastructure so it can withstand current realities of climate change.

Then, we need to put the resources and the trained disaster response in to help municipalities. Don't make obligations on the municipalities unless we're willing to help them achieve them. Give them the expertise they need. Give them the help. Give them the funding. If you make it easy for people to actually do something like an emergency plan or preparedness, they will do it, but if it's difficult because they have difficult decisions to be made with their limited municipal funding, then it's going to be a harder thing to actually achieve. And we can do all that at the same time that we're recognizing and strengthening our volunteer cadre.

We need to give municipalities what they need. During the four disasters that happened in my riding, the municipalities stepped up, our volunteers stepped up, emergency management stepped up, and they all worked hard together to protect people and our communities. But they need resources. If we ask this of them without giving them the necessary resources, then this will just be a masquerade, a charade, a bogus bill that actually doesn't achieve what we need it to achieve—and that is more support and the strengthening of our municipalities in terms of their emergency response.

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

Hon. Trevor Jones: I want to thank the member for Kanata–Carleton for her discussion today on emergency management and the bill. I also want to thank her for acknowledging the fact that Community Emergency Preparedness Grants are helping small rural municipalities all around—even around her riding, and probably many of her neighbours. But Ontario Corps and NGOs and those people will never replace the professional first responders we're investing millions in—in both the infrastructure and the people doing the work. So let's first acknowledge that. This is complementary.

Bill 25, if passed, reduces the red tape and the burden, making it easier for municipalities, big and large, to develop really good, integrated emergency management plans. It also enables multiple municipalities, in the event of an ice storm or flood or fire, to come together to follow one plan, making it much easier to resolve that matter and keep people safe, practised and prepared.

Can the member explain why she might oppose this approach to keep municipalities isolated, instead of integrated, safe, practised and prepared, which is exactly what this bill is going to do?

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: I thank the honourable member for the question. What we need is support for these municipalities to actually come up with the solutions that they need. We can say all we like that you need to have a plan, but if we don't give them the support, the resources and the expertise and the professional advice, they're not going to be able to produce a really viable plan. I don't see that here and I don't see the resources here. I think I see some individual pieces here, but I don't see the whole thing that will actually help municipalities develop and prepare that plan.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: I think the member from Kanata–Carleton did a very good job of outlining some of the weaknesses in this legislation. I will say this about that: Municipalities are key partners in any emergency response. However, this government has actively been undermining municipalities since 2018, even intervening in an election. This is a piece of legislation, as the member has indicated, that's a law-and-order bill that punishes the people doing the good work in our community. It's a huge overreach of power to the minister. It's connecting compliance to funding, which is an unprecedented overreach, Madam Speaker.

Does the member from Kanata–Carleton have any concerns around governments that are creating a culture of fear around those social service agencies who are on the front lines dealing with emergencies every day of this government's making?

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: I would like to thank the honourable member for her question, because to me, that's exactly my concern. I see some administrative changes in this bill—it's a small bill—but I don't see any substantive changes that actually empower municipalities, that actually empower people to do the work.

During these floods, we had Ottawa social services come out. They were amazing. They were there every day. They just knew what we needed and they produced it every day. It was fabulous. And again, it was because they were local and they were on the ground and they knew exactly what was needed and they made it happen. It didn't come down from on high. I think when we talk about red tape reduction, that kind of makes me a little bit uncomfortable. What I would like to do is reduce the ability for interference.

And so, I think this idea of administrative changes is probably okay, but this centralization of power and the overreach is not what we need.

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

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: For the member from Kanata–Carleton, here we are talking about emergencies. It's a government bill. The government has failed to meet any sort of climate expectation and fails to talk about climate change and acknowledge where it's coming from.

How do you take leadership on how to respond to an emergency when we can't talk about the root cause of it and actually address the root cause and prevent it from getting worse?

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: I would like to thank the honourable member for her question, and she's absolutely right. When you have a riding like mine that, within five years, has two once-in-a-century floods, a tornado and a derecho, that's not normal. That's not normal. Things are changing and we have to adapt to the change.

Einstein said that insanity is facing the same problem and doing the same things and expecting different results. We're not going to get different results until we actually acknowledge what is happening and then make the changes required.

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

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Mr. Joseph Racinsky: Thank you to the member for her comments. The Emergency Management Modernization Act makes it clear that municipalities can request provincial assistance without needing to declare a formal emergency, making support more accessible and efficient.

I just wanted to ask if the member agrees that removing these bureaucratic barriers helps communities respond faster and more effectively during a crisis.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: It might be, Speaker. It all depends upon the implementation. If municipalities do not have to declare a formal emergency before requesting help from the province and if the province responds, then I could possibly agree.

But there's not enough in the bill that actually substantiates that, that actually lays out, "Here are the conditions, here's how you do it and here's what's required." The idea is there, but the details aren't, and I think that's what people will need to see.

Thank you for the question.

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

Mme Lucille Collard: I want to thank the member from Kanata–Carleton for helping us better understand the importance of emergency management requiring a good understanding of the local realities. You've given several examples of volunteers and groups that understand the terrain. I know in Kanata–Carleton, for example, I was there helping with sandbags during the last flood, and it is important to listen to those experts.

At the same time, I think it's also important to equip our municipalities with the appropriate funding to be able to put into motion their own local plans according to their own reality. Can you speak a little bit more about the importance of appropriately funding the municipalities and also those groups that are providing the support during those disasters?

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: I'd like to thank the honourable member for her question. Sometimes these small volunteer groups end up being ignored because they don't have a big budget and they can't bring attention to themselves, but they're the ones that actually do an awful lot of the work. If we could find a way to actually support them—we can support them with resources. The money that's going for small emergency management grants to smaller municipalities—my riding is not eligible; we're too large. Maybe we need a medium-sized grant.

But I think that's a step in the right direction, because a lot of these municipalities are short of the money they need for improving their disaster response. That's the key: getting to work with the municipalities and having a solid understanding of what's actually required on the ground. I think that's what's really key.

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

Further debate?

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I want to start off as I always do, just thanking the government for bringing forward legislation to talk about emergency preparedness. Our municipi-

palities have been asking for help in this department for a very long time, and we had our report from the AG in 2020 saying that we have to do better. I hope this is the start of something better, and I appreciate that you've taken this initiative to listen to municipalities, especially small municipalities with small budgets that face big disasters.

But I do think there's a few things you could take out of the bill. There's a lot of words that sound very powerful and oppressive in terms of following directives or else you lose funding, right? It doesn't feel like a real partnership. I know in my marriage, I wouldn't appreciate if that was the terminology that was used in my home. If we really want to think of municipalities as partners, we need to treat them as equals and as people with opinions, be good listeners and create policies that give them the cache of tools they need that they can pick from and that supports their municipality with the idea. Because I have to say, in my time in government, I've been disappointed in the way we look at climate change. This government did not talk about climate change at all in this past budget. And so, if we're going to take directives on how to deal with emergencies, it worries me that if I have a government that isn't prepared to talk about climate change, isn't looking at science to actually know the data and be critical thinkers about these emergencies we face, I don't have a ton of confidence that those directives are going to be well-informed, thoughtful, accurate and helpful. What I would like to see is a better, more thoughtful plan.

When I think of emergencies, one of the first things I think about is our wildfires. We had an incredible wildfire season. More of Canada burned than ever. We had one of the highest emissions in the world because our country was on fire. And we are not prepared. Just recently we got some data from the wildland firefighters. They said in 2005 they had 214 crews. In 2024, they had 143 crews. So here we have more fires, more intense fires, and less staff to deal with those fires. We really need a staffing strategy to address this. And we need a climate plan. If this government isn't going to talk about climate change, then I don't really feel safe and comfortable that we're going to be prepared for these disasters.

Raise your hand if you were at the Intact Insurance lobby day just last week. Thank you to the member for Waterloo. One of the statisticians—and he is the mathiest of math nerds, so he's not making crap up. This guy tells it straight, and he knows his numbers. He shared that 40 years ago, in one decade, we had 19 natural disasters. I'm going to call them climate disasters, because we still had climate change then. In this past decade, we had 133. I've talked to members of the government who said, "Oh, it comes in cycles. Every few decades, we have a lot of fires. We've always had fires in Ontario." But we see from this super nerd that it's different now. It's very different now, a times 10 difference.

I'm not just doing this because I want my kids to have clean air to breathe or clean water to drink. In fact, I think if you talk to the chamber of commerce, you talk to the insurance sector, you talk to our big banks and you say, "Hey guys, I think we shouldn't do anything about climate

change. Let's not even say the words. Don't even talk about it. We'll pretend it's not there because it's not popular with our base. It doesn't trend well on X. It doesn't pull well"—that's not a great way to show leadership. So I beg of this government, come and meet with me. I will talk all day long about how we could adapt so that when the next flood comes to Kanata–Carleton, when the next fire comes to Parry Sound, we have a plan to make our homes safe. We can absorb the water to stop excess flooding. We can save people's homes by being ready, not just to fight the fires but by being ready to prevent the damage from the fires. And we can do so much to reduce our emissions by stopping the expansion of gas power in our grid.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: I know my friend and colleague from Kitchener Centre wants to talk more about climate change and the climate crisis. I don't think that she should have to come to this place and beg the government to pay attention to the evidence on climate change. The fact that it has been missing in budget after budget after budget is so short-sighted. It's just a matter of time.

You know that this is a serious issue when the insurance industry is 100% in the corner on climate change and trying to mitigate the damage of climate change that is impacting the province of Ontario—a great cost: emotional, health care costs; infrastructure costs; economic cost. I just wanted to give the member an opportunity to really address why this emergency measures act misses the point on climate change and why this is going to cost all of us down the line so much more than that.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: People use the analogy of our planet being in the emergency room and headed to the ICU. Imagine somebody with cancer goes to the ICU and their doctor won't talk about the reason why the cancer is there and says that they should have lifestyle changes. They're not ready to treat the cancer. All they want to do is manage symptoms.

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Right now, this government is only managing the symptoms of a cancer that is killing our planet. All of us with young kids should be terrified at this approach because our planet is heading toward the ICU. It's on life support. The lungs of our country are being burned to the ground. We had 70% of Canada in drought this year. Our agricultural sector is going to see a massive decline because of drought, and we are not ready. We can't even say why this is happening and we can't even treat the root cause. All we are doing is managing symptoms.

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

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Thank you to the member for Kitchener Centre. I really feel like you should have been given a lot more time on this issue, being the expert that you are and having your party defend all those important causes related to climate change, which is totally a miss in that bill. So, I would like to give you a little bit of time to tell us more. Give some recommendations to the gov-

ernment about those prevention measures that you were alluding to that could help us not have to deal with those emergency situations.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I think we saw in California there were a few houses standing because people said, "Hey, I'm in a fire zone. I'm going to prepare my property with sprinkler systems and green roofs." So their house was left standing while everything else got decimated.

When it comes to water, we continue to pave over and pave over and pave over. What happens then? The water has nowhere to go. We destroy our wetlands. We even forget to call them wetlands. We don't even see the value of a swamp—"Oh, it's just a swamp; you know, we can turn it into a subdivision"—not realizing that those people's houses are going to flood and that that swamp serves a very important purpose of managing our water systems.

If you talk to any municipality that is looking at the value of that swamp, they say that it is saving us from worse flooding. We know that so much of what happened in Toronto this year, that \$4 billion in three hours, \$1.3 billion per hour, lots of that could have been prevented by coaching residents on how to manage waters on their property, ensuring our sewer system was ready, ensuring that water could be absorbed into the earth instead of flooding through our system and totally overwhelming our municipal infrastructure.

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

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: We're a party that is optimistic. We're a party that believes, even in challenges, there are things you can do. This bill, Bill 25, sets a standard, a tone and an expectation. Unlike the opposition—because I've listened to their remarks, which are negative, which don't believe in the future, which don't believe in working together—we, on this side of the House, believe, yes, we can. Yes, we can do it, and when it comes time to working with municipalities, we can do it.

The question that I don't understand is—when you listen to the opposition, they're so negative on everything, including blaming the fact that climate is something that we all have within our ability to change on a dime. We're working every day to protect Ontario.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I'm sorry, but the Auditor General said you weren't meeting your targets. I started my comments by saying thank you for coming up with this plan, but when it comes to climate change, I'm sorry, but you get a failing grade. The Auditor General said we have no chance of meeting our targets. This is our children's future, and we should be taking it far more—

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

Mr. Anthony Leardi: This afternoon, we're talking about Bill 25. This is an amending bill. It seeks to amend an existing piece of legislation called the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act. I'll be speaking on this this afternoon. This particular piece of action was previously under the purview of the Solicitor General, and it's

now being placed under the purview of a specified minister, a dedicated minister of emergency planning and emergency management, and that should give us an idea of how importantly we treat this issue.

This piece of legislation would also continue the Office of the Commissioner of Emergency Management. The commissioner's job is to coordinate the deployment of personnel and services, equipment and materials that are available to support emergency management. We're going to give that a name, and we're going to call it the Ontario Corps. The commissioner is going to be able to manage the Ontario Corps in order to prepare for and respond to emergencies.

This act also requires the preparation of emergency plans, and these plans have to be submitted to a chief, and that's the chief of Emergency Management Ontario. The new act will require that they have to be developed and submitted to the minister. They were previously submitted to a chief; now they're going to be submitted to the minister, and the minister may outline significant requirements—to have an emergency plan, what that plan might entail, some conditions that might be in that plan, and other things.

The act also goes on to provide for—the provisions of the declaration of an emergency. It sets out how a declaration of an emergency is made, and it talks about the head of council of a municipality. A head of a council can declare an emergency, but that emergency has to fulfill certain conditions first, before the declaration can be made, and then you can implement the emergency management plan.

There's also a very useful section of this bill that provides for reporting. I thought this was quite interesting. It requires that a report be made with regard to the date and time the emergency was declared, the date and time the termination of the emergency was declared, an explanation of why the head of council declared the emergency, and including why the head of council was satisfied that the conditions were met, and other prescribed information. That's a good report to have. It's always good to debrief after an emergency.

This bill also provides for critical infrastructure management.

We already mentioned the existence of the Ontario Corps. What is the Ontario Corps? The Ontario Corps is a network of partners across the province of Ontario. The purpose of the Ontario Corps is to coordinate emergency response. The Ontario Corps consists of volunteers, and they can perform any number of important duties; for example, sandbagging, cleanup of debris, serving meals, and other important duties. One of those duties might include setting up an emergency shelter and helping people at an emergency shelter, stocking emergency supplies, and providing food. Anybody can become part of the Ontario Corps. You just have to be 16 years old, a resident of Ontario and sign up online. It's very easy to do. You take a training module, and then you can become part of the Ontario Corps. This is a very meaningful way of contributing to your society.

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The Ontario Corps has a number of partners. I'm going to read that list of partners. That will give you an idea of the type of people who volunteer for the Ontario Corps and the type of people we're looking for, the type of people who will help in times of emergency. We have:

—Attachment and Trauma Treatment Centre for Healing Niagara;

—Feed Ontario;

—GlobalMedic;

—Habitat for Humanity Windsor-Essex;

—Independent First Nations Alliance;

—Kenora Chiefs Advisory;

—Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres;

—Ontario Search and Rescue Volunteer Association;

—211 Ontario;

—Radio Amateurs of Canada—that's an interesting one because, of course, that has to do with communicating during an emergency. Oftentimes, during an emergency situation, communications are destroyed or shut down, so having a group of radio amateurs who know how to operate radios—is an extremely important service that can be rendered. If you have that talent, you should sign up for the Ontario Corps;

—the Salvation Army;

—St. John Ambulance;

—Team Rubicon Canada;

—Mennonite Disaster Service.

That's a list of the people who, so far, form part of the partners for the Ontario Corps.

This reminded me of a very important comment made by somebody who everybody loves, and that somebody is Fred Rogers. When he was talking about emergencies, he said something that I think everybody will remember and that we should all remember during an emergency. This is a quote from Fred Rogers: "When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, 'Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.'" That's a quote from Fred Rogers. I offer that quote to encourage the volunteers who have signed up for Ontario Corps. I encourage them and tell them that they're doing an important service for society, for their community, and that they should be recognized as such, and I wish to recognize them.

Part of this legislation requires the development of an emergency plan. Municipalities have to have an emergency response plan. There are 444 municipalities in the province of Ontario, and so I just randomly went through those municipalities and randomly selected, in no particular preference, an emergency plan from one of those municipalities. I happened to come up with the emergency plan from the town of Amherstburg, which is my hometown, where I grew up. They have a fantastic emergency plan. I want to commend the town of Amherstburg for being on top of the ball on this matter.

Of course, the mayor of the town of Amherstburg is Michael Prue, a former member of this Legislature who served proudly and with distinction during his time here. I wish to give a shout-out to Mayor Michael Prue for having

a great emergency response plan for the town of Amherstburg, which, as I said, is my hometown, and I love it very much.

Amherstburg has about 23,000 people, and it is located on the shores of the Detroit River and the north shore of Lake Erie.

