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Mardi
2 décembre 2025

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 2 December 2025

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 2 décembre 2025

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PEEL TRANSITION IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2025

LOI DE 2025 SUR LA MISE EN OEUVRE DE LA TRANSITION DE PEEL

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 4, 2025, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 45, An Act to make statutory amendments respecting the transfer of jurisdiction within The Regional Municipality of Peel and the appointment of Deputy Provincial Land and Development Facilitators / Projet de loi 45, Loi apportant des modifications législatives en ce qui concerne le transfert de compétences dans la municipalité régionale de Peel et la nomination de facilitateurs provinciaux de l'aménagement adjoints.

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

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Good morning, Madam Speaker, and good morning, everyone. It's always great to see all of you, your smiling faces in this chamber, and I'm always proud to represent beautiful Beaches–East York when I stand up here every day.

I'm not going to be speaking long at all on Bill 45 because we're supportive of it. But what I would say to the members across is, what seems to happen in this House is that you put forth an idea, you put forth a bill and then—well, if it goes to committee, that's grand; if it doesn't, that's a problem, which we have of late—but the legislation goes out there and it causes a scene. It causes a crisis. It causes a kerfuffle because you haven't met with the key stakeholders. You haven't engaged with the people you need to meet with, to speak with, to hear from. Then you find out there are things that are wrong in the bill, which could have been dealt with originally had you done your due diligence, had you taken the time, had you been methodical and meticulous in the process and done it right. As I say, I don't want to sing it, but get it right the first time.

I was on the committee with my second-favourite member over there, from Perth–Wellington, the new daddy-o. He's actually awake, surprisingly, with a newborn. We went around Ontario. We went to Barrie. We went to St. Catharines. We went to Burlington, and we did this regional governance review. Remember that? Municipal leaders in

those areas are still asking what's happening with that because we started it and then it's just been dropped. So are we actually going to do something for that or is it all for naught?

And now you have a bill about Barrie. We won't even get into that because that's just very eye-popping, that legislation.

What I would say is, just take the time with all future bills, please. Go through the proper readings: first, second and third. Go to committee. Engage with Ontarians, actually listen to them and let's get the legislation right the first time so we are not—I mean, it was the Peel divorce, then it was the Peel kind of separation and then it's the Peel kind of breakup but still together, friends—it wasn't you, it was me kind of thing. We finally got some legislation, but maybe it just could have been done right the first time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Questions?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate—what can I say—the pointedness of the comments made by the member from Beaches–East York. She mentioned, and I was intrigued: “It's not you, it's me.” Could you expand on that, please?

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: The Peel transition wasn't a transition; it was a breakup. The whole Peel region, they were going to break it up. We were doing this whole regional governance review. It wasn't just Peel. It was going to be Niagara. It was Simcoe county. It was Barrie. Where did we go—Burlington. We went all over the province. We spent taxpayer dollars to go to these places and listen to community members and politicians and hear from them. I don't know what happened with Peel. It was going to be a full on separation and now it's back kind of together but separate a bit. Who knows with this government?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Questions?

Hon. Steve Clark: Speaker, through you to the member opposite: You talked many times about the fact that you were proud that you were a Toronto city councillor. One of the things that has always been allowed in municipal politics is municipal service corporations, and there's been a bit of misunderstanding out there in the public about what Bill 45 creates and what it doesn't create.

I'd just be very interested in hearing from the member whether she supports a public municipal service corporation like a public utility—or even a municipality; a municipality is a corporation. When I was mayor, it was the corporation of the city of Brockville. I'd really love to hear the member opposite talk about her support for municipal service corporations.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thank you very much to the former municipal politician, at quite a young age.

Yes, absolutely, and that's why we're supporting this bill. The problem is that there's not a lot of trust for this government in getting it right the first time, in not backpedalling and changing your mind, in flipping and flopping, and in doing one thing on one level but then in the regulations something else.

We are supportive of this bill at the end of the day. I know you're shocked by that, but there will be hopefully unanimous support for this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Questions?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I listened to the member's brief remarks and I did want to ask her her thoughts on whether Bill 45 finally provides clarity for municipal employees in Peel region after two and a half years of back and forth, an announcement and then a reversal.

It has been very chaotic at the municipal level, and I wondered if the member would care to comment on whether Bill 45 provides that certainty that municipal employees need to move forward.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thank you to the member from London West for that question. That is a very important question when we're dealing with people and people's lives and people's livelihoods. Honestly, the people in Peel region, the employees have probably not been sleeping that well at night for the past long while that we've been deliberating and debating and deciding on this. It's not fair, and I know that some members, employees, have left, actually, and that's not what we want. We don't want good people leaving good jobs where they do good work.

0910

So a little bit of clarity and assurance would be beneficial—I'm missing the word—but beneficial for people to go on with their lives and have a sense of calm with their jobs and their quality of life.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further debate?

Mr. Matthew Rae: It's great to rise this morning, everyone, to speak to Bill 45, An Act to make statutory amendments respecting the transfer of jurisdiction within The Regional Municipality of Peel and the appointment of Deputy Provincial Land and Development Facilitators. I know it's an important debate, colleagues.

The region of Peel, as our great members from the region of Peel will tell you, is one of the fastest-growing regions in Canada. Mississauga, Brampton and the town of Caledon—well over a million people live within that area. They've seen a lot of growth over the past 50 years, past 25 years. I know the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing actually grew up in Streetsville, and he talks often about how much change he has seen in that area of the world. My understanding is his parents still live in Mississauga as well.

Really, it was a testament, the growth of Mississauga, to Hurricane Hazel—not the actual hurricane; I know we've been talking about that—the former mayor of Mississauga, and the importance of ensuring we're building strong communities. I know Brampton has grown significantly as well.

Speaker, as the member from Beaches—East York—who, colleagues, is my favourite Liberal member in this

place, even though I'm her second-favourite Tory member. I don't hold it against her. That's okay.

Interjection.

Mr. Matthew Rae: At least I'm in the top 10, as the member from Essex says.

We did travel our beautiful province together, colleagues, almost—I'm trying to think how many—two years ago now. Wow, time flies when you're having a good time, everyone. We travelled our beautiful province. It also relates to our Simcoe bill that we've been debating in this place with the Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy and very important committee meetings on regional governance. We went to each region a minimum of two times. We went to Simcoe. We went to Durham region. We went to Waterloo. We went to Niagara. We went to Halton. We went to York and we obviously went to Peel as well.

I think it was on a very wintry day, like we're having today. We went to Peel—beautiful, beautiful Brampton.

Interjection.

Mr. Matthew Rae: Yes, the great member from Brampton North is supporting—I think it was in Brampton Centre, the actual location of the meeting, but still a beautiful part of Brampton. We were there to hear from—at that time, it was an acting mayor because Bonnie Crombie was currently running for her failed leadership bid.

Interjections.

Mr. Matthew Rae: A little applause on that from the Brampton member.

We met with the city of Mississauga. The city of Brampton also sent representatives; the paramedics as well—their union sent a representative—and some other staff level and interested community members.

We really heard from those on the ground the importance of the different models of governance and how we can improve that, how we can improve efficiency within the Peel area. It really is a fruition of this bill that we have before us today.

The Peel transition board was struck. They did a lot of good work, colleagues. It was under Minister Calandra and it concluded its work with Minister Flack. I know, because I was parliamentary assistant in that role—I've been in that role since March 2023. It's a great ministry—a very busy ministry—to be in, Speaker, because it touches so many different aspects of our province and different acts in the Legislative Assembly.

The Peel transition board really undertook on-the-ground work to understand better: Is there a better way to implement some of the services provided by the region of Peel or the lower tiers—whether that's waste water, whether that's roads and bridges, whether that's social services, paramedics, fire etc. Some we identified as, no, that should remain at the regional level, such as paramedics, fire, police and those types of social and community services. But then other initiatives we identified were the potential for waste water capacity administration but also roads.

I'm pleased to see in Bill 45 that the roads, in particular, are explicitly mentioned in this bill, where they will be given to the city of Mississauga, the city of Brampton and the town of Caledon, because those municipalities have

reached a certain maturity in their development, where they can maintain those roads more efficiently and ensure that they are up to a high standard versus at the regional level. We'll be providing that authority if this piece of legislation is passed in this House to those lower-tier municipalities.

That is something we heard from the committee on our regional governance review tour that we had almost two years ago to the day. I know that in regional governance review, we heard a lot about waste water capacity and how we build out waste water across Ontario.

Colleagues, it costs a lot to build in the province of Ontario. That's because of a variety of reasons, whether it's the increasing cost to build through inflation, whether it's the new trade war, unfortunately, we are currently in with our US partner south of us—it costs more to build in the province of Ontario, but that's not stopping our government. We're continuing to make those investments and continuing to build the roads, the bridges and the waste water capacity all across Ontario, not just in the city of Mississauga. But we are investing in the city of Mississauga and the region of Peel in waste water capacity—I believe, prior to the last provincial election, we announced over \$35 million to improve the waste water capacity in the region of Peel, an important investment.

Interjections.

Mr. Matthew Rae: Yes, a very important investment, colleagues, in their ambitious build-out of that waste water capacity in the region of Peel.

But there are other regions that require significant investment. And it's not for a lack of planning; they've made significant plans to do that, but they've seen such growth. Ontario is growing, which is a good thing, colleagues, because it means there are more people here in Ontario to be working in our industries, to be sending their children to our schools, to be ensuring our schools have the teachers and educational assistants to meet this growing need. Our government makes those investments on the education side, but that means we need to invest in our infrastructure to build out that capacity.

In the region of York, they need roughly \$3 billion to build out their waste water capacity. To do that, I don't think there's any provincial government in Canada—or even the federal government—that has that amount of money to build that significant investment of \$3 billion, Speaker.

Minister Calandra and Minister Flack heard this constantly from smaller municipalities, mainly—less so our urban municipalities that have a larger tax base because they have a larger population, but our medium-sized municipalities, our rural municipalities and our northern municipalities—on the need for a new model to ensure that they can attract investment and finance the important investments in waste water capacity.

I know we've heard from some in this place on how we're going to privatize waste water capacity. That is furthest from the truth. In fact, in every piece of government legislation, it says “public corporation,” “municipal service corporation”—public, Speaker. That ability is really

coming from the feedback we've heard from municipalities. They've been telling us, “We need a new fiscal mechanism to help attract capital, borrow at more competitive rates, borrow over a longer period of time that we can currently do as municipalities,” because they only have so much capacity as municipalities to borrow. If a municipal service corporation—and you're allowed. I know in my riding of Perth–Wellington, the municipality of Mapleton has already set up a municipal service corporation—again, publicly owned—municipal employees and municipal councillors sit on the board they set up. They set it up for their municipality to help fund their size of municipality—under 10,000 people, a very rural municipality in my riding—to build out thousands of new homes, potentially, through their waste water expansion.

0920

They have used this municipal service corp. to provide the \$40-million loan over a longer period of time to make it more affordable to the ratepayer, colleagues. I know the government is very focused on ensuring we put forward legislation and our province remains affordable for families, so it's great to see a municipal partner also have that same view, ensuring that there is affordability and putting less pressure on their ratepayers. The municipal service corp. allows them to spread that out over a longer period of time, and this model is something we should be able to replicate across the province.

Unfortunately, if the municipality of Mapleton wanted to partner with the municipality of Centre Wellington, which is next door in Wellington–Halton Hills, they would not be able to do so because, as the Municipal Act is currently written, it prevents you from crossing those municipal boundaries. For them to be able to do that, to organically create these municipal service corps., they would not be able to do that as the act is currently written.

I know with Bill 60 we just passed, that was part of that bill, allowing the ministry to continue to consult with our municipalities, continue to consult with AMO. I know we are doing that around municipal services corps. and municipal utilities around waste water and water capacity because we know there's a need and there's an ask, colleagues. We're not coming to this House with these ideas out of thin air. We heard this at the regional governance hearings; we heard this at AMO and ROMA and NOMA over and over: the need for this new fiscal mechanism to allow waste water capacity to expand in the province of Ontario without it all relying on the provincial taxpayer or the municipal ratepayer.

I use this example often when I'm speaking with stakeholders or at speaking events. It's disappointing, or frustrating, I would say, historically, to see pension funds like the Canada Pension Plan, the Ontario public service pension plan or OMERS heavily invest in California or London, UK. Right now, OMERS is helping build the London tube system, but they are not helping build Toronto subways or helping build waste water in Ontario or roads or bridges in Ontario because they don't have a fiscal mechanism to make that investment on behalf of their members. I know the Minister of Finance has been working

diligently through the Building Ontario Fund to set up a larger fiscal mechanism, but the municipal service corps. can then provide that ability as well to have that investment flow locally and complement the public dollars that are going to be used in these build-outs.