This emergency response plan was put together, no doubt, in consultation with the emergency response people in the town of Amherstburg—chiefly, the fire chief. The present fire chief of the town of Amherstburg is Michael Mio, but we've already had several very good fire chiefs in the town of Amherstburg. They are featured very prominently in any emergency response.

If you take a look at this emergency response plan—and of course, this is put together because it's required under legislation; a municipality is required to have a plan. What might a plan look like? Well, it might look like this one from the town of Amherstburg.

This one talks about notification procedures, for example. What procedure do you go through when you're going to declare the emergency, and then, after it's declared, what is the chain that you go through to notify everybody who needs to be notified? That is all set out in the plan.

It sets up an emergency operations centre. What is an emergency operations centre? That might be the place where key individuals go to coordinate their efforts. For example, you might have the fire chief there, you might have the mayor, you might have the person in charge of the emergency response plan, or you might have other people, such as the director of public works. These people might gather at the emergency response operation centre and give directions from there. That is set out in the plan.

And then there's a municipal emergency control group and an operating cycle. Then they have an emergency response system that's set out in the plan. It talks about what kind of response is going to be made to various emergencies.

This plan is very detailed. It sets out the location of the emergency operations centre. It has a map for evacuation and flood response. For example, depending on the type of emergency, you would have an evacuation route, and that evacuation route might change depending on the type of emergency. If it's a flood and certain roads are blocked—and we know we can predict, with not absolute certainty but with probability, what roads might be shut down in the event of a flood—they're going to map that out and provide alternative routes of evacuation.

This plan has checklists and forms, and it also has a recovery plan located in it. So in addition to responding to the emergency, then it sets out how we're going to recover from it.

What some people might not realize is—I think another member mentioned this. I think it was the member from Oshawa. She had a particular concern about emergency response with regard to nuclear incidents. Well, we have that in Amherstburg as well, because across the water from us is the Fermi 2 nuclear installation. So we have a nuclear emergency response in place as well, because we need that where I live. That is set out in this plan.

There is also a winter control plan and a fuel depot information sheet, because, of course, one of the important things you need to know during an emergency is where you can get fuel to fuel your emergency vehicles.

This plan also sets out an agriculture and agri-food emergency plan, a traffic management plan, and a response to drinking water emergencies. Amherstburg has its own purification plant; many municipalities do not. If for whatever reason we cannot use that plant, if something happens that prevents us from using that plant, we have a contingency plan in place for that situation. Part of the town of Amherstburg also consists of an island called Bois Blanc Island—sometimes we call it Boblo Island—and there's an emergency response specific to that island.

Finally, there's an emergency response flood plan, as well.

It's a very detailed plan, which was constructed by a lot of consultation and constructed under the requirements of existing legislation. So, once again, I want to commend the town of Amherstburg—that's my hometown—on having a great plan. We're prepared for whatever might come our way.

Under the province's programs, we have a Community Emergency Preparedness Grant. That was provided to many municipalities and other recipients across the province of Ontario. It was part of a \$110-million investment to protect Ontario by ensuring communities and agencies were well-equipped and trained to respond to emergencies.

Let me give you a few examples of what you could have applied for, for grant money, to purchase under this plan—for example, something as simple as chainsaws. Well, why do you need chainsaws? An emergency such as an ice storm, which will knock down a lot of trees, will block a lot of roads, so you need chainsaws to clean up those trees and get them out of the way.

Generators are important because in times of emergency, particularly flood, a lot of times the power goes out. You need generators to run the pumping stations which move the water. So you could apply for and receive generators under this grant system.

Sandbag machines, various types of training and education—these grants ranged anywhere from \$5,000 to \$50,000.

Now there's another intake for this grant. The deadline to apply is October 28, 2025. That's coming up quickly. If any members know of anybody who could benefit from an application under this grant, you should encourage that municipality or that body to apply. Municipalities can apply. Local service boards can apply. Indigenous communities can apply. It's very easy to do so. You can go online, open an account, fill out the form and put in your application. It's very easy to do.

Here are some examples of some successful applicants who applied for and received funding under this program: Chippewas of Rama First Nation purchased a skid-steer attachment, sandbags and other supplies to prepare for flooding; the corporation of the municipality of La Nation applied for and received funding for a trailer and chainsaws to clear debris; the corporation of the city of

Orillia purchased drone trailers and an open pump to address flooding challenges; the corporation of the city of Temiskaming Shores purchased wildland firefighting equipment to complement their off-road response unit; the county of Brant purchased a sandbagging machine, a trailer and radar monitoring gauge to assess river water levels to improve their flooding response; and the municipality of Bayham purchased a trailer equipped with emergency supplies, including chainsaws, signage, radios and a sandbagging machine to help them with potential emergencies.

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Here's one more very successful grant applicant and recipient. This is a really great municipality; it's called the municipality of Lakeshore, located on the south side of Lake St. Clair and the north half of Essex county. They applied for and received funding for a 50-kilowatt portable generator, purchased with help from the provincial Community Emergency Preparedness Grant Program. I want to congratulate Mayor Tracey Bailey on the successful application to this grant and congratulate the municipality of Lakeshore for preparing for and being ready for emergencies.

Here's a quote from Mayor Bailey:

"As the largest municipality in the region, these challenges are complex and are unique to us. In cases of power failure, we needed to be flexible to quickly deploy power sources to our many pumping stations, to maintain critical operations, and reduce the risk of stormwater system surcharges and also localized flooding."

"With the support from the province and the Ministry of Emergency Preparedness and Response, 'We have taken a big step forward to be ready for the next storm.'"

Once again, congratulations to Mayor Tracey Bailey of the municipality of Lakeshore for being prepared for emergencies. They're also in the process of making sure that their plan is up to date and that they will be ready for whatever comes.

One final example of how the Ontario Corps might operate: We're aware that there was a very severe ice storm this spring. The Ontario Corps partners volunteered over 6,000 hours delivering generators, providing over 3,700 meals, providing food hampers, and conducting thousands of wellness checks. They also cleared trees and supported the reception centres for evacuees. So this is a fine example of how the Ontario Corps operates.

I want to take this opportunity to thank all those fine individuals who have volunteered for the Ontario Corps.

And if you are contemplating volunteering for the Ontario Corps, you should absolutely do so. Go online and sign up. You don't have to be any kind of expert. You don't have to have any kind of special qualifications. If you do have qualifications, those help. But you don't need any special qualifications.

If you are an individual who would like to help during an emergency, there are lots of things you can do, such as assisting in clearing debris and simply assisting people at emergency centres and staying organized. That's one of

the ways we can all be helpers, as good Mr. Rogers asked us to be.

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

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I appreciate the opportunity to talk about emergency management in this room.

We're talking about Bill 25. The member from Essex just gave us some detailed thoughts on it. He mentioned, towards the end of his speech—he was giving a shout-out to a local mayor from Lakeshore, I think he said, Tracey Bailey. He gave her a shout-out for how an emergency there was handled, which makes me think of a question about municipalities and what they can expect from this government should there be more emergencies. In this bill, there isn't any information provided as to how municipalities will be funded or resourced to be able to provide emergency management plans.

So my question to this member is, how does the government intend to fund municipalities to do what we all agree is such important work?

Mr. Anthony Leardi: Well, of course, municipalities are planning all the time for all sorts of things.

Primarily, the primary emergency response functions at the municipal level would entail the fire department, because those are the type of people who, in and of their own professional functions, are already trained for emergency preparedness. The Ontario Corps, of course, is set up under the auspices of the Ontario government and is there to coordinate these efforts as well.

A municipality does not stand alone during an emergency. A municipality may also communicate with the centre, if you will, and call upon the Ontario Corps for assistance. The Ontario Corps will be there to help any municipality, should that municipality require assistance above and beyond what is occurring at the local level. I think that is a very meaningful and thoughtful way for all of us to be involved in that kind of thing.

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

Hon. Sam Oosterhoff: I want to thank the member for his speech this afternoon.

I had the privilege of hosting the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Emergency Preparedness, from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, in the riding—an incredible champion for the community. We saw the impacts of those grants and how that can help with training exercises—for example, in this case, for what would be a natural gas well explosion. It was really, really well coordinated. It was funded directly through those grants.

What does it say about our government that we take it so seriously that we have committed members working on always improving our emergency response? What does it say about the care that the Premier has for rural communities that we're now able to hold these training events—that it's not being carried by rural taxpayers, but that the provincial government is stepping up to the plate and helping to pitch in substantial amounts of money for these communities?

Mr. Anthony Leardi: That's a great question, and I thank the Associate Minister of Energy-Intensive Industries for that question. It's a fine example.

I gave an example of the municipality of Lakeshore getting a \$50,000 grant for the purchase of an emergency generator. I also read through a series of other examples where grant money was made available to various municipalities for training. That training is important to be ready for emergency preparedness.

You don't necessarily, absolutely need a grant to train, but a grant can help. Part of that training can be an activity which would get the emergency response team around the emergency response table, for example, and going through what they call the scenarios. You invent a scenario, and then you go through the scenario as if it were actually happening.

That's one way that the government is supporting municipalities, especially small ones, by providing a grant to allow for those kinds of training exercises, and of course also to provide for other types of emergency training.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: I don't know what's going on over there, but the member from Essex usually brings a little bit more verve and energy to a debate on legislation that's before us. It's not the most exciting, I guess, legislation.

It is interesting what government members say—or talk about what's in the bill and then how they're referencing things that are not in the bill, like the Ontario Corps, for instance. The Premier has talked about the Ontario Corps, the member from Essex has talked—and this is, just for those who are paying attention, which is likely just my mom who's watching, a volunteer group comprised of skilled professionals meant as a rapid response to natural and other emergencies.

This is like a major plank of the government of Ontario to respond to impending emergencies, and yet it's not in the bill. If it's so pivotal to our response as a province, why not include it in legislation and law and then obviously the appropriate regulation? I'm looking forward to your answer.

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Mr. Anthony Leardi: The simple answer is: You don't need to. The explanatory note, which is schedule 1 to the bill, states the following:

"The commissioner is also required to coordinate the deployment or use of personnel, services, equipment, materials and facilities that are available to the commissioner to support emergency management, to be known as 'Ontario Corps.' The commissioner may delegate powers, duties and functions to a public servant."

That's stated right here in the explanatory note to the bill.

And, of course, it doesn't have to be in the legislation proper. It can also be set up in all sorts of ways. For example, such things are frequently set up under regulation and then, under the regulation, that piece of machinery is then assigned to the person who is set up in

the legislation—that person being the Commissioner of Emergency Management.

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

M^{me} Lucille Collard: To the member for Essex: I am sure you've been listening to us on this side of the House, and all the speakers mentioned the fact that we're talking about a bill on emergency response management and preparedness, yet we're not talking about climate change in any way, shape or form.

I would like you to explain to us why that is and why we're not talking to the fact that climate change is a thing and that the reason we have those emergency situations is because of climate change—unless you don't believe that's the case. I'd like to hear you on that.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: This is an emergency preparedness and response bill, and it could be an emergency response to anything. It could be an emergency response to climate change. It could be an emergency response to nuclear disaster. It could be an emergency response to contamination of a water treatment plant. It could be an emergency response to flooding. It could be an emergency response to any number of things.

The emergency response sets out a framework and, I think, most importantly, preparation is the most important and the key function that any municipality can do under this legislation. For example, I'm praising again the town of Amherstburg for their incredibly great emergency response plan which is set out.

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

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to acknowledge the member on the question and the answers he gave before.

I'd like to ask, with a little verve, that you would add and talk about the critical infrastructure partners that we might include in this bill that would be expected to plan for any response.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: Well, with some verve: The defence of critical infrastructure probably ranks very, very high in anybody's emergency response list.

What is "critical infrastructure"? When we mention critical infrastructure, I'll tell you what immediately comes to mind is line 5, which is a critical piece of infrastructure which we don't even own. But imagine if that critical piece of infrastructure went down. You'd shut down the entire economy of southwestern Ontario.

There are a lot of other critical pieces of infrastructure. I would say Highway 401 is a critical piece of infrastructure. The Ambassador Bridge, which links Detroit and Windsor, which carries approximately 30% of all of our exports into the United States, is also a critical piece of infrastructure. If that went down, you'd have some serious interruptions of supply chains.

These are the types of things we all need to be thinking about. I'm glad that the member from Sarnia-Lambton brought this up because they don't immediately come to mind during our everyday lives, but these are the things we need to plan for because they are so critical to everything that we do.

Thank you for the question.

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

MPP Alexa Gilmour: I would like to let you know that I'm sharing my time today with the member from London North Centre.

It is an honour to rise on behalf of the people of Parkdale–High Park to speak to Bill 25, the Emergency Management Modernization Act. I want to thank the government for bringing us this bill, and the member from York Centre for using words like “optimism” and “meeting the challenges” and “we can do it.” Because we are, in fact, living in an age of emergencies. From catastrophic floods to record-breaking wildfire seasons to fearsome pandemics, what were once generational disasters are becoming commonplace. Individuals on both sides of this aisle have indicated that Ontario's existing emergency management system is not up to the task of addressing the crisis we are seeing.

The Auditor General's 2022 value-for-money audit found weaknesses in the province's response programs that make “Ontario vulnerable in the event of a large-scale emergency situation.” In fact, to date, almost 60% of the Auditor General's recommendations have not been acted upon, as of 2024.

Legislation is critical. It's imperative. I cannot support Bill 25 as it is currently written. This bill is a missed opportunity. It doesn't address the scale of the problems that we are already facing, much less what we can expect to face in the future as extreme weather events grow ever more severe.

I will speak to schedule 1 of the bill and then schedule 2 of the bill in a little bit, because schedule 2 addresses some issues with very alarming provisions around the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services that, to my mind, require far more transparency and explanation than we've been given so far.

Speaker, my riding is home to a number of wonderful environmental advocacy groups, including Parkdale–High Park 4 Climate Action, Turtle Protectors of High Park, the Indigenous Land Stewardship Circle, Seniors for Climate Action Now and Green 13. These are highly engaged groups that work on local, provincial and national initiatives to advance meaningful action to address the climate crisis.

I thought of them as I reviewed Bill 25 and the minister's remarks in the debate, as well as the comments from the other colleagues on the government side, because I realized until the member from Essex said it today, that I, since I began my term, had never heard the phrase “climate change” mentioned by this government. It's nowhere in this legislation. It's nowhere in the government's remarks about Bill 25 or the budget.

And despite the minister saying that emergencies caused by flooding, wildland fires, natural disasters and pandemics are on the rise, she does not say why this is the case, even when directly asked. It's very strange. It's very troubling. How can you address a problem that you won't name the biggest cause of? How will the province perform

adequate risk assessments? How can we make accurate projections around future emergencies if we won't say what's driving those emergencies?

This government refuses to say the phrase “climate change,” and I don't know who this serves, but it isn't the people of Ontario. Because the climate is changing, faster than we expected. Assessing that riskier new world and putting in place the mechanisms, the policies, the investments to take it on is going to be critical to avoiding and then surviving the new emergencies. To truly modernize Ontario's emergency management system, to prevent, to mitigate and respond to increasing emergencies, we must put climate at the centre of our models.

Among other things, it means emergency systems must be designed to respond to the emergencies that are more frequent, more severe and that happen in places where they've rarely been seen before, places that were previously low-risk. This year, Canada is experiencing the second-worst wildfire season. Toronto had the worst air quality in the world. Weather gets hotter and dryer, and we must prepare for the eventuality of urban wildfires. We saw it in Los Angeles, we saw it in Halifax being under threat and we saw it in the New York fire department having to deal with nearly 300 brush fires in city parks. It seems unimaginable, but this is a very real threat to our municipalities. We need to put the infrastructure in place to deal with it, but Bill 25 does not do that.

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It also does not address a number of existing problems that were highlighted by the Auditor General, including a failure to provide culturally appropriate support during Indigenous evacuations, or to engage Indigenous leadership meaningfully, despite repeated calls for inclusion. In Canada, Indigenous communities represent 5% of the population but made up 42% of the wildfire evacuations from 1980 to 2021.

There are many other problems with this bill from the emergency response management position. It lacks the accountability mechanism. It doesn't have a mechanism for funding. It doesn't address the coordinated services. It doesn't provide real-time transparency. It doesn't have a public dashboard to track preparedness or response time.

I could keep going, Speaker, but I need to move on to discuss the very concerning aspects of the second schedule in Bill 25. This is the one that amends the Ministry of Community and Social Services Act. The amendment gives the minister the power to issue directives to service providers who receive funding, with respect to any extraordinary matters, like extreme weather events, natural disasters, interruptions of essential services or any other matters of public interest.

Matters of public interest—now, that is rather broad, rather vague, compared to the other items that we just read off on the list. I can tell you, it's being met with deep concern by the providers in the social services sector, especially as Bill 25 also gives the minister new powers to compel compliance. These include discretionary powers to reduce or terminate funding and to hold individuals who contravene an order liable for up to \$5,000; corporations

or other entities, for up to \$25,000. This conceivably could mean that Community Living organizations or social housing providers or the children's aid society could be sanctioned and fined under these new powers.

Speaker, social service providers were first alerted to this legislation through a December 10 memo. In that briefing, the ministry staff did not clarify whether the ministry had a definition of what extraordinary matters would be that the minister can issue directives about, or if this category is potentially much broader than what is included in the schedule. And without that further transparency, this is all very deeply disturbing. It raises many questions about the scope, the intended aim of the powers. For example, if a municipality does not comply with Bill 6, for example, the enforcement against encampments, could that municipality lose shelter funding? If supportive housing does not comply with Bill 10, will they be defunded?

Social service program funding recipients are sounding the alarm on this one. One community partner notes, "The minister gains significant authority to oversee and enforce compliance among organizations receiving funding. These directives bypass the usual checks and balances of the regulatory process, giving the minister more direct power." They go on to ask, "How is an emergency defined? Could this be used to respond to an 'emergency' that has been created out of the ministry's own lack of action?"

These are critical questions, all the more so because the ministry's inaction has caused a great many emergencies. If you want to talk about emergency management, social service agencies are the backbone to community resilience. They provide shelter, food, mental health support and elderly care. And yet, this sector has seen dramatic cuts.

Could the minister fine social service providers in these sectors or terminate program funding altogether? Speaker, we have too many questions, and we need answers. We need transparency. We need to be integrating social services into the emergency planning with guaranteed funding. We need to be doing that, not threatening them with fines and defunding. We need legislation that's honest about the nature of the emergencies that we are facing and puts in place the people, the mechanisms, the infrastructure to survive them. All of this is not in Bill 25. As it's currently written, I cannot support it.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I recognize the member from London North Centre.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It's an honour for me to rise today to add the voices of the great people of London North Centre to the government's Bill 25, the Emergency Management Modernization Act.

Whenever one considers legislation from this government, we need to get down to the terms of reference. We need to think about their definitions. It's incredibly important that we think about these words as the government understands them, but also as they hope to convey them to the general public. Whenever this government uses words like "modernization," it's really a substitution

for "privatization," "profitization," "cuts," "underfunding" and "unfunding." They will also use "efficiency" in a similar way. So, when I saw this word come across in the title of this bill, it is an immediate red flag.

In addition, when we think about words like "emergency," you think of urgency. You think something is dire. You think of a risk of harm. But it's this government's use of the word "extraordinary"—now, "extraordinary" would suggest something that is outside of what is "normal." But then that, Speaker, begs the question: What precisely do we define as "normal"? If our definition of what is normal is quite narrow, then everything outside of that falls under this "extraordinary" category. I wonder if the government is doing this particularly on purpose.

My comments are going to focus mainly on schedule 2 as it currently stands. It amends the Ministry of Community and Social Services Act. The changes in schedule 2 were not anticipated by the sector whatsoever. There had been no consultation from this government.

Schedule 2 will allow the minister the power to issue directives to entities prescribed under the MCCSA. It is, in particular, where we get into this definition of "extraordinary matters." These could pertain to extreme weather events, natural disasters, interruptions to essential services, but then they threw in "matters of public interest."

This inclusion of public interest has caused incredible alarm among providers. In a technical briefing, the ministry staff didn't even want to provide a definition for "extraordinary matters." They would not indicate whether that definition was broader than what's included in schedule 1, which is matters such as encampments or CAS budgets. When you see that something has been omitted, you have to think that the omission is really an admission, until there's evidence to prove otherwise. If that's not the case, then it would be very easy to simply state, "That is not included in this definition." And yet, radio silence.

We also see that individuals who contravene a minister's order can be liable for \$5,000 in fines. Corporations or entities can be fined \$25,000. It's really interesting at a time when we see budgets cut for MCCSS. We see organizations that are struggling, and this government is instead concerned more on how much money they can fine service providers and individuals.

Right now, MCCSS has had to resort—because of cuts, underfunding and a lack of respect and recognition from this government—to housing at-risk youth in office spaces and in hotels. They've been having to actually use unlicensed staff in some of these cases. We also saw big problems with the sector in my area when Craigwood Youth Services was closed. There are yet more resources that are not being made available for kids who need them most.

But I also wanted to particularly focus on an issue that was brought to the Minister of Health and Deputy Premier's attention in a letter that was authored by MPPs from the London area on April 2 of 2025. It was the closure of a medical clinic that was housed within the children's aid society. Now, this government will often bang on about the siloing of ministries and how we need

to have cross-sector collaboration, and this medical clinic was a clear example of that collaboration. But for 15 years the province has been pressuring CAS to shut down the clinic. It was a clinic that helped serve some of the most medically fragile youth, and it cost \$260,000. When you consider the cost of a neonatal intensive care unit stay, \$260,000 can easily be accumulated in just mere weeks.

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This closure also placed youth back onto a wait-list for primary care, for mental health, and it would also result in increased pressure on emergency rooms. And yet, this government simply ignored the wise fiscal measure of keeping this open. Now, their argument had been that, well, the Ministry of Health should be funding this, not the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services. That was an example, Speaker, of this cross-ministry collaboration.

So, when you look at Bill 25 and how it is now talking about fines for individuals in these service areas, it is deeply, deeply concerning. It would allow the minister to compel certain actions from these organizations relating to the conclusion of an audit on the children's aid society. This audit itself was really a punitive measure that this government enacted in order to cast aspersions and to raise serious doubts about the operation of children's aid societies.

I also wanted to add the voice of somebody who was a foster caregiver for some of these children in their own home. They stated to me, "I will be unable to care for the most high-needs medically intense infants in my home without the support of the pediatrician we currently have, who has expertise and experience with trauma, addictions, and highly fragile infants. There will be infants waiting in the hospital for placement at a huge daily cost for their care when they could be in our home if we had the support continue." And yet, this government decided to close that clinic. It made absolutely no sense. There are so many emergencies that are of this government's own making.

I think about this weekend; it was traumatic. It was incredibly upsetting for many people who are living paycheck to paycheck, who are at risk of homelessness. And yet, this government was talking about getting rid of rent control. To protect renters, there has to be a rent registry and an enforcement mechanism in place to ensure that tenants are paying the same rent as the previous occupant. That is real rent control and that is what Ontarians need. But instead, through Bill 60 and the consultation, Premier Ford was dismantling tenant protections, pushing our province even further away from the reforms our housing system so urgently needs.

Now, I want to be clear: The government's recent reversal on the security of tenure is a relief for renters, but it didn't come from goodwill. Premier Ford has been attacking renters, but they fought back. I want to thank advocates and caring community advocates who wrote letters because my colleagues and I were able to speak out, and, through the efforts we've all committed to this fight, we were able to stop one of the most egregious attacks on renters by this government. But the government has shown

their hand, and they've shown what their agenda truly is. These are the favours that have been promised to their friends in big commercial landlord corporations. The government did not get away with it this time, but I want to encourage people to continue to organize, to mobilize and to make sure these changes cannot return.

I worry about what will happen if Premier Ford continues to ignore the people who matter the most: senior citizens who have been good tenants for decades, people living with disabilities, those on social assistance and the young people who are just starting out. If this government gets its way, it will hurt everyone. It will drive rents higher, reduce protections for tenants and push even more people into homelessness.

I will continue to fight for renters. I will continue to raise my voice and hold this government accountable. My priority is to protect tenants, safeguard our communities and ensure that housing in Ontario is fair, affordable and accessible for everyone. This fight isn't over. And myself, the official opposition—my Ontario NDP colleagues and I—will never back down.

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

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: Over here.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): I must apologize. I rarely look in the member's direction, so I'm going to recognize the member from the Bay of Quinte.

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: Thank you very much, Speaker. I sincerely appreciate it, and I want to thank my colleagues opposite for their presentation today and, I will say, with significantly more verve, as the member from Waterloo had described it.

I want to ask you about climate change. You said you hadn't heard anyone say it. You've now heard me say it; I'm about to say it again. As it relates to climate change, it seems that the opposition feels that if you name a problem loud enough, it goes away, as though we could scream "climate change" loud enough to enter a period of glaciation and cool down the climate.

You look at what our government has done, including the investment at Dofasco with the electric arc furnace; including investments in public transportation, which cuts down on vehicle use—so many different practical solutions.

I want to get back to emergency management. If there's an ice storm that's caused by climate change versus an ice storm that's just sort of a run-of-the-mill ice storm, how would you deal with those two events differently?

MPP Alexa Gilmour: I want to thank my honourable colleague across the way for the question and for mentioning climate change, because you do need to be able to mention it in order to address the issue, so it's a wonderful start. Congratulations. It's twice today in the House that I've heard it in the seven months I've been here and—

Interjection: Yay!

MPP Alexa Gilmour: Yes, yes.

As we've said, this bill has the beginnings, but the devils are in the details, and the details are not great. We continue to see a lack of transparency, a lack of clarity and, quite frankly, when it does come to climate change, a lack of funding to address and mitigate.

The Auditor General just said that we are nowhere near meeting our targets that this government has set. So, I think that is a good question for this government: When will we meet those targets? I know I'm taking in the questions, but I would love to know that answer.

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

Ms. Doly Begum: Thank you very much, Speaker. You always look great in this chair

I want to thank my two colleagues here for their remarks. They talked a lot about the different parts in this bill that, when you look at the bill, you don't really think these would even be included in this bill, which is the first shock.

There are different organizations that are feeling a little bit lost, I would say, because of the language. Two words in this bill, Speaker, speak directly to that: one is "extraordinary" and the other one is "directive." They are not defined. They are not defined in this bill.

I just want to ask either one of my colleagues if they want to answer. I think of Marvel—what kind of extraordinary power are we giving the minister? I mean, that minister has already taken on a lot of extraordinary powers over the past years I've been in this House, and it's been eight years. I've just seen the government take on a lot of extraordinary powers. What kind of extraordinary powers are we talking about now?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank my friend from Scarborough Southwest for an excellent question, because what this does come down to is what these words are, what they mean and what they pertain to. What do they particularly define? When you look at the word "extraordinary" itself, it means "anything outside of the ordinary." Then, by extension, what is the definition of "ordinary"?

But this government has been very reluctant to provide details. Who knows? Maybe they don't actually know what the details are. I wish that were true, but I suspect that they do know what the details are; they're just not forthcoming with what they actually mean.

In the technical briefing that was provided by the ministry staff, they were either unable or unwilling to provide a definition of what "extraordinary matters" actually meant. They also would not define if that definition included matters broader than what was in schedule 1, and those matters would include things like encampments, things like CAS budgets. Because they would not provide that definition, because it was an omission, that omission is a very clear and tacit admission that perhaps our suspicions here on the side of the official opposition are entirely accurate and true.

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

Hon. Trevor Jones: I want to thank the members from Parkdale–High Park and London North Centre for adding to the discussion today on emergency modernization.

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To the member from Parkdale–High Park: She captured the essence of something very important when she identified that vulnerable communities, especially in the northern Indigenous remote areas, wear the brunt of a lot of the actual emergencies because of either ice storms or fires or flooding. That's precisely why the ministry, my team and Minister Dunlop's team consulted over 550 organizations, including, of course, the most vulnerable: the Indigenous communities; NGOs that do the work; the volunteer groups that come in and support; and first responders.

So, we've made those consultations. We've captured their voices, captured their data, the information, their lived experience. Would the member from Parkdale–High Park agree that we should follow their advice that's captured in the very essence of Bill 25?

MPP Alexa Gilmour: Thank you for the questions and thank you for the consultation that was done.

In Bill 25, however, we don't see anything that mandates Indigenous-led emergency planning or culturally appropriate services and the need for continuing to integrate Indigenous leadership. These are the pieces we need to see to believe that this government is, in fact, acting in good faith.

We have a government that has just passed Bill 5 into law, when the Indigenous people have stood against it and were filling this gallery in rage at that bill that was passed. We do need to continue to consult, and we're not seeing that at this point. For that reason, we can't agree that the consultations have been adequately done.

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

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm glad to ask a question of my colleague from London North Centre, who raised the fact that there are a number of emergencies of this government's own making.

When we left on Thursday and headed into the weekend, I don't know how many of us knew that our whole weekend would be managing the inbox from so many Ontarians who are distraught, terrified, very angry and very worried about this Bill 60.

So here we are talking about emergency management, but I want to read to you—Heather, who called me, said, "I am very concerned about the proposed legislation ... to take away protections for long-term tenancy. I've been living in my apartment for 20 years and I'm on disability. If I were to have my ... rent control change on me, I would be homeless. This is absolutely just evil what he could be doing to ... hundreds of thousands of people that have been living in their tenancies for years, that are barely affording life."

Catherine called. She's so upset. The emails were sent at 2, 3, 4 in the morning, which tells me people are terrified.

Now, this government has walked back the consultation. They have shown their hand, so what can we expect from this government?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I would like to thank my friend from Oshawa.

Similarly, all of us on the official opposition were deeply concerned when we saw so many people reaching out to us with harrowing stories and deep concerns, even people who weren't necessarily renters themselves, who understood exactly what this legislation and this consultation meant.

I was really proud that my Ontario NDP colleagues were also raising their voices, calling out this government, calling them out for trying to get rid of rent control. This would affect so many people who are living paycheck to paycheck, who are right at the edge, whether that would include seniors who have been living in places for decades, who effectively paid for the building in which they live but who are still at the mercy of these corporate landlords. It also includes people living with disabilities, new Canadians. It includes young people just starting out.

Quite frankly, the fact that this government was willing to do this in such a deceptive way—because it's very clear what their intent is. They've removed rent control—

Interjection.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I withdraw, Speaker—for buildings first occupied after November 2018, and it's shown that they only listen to people who are incredibly wealthy. They want to create a system of exploitation where renters are at the entire mercy of these faceless corporate landlords, these real estate investment trusts who will squeeze people for every last nickel.

Quite frankly, Speaker, we already have a homelessness crisis on our hands. How they could even consider removing rights from renters is absolutely beyond anyone normal's common humanity.

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

M^{me} Lucille Collard: It's my turn to speak to Bill 25, the building control, ignoring climate bill.

Speaker, Bill 25 claims to modernize emergency management in Ontario but fails to mention the biggest emergency of all—and we've heard it from so many people: It's climate change. We all know it. But I fail to understand why the government refuses to acknowledge it and act upon it. There is not a single reference to rising temperatures, extreme weather or climate-driven disasters in the text of the bill. In 2025, that omission is not just negligent; it's actually dangerous.

Climate inaction has consequences. It has consequences in each of your ridings, and it has consequences in the whole province of Ontario. I'll speak about the situation in Ottawa–Vanier, because the risks are not abstract. We've gone through a series of disasters in our area. We've seen flash flooding that overwhelmed the city's aging stormwater system, including in Overbrook and Sandy Hill, which is right next to my home.

During the derecho storm of 2022, thousands of residents lost power for days and many seniors in Vanier

and Lowertown were left without access to air conditioning or elevators. Imagine that.

In 2023 and 2024, record-breaking heat waves sent emergency calls skyrocketing and overwhelmed cooling centres in the city. Yet no permanent climate-resilient infrastructure has been prioritized by this government.

The ByWard Market was blanketed in thick, wildfire smoke last summer. I remember that vividly because many outdoor events were cancelled, and vulnerable people—especially those without housing—were left without adequate protection.

And yet, Bill 25 ignores all of this.

These disasters have a cost, and that's why the city of Ottawa is specifically asking the provincial government for additional funding and support related to climate adaption and emergency-services-asset renewal. For example, in the city's emergency and protective services asset management plan, Ottawa estimates its 10-year needs to approximately \$471.8 million, but only \$316 million is budgeted, resulting in a funding gap of roughly \$155.8 million for emergency and protective services assets.

The same report states that Ottawa's assets and services must increase their resiliency to extreme weather and changing climate conditions. In its climate change master plan, the city emphasizes that its ability to mitigate and adapt to climate change is contingent upon senior levels of government to commit to action.

Both the climate change master plan and the emergency and protective services asset management plan provide a clear basis for Ottawa calling on the province to provide dedicated funding for asset renewal and infrastructure adaption for extreme weather events; ensure the province works closely with municipalities to build local capacity and coordination for climate-driven emergencies; and recognize that municipal emergency services and infrastructure face escalating pressures due to climate change, and that municipalities cannot carry the burden alone.

Local governments know their communities best, and municipalities like Ottawa have taken serious steps towards climate adaptation, such as net-zero targets by 2050, Emergency Preparedness Week campaigns and investments in tree canopy and stormwater upgrades. But without funding, coordination or provincial commitment, these efforts are limited. Emergency preparedness must be bottom-up, not top-down.

What Bill 25 actually does is it actually centralizes emergency management under ministerial control; it mandates municipalities to follow a provincial framework without new funding, without a clear support mechanism and without any mention of climate science. That leaves local governments accountable but under-resourced. Essentially, the province is writing the playbook but won't pay for the equipment.