Again, the governance structure would still be a public governance structure. It would still have provincial representatives; it would have municipal representatives. And we're really working with AMO to bring about organic municipal service corps. We're not looking to create a province-wide municipal service corps. We're looking at what municipalities want to come forward with to propose those solutions. I know I had the pleasure of meeting with the eastern wardens, and there was talk of what ways they could collaborate in eastern Ontario to bring forward, potentially, a solution to that, and I look forward to seeing more of that as these consultations continue.

To bring it back to Bill 45, the Peel transition really is the first step in that. A lot of work went through the Peel Transition Board, through experts in a variety of fields. Whether it was engineering, city services, governance or finance, they really went through the Peel transition and identified the strengths where the city of Mississauga or the city of Brampton or the town of Caledon could thrive on their own, stand on their own two feet, and then other services that still needed to remain at the regional level—as I mentioned, social services, police, paramedics and others.

Really, I just wanted to take the remaining few minutes I have to highlight the fact that we've had a very ambitious fall legislative agenda, colleagues. We're passing a variety of important pieces of legislation. We're having rigorous debate. But today, the opposition spoke for five minutes—

Mr. Anthony Leardi: Less.

Mr. Matthew Rae: Less than five minutes—three minutes. The Liberal member spoke for three minutes of 60 and chose to sit down on a very important piece of legislation.

The opposition members from the NDP haven't put anyone up yet. I don't think they're going to put anyone up.

Interjections.

Mr. Matthew Rae: Oh, they are, apparently, colleagues. They're going to put someone up now. Now that I'm starting to call them out, they're going to put someone up. I won't hold my breath.

But, Speaker—

Interjection.

Mr. Matthew Rae: The Minister of Tourism can hold three minutes—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Order.

Mr. Matthew Rae: Speaker, we're here to debate an important piece of legislation, but the members of the opposition aren't putting anyone up. I bring that up because they are saying that we are surmounting democracy, we're destroying democracy. But when they have an opportunity to speak on a bill, they don't stand in their place and talk about the bill. They don't talk at length about what they think we could do to improve it.

The member for Beaches–East York was at committee with me. She heard everything I heard from our deputations about what we could do to improve this bill or regional governance and didn't provide any of that in the remarks this morning.

Speaker, it was disappointing to see that the members of the opposition aren't putting anyone up.

Mr. Deepak Anand: I think it is too early for them—

Mr. Matthew Rae: It may be a little early. We can send up some more coffee from the Speaker's office.

We're here to debate important legislation. I am proud to stand in this place to debate whatever bill is before this assembly to ensure that we have a fulsome debate on every piece of legislation that comes before this place because it's important work we do in this place.

We aren't surmounting democracy. We are not trampling on the democratic rights of Ontarians. We had an election this year—which, I know it's hard to believe, colleagues, was still this year. I know many of us have tried to suppress that memory of knocking on doors in the snow. When it first started snowing a couple of weeks ago in my riding, I started to get some flashbacks from that. I hope we don't have to do another door-knocking campaign in a winter campaign.

Interjections.

Mr. Matthew Rae: Yes, I think we all can agree on that, colleagues.

But we had that campaign. We heard directly from the people of Ontario. It was great to see that the good people of Peel region sent back every single PC member. We swept the entire region, colleagues. We even won the seat Bonnie Crombie was running in. Wow, that's saying something. The former mayor of Mississauga couldn't win a seat in the city of Mississauga. I think the good people of Mississauga knew who they were voting for when they voted for the member for Mississauga East–Cooksville and brought her to this place as part of the PC government here. It was great to see that they sent an entire, strong PC majority government back to this place.

The entire region of Peel voted for Premier Ford and our great PC members there because they knew we bring forward pieces of legislation like Bill 45 to ensure that we strengthen Peel region, to ensure that we continue to invest in Peel region, to ensure that we give them the tools to make the investments that are necessary, ensuring that we create the conditions that get more homes built, that get more roads built, that get more hospitals built. I know they're going to build one of the biggest hospitals in the country in Peel. We'll take a little more hospital funding in Perth–Wellington. We don't need a big, brand new hospital like Peel region, but it's great to see the Minister of Health make that investment. The good people of Peel keep sending back this government because they know they'll continue making those investments in Peel region.

I encourage all my colleagues—I think all of them will vote for Bill 45. I know government members will continue to rise to speak on Bill 45, but I encourage all members in this place: Let's get up. Let's have a rigorous debate, as is the right of every member in this place, to

speak on Bill 45 to ensure that we have a vigorous debate on this piece of legislation—another great bill from the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing—to ensure we advance forward these key initiatives, ensuring we’re building a strong Ontario and, by extension, a strong Canada.

I look forward to the questions.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Questions?

Mr. Chris Glover: I want to thank the member for his comments today. You mentioned democratic rights, so my question is a two-part question to you. Do you believe that freedom of speech is a fundamental democratic right that should never be infringed upon except in the case of hate speech? And if so, why has this Conservative government three times overridden Ontarians’ fundamental right to freedom of speech with three separate bills using the “notwithstanding” clause?

0930

Mr. Matthew Rae: Well, we’re going all over the place today, colleagues—“notwithstanding” clause.

The “notwithstanding” clause is a part of the Canadian Constitution. It’s part of the Canadian convention or parliamentary democracy, which has come over many generations of debate in various chambers from British tradition, and it is a part of the Canadian Constitution. It is a tool that was put in so that Pierre Trudeau could get the document signed and get all of the provinces on board. I know other provinces and various governments have used the “notwithstanding” clause.

We were elected, Speaker, a third-time majority—an historic majority—to continue to get things done for the people of Ontario. I know we’ll continue to put forward pieces of legislation that will be debated in this place, and members have the right to stand and comment on every piece of legislation in this place. We’ll continue to bring forward pieces of legislation that build a strong Ontario and a strong Canada.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further questions?

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: I’m revoking your title. You’re going, now, to the bottom.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Please address the Speaker.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Speaker—and maybe it’s because you’re sleep-deprived with your newborn. I’m going to give you a pass on that.

But you mention democracy, and since you mentioned it, do you feel that your government is respecting democracy when you rush through these bills and you do not go to committee on so many of these bills to allow Ontarians to come down and share their thoughts on the bills with us?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I’ll go to the member, but first, I’ll remind the members to address the Speaker.

The member from Perth–Wellington.

Mr. Matthew Rae: Thank you, Speaker. It’s disappointing that now I have to work my way back up that list, but it’s something to aspire to, I guess.

I will say that we as members in this place receive a variety of feedback from constituents and Ontarians. I get

many emails and phone calls during the day and week. We have opportunities to rise for an hour or 20 minutes, depending on our slot in the speaking order, to share those concerns on the floor of the assembly. The member opposite had the opportunity today to do that for many of the concerns on Bill 45 she was hearing from those members in her riding in this place, and she chose to only speak for less than five minutes. I have had plenty of opportunity—I’m at my max, actually—for my speaking allotment and the ability to provide that feedback on the floor.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I recognize the member from Brantford–Brant.

Mr. Will Bouma: I’m pleased to rise in the House today. I appreciated the speech and discussion about the bill from the member from Perth–Wellington.

Speaker, through you to the member, it seems that there’s a narrative out there about this piece of legislation—and I’m not sure where it’s coming from—that having municipally owned, publicly owned service corporations are somehow privatizing our waste water and water management across the province of Ontario. I know the member spoke about that during his speech also. I appreciate the fact that he’s trying to counteract that, because where I’m from, in the corporation of the county of Brant and the corporation of the city of Brantford, they have wholly owned municipal service corporations and even business corporations that keep the public interest first and allow private money to go into those in order to support those things. I was wondering if the member could speak a little bit more about how important it is to open up that avenue of funding for these municipal service corporations.

Mr. Matthew Rae: Thank you, Speaker—a great point from my colleague from Brantford–Brant. As the House leader mentioned this morning as well, I believe, “corporation” is still in the title of many municipalities. But the municipal service corporations are public.

As I mentioned, the township of Mapleton has established one already, and many municipalities can choose to do this already. It is a public utility and a public corporation, where the municipal councillors and the municipal employees and industry experts—so non-municipal employees, which you need on these boards to ensure good governance, but also that funds are being allocated in the appropriate manner.

That is really the goal of Bill 60 and Bill 45—in this legislation we’re bringing forward. This is what we’re hearing from our rural and northern municipalities, in particular, because it’s the one fiscal mechanism they’re able to use to fund some of this very important infrastructure to get more homes built, which I think all of us in this place would agree is an important goal.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further questions?

Mr. Chris Glover: I appreciate the comments from the member from Perth–Wellington. I asked about whether he thought that freedom of speech was a fundamental democratic right that should never be infringed upon, and he talked about the “notwithstanding” clause being part of the Constitution. It is part of the Constitution, but this government has used that “notwithstanding” clause to override

Ontarians' freedom of speech and other fundamental freedoms and legal rights in three separate bills. In the most recent act—it was Bill 24—it was to prevent education workers from going on strike. Do you think it was worth stripping Ontarians of their fundamental freedoms and legal rights under the charter in order to prevent education workers from exercising their legal right to fair bargaining and to potentially go on strike if that bargaining didn't result in a contract?

Mr. Matthew Rae: I just want to correct my earlier record. The “notwithstanding” clause is not in the Canadian Constitution. It's in the Canadian charter. But I think the member opposite meant Bill 28, which was repealed. We're really, again, as a government on this side and the majority rump, focused on bringing forward ideas—all members, not just the cabinet and the Premier. All of us are tasked by the Premier to bring forward ideas and legislation that will make Ontario the most competitive place in the G7 to do business and to really make it a strong and vibrant place to raise a family and grow a business, ensuring that we have a strong foundation for democracy because we've seen, over the years, if the country becomes poor, the chances of totalitarianism set in; the chances of dictatorship or communism increase. And so we want to ensure that we have a strong economy so we have a strong, thriving democracy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further questions?

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Through you, Mr. Speaker: As the member across from Perth–Wellington mentioned, in our magical mystery tour of the regional governance trip all around Ontario, we went to many places. I forgot Orillia. That was one. So we did that, and everyone used their energy and their time and their efforts to come and see us and explain their stance on the issue and their expertise and their lived experience. I'm just wondering, what is happening with that? I asked everyone at that committee if they thought this was an exercise in futility or if something would actually happen, and I think Ontario elected officials deserve an answer from this government.

Mr. Matthew Rae: I think some of the important work that committee did is being reflected already in the piece of legislation that we're debating in this place, Bill 45, as I mentioned, that we're debating today. But Bill 60, around the municipal service corporations and the public water service corporations, is something we heard about throughout the committee hearings—all members did in those very robust committee hearings, spending more or less December, January and February travelling our beautiful province—to some snowy parts of our province as well. We've already been seeing some of that implemented in a piece of government legislation. I know the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing will continue to look at how we can implement suggestions through that committee and all committees.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I recognize the member for Mississauga–Malton for a quick question.

Mr. Deepak Anand: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a Peel transition bill, so I have to ask a question. The ques-

tion is very simple. You know, for years residents of local councils in Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon have been calling for a governance model that better reflects their size, growth and capacity. Do you think this bill is providing that to us?

Mr. Matthew Rae: Yes. But I still have 19 seconds left, so it does because, again, it demonstrates that our government is listening to the people of Ontario. We are not listening to the downtown Toronto elites and those who may be living on Bay Street or University Avenue. We're listening to the people in downtown Mississauga or—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate the opportunity to address this act. But I have to say first, this whole discussion about the restructuring of utilities, as was promoted by the member who spoke just before me, is one that I'm very concerned about. The reality is that as you move utilities, whether they be hydro or water, away from direct control and ownership by municipalities or, in the case of the former Ontario Hydro, one opens the door to very large-scale privatization, and that is simply the reality.

0940

The whole process that Mike Harris started, and which was carried on by Kathleen Wynne, of taking these utilities that were directly owned and controlled by municipalities and setting them up as separate corporations, facilitates privatization. And I don't think there's any question about that when you look at the historical record. Kathleen Wynne took the structure that was set up by Mike Harris and privatized Hydro One. It was no longer something that was directly under the control of the province. She privatized it.

What the member was talking about is setting up structures that will facilitate that privatization in future. Alectra, which was a municipally owned—still is a municipally owned—electricity distribution corporation, has actually privatized parts of its operations. So what the member was talking about is a system that takes us down the road towards privatization of utilities, which undermines the financial stability of the society. There's no getting around it. When you privatize these fundamental utilities, you open the door to profiteering, you open the door to a focus on getting money extracted out of the society and not actually putting it back into the society.

I'll give you an example of where public ownership has had huge beneficial impact for Ontario's economy. People may or may not remember the former Michigan Governor Jennifer Granholm—a bright person, wrote a book about her experience being the Governor of Michigan: *A Governor's Story*, a simple title. And one of the things that she found hugely problematic in the fight in pre-Trump days over auto investment and the competition between Ontario and Michigan was that in Ontario we have publicly funded health care—publicly owned and run health care—and they didn't in Michigan. This was a huge competitive selling point to the Big Three, because they could see that their health care expenses were dramatically lower in Ontario. Whereas in the United States, they were paying fortunes to these privately owned insurance companies,

duplicating administration everywhere, that made it extremely expensive for them to provide the benefits to their workers that they needed to provide in order to operate. Ontario, with a publicly run health insurance company, had a huge competitive advantage over Michigan.