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Let's look at this government's track record in terms of emergency. During COVID-19, communication breakdowns left local health units scrambling. During the wildfires, air-quality alerts were delayed and unevenly

distributed across Ottawa. During the ice storm in April 2023, it took days for residents in Vanier to see hydro restored and streets cleared; seniors in high-rises were simply stranded. And I will add the Ottawa freedom convoy in early 2022, where the Ontario government response was slow, reactive and insufficient—every time: slow action, confusion and a lack of trust in leadership.

In contrast, let's look at what real leadership looks like. Our caucus put forward Bill 29, the Turn Down the Heat Act, introduced by my colleague the MPP for Beaches—East York. It's a bill that would declare the first week of June extreme heat awareness week. It would include heat safety education in tax bills and it would promote climate adaptation at the household level—a bill that is practical and cost-effective, but the government chose to ignore this bill.

Ontarians are not asking for more reports or frameworks; they're asking for cooling centres that open before a heat emergency, climate-resilient housing that protects families during wildfires, and clear, funded partnerships with local leaders who know the land. Bill 25 isn't emergency preparedness; it's climate denial by omission.

I will end by saying, let's stop centralizing power and start actually protecting people.

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

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: Thank you to my colleague from Ottawa—Vanier for her compelling remarks on climate change and the lack of action in this bill. Just last week, I had a constituent come to my office and talk about her concern about the lack of air conditioning in schools. Certainly, I visited a number of schools in June at the end of the last school year and I, along with the poor kids and staff working there, really found the heat to be stifling on those hot days.

I wonder if the member from Ottawa—Vanier could talk a little bit about the reality of these hot days in schools and what this government could be doing to help the students and staff who are working in those kinds of environments.

Mme Lucille Collard: Thank you to the member for Don Valley West for the question. It is so relevant because, effectively, that's one of the impacts of climate change. We've seen the weather rise; we've seen the spells of heat waves expand in their duration and also starting earlier in the year, like May and June, and expanding way into the fall. We've just seen the temperature change; we had an extended summer. While it may be enjoyable and seem like good news, it is actually worrisome, and I think we need to pay attention to that.

I have also been in schools in June for different events, and schools that don't have air conditioning are a real problem. It really is an impediment for the students to learn adequately.

The first thing that the government needs to do is pay attention to climate change, take action and appropriately fund our education system.

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

Mr. Deepak Anand: Madam Speaker, in today's world, when we talk about anything, uncertainty is the only certain thing.

That is what this bill is doing—is providing emergency management and civil protection.

I want to ask the member opposite about the Ontario Corps. Have you heard about it? Do you know what it is and how it's going to help, through this bill?

Mme Lucille Collard: Actually, I'm going to speak to what this bill doesn't do, because your question doesn't touch upon the important aspect of it. You're talking about certainty, and I don't agree that this bill talks about certainty.

I think what is certain is that climate change is happening. It's having a negative effect on our planet, on our cities, on our province, and we're not doing anything meaningful to address this. This is on the government, for not only not funding those measures that could address it, but also cancelling some green initiatives when they first got elected, in 2018, which was a big mistake.

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

MPP Jamie West: Thank you to my colleague from Ottawa—Vanier. She talked about things that we could be addressing when it comes to emergency management.

I'm reminded on a regular basis by my colleague from Nickel Belt and others in the north that, in northern Ontario, in many areas—not the area of Sudbury, but many areas—911 isn't a real number. So if you're in an emergency—a fire, a boat accident, a car accident—and you call 911, nobody answers.

Do you feel like addressing things like 911 in northern Ontario would be an important step forward?

Mme Lucille Collard: Thank you for the question. I do appreciate that.

I've actually heard repeatedly from members from the north, talking about this issue. I was a little bit surprised the first time I heard about it, but it is actually a thing. I think when you're thinking emergency, 911 comes to mind. The fact that this service is not readily available in regions in our province is just unbelievable.

The government needs to start with those simple things that should be simple to fix with adequate programs, with adequate consultation as to what is needed in the various regions of Ontario, and provide the funding so that these measures can be effectively put in place and actually save lives before it's too late.

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

Mr. Deepak Anand: Madam Speaker, as I said earlier, nowadays uncertainty is the only certain thing.

This is the bill which actually talks about—emergency management and civil protection amendment act, 2025.

I'm always honoured to rise and speak on things that matter most to Ontarians.

This bill reflects our government's continued efforts to protect the people of Ontario—to ensure that when emergencies strike, we respond faster, coordinate better, and recover stronger. Emergencies, whether natural or

human-made, remind us that preparedness is not just a policy; it is a shared responsibility. Ontario is home to strong, resilient people, and every community, from the north to the GTA, relies on co-operation between governments, municipalities and local organizations when the unexpected occurs.

What are we doing in this bill? We're making sure, through Bill 25, that we're modernizing. We're bringing our emergency management framework into the next generation, with stronger partnerships, clear accountability, and more tools to help communities prepare, respond and recover. At its core, it is about strengthening how Ontario prepares for and responds to emergencies. When things happen, we cannot control—but when things happen, we can control what we can do.

That is why this bill establishes a Commissioner of Emergency Management, to lead a unified approach across ministries, municipalities and community partners.

It also requires a provincial emergency management strategy and framework, setting consistent standards for preparedness, training and coordination across the province.

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It enhances collaboration with First Nations, municipalities and critical infrastructure partners so that every region has the tool and resources to respond effectively. Implementation will focus on alignment and accountability, ensuring every level of government and partner organization understands their role, before an emergency occurs.

Say, for example, there is a snowstorm. We can't control the snowstorm, but when the snowstorm happens, rather than struggling and finding—what we do now.

Typically, when we know it's going to rain, we don't go out and buy an umbrella. We buy an umbrella, and we keep the umbrella, and we use that umbrella when there is rain.

Similarly, we'll continue to engage local leaders, emergency services and community partners to guide how these frameworks are rolled out on the ground.

As the minister noted within her speech on October 23, modernization is not just about new rules; it is about building capacity at every level of government.

Madam Speaker, we talk about Murphy's Law. If you remember, it says that anything that can go wrong will go wrong. Similarly, in emergency management—that saying is not pessimism; it is preparation. It is the recognition that when we cannot predict every situation, let's build the system, skills, the partnerships to adapt when the unexpected happens. That is exactly what we're doing through this bill. It embraces that reality. It is about planning for the unknown, making sure every level of government, every responder and every community is ready, not just for what is likely, but for all emergencies.

This legislation introduces important updates that reflect today's realities and helps us to adopt new technologies, from data-driven forecasting to improved communication systems, so that our response can be faster and can be more coordinated.

That is why this legislation also gives local government the flexibility they need to tailor their plans to their unique risks, from urban flooding to rural wildfires and even unexpected snowstorms that could happen in April. At the same time, it ensures that all plans are built on shared principles of accountability, transparency and collaboration.

As the minister highlighted, modernization also means applying the lessons we have learned from real-world emergencies in the past. It builds on those experiences by providing risk assessment and situational awareness shared across ministries and municipalities. By linking technology, training and on-the-ground expertise, we are making sure we are creating a more agile and coordinated emergency management system that reflects the realities of our changing world.

Madam Speaker, we're talking about Mississauga—Malton—I always have to make sure that Mississauga—Malton is core to everything we talk about in my remarks. We actually had an emergency at Hull Street, and that's where we saw the community seeing the devastation, but they came together with the region of Peel and the city of Mississauga to find real solutions. Thankfully, today we have two pumps making sure that if this thing happens in the future, we're prepared for it.

That is exactly is this bill about: Making sure that having the partnerships, having the planning, having those agencies working together—if something happens, we are together to fight against it.

Collaboration across sectors is very key and means that anything that we do—effective management can only happen when we do not do it in isolation. It depends on collaboration across sectors, across ministries, across communities that I've talked about multiple times, and we want to make sure of that.

Our post-secondary education system also plays an advanced role, through the research and training related to emergency management. That's what we're doing through this bill.

We're strengthening the requirements for annual reporting and public disclosure, so that people can have a clear understanding of their communities as they're preparing for these threats.

It also modernizes the process for declaring and managing states of emergency.

We are creating—and making sure that we are there for the people.

Through this bill, we are identifying the Ontario Corps as a key function of emergency response that can be deployed quickly to support communities across the province—supporting municipal emergency management by importance of community-led approaches and allowing the flexibility of municipal emergency management programs based on need and capacity.

The Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act is about one simple idea: protecting people. It is about ensuring that everyone in Ontario, from Mississauga—Malton to Thunder Bay and across the rest of the province, knows that when an emergency strikes, help will arrive swiftly; the system will work as one.

Our government will continue to stand with first responders, municipalities, Indigenous communities, and every partner who plays a role in keeping Ontario safe. Together, we are building a stronger, more resilient province—one that lasts, ready for the challenges of today and prepared for the opportunities of tomorrow.

Madam Speaker, I'm proud to support this legislation. It reflects not only the lessons we've learned but the values we uphold: partnership, accountability, and care for one another.

Let's continue to work together to keep Ontario safe, strong and ready. I'm looking forward for all my colleagues and urge them to come together, work together on this bill and make sure that we continue to bring, in the case of trouble, a better, stronger Ontario, ready.

Through the proposed amendments, we are taking concrete steps.

I believe when we talk about the technology, we are making sure that the technology—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Pursuant to standing order 50(c), I am now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there have been six and a half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader directs the debate to continue.

Hon. Steve Clark: Speaker, please adjourn the debate.
Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

FIGHTING DELAYS, BUILDING FASTER ACT, 2025

LOI DE 2025 VISANT À LUTTER CONTRE LES RETARDS ET À CONSTRUIRE PLUS RAPIDEMENT

Mr. Flack moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 60, An Act to amend various Acts and to enact the Water and Wastewater Public Corporations Act, 2025 /
Projet de loi 60, Loi modifiant diverses lois et édictant la Loi de 2025 sur les sociétés publiques de gestion de l'eau et des eaux usées.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): I recognize the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to lead off the debate.

Hon. Rob Flack: I will be sharing my time this afternoon with the member from Brampton South and the member from Barrie–Springwater–Oro–Medonte.

It's my privilege to speak today in support of this important piece of legislation, the Fighting Delays, Building Faster Act, 2025. This legislation builds directly on the foundation we set last session with Bill 17, the Protect Ontario by Building Faster and Smarter Act.

As we know, it is not business as usual in this province. Uncertainty reigns right now, and it is impacting every sector of our economy, including the housing sector. We are proud of the work we have done to create better conditions to build. However, more work needs to be done

as the situation continues to evolve. Continuous action is needed.

Bill 17 was a pivotal first step, protecting Ontario and building the right conditions to build smarter and faster. It signalled to homeowners, home builders, municipalities and the people of Ontario that our government is laser-focused on cutting unnecessary barriers, reducing costs, and getting shovels in the ground faster. It's helping to create the conditions for Ontario to build, to protect the dream of home ownership for all of Ontario. We are setting the stage for a more efficient, streamlined and results-focused approach to building homes, infrastructure and stronger communities right across Ontario.

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Today, with this new legislation, we are taking that commitment even further. We are building on the momentum of Bill 17, extending the reforms that work, and introducing bold new measures to protect Ontario, keep workers on the job, and ensure families can access the homes they need at the prices they can afford.

Speaker, it takes too long and it costs too much to build in Ontario. We're changing that.

This legislation is designed with a single guiding principle: We are here to make it easier to build homes and community infrastructure, to ease congestion, and to clear backlogs at the Landlord and Tenant Board in Ontario.

Simply put, it is time to remove the obstacles that delay construction, inflate costs and keep families waiting to find and afford the housing they need and they deserve. One third of the total cost of a new home is a government fee such as municipal development charges, a study or an iteration of the building code. That is too high. Municipal development charges have continued to rise at a steady pace, and we're putting a stop to it.

Throughout the summer, I had the opportunity to travel right across this province, in the north, east, southwest, west, GTHA, Niagara. Everywhere I went, there were similar themes. The one thing that struck me the most, frankly, was when you take a look at the HST, when you take a look at development charges, when you take a look at the costs of extra studies and iterations of the building code, it can be up to one third of the cost of a new home that goes into fees or taxes. That's ridiculous. When we bought our first homes—those of us in our generations—it didn't even come close to that. That is hurting the cost of home ownership. It costs too much. It takes too long to build a home. We're fixing it, as well, in this bill.

Our government knows that every unnecessary approval, every extra month in the planning process, every inflated municipal development charge is a barrier for home builders and homeowners alike, and it's something we're not going to accept. We're protecting Ontario by making it easier to build.

We are building on the foundation laid by Bill 17, and we are ensuring that this province continues to move forward without delays, without waste and without compromise on safety or quality.

Speaker, let me be clear: One of the central pillars of this legislation is cost reduction.

Ontario can no longer afford to have home prices inflated by requirements that do nothing to improve safety or the fundamentals of the building that's being built. Housing affordability is a challenge that impacts every Ontarian. Families are feeling it. Young people trying to get their first home are feeling it. Seniors who want to downsize are feeling it. And our builders who are trying to respond to demand are feeling it.

Our government is acting decisively to ensure that homebuyers are not paying for unnecessary costs that do nothing to improve infrastructure and safety.

This legislation continues the work we began with Bill 17 by targeting the very policies and practices that drive up costs for families and slow down construction timelines.

For example, municipal development charges have long been a source of frustration and concern. While these charges serve a purpose, helping municipalities fund essential infrastructure, they must reflect the true cost of that infrastructure.

Through this legislation, we are putting an end to inflated development charges. Homebuyers will pay only the real cost of connecting to roads, water, sewers and other vital services, not historic land costs or hidden fees that do nothing to actually build the infrastructure we require. This is common-sense reform. It is about fairness. It is about putting money back in the pockets of Ontario families, while continuing to ensure municipalities have the funding they need to build safe, thriving communities.

And we are not acting in isolation. We continue to call on the federal government to do its part. Ottawa promised a reduction in the municipal development charges, and it is long past time for them to deliver on these election promises. I look forward to their budget in November. Hopefully, they'll live up to this promise. Families across this province cannot wait any longer.

Our legislation ensures Ontario will continue to lead. However, we need partners at all levels of government to bring down costs and accelerate housing delivery.

Reducing costs is only one part of the solution. The other part is time, and there is no more valuable commodity in housing starts than time. Time is money, after all. Every month a project is delayed is a month a family is kept from their new home. It is why this legislation is focused on cutting red tape, streamlining approvals, and removing unnecessary municipal barriers.

Take, for example, communal water and waste water systems. In under-serviced rural areas, new housing often cannot proceed because of numerous provincial and municipal approvals. Our government is changing that. By simplifying the consent and approval processes, we are giving municipalities the tools to unlock development. These changes will save municipalities time, expand servicing capacity, and ultimately bring more homes on faster. This is practical, effective reform. Communal water systems will work. It also is common sense, and it aligns with our broader vision to ensure that wherever Ontarians want to live—urban, suburban or rural—there is a clear, efficient path to housing.

Let me turn to one of the most concrete examples of how this legislation will deliver real results, and it starts in the Peel region. We are building on the foundation laid in Bill 17 by introducing an innovative new model to deliver vital water and waste water services more efficiently in Peel. Under this model, Peel's water and waste water systems will be managed by a publicly owned corporation, bringing together Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon to make governance and finance more effective. This is bold, innovative action. It will reduce reliance on municipal development charges, allowing further reductions in the cost of new homes. It's a smarter and faster way to fund infrastructure, saving homebuyers money and accelerating the construction of new housing. That is exactly the type of forward-thinking reform Ontario needs: practical, tangible, and directly benefiting families and builders alike. This is what it looks like when government works with communities to make life better for their residents, while keeping costs down.

Let me be clear: Peel is not the only area benefiting from development charge reforms.

This legislation continues to expand on the work, as I said earlier, on Bill 17.

We are making sure that development charges reflect only the true cost of the infrastructure needed—no more hidden fees; no more practices that inflate costs without building more roads, more waterlines or more libraries. These changes protect homebuyers. They protect families trying to purchase their first home. And they protect the very integrity of the building process by ensuring that funding is transparent, fair, and targeted at real infrastructure needs.

Our government is not only making changes that impact the big picture; we are making targeted changes to make your life easier.

Another key reform in this legislation focuses on minor variances—minor variances, but a major problem to fix. Small changes to the zoning bylaws, like modest adjustments in building height or lot coverage, have historically required costly municipal approvals. We all know this. Our government is removing unnecessary steps and cutting the red tape to make things easier for our constituents. By allowing certain minor variances to be approved “as-of-right,” we are eliminating needless paperwork, saving time, and freeing municipalities to focus on the work that really matters: delivering services for their residents. This is a simple but powerful way to accelerate construction without sacrificing safety, community integrity, or local planning priorities. Builders can move forward quickly, and municipalities can direct their resources towards creating homes and infrastructure, rather than processing paperwork.

But this is not all—far from it.

Our government is continuing to take direct aim at the unnecessary burdens and municipal red tape that drive up the cost of building homes in Ontario.

To impose costly, premium design demands and Cadillac requirements that add months of delay and tens of thousands of dollars to the price of a single home is not acceptable.

Let's be clear: Ontario families are facing very real economic pressures. Interest rates are high—too high. Construction costs are high—too high. Young families are doing everything they can just to get a foot in the door of the housing market. Now is not the time for municipalities to be laying on boutique design preferences that do nothing to make homes safer or more affordable.

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Our government is tearing down these roadblocks once and for all. Enhanced site plan controls that force builders into time-consuming, redundant and costly processes will be eliminated and replaced with clear, consistent provincial standards. We will not stand by while municipalities use their powers to impose expensive and unnecessary requirements that delay homes and raise costs for homebuyers.

Those days are over, Madam Speaker. By the next building season, these practices will come to an end. Every builder in Ontario will operate under one clear, fair and efficient standard, one that prioritizes what truly matters: safety, affordability and getting shovels in the ground faster. This change will bring fairness and predictability back to the system. It will ensure that builders can focus on building and that homebuyers are not paying for gold-plated, mandatory design demands that have nothing to do with quality or safety.

Our message is simple. We are standardizing the process right across the province, giving choice back to builders and buyers, predictability back to the marketplace and relief back to the hard-working families of Ontario. We are cutting costs, we're cutting red tape and we're cutting the time it takes to get to build in Ontario, because at the end of the day, that is how you protect Ontario's economy: by keeping workers on the job, keeping projects moving and keeping the dream of home ownership within reach for more families.

And we are not going to stop there. Our government is going to go line by line through the rules that govern building in this province, because we know that outdated regulations, redundant paperwork and unnecessary delays are costing builders time and costing families money. That is why we are launching a comprehensive, section-by-section review of Ontario's building code to ensure the rules that govern building are up to date and reflect modern standards. It is one of the most important steps that we can take to make housing more affordable and get shovels in the ground faster.

This will be a top-to-bottom modernization. We are identifying rules that no longer make sense, outdated provisions that slow down projects, inflate construction costs or create unnecessary barriers, all the while maintaining the strict health and safety standards that Ontario families expect and deserve.

Ontario's building code has to be king. And what I want to say is it can always be improved. However, we are not complacent. Good is not good enough, and as time moves on, we will need to constructively look for improvements to enhance the building code. But remember one thing, Speaker: Our code today is a good code. We are looking

to improve it, simply put. Our goal is to strengthen efficiency, improve predictability and make sure that every rule in the building code serves a purpose, not a process. We are cutting through the red tape so builders can focus on what they do best—building homes, building communities and building the opportunity for Ontario families.

A prosperous Ontario must move faster, build smarter and keep costs down, because every day we save in the approval process is another day that a family moves into their home faster. Every dollar we save in construction costs is another dollar that stays in the pocket of an Ontario home builder. This just makes common sense. It's responsible, it's practical and it's exactly what Ontario needs today: a government that protects safety, clears obstacles and delivers results.

Beyond the specific policies and measures, this legislation represents a broad culture change. We are creating a province where approvals are efficient, where approvals are predictable and transparent. This takes time. It takes effort but it's worth doing, not because it's easy, but because it is hard. Ontario can no longer afford to operate as it once did. We must say yes to growth, yes to building and yes to housing. Where municipalities and the private sector work hand in hand to get results, where safety and environmental stewardship are protected but where overreach, bureaucracy, delay and inflated costs are not tolerated, the culture of change is necessary. The challenge of change is never easy. I think we all know this.

However, the challenges we face are unprecedented, and Ontario cannot afford to wait. Every delay costs families, costs jobs and it costs prosperity. Every roadblock slows down growth and opportunity. We are changing the way Ontario plans, we are changing the way Ontario builds and we are changing the way our government works when it relates to housing. These changes have to be for the people. It is the only way that policies like Bill 60 will work, after all.

Ontario is facing significant challenges not only south of the border but here within our own country. From economic pressures and rising costs to housing shortages and infrastructure demands, there is too much at stake not to act. The Fighting Delays, Building Faster Act, 2025, addresses these challenges head-on. It reduces costs, streamlines approvals, modernizes rules and will create the conditions to get shovels in the ground faster. It ensures homebuyers pay only the true cost of infrastructure. It empowers municipalities to act efficiently. It gives options back to home builders and homebuyers, and it protects families and communities across Ontario.

Under the leadership of Premier Ford, our government is building on the foundation we set in the spring. This is one part of our government's plan to protect Ontario. Together, we will keep workers on the job. Together, we will drive economic growth, and together we will ensure that every Ontarian who wants a home—whether it's in Peel, whether it's in Elgin county or Middlesex county, at home, Toronto, or all parts of rural Ontario or anywhere in between—has the opportunity to find a home they can call their own.

I am proud to support this legislation. It's practical, it's bold, it's forward-looking and it's exactly the kind of action Ontario needs now. I encourage all members of this chamber to support the Fighting Delays, Building Faster Act, 2025, a law that will protect Ontario, reduce costs and speed up construction to ensure our communities can thrive for generations to come.

In conclusion, Speaker, I am reminded of the story, and I go back many decades—I have said it in the House before, but I think for the purposes of today—when I bought my first house in 1983, I bought a house in Guelph, Ontario, for \$54,000. And it was a basic bungalow brick house, three bedrooms, no garage, no fancy hardwood, no marble, no granite. It was a good, basic, brick house on a 40-foot lot, and it was \$54,000. I was by it this summer—oh, and by the way, I was making \$30,000 a year. I had \$16,000 down for a down payment, but the interest rates were 19%, which was scary.

At the end of the day, I got it bought. But I asked a builder this summer, a builder from Guelph, “What would that lot cost today, and what would it have cost when it was built in the late 1970s?” He said the lot would have cost, in the late-1970s, \$20,000 to \$22,000. Today the lot would be \$450,000 to \$500,000. The house would be over a million dollars.

Think about what I was making and what you have to be making today. The down payment—the math doesn't work. We have to change that. There were no development charges when I bought my first house. There were no special iterations of the building code. You could get a building permit in a matter of weeks, not months or years, as it takes today.

What we are doing today is changing that, creating the conditions for home builders to get shovels in the ground faster, make home ownership more affordable, working closely with our municipal partners. We're going to get it done.

I thank you for your time and attention today, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): I recognize the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: I want to take an opportunity to thank my colleague the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing for his remarks and his experience in the file and for outlining this government's plan to invest in Ontario's economy. But I'm also thankful for the opportunity to be a part of this piece of legislation through the Ministry of Transportation, to help our goal of reducing gridlock, getting shovels in the ground faster and building infrastructure as quickly as we possibly can.

We have taken some bold action to keep people and goods moving and to build critical transportation infrastructure in every corner of this province. We need to tackle the gridlock and unlock Ontario's full economic potential. Amid economic uncertainty, this work has never been more important.

That's why we've tabled this legislation with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. If passed, it would accelerate critical infrastructure timelines and

investments to keep Ontario's workers on the job and support the province's long-term economic stability and prosperity. The Fighting Delays, Building Faster Act includes measures aimed at easing traffic on city streets, accelerating the delivery of public transit, enhancing road safety by strengthening eligibility requirements to get an Ontario driver's licence and setting the stage to harmonize road construction standards across the province. These are the common-sense measures that we need to build Ontario into an economic powerhouse as we continue to invest in the infrastructure that will support our growing population.

1620

Gridlock costs our province up to \$56 billion each year. If we do nothing to address this, that number could skyrocket to \$108 billion a year by 2044. That is a cost that we simply cannot afford. We need to do everything we can to support the movement of people and goods across the province. That is why our government is making historic investments in public transit, in priority highway projects like the 413 and the Bradford Bypass.

In addition to building new transportation infrastructure, we must fight gridlock on existing roadways, and the Fighting Delays, Building Faster Act aims to do exactly that: keep traffic flowing on city streets across Ontario. Here in Toronto, commuters face some of the worst traffic and lose about 98 hours a year in rush hour delays. We are taking action. This legislation will protect lane capacity by prohibiting the removal of vehicle lanes when municipalities install new bicycle lanes. We are standing up for drivers and supporting families and businesses across the province.

When gridlock is threatening our economy, we need to bring back common sense. Whether it's sports teams, tourists, emergency crews, truckers or families—that's not the reputation we want. Every parent who commutes knows the time stuck in traffic is the time away from the people you love. We need to make sure our roads remain open to move traffic, which is exactly what they were built for.

We have seen, Madam Speaker, in the past couple of years, the installation of bike lanes across some of the busiest roads in this city, whether it's Bloor Street, Avenue, Yonge. We have seen travel times on these roads get significantly longer, and that is what this legislation intends to fix all across the province.

We are also determined to make it easier and faster to build new homes and infrastructure like transit, roads, and water and waste water systems. Right now, a major roadblock to this is the inconsistent municipal road building standards. Currently, each municipality in Ontario has the authority to set its own road construction standards. This has resulted in inconsistencies across Ontario that can slow down the design, which will add red tape and drive up the costs of road projects across these cities and municipalities. While any municipality can use the OPS, or Ontario Provincial Standards, for municipal roads and public works, the adoption and application vary from one municipality to another, making it harder for our road builders to complete projects without delays and added

costs. While the province does have the authority to set mandatory road-building standards for municipalities under the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act, there is currently no road-standard regulation in place to ensure the uniform approach to road construction.

We intend to change that, Madam Speaker. If passed, the Fighting Delays, Building Faster Act would amend this act. That would help enable better provincial oversight of construction standards and support the implementation of common road construction standards across the entire province. The proposed amendments would require municipalities to provide information on road design matters upon request and allow the province to establish reporting requirements on the municipal adoption of standards.

The amendments would also allow the province to prescribe requirements for all municipal road and bridge construction contracts. Our goal is to streamline the design and construction of municipal roads so municipalities can move forward quickly to build the infrastructure we need to fight gridlock and support the movement of goods across the province.

For decades, local roads boards have played a critical role in maintaining rural roads outside of municipal or provincial jurisdiction. Currently, we have 208 local roads boards responsible for over 4,000 kilometres of rural roads in northern Ontario. For all property taxes collected under the Local Roads Boards Act, the province provides matching funding to the local roads boards to ensure rural roads remain in a good state of repair. But local roads boards do not receive matching provincial funding for voluntary donations made by owners of tax-exempt properties.

This is an issue local roads boards have raised for years, and we've heard their message loud and clear. This act, the Fighting Delays, Building Faster Act, if it passes, would amend the Local Roads Boards Act to allow the province to match funds donated by owners of certain tax-exempt properties. That means more funding for local roads, helping us build a reliable transportation network in every corner of Ontario, including our rural communities.

Our government is making historic investments in public transit to connect more Ontarians to housing and jobs as we continue to build for the future. We're investing nearly \$70 billion in the largest transit expansion in North America, including the largest subway expansion in Canadian history. We're delivering two-way, all-day service on GO Transit's busiest railroads. Madam Speaker, after the Liberals cancelled the Northlander passenger rail service, it left northerners without a reliable transportation option. We are bringing it back with brand new trains and brand new stations.

While the Liberals and the NDP continue to distract with political delays, we are determined to build as fast as possible so we can build Ontario and keep driving economic growth across the province. That's why our government tabled the Building Transit Faster Act in 2020. This gave Metrolinx a suite of measures to accelerate the planning, design and construction of priority public transit projects. The Liberals, NDP, the Greens all voted

against this plan that would deliver transit faster in their own communities.

Unlike the opposition, we're getting it done. Earlier this year, we tabled legislation that expanded those measures to all provincial transit projects.

Madam Speaker, we're going a step further. Currently, the Building Transit Faster Act provides tools to accelerate the planning, design and construction of projects. If passed, the Fighting Delays, Building Faster Act would extend those tools to the operations and maintenance of transit projects as well. These measures are necessary to ensure we deliver game-changing transit services for thousands of Ontarians without unnecessary delays.

And while we are delivering the largest transit expansion in Canadian history, we are also strengthening the rules to keep our roads safe. For 25 years, Ontario's roads have ranked among the safest in North America. But there is always more we can do to promote road safety, and that includes drivers' licensing.

Currently, drivers from countries without reciprocal licensing framework agreements can count foreign driving experience towards a full G licence even when that experience is hard to verify. Our government intends to put a stop to this. We're cracking down on bad actors who use fraudulent documents to obtain an Ontario driver's licence. We are closing this loophole to ensure that all drivers earn their licence the right way. This means drivers from non-reciprocal jurisdictions will be required to pass both the G2 and G road tests before becoming fully licensed. Applicants with more than 12 months of verified driving experience could complete a G2 road test immediately, but they would have to wait another year before completing a G road test and becoming fully licensed. This will continue to help ensure our roads remain some of the safest in North America. And we aren't stopping there.

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Currently, everyone who holds an Ontario driver's licence or Ontario photo card must be an Ontario resident who is legally authorized to be in Canada, but unlike other provinces, Ontario does not require licensed applicants to verify their legal presence in Canada. The Fighting Delays, Building Faster Act would, if passed, align Ontario's requirements for driver's licence applications with other jurisdictions across the country so drivers must verify their residency and legal presence.

Additionally, to strengthen road safety and stop fraud, every new commercial driver's licence applicant must prove legal presence in Canada and work eligibility, and show it again at renewal. The trucking industry is a great place to start a career, and we want people to succeed, but we must do it the right way, with clear rules that protect lives on Ontario's roads.

In addition to the legislative measures in the Fighting Delays, Building Faster Act, our government intends to introduce regulatory changes to improve commercial driver safety.

Currently, anyone in Ontario with a class G driver's licence can apply for a class A licence, allowing them to

drive a commercial motor vehicle. By June 2026, we plan to introduce a mandatory waiting period before anyone with a G licence or higher can attempt a class A road test. Applicants for class A licences can complete the knowledge test and other requirements during the waiting period, but we want to ensure anyone operating a commercial motor vehicle is an experienced driver so that we maintain our standing as one of the safest jurisdictions in North America.

Last year, Ontario became one of the first provinces in Canada to also require tow truck drivers and vehicle storage operators to have a certificate to operate. This has strengthened consumer protection and guarded against fraudulent towing practices. Tow truck operators must submit to the ministry a list of the maximum fees they can charge, giving drivers confidence that towing rates are clear and fair. Our government is monitoring towing rates and preparing to take further steps to enhance consumer protection.

The Fighting Delays, Building Faster Act proposes legislative changes that would not require tow truck drivers to submit their maximum fees for a service to the province if the province has already set a maximum rate for the service through regulation. This would support the province in establishing fair prices for select services to ensure Ontarians aren't taken advantage of by tow operators. While most of the towing industry in Ontario operates in good faith, bad actors have preyed on vulnerable drivers for too long, and we are putting an end to that.

Our government was elected to a historic third-term majority, Madam Speaker. The people of our province elected our PC government to protect Ontario. This means protecting people from predatory practices in the towing industry, ensuring every driver, personal or commercial, meets strong licensing requirements and standards, and building and repairing our roads faster. And we're doing everything in our power to accelerate the delivery of public transit so we can connect more Ontarians to more jobs, housing and nearby communities.

The Fighting Delays, Building Faster Act and related measures would allow us to achieve all of these objectives and more. This bill represents our government's vision for protecting Ontario by speeding up development to build a more prosperous and competitive province. It is our next step in our government's plan to build a better Ontario for workers and families.

As I recap some of the work we will accomplish in this piece of legislation, I urge the members opposite to support this government's agenda in building Ontario, whether that is our \$70-billion investment into public transit that sees projects—whether they be in Ottawa, Hamilton, Toronto or across the greater Toronto area—be supported in their ability to build these projects faster and quicker, or whether it be on the front of highways and roads across the province. Whether it's talking about building the Bradford Bypass, whether it's about the 413 or the 401 tunnel or roads like Highways 11 and 17 in the north, these measures and this piece of legislation are

critical. Whether it be road harmonization and standardization practices or the legislative tools that we've put in place here to help speed up the process of getting these built, it is critical that the members opposite look to this piece of legislation and support this government's agenda.

I also urge them to support enhancing and strengthening our licensing requirements to keep all Ontarians safe on the roads, as we preserve our standard as one of the safest and best roads in all of North America.

With that, Madam Speaker, I thank you for the time, and I would like to turn it over to the Attorney General.

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

Hon. Doug Downey: I'm thrilled to join my colleagues Minister Flack and Minister Sarkaria, sharing the time with me today. A special thank you to my office and their offices, the dedicated people working behind the scenes in each of those offices and in particular the Ministry of the Attorney General. It's been a tremendous team effort as we work to build on our plan to protect Ontario, and I'm grateful to everyone who works so hard to help bring this new legislation forward.