So we don't want to be in a position where we will put ourselves at competitive disadvantage with other jurisdictions by losing that public ownership, introducing a profit stream that eventually will mean—or sometimes not eventually, sometimes very quickly—higher prices and a loss of funds that would stay circulating within our economy, but in fact seeing those funds taken out of Ontario, sometimes out of Canada. That is a real, substantial concern.

The member also mentioned the beneficial impact of having Canadian pension companies, pension operations, invest in these corporations. I just want to point out that OMERS, which is the Ontario Municipal Employees Retirement System—provides pensions for municipal employees across this province, a major pension fund in Canada—went all in on Thames Water in the UK.

Margaret Thatcher privatized the water system. People may not be aware that there were substantial health problems that flowed from that because Thames Water cranked up the cost of water. What they found in the UK was that, because the cost of water was so high, they had increased incidence of diseases related to lack of cleanliness, that people were not washing as often because they didn't have the money. And it actually showed up in their health stats, those kinds of diseases.

So that was one side of it: higher prices, meaning that people could not consume the water that they needed to consume. But the other side of it is that Thames Water is in deep financial trouble right now. OMERS just wrote off its 32% share in Thames Water, declaring it effectively a zero operation. Thames Water needs a billion dollars to continue operating. This privatized water company with a monopoly on water in the greater London area is not functional.

OMERS has had to write off many billions of dollars in investment in that private company. I don't want the pension funds that people in Ontario depend on put in a situation where they are hopeful that some private managers will actually be able to run a monopoly. I mean, seriously. A recommendation that we move away from municipal or provincial ownership of critical utilities is not a responsible recommendation.

And with those comments, I want to move on to the bill. I am a bit surprised to be speaking to this bill today. I got a note late last night saying, "You're going to be talking to Bill 45 tomorrow morning. I hope you're enthusiastic about it." I said, "Yes, of course I'm enthusiastic." I have wanted to talk about Peel region for a long time, and as one of my colleagues said, "The opening line should be 'to Peel or not to Peel.'" And it wasn't a great line, but I enjoyed his sense of humour.

So I thought a bit about some people who have, in the past, spoken extemporaneously on issues before this House. I remember Peter Kormos, the member for Welland—years ago, and this was when I was very new—getting up

and talking for an hour. And in the course of the debate, I realized that he was looking at the different gargoyles and carvings around the room as inspiration for his next round of comments. I had never seen that before. I was deeply impressed. I'm not going to replicate it today.

And I will say as well, Shelley Martel, when I was here early on—I think I was here a few months—she was scheduled to speak to a bill. I watched her come in through those doors. From the Sergeant-at-Arms, she got the Hansard for the previous day, which had the speeches about the bill. She came to her desk, stood up with the Hansard in hand, and really extemporaneously and quite creatively, wove a one-hour speech. I was deeply impressed. I am not going to do that, friends. You will be spared. Count your lucky stars.

Former environment minister Jim Bradley, once, in question period—so not a long speech—was clearly focused on something else entirely when the Premier at the time referred a question over to him. He had not been paying attention; we could all see that. He was reading something. And so, he stood up, and for about a minute and a half, said absolutely nothing, but spoke directly to the question that he had not heard. And we were all impressed. He got a standing ovation at the end of that. I can't do what the greats did, but I will do what I can.

I have to say, one of the first things that struck me about this bill—and I know you can't use a prop, but I'll just hold up the bill and say, this is not a thick bill. This is not an omnibus bill. This is not one of those bills that you read when you have difficulty getting to sleep at night because you go through it too quickly.

But one of the things that's really striking about it is, of the three pages of the bill, one page is "immunity from liability." And I have to say, I'm deeply impressed because I've seen a lot of "immunity from liability" clauses since this current government was elected. I've never seen as many before. One of the most striking to me in the past, was protection against anything that could be called misfeasance or malfeasance. And I thought, whoa. This isn't omissions or errors. You're saying you have immunity from doing bad things. It's a good thing this government doesn't have the ability to declare immunity from the Criminal Code, because we'd be seeing that here.

In any event, one page—one whole page on immunity. You know what it says to me? There's going to be a lot of cranky people at the end of this process. Someone—some large number of someones—are going to be very unhappy. Because if you have to have that much protection against lawsuits, against the thought of lawsuits, against people who were thinking of lawsuits but didn't get to file them—man, you're doing something that's making people really unhappy. So that is an issue.

0950

Anyway, enough of introductory remarks. I, Speaker, will take great liberties with comments by my colleague the member from Welland because he has spoken to this. I'm going to extract some of the more interesting stuff. I appreciate the work that he did in his leadoff. One of the first things that he had to say was the comment that this bill was being presented as something that was new, that

was well thought out, that municipalities were voluntarily taking part in. I go back to the immunity from lawsuit section. Man, nothing says everybody's happy like a page of immunity from lawsuit in the legislation—one third of the legislation.

I have to say that my colleague was probably quite correct when he said this wasn't a new or well-thought-out bill. This has been the culmination of a three-part saga. It's a lesson, he said—and I agree—in how not to make public policy, how not to implement public policy, why it's dangerous to ignore your own experts, why it's undemocratic and irresponsible to avoid meaningful consultation. Man, it's got to be dangerous if you've got that much armour against lawsuits.

The member noted that you should go back to the roots of this story, both interesting and tragic. The Premier started talking about this with what he described as a deathbed promise to his friend Hazel McCallion to dissolve Peel region. I'm not going to comment a lot further on that other than that it concerns me that that would be the genesis of this particular activity. That declaration by the Premier caused a lot of confusion and a lot of disturbance in the Peel region.

A few things that he noted about Peel region that people need to understand: The region went into a panic after the government initially announced what it intended to do. There were council meetings. The region wanted to impress upon the government exactly what kind of a huge undertaking it would be to dissolve any region but especially the region of Peel—once again, why you need a full page of protection against lawsuits in this act. One third of the act is covering your backside against any legal challenge.

What the people in the region of Peel did was put together a list of all the things that Peel did. It, I think, would be educational for anyone to look at what they noted. One in 10 Ontario residents live in Peel—one in 10. The earlier speaker from the other side talked about the size of Peel, its significance, and you know, he had a point. Peel's population is 1.5 million people, and that's from 2023. You can imagine that in the intervening years, it has grown. It's the second-largest municipality in the greater Toronto area and larger than six of Canada's provinces—not a small village, not a hamlet somewhere. Nothing against hamlets or villages, but this is going to be an awful lot more complex than a 5,000-person town.

It's financially secure and stable. It's maintained a AAA credit rating for 27 consecutive years. In 2022, it was one of 14 Canadian municipalities to receive the AAA credit rating and one of eight to receive a AAA credit rating from Moody's Investors Service. So it's a stable organization. One could even say it's financially successful. One has to ask, if it's not broken, why is this process going on trying to fix it?

A little bit about debt: \$1.8 billion worth of goods travel to, from and through Peel every day; 36% of truck trips in Ontario start or end on Peel region roads; Peel's goods-moving industry contributed \$49 billion worth of gross domestic product to regional, provincial and national economies; their roads carry 21% of all goods-moving GDP in Ontario.

That is quite the industrial and economic powerhouse. This is not a backwater. This is not an afterthought in our Ontario economy. It's a substantial place. When you mess with a locally very successful economy, man, you need to do it carefully because you don't want the unintended consequences raining out on this region.

Peel has the second-largest water and waste water system in Ontario and the fourth-largest in Canada with an infrastructure replacement value of \$26 billion. That's about the size of Thames Water. Thames Water is, as I say, under-water right now.

The whole waste water issue was carved out and put in Bill 60, which has passed. I note the comment from the other side earlier that it would be a great idea to have pension funds owning these corporations directly. Well, I want to note that Peel's utility rates remain 30% lower than other GTA municipalities.

Where is the problem here? If their rates are 30% lower than other municipalities, why would you mess with that structure? That's pretty successful. I wish Toronto's water rates were 30% lower than other municipalities. I wish other municipalities were able to achieve what they were able to achieve here.

Another indication of the size and scope of the government that we're dealing with: Peel Regional Police, the second-largest municipal police service in Ontario and third-largest in Canada.

This is where it gets interesting as well because the health care system in Peel is very substantial. Peel paramedics, the second-largest paramedic system in Ontario, responds to over 140,000 calls in a typical year. It's the third-largest community housing provider in Ontario. Peel Public Health is the third-largest in Ontario and one of the largest in Canada.

It has the second-largest waste management program in Ontario.

Again, I have to ask, what was the pressing issue other than a deathbed wish to take apart what seems to be a well-functioning machine? What would be the justification for doing that? Why would you put yourself in a position where you have to don all of this legal armour against potential lawsuits? What is driving this? I'm not going to answer that in this speech because, frankly, I don't fully understand the roots of what are driving it.

But on the face of it, if you have a successful organization, why would you take it apart? What drives this?

Peel includes over 200,000 businesses, and 8.6% of the population live in poverty with approximately 25,000 residents receiving Ontario Works and they depend on Peel region delivering uninterrupted services. Of course, when this process started in 2023, it threw not-for-profit organizations in the Peel region into a state of anxiety because the number of clients across Peel that depend on Peel region and all the services they support—those non-profit agencies and those who depend on those agencies rely on Peel's financial health and political stability to ensure that their social problems are addressed.

As a service manager and primary founder of Peel's affordable housing system, Peel froze federal, provincial and regional funding to 51 community housing providers,

including Peel Housing Corp., which is the largest community housing provider in Peel.

Some 69% of individuals in Peel identify with a racialized group, the highest percentage of racialized individuals in the GTA, and their long-term care was the first to receive butterfly model-of-care accreditation in Ontario.

We all know they're home to Ontario's busiest airport, the Pearson international airport.

They provide \$10.3 million annually in funding to over 150 community agencies in the non-profit sector.

Just imagine then, Speaker, given all that I've cited about the size, the scale, the scope of Peel's activities, that the Premier would go and make an offhand remark to a former mayor of one of the three municipalities, "I'm going to break it up. We're going to dissolve the region."

Well, I have to say there is a potential for substantial unintended consequences. Now, to some extent, apparently, the government is aware of this, which is why it is armour-plating itself on the legal side so that one third of this bill—one third; that's amazing—is about protecting the province against legal liability.

1000

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Questions?

Ms. Natalie Pierre: Thank you to the member opposite for his remarks this morning. I wanted to ask the member about the power of consensus. We know this bill embodies co-operation, not conflict, and reflects the collective will of the municipalities, the local government. Mississauga, Brampton, Caledon and Peel region all agreed it was time for a more efficient, locally accountable model.

For the member opposite, will he stand with the municipalities in Peel region and respect their wishes by supporting this legislation?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: First of all, I appreciate the question from the member. It's fairly straightforward. I'm going to listen to the other speeches on this. I'm going to listen to my House leader and his sage advice on how we go forward. But I have to say, again, if there's that much consensus, why is there so much effort on legal protection? If you're in a room of happy people, you know it's unlikely that they're going to sue you—well, okay, it depends on the room you're in.

But mostly, when people are happy with an initiative on the part of the government, they don't think about lawsuits; they think about how we move this forward. What it says to me, with all of this protection from lawsuits, is that there's an apprehension on the part of the government that there are going to be a lot of unhappy people when this—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further questions?

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you to the member for Toronto–Danforth for your presentation today about the Peel transition bill. My question is about how we think this bill is going to impact how much ratepayers pay. Do you think this bill is going to increase the amount that ratepayers are going to pay for water and services, or do you think it's going to decrease the amount that ratepayers would pay?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate the question from the member. First of all, because water rates are currently 30%

below the average in the GTA, one has to ask, what are the opportunities here?

I would say that if, in fact, the structure that's being proposed—which is simply setting up a separate corporation—opens the door to further or future privatization, it inevitably would lead to much higher rates. You introduce a line item in an operating budget, which is the profit that has to be paid, and then you're adding an expense that didn't exist before. Now, it is not being proposed, I gather, immediately, that the new—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Response, please.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Pardon?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Response, please.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I am responding—it sets the stage for much higher rates in the future.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further questions?

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: Thank you to the member for Toronto–Danforth for your remarks. You understand municipal governments and municipal structure, how it works.

Peel region—not only Peel region, but Ontario—most of the municipal regions have grown exponentially. The world took a U-turn, you know. We are sitting on a 50-year-old, 100-year-old municipal structure. What we are trying to do: We are modernizing the municipal structure and the municipal governments.

I have to thank Minister Flack and former Minister Paul Calandra for coming forward and coming up with these wonderful changes.

Does the member agree that empowering a mature municipality like Peel region to take direct control of key public works functions reinforces the local democracy—you talk about democracy—and allows local councillors, who are the ones closest to the people, they bring the ideas—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Response?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I'll confess I didn't hear clearly all that was put forward, but I gather the essence is that we have a 50-year-old structure here and there's an opportunity to modernize it. Why wouldn't you do that?

What I would say, Speaker, is that if something is so obviously successful, so obviously able to deliver services at a lower cost, so obviously able to attract economic investment, so obviously a substantial part of Ontario's economy, that one has to be extraordinarily careful when you put your hands into it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Response, please.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Well, one thing alone, then: The idea of taking away their water and waste water system and setting up an independent corporation is not an indication that you're going to be improving the system. It says to me you're going to put it in jeopardy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further questions?

Ms. Jessica Bell: My question is again to the member for Toronto–Danforth. I listened to his speech, and I was struck by how he talked about the stability and the effectiveness of the existing corporation. Just to summarize, he mentioned that it had gotten a very high rating from Moody's and that it was providing services at a rate that was 30% lower than the GTA average.

My question to the member is: What is going to happen now if they move down this path of giving it a different corporate structure? What do you think can happen to the stability and the rates?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate the question. To some extent, it is hard to be certain what will happen. I was on Toronto city council in 1997 when the megacity amalgamation initiative was brought forward by the then Conservative government. I have to say, having gone through that, that it destabilizes a community for a long period of time, notwithstanding the fact that, as I remember, there wasn't a lot of language in the—we called it the megacity bill. There wasn't a lot of language about immunity for the province from lawsuits.

But the whole question of reorganizing the workforce, the certification votes that had to go on, the reorganization of city departments and the reorganization of services that were being delivered caused, for a number of years, tremendous difficulties. So I expect the same at least here.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further questions?

Mr. Will Bouma: Through you, Speaker, to the member from the Danforth: I appreciate his input and his years of experience in dealing at different levels of government.

I was wondering if he could provide the House an answer to this question, which is: We have before us a piece of legislation, colleagues, that was crafted directly with input from the region of Peel and all the municipalities there. This is fully supported by the entire region, and the levels of government there in Mississauga and in Caledon and—the third one escapes me right now.

But I was wondering if I could ask the member, then, the direct question: This is a piece of legislation that was crafted by these municipalities. We have it before us here as a direct result of that consultation, supported by all of them. Will the member listen to those municipalities and vote in favour of the legislation?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: First of all, I appreciate the question from the member. That's one that I am going to answer for myself as I listen to further debate and I discuss with our House leader.

My sense has been that there has not been the same calm, happy approach to this that you've outlined in your question. Again, I note the extensive piece in this bill for protection against lawsuits. That says to me that there's a lot of unhappy campers. That's always a bad indicator, when you go into a deal where everyone wants to protect themselves against a big lawsuit. Our critic on this expressed a lack of confidence that there was actually a lot of consensus and happiness on the part of those who are part of this process.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): There's only 30 seconds left. I think we'll move on to further debate.

Further debate?

Mr. Deepak Anand: Well—

Interjection: You won't forget Peel, will you?

Mr. Deepak Anand: Absolutely. Speaker, I cannot forget Peel. I cannot forget Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon.
1010

And, member from Brantford—Brant, talking about Brampton, I actually think people from Brampton call me, already, a resident of Brampton. The reason is simple: When I came to Canada in 2000, my first basement I rented was at 36 Oaklea Boulevard, Brampton. Then we moved to 165 Kennedy Road, which was Brampton. The first house we bought, 71 Native Landing, was Brampton. My first job was at High Polymer Labs, 188 West Boulevard, Brampton. My daughter was born in Peel Memorial, Brampton. So, if you really look at my early days of life, it was in Brampton.

And, my goodness, I have seen Brampton growing from 325,000 to over 800,000 people today. Look at that expansion—same as with Mississauga. When I moved to Mississauga in 2003, the population was close to 525,000—today, officially, about 750,000 to 775,000. With all the students that we have in Malton, you add another 20,000 or 30,000; that's about close to over 800,000.

So that's why, Mr. Speaker, we have this bill called the Peel Transition Implementation Act. The bill is something simple but important: making local service providers stronger, faster, more responsive for the people of Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon, and the growing communities, like Mississauga—Malton.

For decades, Peel operated under a structure which was created in 1974. I always give this example: When my brother and I were young, we had a house and my parents felt, "They're both not independent. Maybe they can help each other." So they gave us one single room to stay together. He was three years older than me, so I can look up to him, ask him if I need help. And with the passage of time, when we both grew, we both became independent, and we actually had our own independent needs also by this time. So that was the time when my parents felt, "Okay, they need independence and they need independent rooms."

So, in the same way, when this whole structure was created in 1974, Mississauga was, back then, 75,000 homes. Today, even Mississauga—Malton has 45,000 homes. And the population back then was 330,000, and today we have, as you all know, a dynamic city of 250,000 homes and over 760,000 people on book. Across the region, the growth of roads, traffic, waste needs and stormwater infrastructure has accelerated at a pace. The old model is not good enough, was never even designated to handle that growth.

So what is this bill doing? Bill 45 reflects this reality. It recognizes how much Peel has grown, how complex our needs have become and how urgently we must modernize the systems people rely on every single day. I was hearing from the member from Perth—Wellington. He said it so well: This is the government that listens to the people, and we are continuously progressing on making sure we have

a strong Ontario where people are heard and we work with their progress. So, speaking of this, that's what we're doing through Bill 45: strengthening Peel by bringing key local services directly under the cities that understand their neighbourhoods best.

I don't have much time, Speaker, but when I come back, I will be talking more about what we're going to do in this bill. But I just want to say this is the bill which is focused on making sure that things are clear and we have a unified system. It means that our regional roads—the ones people rely on every day—will now be planned, maintained, repaired and upgraded by the same cities, by the same people; the same people are going to be taking those decisions who manage the rest of their transportation network. Snow clearing—another great example—long-term planning, transit coordination—something which the people of Mississauga and Brampton need will be done by them, making the system smoother and more responsive.

And, looking at you, I'm kind of seeing nodding. Okay, I'm going to sit down and we'll continue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): The time has come for members' statements.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ECUMENICAL MEETING IN ISTANBUL

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: The ancient city of Constantinople, present day Istanbul in Türkiye, last week was the setting for a historic meeting that brought together spiritual leaders from around the world. At the centre was the commemoration of the 1,700-year anniversary of the first ecumenical council held in Nicaea in 325 AD, a pivotal event in Christian history.

Present were Pope Leo XIV, head of the Roman Catholic Church, and ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, leader of the Orthodox Christian Church. Their meeting brought together religious leaders, political representatives and many pilgrims to celebrate the feast of St. Andrew, the first-called apostle, the founder and patron of the church in Constantinople.

This gathering reflects the ongoing commitment toward dialogue, unity and reconciliation among the world's largest Christian confessions. The symbolism of the two spiritual leaders side by side as Pope Leo embarked on his first foreign visit illustrates the enduring pursuit of peace within and beyond religious communities.

Patriarch Bartholomew, the longest-serving patriarch in history, contributed his pastoral wisdom further highlighting the shared commitment to and need for spiritual leadership and collaboration.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Speaker, as we gather with friends, family and loved ones this holiday season, what

about those who don't have warmth or shelter and the things many of us take for granted?

The Ford government came to power in 2018, and their legacy has been marked by raising homelessness, expanding encampments and the complete annihilation of hope for far too many people. Housing is health care, and housing is fundamental. Without stable housing, not much else matters.

According to London's homelessness dashboard, nearly 1,500 people are currently homeless, with 45 active encampments in our city. Every day downtown and in beautiful Old East Village, we witness human suffering and hardship, scenes created by policy failures of the Ford government and an appalling lack of provincial care.

London is not unique. In every single city, town and municipality across Ontario, the same heartbreaking realities are playing out. The Ford government is ignoring small businesses and downtowns, leaving proud business owners increasingly frustrated by the lack of provincial supports, care and investment.

Let's invest in housing with wraparound supports. It's both an ethical and moral imperative and is far less costly than abandoning people.

Secondly, double social assistance rates and get people above the poverty line so they can rebuild their lives.

Lastly, stop attacking renters' protections. Restore rent control, reinstate vacancy control. These are the most effective steps we can take to improve affordability.

This season, I encourage all members to volunteer at your local soup kitchen or church dinner. Listen to people we serve, not just with your ears but with your heart.

This Christmas, may we choose compassion over indifference.

HOLIDAY EVENTS IN AJAX

Mr. Rob Cerjanec: The holiday season is here in Ajax, and our community is filled with warmth, celebration and opportunities to come together. St. Nick is truly in town.

Across the town, there's a wide variety of festive activities bringing neighbours and families closer together. A highlight for me was our annual Santa Claus parade and Santa's Spectacle of Lights. It was truly wonderful. The streets were full of smiling kids and families. We enjoyed seeing all the happy faces sharing excitement—and I promised my constituents I would wear this blazer in the Legislature.

From tree lightings and neighbourhood gatherings, Christmas in the Village, seasonal concerts, Hanukkah celebrations and new year's activities, the joy of Ajax is for all to see. Our recreation centres and community spaces are busy with winter break programs to keep kids engaged, and these celebrations remind us how strong our community spirit is and how much joy we create when coming together.

But as we enjoy these special moments, we must also remember that many in our community are struggling right now. Costs are rising, and the holidays are a difficult or lonely time for folks. So I'm proud to see the caring spirit of Ajax on full display—our mayor and council collecting

toys for the holidays for families who can't afford it on their own, community groups working together, food drives. These acts of kindness reflect the very best of who we are, and while not everyone can give in the same way, each of us can still extend that warm sense of community to all by reaching out to a neighbour and offering some support.

FILIPINO COMMUNITY

Mrs. Michelle Cooper: I rise today to proudly recognize the vibrant and growing Filipino community in the riding of Eglinton–Lawrence. This community plays a vital role in the life of our neighbourhoods, from health care workers and caregivers to educators, small business owners, faith leaders and volunteers. Filipino Canadians have long been known for their courage, deep sense of family, service to others and unwavering faith.

1020

This summer, I had the privilege of visiting Our Lady of the Assumption Parish during a special gathering with His Eminence Cardinal Frank Leo. It was an incredibly moving experience to witness thousands of Filipino families come together in prayer, celebration and unity. The energy and spirituality in that room reflected the strength of a community rooted in faith and service.

Today, we welcome board members from the Philippine Chamber of Commerce Toronto, an organization that champions Filipino entrepreneurs and strengthens economic ties across the city. Their work helps small businesses thrive and creates opportunities for the next generation of leaders.

Filipino organizations are continuing to make a real difference every day, like Philippine Legacy and Cultural Alliance, Kababayan Multicultural Centre, Taste of Manila and Fiesta Extravaganza.

To the Filipino families of Eglinton–Lawrence, thank you for everything you do.

SUZANNE OBIORAH

MPP Catherine McKenney: I rise today to congratulate Suzanne Obiorah, the CEO of Somerset West Community Health Centre, on receiving the Order of Ottawa.

I have had the privilege of knowing Suzanne for over a decade, and throughout that time, I have witnessed her unwavering commitment to our community. Her leadership exemplifies what it means to serve with both competence and compassion.

During my time on city council, I was pleased to see the city of Ottawa recognize Suzanne's talents and recruit her from Somerset West Community Health Centre. And when I left council, I was equally pleased when she was encouraged to return to the community through the centre, bringing her expertise back to where it continues to make such a profound difference.

The Order of Ottawa recognizes individuals who have made outstanding contributions to our city. Suzanne's dedication to health equity, community wellness and sup-

porting our most marginalized neighbours makes her deeply deserving of this honour.

Somerset West Community Health Centre serves thousands of residents in our community, providing essential primary care, mental health services and community programs. Under Suzanne's leadership, the centre continues to strengthen its role as a vital hub for health and well-being.

Speaker, I ask all members to join me in congratulating Suzanne Obiorah on this well-deserved recognition and in thanking her for her continued service to Ottawa Centre and to the entire city of Ottawa.

MARTEN FALLS FIRST NATION

Mr. Will Bouma: Good morning, Speaker. I am pleased to rise in the House today to highlight the recent community partnership agreement our government has signed with Marten Falls First Nation.

Marten Falls First Nation is a remote Anishinaabe community approximately 400 kilometres northeast of Thunder Bay, located where the Albany and Ogoki Rivers meet. Our government is providing \$39.5 million for important community infrastructure while supporting the development and construction of the Marten Falls community access road.

I had the honour to meet with Chief Bruce Achneepineskum last Thursday and was pleased to be able to share a lovely lunch alongside the entire Marten Falls First Nation. It was during lunch that Chief Bruce told me his community is mainly accessible by air, with winter roads available seasonally for usually six to eight weeks. I was humbled and elated to see the reactions of the chief and council as they described to me how much a road would enhance their lives and their community by better connecting them to the rest of the province.