Today, I'm pleased to rise in the House for second reading debate on the Fighting Delays, Building Faster Act, 2025. Before I go into the real substance of the words that I've prepared, my colleague beside me was mentioning about the Northlander. For me, this is a little bit personal. I grew up as a little kid riding on the Northlander, because my father was an engineer. He drove for CN, he drove for Via and he drove for the Northlander, so I have fond memories of seeing parts of this province that I wouldn't see otherwise. I'm really glad that we've brought this back and that we're serving the people in the north in a way that—they'd been abandoned for so long under the Liberals, Madam Speaker.

As my colleague mentioned, this bill would, if passed, spur housing, infrastructure and other projects, getting shovels in the ground faster, keeping workers on the job and building on our plan to protect Ontario. The Building Faster bundle consists of 42 initiatives that would create the conditions to accelerate the development of housing, transportation infrastructure, cutting red tape and strengthening our economy.

My focus today is on the proposed changes that would strengthen the Landlord and Tenant Board by reducing delays, balancing the rights and responsibilities of landlords and tenants, and building on our plan to strengthen Ontario's rental housing system. I also want to thank some of the many stakeholders who provided meaningful input that supported many of the proposals that I will soon speak of.

Speaker, our government has received a strong mandate from the people of Ontario. It's a mandate to build solutions, to create the conditions to speed up the development of housing and transportation infrastructure, and to protect our economy. We're rising to that challenge, and we're taking decisive action. Our goal is simple: Make the system fairer, make it faster and make it more accessible, so both landlords and tenants can get timely resolutions and bad actors no longer abuse the process.

Before I get into the proposals in the bill, I want to highlight the fact that the Landlord and Tenant Board has already made, and will continue to make, significant improvements, both in reducing its active case count and improving its timelines. Under this Premier and this government, Tribunals Ontario and the Landlord and Tenant Board have received historic levels of funding to modernize operations, improve efficiency and increase staff capacity.

We know that hearing volumes at the Landlord and Tenant Board have risen sharply year over year. Here are some numbers, Madam Speaker: In 2022, there were 49,000 hearings; in 2023, there were 76,000 hearings; and in 2024, there were 109,000 hearings. The exponential growth is staggering, and yet the backlog comes down. As of September 30 of this year, I should include, the board has already scheduled approximately 105,000 hearings just this year alone, and we're only to the end of September.

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That's why our government acted years ago to more than double the number of full-time adjudicators at the Landlord and Tenant Board. We went from 40 to over 80 full-time adjudicators. That's in addition to the part-time adjudicators, and I'll share those numbers in a moment.

We supported the Landlord and Tenant Board by a critical \$6.5-million investment that delivered those 40 more full-time adjudicators. We did this in early 2023, and then we embarked upon recruitment and then training. Those members are now fully doing hearings. We have a full complement, and things are really clicking along. This is the largest expansion in the board's complement of full-time positions in the Landlord and Tenant Board's history. To date, there are almost 80 appointed full-time adjudicators in addition to the 54 part-time adjudicators serving the people of Ontario every single day.

Thanks to our government's key investments in one of the most fundamental parts of Ontario's housing system and despite significant increases to application intake, the Landlord and Tenant Board resolved approximately 106,000 cases last year, the highest number of resolved cases in the history of the board. The board reduced its caseload from 55,000 to below 37,000 since its peak in 2023. We'll never get to zero because there's always a case count. Steady state is about 30,000. We are almost back to balance. We are making great strides.

It's not just numbers that we're talking about. For every case that's heard, it's thousands of people across the province—landlords and tenants—receiving faster, fairer access to justice and being able to have security in how they move forward.

Our plan to modernize the system and make timely investments is driving meaningful change. This legislation builds on that progress to make Ontario's housing system even stronger and more responsive. But we also know there is more work to do to strengthen the Landlord and Tenant Board. We've heard from landlords that the current process for evicting a tenant on legally permitted grounds under the Residential Tenancies Act—for instance, evict-

ing the tenant for not paying their rent—is just too long and can cause significant financial strain. Madam Speaker, as you know, when a tenant doesn't pay, it's the landlord's wallet that gets emptied, while the tenant continues to live in the property.

Of course, the tenants have concerns. Tenants experience extended wait times for having their applications heard for things like maintenance complaints or illegal rent charges, which can lead to drawn-out periods of time where the tenant is living in poor conditions or even overpaying rent as they wait for their hearing.

Hearing feedback from both sides helped us see that more needs to be done. That is why we are continuing our efforts to reduce delays at the Landlord and Tenant Board. One change we're proposing is something we really think will help speed things up. If passed, this would limit the situations where a final decision or order that has been made by the Landlord and Tenant Board after hearing all parties can be reviewed. This is the current situation: As it stands right now, the Landlord and Tenant Board have the discretion to review a final order even if that order contains a serious mistake or if a party to the case was not able to participate in the hearing.

I want to note, when files are reopened for review, they have the potential to delay decisions by an additional four to nine weeks. This can lead to bad actors abusing the system by requesting a review to purposely delay the enforcement of orders. This adds to the backlog. This is not acceptable. We are now proposing changes that would provide the Attorney General's office with the authority to limit, through public regulation, the situations where a final decision or Landlord and Tenant Board order can be reviewed. This would lead to faster dispute resolutions, fewer delays, less churning, which would reduce financial hardships for both landlords and tenants and address tenant applications. This is just common sense, Madam Speaker.

Making these changes would significantly help to reduce the backlog of active cases before the Landlord and Tenant Board. Delays at the board are one of the main concerns raised by landlords. Our proposed changes would shorten the time it takes to resolve applications related to collecting rent, as well as evicting tenants for non-payment. These account for over 50% of the LTB applications. Just imagine how much time we could free up if we could reduce this volume.

Another initiative we're putting forward would shorten the time a landlord or tenant has to request a review of a Landlord and Tenant Board decision from 30 days to 15 days. If the time period for requesting a review is shortened, it would lead to faster resolutions as well as reducing the chance that either party incurs financial losses.

Speaker, I want to emphasize that this proposed short time frame could still be extended by the Landlord and Tenant Board in certain instances. For example, if one of the parties involved was to be sick or hospitalized, we would leave that open to the Landlord and Tenant Board to address.

I want to touch now on the process around evictions, because this isn't just what happens at the board; it's what happens before the board and after the board.

Evictions ordered by the Landlord and Tenant Board are filed with the sheriff for enforcement. This is after a hearing; after an order has been issued, then it's filed with the sheriff's office. In Ontario, the duties of the sheriff are performed by public servants, known as enforcement officers. They're employed through my ministry, the Ministry of the Attorney General, through the court services division.

Since the 2019-20 fiscal year, enforcement officers across Ontario have seen a 14% increase in filings of LTB orders. Enforcement offices are trying to keep up and maintain a two- to three-week turnaround to deal with evictions. However, some offices in the province are experiencing delays. In response, we are proposing that we add up to eight temporary enforcement staff to address delays and ensure timely enforcement of eviction orders. With these measures, we are confident that Tribunals Ontario and the LTB will continue to make significant progress addressing tenant applications and backlog.

Now to put that in context, Madam Speaker, the added eight new full-time sheriffs are in addition to a current complement of 49. That's about a 17%, 18% increase, which is proportionate with the number of orders that we're seeing filed, to allow them to meet a service standard for the customers of the Landlord and Tenant Board. We propose to make that flexible so that we can deal in geographic areas that have greater need than others.

I've heard from social service housing providers, the northern DSABs. I've heard from sheriffs, not directly but through offices, in different parts of the province, who are going through turnover of sheriffs who have experience, and where it's a little bit clunky, we can add some reinforcements and make sure that our customers and Ontarians are getting the service that they're paying for and that they expect.

Now, our government is also proposing changes to the Residential Tenancies Act. Right now, a landlord can evict a tenant if the landlord, in good faith, needs the rental unit for their relative such as their spouse, child or parent, or if a caregiver needs to move in for at least a year. For this to happen, the landlord has to compensate the tenant by paying the tenant a month's rent or offering them another rental unit that is deemed acceptable to the tenant. The proposed change would remove the requirement, but only if the landlord provides 120 or more days' notice—four months or more—to the tenant. If the landlord provides less than 120 days' notice, then the current compensation requirements would still apply.

Another proposed change could help the Landlord and Tenant Board resolve disputes more quickly, including cases involving the non-payment or persistent late payment of rent. This includes removing a tenant's ability to raise new issues at a hearing related to non-payment of rent, unless they've given seven days notice in advance of the hearing and have paid at least 50% of the rent that the landlords claim is owed.

We are proposing a change that would allow the government to make regulations to clarify when a tenant who, time and time again, has failed to pay their rent when it's due—or their monthly housing charges, if they live in a non-profit housing co-op—can be evicted. This change could help the LTB by reducing the need for interpretation when determining what situations actually qualify as “persistent late payment” of rent.

Now, Madam Speaker, we read in the papers a lot—and sometimes the reporters report on one side of the issue and sometimes they report on the other, where they'll write about a landlord who is owed an extreme amount of money because the tenant is not paying the money and not co-operating in terms of getting to the hearing, and it drags on and on and on. And we're not talking \$2,000 or \$5,000. There are stories of landlords who are out \$30,000 and \$40,000 and \$50,000 because these professional bad actors are causing grief in the housing market.

1650

One of the things that I ask my colleagues—when I ask other people who aren't necessarily renting or aren't necessarily landlords—I say, “Would you buy a property and be a landlord?” I think that's the test. Until we get to “yes” by all members, they inherently know that there is a challenge here. We have to deal with that challenge. By putting in this rule that 50% of the outstanding rent needs to be on the table, that will help sharpen the senses of everybody and help deal with delay and help deal with fairness.

Speaker, right now, when a tenant doesn't pay their rent on time, the landlord can issue an N4 notice of eviction on the day after that rent is due. The notice basically tells the tenant they have 14 days to pay their rent or the landlord can file an application with the LTB to move to evict them and collect the money owed.

Our government is also proposing to reduce the amount of notice a landlord or co-op is required to give a tenant from 14 days to seven days. Again, this could help speed up processes for eviction and collecting money owed. This will tighten the system. Now, if the tenant pays the money within that period, then it makes no difference.

But when you look at the ecosystem and you look at the timeline of how the system is working, it's clunky, it's long and it's serving nobody's interest, except for the people who aren't playing by the rules, paying their rent and doing their part. With rights go responsibilities, Madam Speaker, so we are tightening up the system to make sure that it's functioning in an optimal way.

Some jurisdictions don't have seven days; they have zero days. You can move right away. So, seven days is fair for something as important as your housing to make sure that you're paying attention and reacting to the obligations that you have under that lease.

On the subject of notices, the Landlord and Tenant Board currently has the power to determine what is in these notices, including the N4 and other notices of tenancy termination. The changes we are proposing would give the government authority to simplify the forms to make them easier to understand. For example, by using

language that stresses the seriousness of the eviction notice, tenants may be encouraged to address their non-payment of rent. Hopefully, this will lead to fewer eviction applications filed with the Landlord and Tenant Board, which would ultimately reduce the number of active cases.

Madam Speaker, a movement towards plain language and a movement towards proper notice is something that I think we can all agree on. It's really important that we have, in the hands of those who are interacting with the system, forms that they can understand and forms that bring to their attention the importance of the process and what is happening.

Now, I may come back to some Landlord and Tenant Board pieces, and I know my focus has been in this area so far in my speech, but I would be remiss if I didn't mention the technical changes we are also proposing in this bill, in Bill 60, for the Construction Act that affect holdback payments.

Let me explain what a holdback is: A holdback is 10% of the value of payments on a construction project, set aside by the payer or owner to protect against potential liens from subcontractors or material suppliers in case they don't get paid by the contractor or subcontractor above them in the construction pyramid. Simply put, the owner will hold back 10% in case the general contractor doesn't pay the subs. There's at least a pool of money to work with there.

I see my friend the MPP from Simcoe–Grey, a former practising lawyer and solicitor, who would have dealt in this area many, many times for people building their own homes or for companies building a warehouse or otherwise. It's a very commonly known area.

Holdbacks have traditionally been paid out once a project is substantially complete; that's a term of art in law. In 2024, a new requirement for the annual release of holdbacks was added to the Construction Act, but it's not yet in force. The new requirement states that subject to any registered liens, owners will pay out holdbacks to contractors on each anniversary date of a multi-year construction project, instead of at the end of a project. Contractors will then have two weeks to pay subcontractors, and two weeks later payments will continue to cascade down.

These changes were introduced to promote better cash flow from project owners to contractors, subcontractors and trades on multi-year construction projects.

We are now proposing some technical adjustments to the Construction Act so that liens would continue to not expire until the end of a construction project, when it's mostly complete, instead of annually. In this way, contractors and subcontractors can decide to wait until a later year to register a lien. This would help ensure more timely payments on long-term projects, while helping reduce cash-flow stress and payment-related disputes.

The government would also be able to make regulations exempting certain alternate financing and procurement arrangements, commonly known as P3s, from annual release of holdback. To be clear, this authority would be used only for some pre-existing projects where the gov-

ernment has already negotiated private sector agreements that require holdback to be paid out early, before the project is completed.

This is an area of technical expertise. I would really like to thank Duncan Glaholt, who was the lead, a private industry lawyer who was well respected by all; and Glenn Ackerley, who has been a phenomenal resource for government in navigating a very technical, high-stakes area.

I can tell you, Madam Speaker, that the construction bar, as they're known, is thrilled with the movement that we've made to update the act and to tweak the act to get it just right.

I'd also be remiss if I didn't mention Anthony Galea in my office. He has been the point person on the policy side, in a very, very technical area. He has worked very closely with Duncan, Mr. Ackerley, and others to understand how we do this and to get it just right.

This has been a multi-year project. And I'm just absolutely thrilled that we're landing it in this bill—and the movement that we've made to update the act and to tweak the act and to get it just right. I'm just absolutely thrilled that we're landing it in this bill and getting so much of it done. We have heard no negatives from any of the industry. The extremely wide consultation done by Messrs. Glaholt and Ackerley really got us to a good place today.

Everything I've outlined today demonstrates what's possible when we collaborate across government.

If passed, the initiatives in this legislation will strengthen Ontario's rental housing system, stop bad actors from abusing the process, and reduce backlogs at the Landlord and Tenant Board.

We're in the solutions business. These measures are practical, balanced, and designed to help both landlords and tenants.

I look forward to engaging further with the people of Ontario and our valued partners on this very important legislation.

I couldn't say enough about the collaborative work getting to this point, to make sure that we are creating real solutions in very difficult times, as my colleague the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing has talked about. In these uncertain times and how it's affecting the building industry—this is the time for us to bring these matters forward, to expedite and turbocharge the rules, to make sure that we're incentivizing the right behaviour, to make sure that we're holding people accountable, to make sure that we're putting practical solutions on the table to get us to the right spot.

I'd also like to thank my colleague the Minister of Transportation—I know we can't call them by name.

But it's not just us—it's all of the people who have given input into all of these matters. I look forward to more debate as we go through them. Debate is healthy, and I look forward to making sure that we land these for everybody's sake.

Thank you. Merci. Meegwetch.

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

MPP Catherine McKenney: My question is to the housing minister, on development charges and their impact on housing prices and housing affordability. In particular, I'll leave affordability for municipalities aside for now.

I'm going to focus on the city of Ottawa, because I'm quite familiar with it, of course. In the city of Ottawa, an average home price is approximately \$670,000. Inside and outside the greenbelt, it's a little bit different in how it's calculated there, but to be generous, the average development charge per unit is maybe \$40,000. If you take \$670,000 and subtract \$40,000, it's \$630,000.

Are you suggesting that those savings will be passed along to the buyer, to the purchaser; that that developer will say, "Do you know what? I was going to have to sell you this home for \$670,000. Lucky for you, I got a break, say, on half of the development charges. So I'm going to sell it for \$650,000"? I just wonder if you feel that that—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.
1700

Hon. Rob Flack: Thank you for the question. It's a very good question, actually.

When you take a look at development charges right across the province, from Ottawa—or even in Toronto here.

Mississauga cut their development charges in half and deferred them to create—and I compliment Mayor Parrish for that—to get shovels in the ground, and we're seeing great starts because of it.

The big idea we're floating here or we're going to build on is, in Peel, and, I'm hoping, Ottawa—I've talked to your mayor, Mayor Sutcliffe, and others, to accelerate this throughout the province. There's only one taxpayer. So if we keep adding on these development charges year after year after year, the problem is, we reach unaffordability. Add the HST, add the studies, add the changes to the building code—it all adds up. So we need to reduce those costs. Using a municipal service corporation can amortize those costs out over decades—rather than the first-time homebuyer. What it does is it amortizes it over decades, and it reduces the price of a home. That's a lot of money.

I also asked the federal government to consider reducing their HST costs, as they promised in the election.

When you add all these things up, affordability comes into play.

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

Mr. Brian Saunderson: My question is also to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. It does pick up on that development charges point.

We've seen a lot of work from this government, on this side of the House, in terms of trying to help municipalities offset the pinch point of critical infrastructure, whether it be water and waste water services—we've seen the HEWSF funding, the health services funding, and infrastructure generally, and it has exceeded \$3 billion that

we're putting out. And this issue with the municipal service delivery corporation can help change that landscape dramatically.