I am proud to represent a government that is committed to strengthening its partnership with First Nations, as seen through the community partnership agreement with Marten Falls, by partnering on critical infrastructure projects that will enhance the lives of so many.

My time last week together with the chief and council from Marten Falls was deeply informative, and the bonds that we created will serve as the foundation for this continuing and greater partnership.

TOTAL COMMUNICATION ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Recently, I had the opportunity to attend a celebration for the 45th anniversary of TCE, Total Communication Environment, in my riding of Ottawa West–Nepean.

TCE began in an Ottawa living room in 1979 as a result of the determination of Christine Wilson to have better care options for people with developmental disabilities and special communications needs, like her son Jamie.

In 1981, TCE opened their first home, welcoming six children with multiple disabilities, including Jamie. As the

children aged, TCE created new homes offering age-appropriate care so that residents could remain within TCE rather than having to move on to another organization. Today, TCE serves 90 individuals of all ages in 14 supportive living homes, cared for by over 200 staff. They receive person-centred care, offering them access to programs and events that respect each individual's interests.

Like many organizations providing residential care and day programming to people with developmental disabilities, TCE has been squeezed by persistent underfunding of the sector. How we care for our most vulnerable members says a lot about who we are as a society and, right now, our record as a province isn't so great. But I'm grateful for organizations like TCE that put in the hard work and overcome all of the challenges to keep providing great care and support.

Thank you to all of the TCE staff, volunteers and board members, and to the Wilson family for showing up every day with great commitment, and congratulations on an amazing legacy.

FERTILITY SERVICES

Ms. Natalie Pierre: Recently, I had the opportunity to visit ONE Fertility and Trio Fertility, two fertility clinics in Burlington doing remarkable work to help more people across Ontario start and grow their families. During my visit, I heard how life-changing access to fertility care can be, and I saw the dedication of the clinicians, the nurses and the specialists who support individuals on what is often a very deeply emotional journey.

Speaker, our government's recent \$250-million investment to expand access to fertility treatments is already making a real difference. This funding is one of the largest fertility investments in Ontario's history and will support 25 new and expanded clinics, including six new IVF clinics helping to triple the number of families benefiting from publicly funded fertility supports. Fertility care is more than about treatment; it's about hope, dignity and giving people the chance to build the families they dream of.

I want to extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to the teams at ONE Fertility and Trio Fertility in my community of Burlington for their leadership and their compassion. Their work is helping more people in my community realize the possibility of parenthood.

INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I have more great news from Essex county, this time from the town of Kingsville. The province of Ontario has a multi-million dollar fund called the Housing-Enabling Water Systems Fund. It helps municipalities build things like water lines and sewer lines.

The town of Kingsville applied for and received a grant under this program in the grand sum of over \$9 million. This fund will help Kingsville build the infrastructure necessary to build homes in the province of Ontario—single-family homes, semi-detached homes, multi-resi-

dential homes—a home for every taste and a home for every style.

I want to thank the Minister of Infrastructure and the leadership of the Premier for introducing this remarkable infrastructure fund that is building infrastructure not only in Kingsville and in the county of Essex, but across the province of Ontario so that we can build more homes for the future: homes for young people, homes for retiring people, homes for everybody because everybody can find a home in the province of Ontario.

MINOR HOCKEY

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I seek unanimous consent to wear the jersey of the Kitchener hockey team, the Kitchener Rangers, during my member's statement.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The member for Kitchener Centre is seeking unanimous consent to wear the Kitchener Rangers jersey during her member's statement. Agreed? Agreed.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

All across Ontario this weekend, families, kids and volunteers head to arenas, turfs and gyms. While I played only my first game of hockey last week—thank you, Dave Smith—my kids have enjoyed the sport from a young age. We hockey moms endure early mornings, games out of town and a hit to the pocketbook. I might groan sometimes, but it's all worth it because you see the joy in your kids' face when they hit the ice.

None of this would be possible if it weren't for the hard work and dedication of minor sports organizations and our volunteer coaches. To coach kids is a special gift. There's so much to do: setting up drills, organizing tournaments, staying up late, waking up early, putting up with behaviour and everything in between. They support kids to become athletes. They build the character of the next generation. They inspire them when they're feeling sad. They dry their tears when they lose, and they savour core memories with wins. But above all, they help our kids build healthy relationships and to see value in themselves.

1030

I want to thank the Kitchener Minor Hockey Association, and of course, our coaches and volunteers.

To the Pirates: I want to thank Mike, Cody, Nicole and Craig.

And to our Lady Rangers coaches, Bob, Derek, Jamie and Craig: Let's go, Rangers!

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I'd like to draw your attention to the Speaker's gallery. With us today we have the former Speaker in the 39th Parliament, Steve Peters, who was also the representative for Elgin–Middlesex–London in the 37th, 38th and 39th Parliaments.

Also joining us today is the former representative for Hamilton Mountain, Monique Taylor, who represented

Hamilton Mountain in the 40th, 41st, 42nd and 43rd Parliaments.

Welcome back.

Joining us in the public gallery is Brad Duguid, from Scarborough Centre, representing Scarborough Centre in the 38th, 39th, 40th and 41st Parliaments.

Welcome back.

Applause.

Mr. Stéphane Sarrazin: I'm pleased to welcome Dr. Rob Beanlands, president and CEO, and Jennifer Kuss, vice-president of communications of the Ottawa Heart Institute.

I would also like to welcome Francois Abdelnour, who is the energy director at Ivaco Rolling Mills, who is here with us today. He is actually here with AMPCO, Association of Major Power Consumers in Ontario.

Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: It's my pleasure to welcome to the House members from the Ontario Real Estate Association from my riding, Cornerstone Association of Realtors: Lou Piriano, Goris Nazari, David Zalepa, Bill Duce and Stéphane Hamade.

Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I had a wonderful meeting this morning with the Niagara realtor association, and I'd like to welcome Ms. Finora and Sarah Hart.

Welcome to your House, and thank you for your lovely meeting.

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: I'd like to welcome, from my riding of York-Simcoe, community leader Tariq Marwan, of Bradford, as well as Karol Kwiek, who worked as a summer student in my const office. He's visiting Queen's Park today with his mother, Magdalena.

Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Trevor Jones: I'd like to welcome members of the Ontario Greenhouse Alliance to Queen's Park and remind all our colleagues to please attend their reception this evening in rooms 228 and 230.

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: I want to welcome Joe Reid from the city of Belleville. Thank you for coming, and welcome to your House.

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: I'm delighted this morning to introduce two distinguished guests who are visiting all the way from Italy: Donato Bellisario, the mayor of Pescosolido, a beautiful municipality in the region of Lazio; also, Enrico Neri, councillor of Pescosolido.

I'd also like to welcome people from Vaughan-Woodbridge: Marino Moscone, Mary Mauti, Sam Ciccolini, Sabrina Baldesarra, Aldo Carinci, Anna Cianfarani, Carlo Corsetti, Enzo Neri and Angelo Carnevale.

Welcome—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The member for Niagara Falls.

MPP Wayne Gates: I'd like to welcome Wayne Harris, Marv Mulder and Linda Mulder. Thanks for coming to the deeming press conference today. Welcome to your House again.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Good morning, everyone. I'd like to welcome jazzy Jerry Krzywda from TRREB—

Toronto real estate board—and OREA, here in the House today, and everyone else—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The Minister for Seniors and Accessibility.

Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: I'd like to welcome Matthew Grainger, a constituent of Northumberland-Peterborough South. He's a talented young man with a bright future and my favourite staff member at the Premier's office. Welcome to Queen's Park.

MPP Bill Rosenberg: I'd like to thank my staff from Thessalon today: Robin Horwath; Maria Trudeau; MaryKaye Karhi; Robin's wife, Susan; and the boss, my wife, Jeannine.

Mrs. Michelle Cooper: I'm pleased to introduce members from the Toronto Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Our Lady of the Assumption Parish who are here. Welcome to Queen's Park.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: I would like to welcome, from the Ontario Real Estate Association from my riding of Thunder Bay-Superior North, Karen Hill, Bob Pfaff and Erin Nadon. Welcome to your House.

Hon. Sam Oosterhoff: We have a number of folks who are here today with the Association of Major Power Consumers of Ontario. I want to especially acknowledge Brad Duguid and Jeff who are here as well. I appreciate all of you coming for breakfast and I'm looking forward to the meetings later today.

MPP Monica Ciriello: I'd like to welcome two councillors from the city of Hamilton, Councillor Spadafora and Councillor Francis.

Hon. Steve Clark: I'd like to introduce members of the Rideau-St. Lawrence Real Estate Board: Chris Wiltshire, board president; Andrea Denison; Connie McNamee; Dana Pearce; and Paul Martin. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: I'd like to welcome to the House this morning Mr. Barry Evans from Durham, a leading trial and appellate lawyer in the province of Ontario. Welcome.

Hon. Stan Cho: Speaker, are you ready for this? A legend in Canadian music is here. Seven-time Grammy award winner—music from Drake to Eminem to Nicki Minaj—Boi-1da right there in the gallery. Welcome to the Legislature.

Mme France Gélinas: I'd like welcome Liana Bacon, Paul Kusnierczyk, Luc Bock and Tanya Vanden Berg from the Ontario Real Estate Association, Sudbury region. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: I would like to welcome Marco D'Angelo and Maureen Cosyn Heath, who are with the Ontario Public Transit Association.

HOUSE SITTINGS

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the government House leader on a point of order.

Hon. Steve Clark: Thanks, Speaker. I'd like to announce to the House that the night sitting scheduled for this evening has been cancelled.

REMARKABLE WOMEN AT QUEEN'S PARK

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Colleagues, as you will recall, I recently launched the Remarkable Women in the Workplace initiative, a monthly recognition program celebrating the outstanding women who work for the Office of the Assembly. These individuals exemplify dedication, professionalism and leadership in their roles, and this initiative is a small but meaningful way to honour their contributions to the Legislature.

Today, I'm pleased to draw your attention to the Speaker's gallery and introduce our newest honouree, Sara Bortolotto, administrative financial coordinator for parliamentary food services. Since October 2023, Sara has been leading our cafe operations with energy, passion and a sharp eye for quality. Originally from Italy, she brings a deep appreciation for food—cannoli—and beverage and a true love for hospitality. Her guest-first mindset and strong work ethic help ensure the cafe runs smoothly, even on the busiest days. Sara has introduced new service ideas, supported staff training and built a welcoming environment that keeps people coming back.

On behalf of all members and staff, I extend our heartfelt congratulations and gratitude to Sara. Thank you for your remarkable service to Ontario's Parliament.

Applause.

QUESTION PERIOD

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Marit Stiles: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday, 1,000 families in Sault Ste. Marie got some pretty terrible news: 1,000 workers got their layoff notices; 1,000 families got the rug pulled out from under them just before the holidays. This is going to be really devastating for that community. These are good union jobs that built that community, built this province. These are workers who are ready to roll up their sleeves to build this province once again.

1040

So, to the Premier, why didn't the Premier have a plan to protect those jobs?

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

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: Thank you to the Leader of the Opposition for the question. I wanted to start today by saying that we are not only thinking about those 1,000 workers and their families in Sault Ste. Marie, but we are working tirelessly to support them. We will be dispatching a POWER centre immediately to Sault Ste. Marie to make sure that those workers have the support and the retraining that they need to find new opportunities.

But, Madam Speaker, make no mistake about it: President Trump is coming for our steel jobs, our lumber jobs, our manufacturing jobs. He wants to see all of them shipped down to the United States, and Algoma Steel is on

the front lines of that battle, with crushing 50% tariffs that block market access to the United States, where they derive 60% of their revenue. That's why we stepped forward with the Protect Ontario Financing Program, which supplied \$100 million of support to that company when they needed it the most.

The very frustrating thing on this side of the House is that that party likes to talk about support for workers, support for manufacturers, but every time we put forward a measure, they vote against it. You can't just talk about supporting workers; you have to be about supporting workers. We are going to support those workers in Sault Ste. Marie.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Wow. Wow. Let me tell you, the workers want paycheques, not handouts, Speaker. They want good, unionized jobs, and these workers, they want stability.

Let's talk about that \$100 million that the government handed over to that company, because we have seen this play out so many times before. I was in the Soo just last month, and let me tell you, those steel workers told me that what they wanted was to be at the table. They wanted to be at the table themselves, but instead what happens every single time, just like every other time, the Premier sits down with the bosses and he hands them the paycheques while they hand the workers the pink slips. That's what happens.

So my question to the Premier is, why did the Premier hand 100 million taxpayer dollars over to a company without any guarantees that they would save those jobs?