My question to the minister is, in addition to lowering development charges by taking these extremely costly projects off the municipal table, how will these municipal service delivery corporations help to pay for the critical infrastructure, to unlock the housing that we so critically need?

Hon. Rob Flack: Your question does complement the member from Ottawa Centre, as well.

Let's take an example: When you talk to the Ontario Sewer and Watermain Construction Association, they estimate that in this province over the next 10 to 20 years, we're going to require over \$200 billion in infrastructure, water, waste water and roads, to replace aging infrastructure, and new growth—\$200 billion to \$250 billion. Where's the money going to come from? Are we going to raise taxes? Municipalities don't want to. The province doesn't want to. The federal government doesn't want to. So we're looking at the municipal service corporation. Peel is the pilot, and if that works—and it will work—we believe we can expand that model throughout the province, not only for larger centres, but rural communities, working with communal water systems and the like.

At the end of the day, what we're really trying to accomplish is getting the price down, amortizing those costs over a period of time. And I know the member and I are working very hard to get that job done through this bill.

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

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: I believe that everyone in this House will recognize and probably agree that Ontarians deserve an honest answer from their government. This morning, what we heard from the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, when asked about whether or not he could answer in a straightforward yes-or-no manner whether or not this government intends to keep rent control and not eliminate the security of tenure—the minister dodged the question. So I'm going to give him one more chance, while he's here in the chamber today.

We all would like to know whether or not this government intends to ensure that they never attack housing and undermine housing for Ontarians, by keeping rent control and making sure that tenants have access to the same security of their housing that we would expect for massive profits for big corporate landlords.

Hon. Rob Flack: I think if the member checks the record, I avoided no such question at all.

Nothing in this bill talks about rent control that I can see, but fill your boots, and if you see it, let me know.

What I do know with respect to rent in this province—if you want to get the cost of rent down, we need better supply. And that's just what our government has been doing—to help create the conditions to get supply built. Some 52,000 new units over the last three years; some 17,000 new starts in the first nine months—up 38%. Rents are coming down.

This bill complements renters—always has through Bill 17, always will through Bill 60. I'm convinced this is the way to go.

And again, she needs to check the record.

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

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: Earlier in the debate, the Minister of Transportation talked about the gridlock in Toronto, and certainly, as a 30-plus year resident of Toronto, I can attest to that.

In fact, I'm old enough—I'm not sure if he's old enough—to remember when the previous Conservative government—the previous, previous one, under Mike Harris—filled in the Eglinton West subway. I know that that subway, had it been completed, would have absolutely helped gridlock, not just along Eglinton West, but in my riding.

I want to know if the minister will talk about the Eglinton Crosstown again. The previous Liberal government started it. This government hasn't been able to finish it. We keep hearing story after story about the reason for the delay. Will he tell us today when the Eglinton Crosstown will open?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: For 15 years, the previous Liberal government had an opportunity to build transit in this province, and guess what? Not a single project, in 15 years, was accomplished by the members opposite from the Liberal Party. That's a shame.

Thankfully, we've got a Premier who has put the shovels in the ground on \$70 billion worth of transit projects in this province.

The Ontario Line, the Scarborough subway extension—the Liberal Party ignored the people of Scarborough year after year after every year, as they raised their voices for more public transit.

It was this Premier who delivered the Eglinton West extension that is going to bring almost 30,000-plus people within walking distance.

That is the record of this government—getting shovels in the ground.

Not a single project for 15 years under the Liberals.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): We have time for one very quick question and answer.

Mr. Joseph Racinsky: Thank you, Ministers, for your presentation and bringing forward this incredible piece of legislation.

My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing regarding municipal service corporations.

There's a 9,000-home development in my riding called Vision Georgetown, which was approved by Halton Hills council in 2009. But the water and waste water services required for that development didn't arrive at the development until 2024. That's 15 years later.

My question to the minister is, how will municipal service corporations fight delays like this in the region of Peel?

Hon. Rob Flack: Thank you for the member's question. I'll gladly talk about the municipal service corporations as much as we can, because it really is a great

opportunity for municipalities and homeowners alike throughout this province.

The other thing we could add in there are communal water systems. We can add that to our bag of opportunity, because that will help—

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

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: It's always a privilege to rise in this house and to speak on behalf of the great people of Toronto Centre.

Today, we are debating a new government bill that was just introduced on Thursday, just a few days ago: Bill 60, the so-called Fighting Delays, Building Faster Act.

Before I dive into the bill with its 12 schedules—some can proceed, I think, without too much debate, but there are others that really require more drilling down—I want to start by saying that we need to see the existential threat that this Premier placed tenants under this weekend. We need to identify it for what it was, and that was and still is an existential threat.

The Premier owes the people of Ontario an apology for threatening their housing by threatening the scrapping of the security of tenure and effectively ending rent control as we know it in Ontario.

I would like to see the Premier's inbox. I had a difficult time managing my own because it was packed, absolutely packed with tenants who were telling me about the security of tenure.

1710

Speaker, I should say that I'm going to be sharing my time with the good member for Ottawa Centre.

There are so many tenants right now who are struggling in Ontario. When the government put forward a briefing note that highlighted how they were going to go further to make life more unaffordable for Ontario renters, of course people were alarmed. I received over, I think, 3,000 emails alone in just three days. I would imagine that the Premier and the government members—especially the cabinet members—would have received comparable numbers, if not more.

The Premier then walked back—over the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing—on the briefing note suggestion that they were going to go into consultation on this particular egregious piece around erosion of rent control. Then he sent out a tweet, a social post on Sunday evening, and said, “No, no. We're not going to do anything like that right now.”

I just want to highlight that this government has a history of walking back on horrible legislation, whether it's the greenbelt or Bill 28—if you will recall, in 2022, that was an attack on education workers' constitutional rights. The government was going to impose an agreement upon them, essentially taking away their collective bargaining rights and the right to strike. The government pushed that bill through in three days, and then they had to come back in 11 days and say, “Oops. We made a mistake. We're not going to pass it. We're going to repeal it altogether.”

So I don't think the government has a lot of credibility, when it comes to putting forward legislation that hasn't been well thought out—or they thought that they could get away with it and then they had to backtrack.

I just gave the Minister of Housing an opportunity to clarify his position once again, because this morning the minister said that he didn't say that he would not proceed for now. He just said, "It's not in the bill."

Sure, it's not exactly laid out in the bill, but if you put it in the briefing note and you announce to the world that you're going to go to consultations and have conversations with the public about it, then you had intentions to move it forward. So I'm going to venture out and say that this government is probably going to bring it back.

We are going to be on high alert, because people in Ontario, especially renters, are struggling around the cost of housing. We are not going to be fooled. They certainly will not be fooled.

The bill has 12 schedules, and I am just going to quickly go through a couple of pieces that I think need to be highlighted.

Schedule 4, where the bill is specifically talking about transit—right now, the bill is talking about the creation of a new transit station development charge, which is odd, coming from a government that claims housing is not being built because municipal development charges are simply too high. It is quite hypocritical for the government to be limiting municipalities' ability to use development charges to pay for municipal infrastructure while obligating those same municipalities to level new development charges to pay for provincial infrastructure.

Let us be reminded that it is this government that quietly stopped funding the GO stations in 2018. That was reported in the *Trillium*. As we know, local municipalities are now required to fundraise for their own GO stations. Why are we calling them GO stations? We just name them after local municipalities.

Transit station charges are new development charges that were enabled in Bill 133 in 2023 and regulations that came forward in 2025. Those charges are intended to allow municipalities to fundraise for GO stations.

Once again, everything points to the fact that this government is downloading onto municipalities and asking them to do so much more, including building regional transit.

I'm just going to highlight that in a case in Toronto, the Metrolinx transit-oriented communities are based on that same premise, yet recently we've seen the collapse around Park Lawn and Mimico. Transit-oriented developments in communities have now been called into question because that scheme of asking the local municipalities to fundraise for transit is simply not working.

I'm going to move to schedule 10, around the Planning Act. All ministerial decisions under this act, and not just municipal zoning orders, no longer need to be consistent with the provincial policy statements. The government is essentially exempting themselves from following local planning rules under the provincial policy statement. That means the sustainable neighbourhoods—the neighbour-

hoods that allow us to have consultation; to build out better, more inclusive dynamic neighbourhoods that are prosperous—the government is saying those rules don't apply to them.

At the same time, we've seen them triple down on MZOs. We haven't had a conversation about MZOs since the beginning of this new session but let us be on high alert that that's what the minister is now proposing will happen, that these new ministerial zoning orders will no longer be considered regulations and they don't need to be part of any of the Legislation Act, including its rules for filing and publication. MZOs will still be published on a government website; however, the timeline for the publication is not specified. What we have here is a bit of mystery, and the government is giving themselves far more power and overreach into how municipalities are going to grow.

Schedule 12 talks about the Residential Tenancies Act. This is the piece that's actually causing a lot of concern. We heard the municipal affairs and housing minister talk about all the things that will happen in developing supply. And then we heard the Attorney General speak about all the good things that are now going to take place at the Landlord and Tenant Board and how everything is going to be sped up. What's going to be sped up in Ontario are evictions. What's going to happen with these changes that we're seeing through Bill 60 is the silencing of tenants.

I'm curious to know, Speaker: Who on earth did this government consult on the Residential Tenancies Act, as well as any changes prescribed to the Landlord and Tenant Board? Because from what I see, it is very heavily favouring big corporate landlords and doing very little to protect renters, who are really the workers of Ontario and let us never forget that. I've had experiences myself as a renter. I know how difficult it is to make sure that you can make the monthly rent. And I will also say, Speaker, that my family has been renters for a long, long time, for decades in Canada, before my mom and dad were able to scrape by, put together a small amount of money and place a deposit on a very modest, rundown house.

That is the story of so many people. Yet the options of home ownership, as we know, are slipping away every single day, faster than anybody can catch them. There are going to be more Ontarians who are going to be renters, including Ontarians who are children of the folks who are here in the Legislature. So any time you put forward legislation that's damaging to tenants, that is going to disadvantage tenants, guess what? You're disadvantaging your children and your grandchildren. Because that's what's happened as they're stuck in mom and dad's basement.

I want to talk about the fact that the foundations to housing in Ontario and access to housing in Ontario is slipping away so fast. Everybody deserves access to safe, affordable, stable housing, but that foundation is quickly cracking, and one of the most powerful tools we have that we can use to protect it is rent control. Rent control is not just an economic policy; it is literally a lifeline. It ensures that tenants aren't priced out of their communities, that families can plan their futures and that young people can

imagine what life would look like in the cities and towns where they grew up.

It's about making sure that Ontario remains livable for people who make this province work. That's why I said renters are workers. They're nurses, they're teachers, they're service workers, they're newcomers, they're seniors—everybody who is working so hard to contribute, including the students in the next generation that are giving up hope. Because not only can they not find a job, as we know that the crisis sits and youth employment numbers are so high, they can't find a home. And the government is now proposing legislation that's going to make it harder for them to keep their home as a tenant.

1720

For decades, rent control has helped keep housing within reach, but in recent years, these protections have been weakened and removed. In 2018, this government lifted rent control on most new buildings, giving developers a free pass to raise rents without limits. Imagine: raising rents without limits. This government did it. Since then, tenants have been facing double-digit increases year after year. And I have heard those stories, Speaker, when I was canvassing my own community, when tenants would come to the door and they told me that they have faced 20%, 30% and 40% rent hikes. Can anybody here tell me whether or not they can pay their mortgage if all of a sudden it went up 20%, 30% or 40%? You would say no. You would protect yourself, but you won't protect tenants—shame.

This is not a healthy housing market. It's a crisis. Nearly half of Ontario renters are spending more than 30% of their income on rent. This is the official definition of unaffordability. This government has stopped talking about affordable housing. What they talk about is something called attainable housing. Well, guess what? It's not attainable; it's not affordable. You aren't bringing forward the solutions that Ontarians need.

Rent control, we know, restores balance to communities. It helps prevent unfair and sudden rent hikes, curbs displacement and it gives tenants the opportunity to build their lives and raise their families. Have a heart.

We are talking about making sure that we can keep our province prosperous, and we can't do that without a workforce that lives here and that wants to live here and that can afford to live here. We know that these are such critical conversations, and I really wish that this government would give tenants a fair hearing because that needs to be considered. This government talks about workers. Well, guess what? Workers are tenants, and the majority of workers are tenants.

This government has gone further to claim that rent control discourages new construction, but the evidence shows exactly the opposite. Ontario built plenty of rental housing when rent control existed. What drives construction is public investment, strong planning, political will—not giving landlords a blank cheque by removing rent control. You're going to drive the workforce out of Ontario. And if we want Ontario to be livable not just for the wealthy but for everyone else, then what we have to do

is strengthen rent control, close the loopholes and tie it exactly to the unit and not just the tenant.

Every home should be free from exploitation no matter when it was built. And because we know that a home is not a Louis Vuitton bag—it's not a luxury, Speaker; it's a human necessity. We know it's a human right, and without rent control, you won't have that essential necessity, the shelter and housing that we all need in order for us to live a life that's full of dignity.

Ontario is blessed with many tenant organizations, and I have had a chance over my public life and career to work with some of the very best, whether it's ACORN or ACTO—the Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario. They spent the weekend, along with many others, including the York South–Weston Tenant Union, sounding the alarm. And the reason why the Minister of Housing sent out a Sunday night tweet saying, “Not now”—something about “balancing the market”—is because the tenants rose up. And the tenants will continue to rise up against Bill 60 because it is horrible, cruel legislation that will lead to mass human suffering. It's a humanitarian disaster in the making as you plan to speed up evictions and remove the rights of tenants at the Landlord and Tenant Board.

What we know is that the Landlord and Tenant Board has been broken by this government. Yes, it was never perfect under the Liberals. You walked into a situation in 2018 where the backlog was sitting at 20,000, and then you made it significantly worse by letting those numbers soar, soar, soar up to over 54,000. And now, you're trying to bring it back down to 37,000. I heard earlier that the Attorney General felt that a 30,000-case backlog was a good floating rate. In what world is a 30,000-case backlog at the tribunal system a good floating rate? That's absolutely ludicrous, because people are still waiting years for justice, and we know that the justice system—Speaker, you know this as a solicitor—has to work.

Bill 60 now proposes a number of reforms that are supposed to address the delays at the Landlord and Tenant Board. These are changes that will undermine fundamental tenant protections and create a false narrative that tenant rights are the reasons for the LTB delays. Somehow, it's the tenants' fault that the LTB is broken, mismanaged, underfunded.

The proposed changes would cut back on the ability of tenants to challenge an unjust eviction order with only 15 days to ask for a review of an LTB order. In addition, the tenants will have only seven days now, instead of 14 days, to pay their rent before the landlord can apply to the LTB for the non-payment, which of course, as we know, is way too fast. All of this is leading to the conditions that will make it nearly impossible for tenants to keep their housing. All of this is actually eroding the human rights and the legal rights of tenants in Ontario. These changes will only go further to restrict tenants' access to justice, and we know that this will lead to further evictions and further displacement.

Bill 60 shows us a disregard for eviction prevention and it totally ignores the housing crisis. Bill 60 talks about the Residential Tenancies Act, speaks about planning, even

makes big mention here about the Landlord and Tenant Board, but this is not a housing strategy, and there is nothing in here about increasing supply, despite the government's talk that supply will be increased.

What we do know is that Ontario is experiencing a homelessness crisis. As we know, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario have highlighted that, right now, over 81,500 people in Ontario are homeless. That's larger than most of the towns in Ontario, and it's worse because it's growing. The number has now increased 25% since 2022. My goodness, why are we not talking about housing and how to build more housing as opposed to the plan that this government has put forward to evict people faster into further homelessness?

The homelessness crisis extends far beyond urban centres, and I've learned this by speaking to members here who come from the north, who live in rural communities. I've heard from those members, including government members, about how high the homelessness rate is in their own community, and I've heard as high as 50%. Half the town, half the village is homeless. How is that not a crisis?

Undermining the security of tenure, as this government proposed, is only going to facilitate faster evictions. And with the growing threat of job losses due to tariffs, workers are now facing more hardship than ever before. The changes that this government has put forward is simply going to speed up evictions as we know it.

I wanted to share a few stories, because I think stories from our residents are important. As I mentioned, my inbox was full of these stories this weekend, and I want to share the stories of people who wrote to explain what they were going through and what they have been going through under this broken system.

One of those stories is from a renter by the name of Juan Jay, who lives in Toronto Centre, and he's writing this letter from his rent-controlled apartment that he's been renting since 2021. He says, "I first heard about Bill 60 last night at" my "friend's place in the Beaches. We are scared. Some of us are from small towns in Ontario, some of us grew up in the suburbs of the GTA and some of us grew up right here in Toronto in some of the 'roughest' neighbourhoods. Collectively, we've been renting in Ontario for over five decades.