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: Thank you to the Leader of the Opposition for the question. That \$100-million loan that we made available to Algoma Steel, in partnership with the \$400 million put forward by the federal government, is to help them get through this transitional period as they move to electric arc furnaces, which will not only be more efficient and help them better control their inputs as their outputs waned because of the trade crisis, but it will make sure that there is a future for steel jobs in this province and a future for steel jobs in Sault Ste. Marie.

We know that those workers don't want bailouts. They want to get back to work, and that is exactly what we are delivering to those workers. Through our POWER Centres, through our support for this sector, we are making sure that high-quality steel continues to be made in Ontario by the greatest workers in the world, and we will never back down from supporting our 17,000 steel workers.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, this is getting pretty tiring. I don't know what the government doesn't understand about attaching strings to 100 million taxpayer dollars. We have 3,000 workers in Brampton facing layoffs; we have 1,200 in Ingersoll; there are hundreds and hundreds of people all across this province—in Oshawa, elsewhere—who don't know whether they're going to have a job to-

morrow—1,000 more people in Sault Ste. Marie without jobs.

Instead of bringing the workers to the table and ensuring that they could keep those jobs, this government is always more focused on putting money in the pockets of their friends and their donors. So 1,000 workers and families are watching their jobs disappear. They deserve good jobs. They deserve good wages. They deserve a government who is going to stand up for them every single time to defend their families, to defend their livelihoods. Why will the Premier not stand up for those workers?

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: Madam Speaker, the statement that that member just made was so manufactured, she might qualify for a tax credit. But, unfortunately, she would vote against that tax credit, just like you voted against the Ontario Made Manufacturing Investment Tax Credit; just like you voted against the Ontario Together Trade Fund; just like you voted against the \$30-billion package of support that we have put forward to protect workers, to protect industries, to make sure that our jobs are not shipped down to the United States.

These workers knew that this was a big opportunity to make sure that steel production continues in Sault Ste. Marie. We know how important it is to that community; we made the investment to guarantee the future of high-quality steel made in Ontario, made in Sault Ste. Marie, and we have secured the future of that industry.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Marit Stiles: That's quite a performance, but it's not going to put gifts under the tree or food on the table.

Interjections.

Ms. Marit Stiles: That's right.

Speaker, let's talk about what this government's priorities actually are because yesterday, in committee, public servants have confirmed what we have been saying all along: The Minister of Labour has been picking winners and losers for the Skills Development Fund.

Did the Premier know that his minister was hand-picking low-scoring applications for the Skills Development Fund?

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

Hon. David Piccini: Speaker, that's not new news; it's something I've stood in this House and said. We take ministerial accountability. I'm proud of the decisions we've made as a government to invest in workers in every corner of the province.

Just this morning, I was at a labour conference in Etobicoke where we had employers, where we had union representatives alike. We talked about the investments to build. They recognized, for the first time, a significant commitment to nation-build: a commitment to build new nuclear that's going to bring 18,000 jobs with small modular reactors alone and another 30,000 jobs with the Pickering refurbishment.

The civil construction investments this government is making are critical to support an economy at a time when

we so desperately need it. To put men and women to work, to build hospitals, to build schools, to build public transit infrastructure, we're supporting them with skills, investment funds and investments to break down barriers for a talent pipeline to support that work.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Supplementary?

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, it's hard to keep track of his answers because one day he takes responsibility; the next day, he blames somebody else.

We know that the minister picked all the projects. We also know that he decided how much money they would receive. Don't just take it from me; take it from the very public servants that he has tried to throw under the bus: \$2 million to the Premier's family dentist, \$7.5 million to Keel Digital Solutions—that's the company that's connected to the Paris groom. We're following along here—\$10 million to the Premier's favourite nightclub owner and more than \$100 million to the clients of the Premier's campaign manager.

You're all seeing this, right, aren't you? You're seeing this too.

Can the Premier explain what direction he gave to the Minister of Labour to hand out these grants?

Hon. David Piccini: Speaker, as you heard yesterday, it was documented: the monthly reports that are done, the audits that are done, the transfer payment agreement process where that's negotiated.

Of course, we're going to make those investments that support men and women; that support people in the skilled trades, for example; that support health care workers.

Again, this morning I met with a number of leaders from various locals around Ontario. They said that for the first time ever this government is investing in meaningful pre-apprenticeship pathways, breaking down barriers for underrepresented groups to enter the trades.

We have a record number of people who have signed up: 105,000 active apprenticeships right now in the system. We've seen more youth registering for apprenticeships, whether it's a LIUNA local, carpenters, IBEW in Durham region—in my community alone, entering the incredible nuclear workforce. And it's millwrights; I saw millwrights this morning as well. Not one of those locals, the member of the opposite has visited. She has never taken the time to talk to a single worker that has benefited from this fund. She's just politicizing it.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: You can't seriously think that the people of Ontario are going to let you get away with this again. You can't seriously think—

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Your donors, your friends, your campaign manager, their lobbyists—this is not a coincidence, right? The scandal is not going away. The Premier's dentist, his favourite strip club owner, his campaign manager: every road leads to the Premier. We know the buck stops with him.

When is the Premier ever going to show up to answer the questions of the people of this province about this scandal—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): This is the third day in a row.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Well, he should show up, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): You have been warned.

Do you want to answer that? I recognize the Minister of Labour.

Hon. David Piccini: Thank you, Speaker. I'm happy to.

Yesterday, Speaker, we saw officials talk about the continuous improvement of the Skills Development Fund that was established in the wake of a global pandemic to get people back to work, to get them back to the office. A key tenet of this government, something we took to the people just a few months ago, was a commitment to build a stronger Ontario.

1050

Again, the member opposite has never visited one of the local training centres that have benefited, one of the local unions, the men and women who are building a stronger Ontario, Speaker—as I said, in the nuclear sector, the incredible investments to support homes and infrastructure.

You know, Speaker, in my community alone, we've seen historic investments in waste water treatment plants, in trenching and shoring, to ensure that we have the critical sewer trunks needed to support new homes. These are specific things needed to support a growing Ontario.

It's a shame she couldn't be bothered to visit the local of any of those local unions that are actually doing the work, benefiting from the Skills Development Fund.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. John Fraser: My question is for the Premier. Yesterday, the Ministry of Labour's staff appeared before the public accounts committee. It was clear from their testimony that it was the minister who was responsible for all decisions related to the Skills Development Fund. So we asked them, "Can you provide us with a list of all those Skills Development Fund applicants, their scoring, how much money they got?" We were told that was confidential advice to the government. I just think it's reasonable for Ontarians to expect to know why the minister made the decisions that he did.

So will the Premier release the full list of Skills Development Fund applicants to this House so we can get to the bottom of this?

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

Hon. David Piccini: Speaker, I appreciate the great work that officials in our ministry do each and every day to support our labour sector, to support men and women in training across Ontario and the work that was done yesterday to explain the important work of this fund. Of course the minister makes decisions. Who else in the

ministry would? And we're doing it to support the men and women of Ontario.

When he asks about priorities, we talked about priorities that we took to the people—a priority to build; to protect workers; a priority that's going to actually build hospitals; that's going to build new nuclear plants, plants that they wanted to close down; priorities that are going to ensure we have the infrastructure to support homes; priorities to build new schools, new hospitals. It's men and women supported by the Skills Development Fund that are getting the job done.

I would ask that member—I would encourage him: Visit one local, talk to one of the programs, actually talk to apprentices that are benefiting, because it's changing their lives. It's giving them access to better training for a better job with a bigger paycheck.

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

Mr. John Fraser: So the minister respects his public servants so much that when they said, "Don't do it. It's a risk. Don't do it," he said more than half the time, "I'm going to do it." That's a lot of respect, Minister. I could see it on their faces yesterday.

So we asked for a redacted list of the 670 high-scoring projects that this minister and maybe the one before rejected. Simple: We just want to know, why did you choose the strip club owner over the great-ranking project or the family dentist over the great-ranking project or the lawyer appointee over the great-scoring project? It's obvious what's happening here.

Can the Premier release the list of the 670 high-scoring applicants?

Hon. David Piccini: In fact, when I became minister, we released the full list of all SDF recipients from rounds 1 to 3, and we continue to.

Speaker, just go look at newsroom. We've publicly announced every single SDF recipient and the incredible work that they're doing.

I think to some important partners. This morning at that conference, we talked about the value of work that Oaks Revitalization has done—Mark Tenaglia, Joe, for example, two people doing incredible work offering a second chance for men and women in the construction sector, for people who want access to better training. We visited them. We've seen their program that's supported through the Skills Development Fund. It's getting people on job sites.

And then I've often reflected on the Bridgecon project that I visited two weeks ago, where I met one of their graduates. These are real Ontarians getting better training, working.

That member can't even name one because he's never bothered to actually visit the sites to see the incredible work being done, Speaker. It's changing lives.

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

Mr. John Fraser: Maybe the minister didn't hear me clearly. I asked for the list of the 670 high-scoring applicants who didn't receive money because maybe their

work would have helped Ontarians get jobs. Maybe that wasn't as important as rewarding a friend or an insider. There are 700,000 people in Ontario out of work; 1,000 of them in Sault Ste. Marie found that that was going to be the case with them. It is incredible that this minister can't answer any questions—simple, straightforward questions.

I guess my question for the Premier is: Since you're rewarding your friends and insiders and donors, how do you look those unemployed Ontarians in the eye and say, "I'm helping you"? Because you're not.

Hon. David Piccini: Speaker, we are: 100,000 Ontarians have achieved employment within 60 days or less thanks to the Skills Development Fund. Find me one program in Ontario that has those sorts of outcomes. I've stood up here and spoken about the continuous improvement measures we've taken with the program, a program that is changing lives. We've met the youth unemployed through youth employment services. There's incredible work they're doing to take unemployed youth, give them rapid training to land jobs.

We know that the previous government just wanted a service sector. They didn't care about tech jobs. They didn't care about jobs in the construction sector. We saw a declining number of men and women in apprenticeships. The service sector alone can't build the highways, hospitals, roads and bridges we need.

It's not a surprise they wanted to shut down the Pickering plant. They didn't want to build the Ontario Line. They opposed the Bradford Bypass. They opposed Highway 413.

Working-class men and women in Ontario see the value of these projects. It's putting people to work—

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

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. John Fraser: My question is for the Premier. Yesterday at committee, Keel Digital Solutions and the fact that they got tens of millions of dollars and continued to get it while they were under forensic audit came up. It's still not clear how that could happen.

If the President of the Treasury Board wants to step in here, I'd really appreciate it. But what I want to know is, can the minister or the Premier explain to us just exactly what checks were done for all the applicants of the Skills Development Fund?

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

Hon. David Piccini: As I said and as the ministry officials highlighted yesterday, we work closely. I take accountability for this program that has continuously improved over every successive round.

Let's not forget its origin stemmed from the pandemic, when people were literally dividing their families into social bubbles. We were trying to get people back to work to kick-start this economy to support the hospitality sector that was ravaged, to kick-start construction projects to

support the incredible growth we need to see in this province.

Now we're nation-building. We can no longer rely on our closest ally, who has launched an all-out assault on our steel sector, on our automotive sector. We need to have a program that is there to rapidly support and train workers with better training for better jobs, and we've done it.

We've highlighted the programs. We've brought many of the recipients here, and 100,000 people have achieved employment within 60 days or less. The Auditor General spoke about the strength of the KPIs, about the strength of retraining. We're going to keep doing that for the people of Ontario.

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

Mr. John Fraser: Yesterday at the public accounts committee, we asked the ministry staff about what background checks were done on Skills Development Fund applicants. We know that they're now checking to see if they're a lobbyist or a consultant. It's a little late for that, but we know already, so that's not really much of a background check for us. It's not clear what background checks are being done about the principals in companies, the companies themselves, any individuals involved with a Skills Development Fund application.

I didn't hear an answer in the minister's last response. So can the minister please explain to us just exactly what background checks are being done?

Hon. David Piccini: As I've said before, the team reviews. We have thousands of applicants that come in through the Skills Development Fund. It's an oversubscribed program, speaking to its efficacy and the strength of the work that this program does.

The member referenced that we have a public registry, and we've taken steps, thanks to the recommendations of the Auditor General, to continue to improve the program. I'm grateful for the officials in our department who we're working with to implement those changes, changes for a program that has, as I said, helped 100,000 people find employment.

In the north, the Ring of Fire, you've seen two announcements the Premier's made this past week. We've helped people like Jennifer with the common core training—Jennifer with Musselwhite mine. She's now working up north.

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The members opposite laugh. They've never actually visited a mine. They've never actually gone to speak to the workers and speak to the folks being retrained. Why? Because they vote against every measure to unlock the potential of the—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Order.

The leader of the third party.

Mr. John Fraser: Well, you know, \$2 billion has gone out the door, and you'd think you'd might want to know who you're dealing with when you're sending that money out the door. It's part of assessing risk: knowing who you're dealing with.

Does the minister, in assessing risk, check for things like previous dealings with the Ontario government? Do they check for litigations, settlements involving the government? Do they check for securities violations, sanctions or anything that would be untoward or a risk for the government? Instances of fraud? Through you, Speaker, does the minister check for any of these things?

Hon. David Piccini: This program is about impact, and the impact that it's having on everyday Ontarians. The team at our ministry does work, as we've mentioned—monthly visits, audits, visits of successful SDF funding recipients.

We heard yesterday about the strength of those visits to assess training and the work that it's doing to change lives. When we talk about impact, we think about the 100,000 Ontarians that have found employment within 60 days or less.

We think of underrepresented groups—the young people in Hammer Heads, an incredible program that's putting people like Marvin on the front lines of the work that we're doing with the GO train. There are so many—Ontario Line, GO train—but it's Union Station where I met Marvin, Speaker, a Hammer Heads graduate who's now a foreman with Alberici.

We've spoken about employers, about the linkages with labour to build a stronger Ontario. This program is having an impact and we're proud to support these young people on their apprenticeship journey.

UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE FUNDING

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Premier. Thousands of jobs are being lost at Ontario colleges and universities across the province. Student services are being cut, hundreds of programs have been cancelled and entire campuses are shutting down.

In the middle of a trade war, this is hurting students, it is hurting communities and it is hurting local economies, and it's only just beginning. A college president told me that without an urgent increase in government funding, everything will be on the table: more layoffs, more program cuts, more campuses closing.

Speaker, what is this government's plan to deal with the \$2.1-billion revenue loss facing Ontario universities and the \$1.5 billion that our colleges need now to stay afloat?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Response? I recognize the member for Mississauga—Malton.

Mr. Deepak Anand: The question has two components. I'm going to start with the first one and I'm going to take the second one in the supplement.

Before I start, I want to say thank you to all the educators, the students and the faculty at the colleges and universities. Today, Ontario is strong because of strong partnerships between this government and all of you. So thank you for that.

The question's first component talks about the funding. I want to share with everybody, through you, Madam Speaker: In the last nine months alone, our government has invested nearly \$1 billion—with a B—into publicly

assisted colleges and universities to fund over 100,000 more seats in programs that produce graduates to meet Ontario's market demands.

This is not enough, Madam Speaker. We also included \$750 million to fund 20,000 STEM seats annually and \$75 million in construction-related programs to fund 7,800 new seats.

We are making these investments because we believe in a strong future for Ontario, which is going to come through—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the member from London West.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: This member should know that Ontario provides the lowest per-student funding in all of Canada.

We are seeing college programs like culinary and hospitality closing down at Loyalist, George Brown, Confederation and elsewhere. At the same time, this government is funnelling money through the Skills Development Fund to low-scoring, private sector companies like Scale Hospitality.

Instead of investing in our public post-secondary system, we hear that this government is now floating the idea of making students pay more. Speaker, a funding formula review that only moves money around won't fix the problem. Will this government commit today to the increased per-student funding that our colleges and universities urgently need?

Mr. Deepak Anand: Thank you to the member opposite for that important question because something that we believe is our future is our students. Talking about the international students, something which we have seen a growth of—between 2013 to 2023, there was a growth of 397%. It's kind of saying that you have to drive on a highway and your instructor is asking you to increase the speed and then asking you to apply your brake with the wall in front of you. That's exactly what happened.

Madam Speaker, this government is here to support our students. But we didn't stop here. We continue to work to make sure we are modernizing the funding model to be a more responsible, sustainable and future-ready framework that fits the current post-secondary landscape. This includes discussion with how we can better make sure—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Question?

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Jonathan Tsao: Ontarians work hard. They pay their taxes expecting that money goes to support hospitals, schools and transit. Instead, this Premier has built a system that rewards insiders: donate and you get access; don't and the door slams shut.

Yesterday we learned that yet another major donor to the Conservative Party, an Etobicoke dentist with close ties to the Premier, was awarded \$2 million from the skills development slush fund. Speaker, can the Premier explain why he gave \$2 million to an Etobicoke dentist/donor instead of using that money to help workers?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member for York South–Weston.

MPP Mohamed Firin: Speaker, I'd like to thank the member for the question. We've got a province to build—\$200,000 worth of infrastructure. That needs workers, and that's why our Skills Development Fund is funding those workers. Some 700,000 workers have been trained through this program. One in seven of those workers received a job within the first 60 days. That's something to be very proud of.

I've travelled this province, and the minister just mentioned earlier today the Hammer Heads program, a program in my riding of York South–Weston that's delivering real results. What that program is doing—there's a hundred youth that have graduated from that program, but the program is motivating thousands of marginalized youth across my riding that they're going to have an opportunity, that there's an opportunity for them when they get trained.

Speaker, I'll tell the member—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The Minister of Natural Resources will come to order.

Back to the member for Don Valley North.

Mr. Jonathan Tsao: Speaker, the minister still refuses to answer the question. Ontarians still don't know what criteria are used or what safeguards exist to prevent political interference. I guess no matter what it was, it clearly didn't work. This matters, Speaker, because only a small handful of dental companies in Ontario even received Skills Development Funding, and at least two have direct ties to the Premier and to his party.

The other week it was \$10.5 million to a Tory strip club owner. Today it's \$2 million to a dentist in the Premier's inner circle. When will this disrespect for taxpayers finally end?

MPP Mohamed Firin: Speaker, I'd like to thank the member opposite. And I'd actually like to correct myself. It's actually \$220 billion worth of infrastructure.

Speaker, through the Skills Development Fund, we're supporting every sector, whether it's our health care—52,000 health care workers are being funded; \$60 billion worth of hospitals that we're building. And you know what they need, Speaker? They need workers—the same program that the member opposite voted against in the budget.

It's sad. They go out there and pull stunts and talk about how they support these workers, but when it comes to it, they don't vote for the workers—\$70 billion worth of transportation announced by the Minister of Transportation, but when they get the chance to vote for it, they vote no. The \$30 billion to protect the workers of this province, as the PA over there mentioned—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Response?

MPP Mohamed Firin: —again, they vote no. They can ask these questions but then continue to vote no again and again.

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HOUSING

Mr. Joseph Racinsky: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Ontario families want to see homes being built faster and more affordably in our province. They are tired of delays, red tape or empty lots sitting idle. They want action. Under the previous Liberal government, we saw unnecessary rules and outdated processes slow down construction and drive up costs. This resulted in fewer housing starts and higher prices for families who are already struggling.

Our government is taking a different approach. Under the Premier's leadership, we are putting people first and making housing more affordable by removing barriers and speeding up approvals.

Speaker, can the minister please explain how our government is protecting Ontarians and building a stronger, more affordable housing market for everyone?

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

Ms. Laura Smith: I want to thank the member from Wellington–Halton Hills for the incredible work he does for his community every day. Thanks for the question.

Our government is focused on building homes, not bureaucracy. That's why we've taken action to streamline approvals and eliminate unnecessary site plan requirements that added months of delays and thousands of dollars in costs. These changes mean home builders can spend less time waiting and more time building. We're setting clear consistent standards across Ontario so that every municipality plays by the same rules. This is about common sense: cutting red tape, lowering costs and delivering homes that Ontarians need.

By removing duplication and uncertainty, we're helping families move into homes faster, making housing more affordable to everyone. We will not allow unnecessary rules to stand in the way of building homes for the people of Ontario. We're committed to ensuring every family has access to housing that builders can work on without unnecessary delay and confusion.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the member for Wellington–Halton Hills.

Mr. Joseph Racinsky: Thank you to the PA for that response. Ontarians can't afford more delays and high costs. They want a fair, predictable system that gets homes built quickly and affordably. For too long, municipal red tape and previous government mismanagement stood in the way. Those delays drove up costs, slowed down projects and made it harder for families to find a place to call home. Our government is saying no to the status quo. We are working with municipal leaders and home builders to get shovels in the ground faster so we can build more homes.

Speaker, can the minister share what steps our government is taking to remove the barriers that stand in the way of getting homes built for Ontarians?

Ms. Laura Smith: The member is absolutely right. Every delay adds costs and every cost makes housing less affordable. That's why our government is continuing to bring common sense back to the housing system. By removing redundant site plan controls and standardizing building requirements across Ontario, we're saving builders time and saving homebuyers money. We're cutting costs, reducing duplication and ensuring that every municipality plays by the same clear rules: one building code, one standard, one Ontario.

The opposition believes in costly delays and complex processes; Ontarians rejected that approach, giving us a strong mandate to keep building homes faster and more affordably. The message is quite simple: It's time to build homes, not bureaucracy. Families deserve homes that they can afford, and we are delivering on our promise. Together we're building stronger communities and creating opportunities to ensure Ontarians remain in a place where—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Question?

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Sandy Shaw: My question is for the Premier. Good morning, Premier.

This government is a jobs disaster for Ontario and for Hamilton. A recent stat shows a loss of 4,000 Hamilton jobs from September to October this year alone—job losses in manufacturing, in steel, and now we are facing hospital job losses. The health minister has stood in this House many times and blamed local hospitals for this crisis, but these job losses are a direct result of government cuts to our hospital.

Premier, the finger pointing and the blame game has to stop. We need you to take responsibility and do something to make sure that our Hamilton hospitals are fully funded and fully staffed.

Hon. Doug Ford: I want to thank the member from the doom-and-gloom party—that nothing can be built and when we do build things, you vote against it.

Let's go back to 2018, when the NDP and the Liberals destroyed our province, chased 300,000 jobs out of this province. Let's remind people that there's 1,080,000 more people working today than there were in 2018. Let's remind everyone the GDP was \$825 million under your watch; it's \$1.21 trillion.

We've attracted \$70 billion of investment here, creating hundreds and hundreds of thousands of new jobs, and you vote against it. You vote against the health care spending that we're doing. We've increased health care, hiring 100,000 nurses, 20,000 doctors—\$60 billion in builds. But guess what? You don't believe in that—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Question?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Premier, you must see that blaming hospitals is not the action that we need across the province. Blaming others and not taking responsibility is not the sign of a good leader.

And this is not just a Hamilton problem. In fact, half of Ontario hospitals, under your watch, are dealing with deficits created by the negligence of this government—all

across Ontario. Communities like North Bay, like Niagara, are facing hospital job cuts.

Hospital job losses hit real workers with families to support. It's almost Christmas. They hit patients who are already waiting too long in the ER, waiting for a treatment, waiting for a bed. And with flu season here, this is a disaster for the people of Hamilton and the staff who work so hard.

Can you please tell the people of Hamilton what you, Premier, will do to prevent these job losses in Hamilton?

Hon. Doug Ford: Well, Madam Speaker, let's talk about the health care system. We walked in in 2018. It was a disaster, the health care. We went from \$61 billion in spending up to \$91 billion in spending—more than anywhere in the entire country, an increase of 50%. We added another 3,500 beds that they all voted against. And we're building new hospitals to add another 3,000 beds.

There's nowhere in North America that is spending more on building new hospitals, putting additions on hospitals, making sure we pay for the doctors' education—never been done—making sure that we pay for the nurses' education. That's never been done. We've added medical seats. We're building medical schools. That's what we're doing, but you vote against it. So you aren't for the doctors. You aren't for the nurses.

And do me a favour: Call any CEO of any hospital and ask him, is it better now, or was it better under the doom-and-gloom—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Order. Question?

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Speaker, when this government gets caught doing something they shouldn't, the familiar refrain seems to be, "Nothing to see here." Giving millions to insider friends and strip club owners and the family dentist: "Nothing to see here." When called out by the Auditor General for not being transparent or fair: "Nothing to see here."

Listen, now we're seeing, in Bill 46, schedule 5, the government is repealing the consumer protection legislation which protects reward points earned by Ontarians and replacing it with a regulation, which means the government then can easily cancel it at any time. When questioned yesterday in this place, their response was, "Nothing to see here."

Can the Premier tell the people of Ontario exactly how cancelling the consumer protections of the reward points could possibly help them?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery and Procurement.

Hon. Stephen Crawford: When you speak in the House and you say information that may cause panic, you might have to take it back a little later. So I'm going to give you a suggestion: Maybe don't bring up this topic because you're going to have to walk it back.

Let me explain. If you go in a house or apartment building and you pull a fire alarm and the alarm goes off and everyone panics and runs out, you know what? You're actually causing a problem. You're causing panic. You're causing people to be upset. You're moving emergency workers away from the job that they're supposed to do. And that's what you're doing right now.

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Let me be very clear: It's on the record right here in the House. We are changing the consumer protection laws to enhance consumer protection, to give consumers the right to actually get a response when they lose points in the future. I'll have more to say in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Supplementary?

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: We all know that legislation provides the strongest protections because changes to legislation must be debated. They must be consulted upon and, normally, discussed at committee, where difficult questions can be asked. Repealing the legislation and replacing it with a regulation means that it can be changed at any time with no notice, no debate, no questions, no transparency.