1730

"Most of us will never own. I'm the only person in this friend group who has a glimmer of that possibility. In large part that is because I am privileged enough to have inherited some family support. The other part is that I have been able to save only because I live in a rent-controlled unit. However, it hasn't been easy or without threats from my landlord."

From the first year in this unit, "my landlord has been trying to get me out or raise my rent exorbitantly. The first year it was an attempt to raise my rent by 30% because 'the market had changed'—we were coming out of the pandemic dip—as well as pushing me to sign a brand new ... lease at a new price instead of letting things go month to month.

"It was clear that my landlord and her property manager were banking on me not knowing my rights as a tenant.

Then came the incessant questions about how long I planned on staying in the unit."

For another year, they asked for more rent, and they kept trying to raise the rent above the provincial guidelines. And now, four months later, after all of this, they receive an N12. And now they've been fighting this N12 since April of last year. They've hired a lawyer, this tenant has, and he's had to learn all about the Residential Tenancies Act and N12s—more than he's ever needed to know before. He has no doubt that his landlord is one of the greediest landlords who will benefit from this bill. And he is confident that, should this bill pass, he's going to be evicted as soon as possible.

Let me share with you a story by a constituent whose name is Moe. He texted this over. This tenant has lived in a mixed-use building with 10 units and has been refusing an illegal rent increase. And when he does that, the landlord retaliates with leaks and flooding and harassment: no gas, no heat in January. The tenant was forced to accept a "cash for keys" deal that was never paid out as required by law.

They filed some paperwork at the LTB. The Landlord and Tenant Board doesn't hear it for two years. The Landlord and Tenant Board called it an adjudicated case conference, not an actual hearing, so there was no real outcome. Then a clerical error took place at the LTB, and the case got tossed, and the tenants had to fight just to be heard.

Speaker, I can go on because there are so many of these types of stories. And if I was to choose one more—I'm going to share this one very quickly. This is Ryan's story:

"I am a student on ODSP who can barely afford rent, and by passing this bill, this will create more systematic barriers of obtaining housing security for tenants like me. While I understand the urgent need for more housing in Ontario, Bill 60 takes the wrong approach. By cutting environmental and community oversight, reducing the role of municipalities in development decisions, and prioritizing developer and landlords' interests over public accountability, this legislation fails to ensure that the housing being built is affordable, sustainable and accessible to the people who need it most."

"Ontario's housing crisis," says Ryan, "is not just a problem of supply. It's a problem of affordability. Without stronger rent control law, new construction will not solve the crisis that is faced by renters across the province because they are being priced out of their homes. The government's exemption of post-2018 buildings from rent control" has now forced the situation even further. Rents have skyrocketed, not come down, forcing Ontarians to constantly live in housing insecurity with the threat of displacement.

Ryan says, "If the government truly wants to make housing more attainable, it must focus on protecting tenants by:

- reinstating comprehensive rent control on all rental units, regardless of when they were built;

- strengthening enforcement against illegal evictions and renovations;

“—expanding funding for non-profit, co-operative, and public housing initiatives; and

“—ensuring that new development prioritizes affordable housing, not just market-rate or luxury projects.”

Ryan wants this House to know that Bill 60 is a missed opportunity to address the root causes of the housing crisis. Ryan is calling on all of us to oppose Bill 60 and to advocate for legislation that guarantees affordability, stability and dignity for renters across Ontario, and that includes renters who are living in the ridings of government members.

I want to appeal to those renters right now: I know you're scared because you've contacted me, the downtown MPP in Toronto Centre. I'm hearing from people in communities I don't represent because they're saying that their government members are backing this legislation that they're so scared of, and they can't get through to their government members. They don't understand why, as renters, they're not seen in those communities.

As we are facing what will be some pretty hard economic challenges, Speaker—because it's already tough. It's already tough if you haven't seen wage increases. It's already tough when the grocery bills continue to rise, the fuel costs continue to rise and the housing costs continue to rise. Those renters in those communities living in government ridings are so scared. They want the government members to know that they should represent them as well, to recognize how hard it is to make rent and recognize their struggle. For all the talk about the government supporting workers, those renters in their communities have asked this government to recognize those workers who are working two jobs, doing everything they can to pull it together to make ends meet—those renters are really crushed under this housing crisis.

They want to know why their government, why their MPP and their government members, would put forward legislation that could land them in the path of eviction, of homelessness, when they're fighting so hard, fighting tooth and nail, to keep their housing. They want to know why the government would be so heartless to even consider removing the one tool in housing that will give them predictable, affordable rent.

This is a serious issue that we need to grasp without any further delay.

I'm going to conclude my remarks and thank all the people who have taken their weekend to call and fill my phone box and my inbox. I want to thank them for reaching out to us, and I want to thank them for keeping up the fight, because we know that despite what the government has said around Bill 60, how it's not going to be harmful and how it's going to be good for everyone—they know differently, and they're coming. They're coming to committee, they're coming to this House, and they'll be coming to your offices. I welcome that conversation. Thank you.

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

I recognize the member from Ottawa Centre.

MPP Catherine McKenney: It is hard to know where to start in addressing this bill. On Thursday, when this government introduced it, my email and phone blew up. I can tell you that I've actually never had such a strong reaction to a proposal by this government, and that is saying something. There were words like “vindictive,” “frightening,” “attack on tenants,” “minister of evictions.”

If enacted, Bill 60 spells the end of rent control and is an express lane to homelessness.

Before I go on, I know that you all received emails from people across the province desperate for you to reconsider, but I want to read one email in particular that I received from a landlord in Ottawa. She says:

“I am writing to you as a landlord to oppose Bill 60 currently proposed by Doug Ford's government.

“I cannot fully express to you the fear I feel for my friends and family who are renters in light of this bill. Specifically, the provisions that would allow landlords to end tenancy once a lease is up.

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“I am a homeowner of a condo in Centretown but currently rent out my place and live with my partner in Barrhaven.

“As a landlord, I do not need further government help. The tax code already favours landlords like myself, allowing them to deduct mortgage interest, condo fees and all kinds of other expenses from their taxes.

“The people who need help are people like my friends and family who rent”—I didn't write this; this was somebody else who wrote this—“who felt, and I quote, ‘a wave of fear radiate through their body’ at the thought of this bill.

“This bill will make people homeless.

“I was a renter for 10-plus years, and the main reason I was able to save for my own place was because I lived in a month-to-month rental at a stable price for years.

“Landlords like myself do not need a further break.

“Housing is a right. Being a landlord is not.

“It is a business decision. And I find Doug Ford's government's continual desire to put the wants of business over the needs of working people disgusting.

“I truly hope that you and your offices will oppose this bill and work to convince your Conservative Party colleagues to do the same.

“Thank you.”

The reason I read that out is because I do want to make a distinction, before I go on, between what we refer to as the mom-and-pop landlord and the large corporate landlord. We all know that well over 80,000 people are homeless in Ontario today. According to the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, this 80,000 is the population of Peterborough. The population of Peterborough in this province is without housing. They're living in shelters. They have no place to go tonight. They're living outside.

That number is expected to grow to 300,000 in a decade without serious interventions in non-profit and affordable housing. If this government moves ahead with abandoning

rent control, we will be there much sooner than a decade. Today, there is not one Ontario city where a minimum wage worker can afford a one-bedroom home—not one—let alone a two-bedroom apartment if they're a single parent, a single mom, who is actually the most likely type of household in housing need.

Ontario is the province with the highest rate of core housing need, where people pay more than they can to afford rent, which has actually increased considerably since you came to power. In 2018, that number was 19%; today, 29% of renters are in core household need. These are the people who are low-income and at most risk of homelessness. These are the folks that spend 30%, 40%, 60%, 80% of their income on rent, and you think they can afford more.

So what should this government be doing instead of threatening renters? I'll give you a few hints: They should be creating a real plan to end homelessness, with supportive and non-market housing targets. You should be improving basic income like Ontario Works, which doesn't even allow renting a room in most Ontario communities. You should be funding rent banks to help low-income renters keep their housing. And you should be making real improvements to the Landlord and Tenant Board to make eviction a last resort, not a first resort.

But this government instead has the audacity to blame renters for their failure to get more homes built. Speaker, renters are not to blame for the 80,000 people without housing in this province. They are not to blame for this government's failure to manage the Landlord and Tenant Board. And they are not to blame for the disasters this government has created: jobs disaster, health care disaster, housing disaster, education disaster, homelessness disaster.

The basic premise behind these changes is that tenants have too many protections, resulting in delays at the Landlord and Tenant Board, which in turn apparently discourages investments. There is absolutely no data to support this. If there is, I'd like to see it. But you did not put it in the bill, and you did not put it in your briefing, because there is no data anywhere to support that.

Tenant protections have not increased since this government took power. If anything, they have already been weakened, and still the housing crisis worsens.

I'll tell you what has changed under this government. The Landlord and Tenant Board has become dysfunctional, and hearings take longer. The 2023 Ombudsman report—I'm sure you all know it; Administrative Justice Delayed, Fairness Denied—was clear that this dysfunction emerged after the Ford government took power.

I'll take a quote from the Ombudsman report: "The cause of delays at the board shifted during the course of our investigation. At the outset, we were told that the primary contributing factor was a dire shortage of board members. By ... 2019, there were 19,000 applications pending at the board. By March 31, 2020, that number had risen to 22,803"—again, a failure of this government to manage the LTB.

This government continues to show its vindictive hand towards renters, and it did so again on Thursday. When the

Attorney General was asked about fixed-term leases, he said, "These evergreen leases that just go on with no end in sight may not be appropriate." They had the gall to suggest that corporate landlords should have the right to adjust tenancy arrangements based on market conditions, personal needs or business strategies. Imagine talking about someone's housing that way: It just goes on and on. They just live in their homes. They go on and on with no end in sight—the horror.

This is an astonishing admission that their goal here is to keep tenants in a constant state of fear that they will lose their housing. While they've offered a temporary reprieve today, we know that we need to stay vigilant, because their intentions have been made very clear. Even in pulling back, the words that were used were that we will not proceed now with the consultation—not now. But you will, and people know that you will, and renters across this province are afraid.

The intent here is to increase evictions so that landlords can remove any tenant from their home so that they can rent that same unit to someone who will pay more, much more, often actually more than they can even afford.

Because eliminating evergreen month-to-month leases and security of tenure would end rent control in Ontario as we know it. Landlords would no longer need to use the often-bogus renovictions and demovictions to turn out tenants and bring in higher-paying renters. No more need for above-guideline increases under the guise of making necessary repairs—they could simply just end the lease.

When I think back, just a couple of weeks ago, to a rally and press conference with a large group of people who are renters, we were arguing against above-guideline increases. It's almost quaint today to think that that was what we were worried about. Now, with this, with what this government wants to do, with what it has indicated that it wants to do, we will be putting homelessness on speed. It will be on speed dial. They won't have to go out and get AGIs. They won't have to go out and pretend that they are doing renovictions or demovictions. They're just going to simply turn people out. This is a full-frontal attack on security of tenants. I might add, about 34% of the people you represent here in this province are renters. It's something that we haven't seen in over 50 years in this province.

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Think about what that means. You're a tenant, you move in, you're single, maybe a couple, and you have a kid or two, and your landlord says, "I wasn't bargaining for kids"—out you go. The contract ends. The list of grievances, honestly, and discrimination, let's not kid ourselves, is actually endless. It's a direct effort to strip away the rights of tenants and to allow landlords to evict more people from their homes and, again, often into homelessness.

Again, I will remind you of what this Premier said back in 2018: "I have criss-crossed the province, and from one corner to the other, the people of Ontario have told me that they are struggling"—in 2018. "I have listened to the people, and I won't take rent control away from anyone.... When it comes to rent control, we're going to maintain the

status quo.” Once again, and unsurprisingly, this Premier did not intend to keep his word. People are struggling more than ever, and his answer and your answer is to raise rents.

Today, if you are a renter in this province, if you are a worker in this province, this government is making your life unaffordable—unaffordable for you, unaffordable for your kids, unaffordable for your parents, for your friends. Let me be clear: If you take away rental protection, it will lead to an explosion of people without housing and shelter. If you’re concerned today, which many people are, about the growing number of encampments in their neighbourhoods, you can be certain—you can be absolutely certain—that the number of the visible unsheltered population will grow, and you will have this government to blame.

The bill also makes significant changes to the Landlord and Tenant Board, and I know that the Attorney General tried to convince us that these were all going to be to the benefit of renters. Well, it is not. Every single one of them, every single one of those changes, is to the extreme disadvantage of people who are just trying to get by, who are just trying to keep their housing, who don’t want to live in a shelter, who don’t want to live in encampments, women who are living with violent partners who can’t move out. They’ll have to stay more and more and more often because there will be nowhere for them to go.

What this bill is going to do—Landlord and Tenant Board: It will cut tenant notice periods in half. Where right now tenants have 14 days to pay their rent before the landlord can apply for eviction, this bill will cut that to seven, so tenants are evicted faster into homelessness.

Tenants will have less time to appeal unfair decisions. Today, they have 30 days to request a review of an LTB order that they believe to be unfair. This bill will cut that to 15 days. That’s 15 days for someone who is struggling to find legal help, file paperwork, prepare a defence before you are locked out of your house. This, again, will increase the amount of people losing their housing, and it stacks the deck in favour of landlords. And it goes further because it would silence tenants for non-payment of rent cases. It would remove a tenant’s ability to raise new issues at a rent arrears hearing. That means if the landlord is not complying with the rules, this bill makes it harder for tenants to raise a particular issue at the LTB. Serious issues like disrepair that impact tenants’ health and safety, landlord harassment, or any repeated above-guideline increases could just be ignored. This bill will end the requirement for landlords to compensate tenants if they want to move into their units—again, making it even easier and faster for bad-faith evictions.

So when we look at the LTB and the dysfunction of the LTB, it is of the making of this government; you created it. The notion that the delays here are because tenants have too many rights is actually laughable at best. Actually, it makes you want to cry.

First, tenants gained absolutely no new rights with this government—none. Quite the opposite: They lost rights with the 2018 loophole. The average time to get a hearing for tenants and landlords, in 2020, was eight to nine weeks.

That increased, by 2023, to seven to nine months for landlords, and three years and seven months for tenants. So your argument just doesn’t hold.

And are you proposing to bring back in-person services at the LTB? No. Nope. This same Premier who claims that workers need to be near their phones, landlines in the office, hanging out around water coolers so that they are productive—obviously never had a real job—refuses here to acknowledge that having in-person services for the LTB is reasonable. Everybody else can go back to work, but if it advantages a renter? Nope.

Every week, we see the risk of more layoffs. Unemployment is the highest it’s been since this government took office. And with all that happening, the government thinks that now is a time to gut tenant rights in Ontario. You could not accelerate a housing crisis faster if you tried harder.

Just last week, I’ll remind you that this government voted against a private member’s bill to end homelessness. It was such a simple bill: end homelessness in 10 years—just set some targets and end. And you argued instead that such an ambitious target would lead to a failing grade.

Well, guess what? You, provincial government, actually mandate municipalities across this province. You actually mandate them to set 10-year housing targets. Every 10 years, municipalities have to bring you their 10-year housing homelessness plan. And yet, you can’t do it.

And although this shouldn’t surprise anyone, there were answers to building more housing in this province. It was your own advisers. Your own friends told you; you’ve got to start allowing that gentle density in neighbourhoods across this province. You’ve got to start allowing for that missing middle so that we can get housing built.

Again, you want to talk about development charges. You want to talk about making things affordable for municipalities, for people who want to purchase homes. Right now, all you can do, if you want to build homes, you can either go out and build them, push out the boundaries of municipalities, or you can build high-rises. Not everyone wants to live in a high-rise, so people just keep moving out further and further.

And that’s where development charges become so expensive, because somebody has to pay for all of that infrastructure—the pipes, the water, the waste water, the roads. And then you don’t just build it the one time; you’ve got to service it. You’ve got to go out and plow it. You’ve got to continue to keep that infrastructure upgraded in cities. That’s where you get unaffordable housing. You’ve got to allow for people to be able to build housing within cities, within neighbourhoods, where there is actual serviced land available—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos):
Thank you.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos):
Seeing the time on the clock, this House stands adjourned until 9 o’clock in the morning.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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Firin, Mohamed (PC)	York South—Weston / York-Sud— Weston	
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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	
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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
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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
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Lumsden, Hon. / L'hon. Neil (PC)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	Minister of Sport / Ministre du Sport
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McKenney, Catherine (NDP)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
McMahon, Mary-Margaret (LIB)	Beaches—East York	
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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	
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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
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Rae, Matthew (PC)	Perth—Wellington	
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
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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 (IND)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Scott, Hon. / L'hon. Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	
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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

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Thanigasalam, Hon. / L'hon. Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associé délégué à la Santé mentale et à la Lutte contre les dépendances
Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Rural Affairs / Ministre des Affaires rurales
Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Associate Attorney General / Procureur général associé
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	Deputy Speaker / Vice-Présidente Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
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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	