Will the Premier do the right thing, protect Ontarians and strike schedule 5 from Bill 46?

Hon. Stephen Crawford: No, we will not strike that out because we're here to protect consumers. That's why we're not going to strike it out—absolutely not. We're here to bring more protections to consumers. I'm on the record. It's in the House today. We are going to bring in measures to strengthen consumers.

If you want to talk about affordability, Speaker, let's look at what the Liberals have voted against in the past. They voted against cutting our gas tax. They voted against scrapping licence plate fees. They voted against banning tolls, freezing drivers' licences. They voted against tuition cuts for students. They voted against doubling payments to low-income seniors. They voted against the low-income tax credit.

These are things that we brought about to help the people of Ontario. We brought through countless pieces of legislation in this House to support consumers, whether it was banning NOSIs or Bill 194, and this legislation is a part of that, a part of our government's agenda to further strengthen consumer measures right here in Ontario.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr. Mike Schreiner: My question is for the Premier. The holidays are just around the corner and, across the province, people just paid their December rent. Far too many families will now have to choose between putting food on the table and buying gifts for their kids. Life is so unaffordable in Ontario right now that over one million people need help from a food bank. One in three are children. In Toronto, half the households going to food banks have a job, and one third of them have two jobs. The bottom line is your housing policies are making life unaffordable in Ontario.

Speaker, why is the Premier making life harder and less affordable for renters and their children?

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

Hon. Doug Downey: I appreciate the question from the member opposite, but I don't understand the perspective that he's coming from, Madam Speaker.

We have created a million jobs in this province since we started. We have made things more affordable. Rent is down, lower than it has been in about four years, 40 months. We have put supports in place to protect the most vulnerable. We have made sure that people have the ability to get a job, get retrained, make sure that they have the chance to seek employment when they weren't able to otherwise. We've doubled funding to certain social services in the past couple of years. We've made it possible for people to work hard in this province and to get ahead.

But we do have a challenge. We do have a challenge because of what's happening south of the border. We are all hands on deck over here, making sure that we're protecting the people of Ontario, and we're not going to stop until we get the job done.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the member from Guelph.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Wow, Speaker. That response is so out of touch with the reality that everyday people are facing right now in the worst housing market in Ontario history. There is no town in Ontario where people can afford average monthly rent even when they're working full-time minimum wage jobs. Housing prices are at historic highs, housing starts at historic lows. Yet this government continues to say no to all the solutions: legalizing multiplexes in mid-rises, protecting renters, building deeply affordable non-profit and co-op homes.

Speaker, I ask, on behalf of families struggling to put food on the table, will the government prioritize hard-working, everyday folks over big, corporate landlords?

Hon. Doug Downey: Madam Speaker, I actually don't know the voting record of the member opposite, but I suspect if I looked, he did not support waiving the HST on new homes—

Interjection: Purpose-built rental.

Hon. Doug Downey: —on purpose-built rental—and the number of purpose-built rentals that we have increased over the last several years.

We have made sure that the building stock is coming back to this province by dealing with development charges, all the input cost, the HST. We're making sure that we are putting shovels in the ground to build houses that will not build themselves. We are putting all the elements in place for the private sector to come to the table. They are coming to the table, and creating more stock is bringing down the cost of living from what it has been. Building more housing will create more housing, by definition, Madam Speaker, and the changes to the Landlord and Tenant Board that we recently debated will put more units online for everybody in Ontario.

NORTHERN ONTARIO DEVELOPMENT

MPP Bill Rosenberg: My question is for the Minister of Indigenous Affairs and First Nations Economic Reconciliation. At a time of global economic uncertainty, building a competitive, resilient and self-reliant economy has never been more important. One of the ways our government is continuing to protect Ontario is by unlocking one of the most promising critical mineral development opportunities in the world: the Ring of Fire.

Speaker, the Ring of Fire is more than a mining project. It's about creating good jobs, clean technology and lasting partnerships with First Nations communities. Just last week, our government signed a historic agreement with Marten Falls First Nation.

Can the minister please share with the House how these partnership agreements are helping build opportunity and prosperity in northern Ontario?

Hon. Greg Rickford: I want to thank the member from Algoma-Manitoulin for the work that he does for northern Ontario.

It was a landmark agreement that the Premier and I had a chance to sign with Marten Falls First Nations last week. It puts into play the Northern Road Link and the community access road. More than two thirds of the corridor to prosperity can now be thought of as a road that will be under construction this coming construction season, in 2026—an incredible opportunity.

If you want to think about how excited everybody was, as the Premier and I reflected on it, it came from the words of the chief himself, when he said, during the community ratification, the youth that were at the meeting—so they were actually at the meeting—they got up and applauded the community leadership.

They're looking forward to prosperity. They're looking forward to a job to provide for their family and build for their communities, and we think that's what building the Ring of Fire is really all about.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Supplementary?

MPP Bill Rosenberg: Thank you to the minister for that update.

It's great to hear about the community partnership agreements that are already under way and how they address shared priorities between our government and First Nation communities. For far too long under the previous Liberal government, northern Ontario was ignored. Promises were made, but nothing materialized.

Our government is taking a different approach. We are working hand in hand with First Nations to build critical roads, strengthen local economies and ensure that northern communities share in the benefits of the growth.

Can the minister share how these investments and partnerships are helping advance the Ring of Fire and grow Ontario's economy?

Hon. Greg Rickford: About a year and a half ago, of course, we worked with a group of First Nations communities in the Greenstone area to develop a commercial plaza and staging area for what was about to become. Nine months ago, we entered into a partnership agreement with

Aroland First Nation. Then we entered into a partnership agreement with Greenstone municipality to make sure that the road coming immediately off the Trans-Canada was fit for the kind of capacity that building the corridor to prosperity would require.

We recently signed a partnership agreement with Webequie First Nation to ensure that the northern part of the corridor to prosperity would be under construction next year.

And finally, with respect to Marten Falls, what we have now is an ability to think about the corridor to prosperity under construction next year at every access point.

We're building communities, legacy infrastructure and access to the Ring of Fire. It couldn't have been a better day last week, Madam Speaker.

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Ms. Jessica Bell: My question is to the Premier. Last year, 2024-25, this government spent nearly \$112 million on advertising—the highest on record—just before an election. That's not a coincidence.

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This money was not spent explaining government services or encouraging people to get vaccinated; these millions were spent trying to make this scandal-ridden government look good. The Auditor General has ruled that this government has repeatedly used public funds for blatant partisan advertising.

My question is this: How can this government justify spending millions of taxpayer dollars on ads to promote themselves when we've got schools and hospitals in desperate need of funding?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the President of the Treasury Board.

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: I'm actually so surprised by the question from the member opposite because I think everyone in Ontario—everyone in Canada—knows that there has never been a more important time to tell the story of Ontario and Canada. We are at a critical moment, and it's essential to tell the story of Ontario both domestically and globally.

Speaker, President Trump has imposed unfair and unjust tariffs on Canada. It is hurting workers. It is hurting businesses. It is hurting the people of Ontario. And so, telling the story of Ontario so that we can attract billions of dollars of investment has never been more important than it is today.

I'm happy to say that the ads are working. Under the leadership of Premier Ford and our Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade, we've attracted billions of dollars of investments here to Ontario, creating thousands and thousands of jobs.

Madam Speaker, we will not stop telling the story of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the member for University-Rosedale.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Speaker, this government wasn't promoting the province; this government was promoting

their own party using taxpayer dollars. Again, this government spent almost \$112 million of taxpayer dollars on advertising last year, a record. That is millions of dollars that could have been used to fix our schools, to keep our emergency rooms open or to invest in a real jobs plan.

My question is this: Why is this government spending millions of taxpayer dollars promoting itself, instead of improving the lives of Ontarians?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: We are spending millions of dollars in advertising to help Ontarians, to tell the story of how great this province is, how amazing it is, and it has worked. We've attracted manufacturers from around the world to come and to choose Ontario to build manufacturing facilities, to hire workers, to put food on the table of Ontarians around this province.

Our ads have paid off. We've spent money and our ads have had billions of impressions—some of the most record-breaking advertising campaigns in the history of this province.

Speaker, we are at a critical time in this nation's history. It has never been more important to do everything we can to promote Ontario as the best place in the world to live, to work and to raise a family. We will not stop doing that. It is important.

I'm not surprised that the opposition that votes against every single important measure we do to help Ontarians doesn't understand that we're at a difficult and critical time and we have to do everything we can to promote and protect—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Question?

PUBLIC TRANSIT

MPP Andrea Hazell: Despite repeated failures from this government, we now see the Hazel McCallion LRT joining the Eglinton Crosstown LRT family in a troubling legacy of delays and budget overruns. How can this government justify its failure to manage yet another critical transportation project disastrously?

Keep in mind, the city is still waiting for Metrolinx to provide a completion date while facing the reality of yet another LRT line potentially opening five years later than originally planned.

Through you, Madam Speaker: Can the Premier explain to the people of Mississauga how he has allowed this massive infrastructure project to become another glaring example of mismanagement, and what are his plans to restore public trust with the people of Mississauga?

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

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Madam Speaker, under the 15 years that those members in the Liberal Party held the government, they ignored the people of Mississauga. They ignored the people of Brampton. It is this government, under the leadership of Premier Ford, that is investing in communities like Mississauga and Brampton and giving them the transit that they need and the transit that they deserve.

That's why we have construction ongoing on the Hazel McCallion LRT, an incredible project that will connect two cities together and move hundreds of thousands of people every single day. That's what we're doing all across the province. We're getting shovels in the ground. We're building for the future—\$70 billion over the next 10 years.

Those members over there, whether it's in their own communities, like Scarborough, have voted against public transit every step of the way. But this government is focused. We're focused on building. We're going to get these projects delivered, and we're going to connect people to transit all across this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the member from Scarborough—Guildwood.

MPP Andrea Hazell: There we go again. Nearly two years after the tracks for Hazel McCallion LRT line were added to the rebuilt intersection of Hurontario Street and Topflight Drive, crews are back digging it up again. This means we'll continue to see this endless cycle of digging and paving.

This government is definitely on the wrong track, just like the failed work on the Eglinton Crosstown LRT. Recently, in the news, the Premier stated, when asked about an opening date for the Eglinton Crosstown LRT, "I've been asking for a confirmation for this thing for two years."

Premier, whom have you been asking for two years, and why can't you get a straight answer? This is quite strange, considering the powers are vested in you.

So through you, Madam Speaker, can the Premier tell us who needs to be removed from this file to ensure these massive transportation projects are completed on time and on budget?

Interjections.

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

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: I don't know if I can follow that up. I can't follow that up—hard to follow.

Speaker, that's why we have a \$70-billion plan committed to building public transit across this province. For 15 years, those members sat there and did absolutely nothing. They ignored the people of Scarborough for 15 years and didn't build the rapid transit. They ignored the people of Mississauga and Brampton and didn't build the LRTs. We're getting it done. They ignored the people of Hamilton. That's why we're investing in the Hamilton LRT.

We're getting it done by delivering it in an affordable manner. That's why yesterday, we renewed One Fare for an additional two years, securing people and those who use these transit agencies \$1,600 a year, ensuring that they don't have to pay two fares. They only pay one fare.

I hope the members opposite vote to support those measures as they are tabled in the fall economic statement.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

MPP Monica Ciriello: My question is for the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery and Procurement. Ontario businesses are the backbone of our economy. They create jobs, strengthen local supply chains and help communities thrive. In today's competitive global market, it has never been more important to support Ontario-made goods and the workers who produce them.

That's why our government introduced the Buy Ontario Act. This is a critical measure to ensure more public sector procurement dollars stay right here in Ontario, creating good-paying jobs and driving economic growth.

Speaker, can the minister please tell the House how the Buy Ontario Act will help Ontario businesses and workers succeed and protect our economy from the impact of US trade barriers?

Hon. Stephen Crawford: Thank you for that really intelligent question from the great member from Hamilton Mountain. I really appreciate that very good question.

The Buy Ontario Act is about protecting Ontario jobs and defending our economy from unfair US tariffs. These tariffs have hit our steel, aluminum and auto sectors hard, threatening thousands of employees.

Our government is standing up for Ontario workers. This legislation ensures that taxpayer dollars strengthen Ontario, not foreign companies. By prioritizing Ontario-made goods and public procurement, we keep billions of dollars circulating in our economy, create good-paying jobs and secure local supply chains.

At a time when Trump's tariffs put Ontario at risk, we're taking action to protect Ontario industries and families. Supporting this act means defending jobs, safeguarding prosperity and ensuring every dollar stays in Ontario and builds our future, not somebody else's.

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

MPP Monica Ciriello: I thank the minister for that answer and for his leadership in this ministry.

Protecting Ontario jobs and businesses means more than passing legislation. It means delivering measurable results that Ontarians can trust. The Buy Ontario Act is a bold step forward, but accountability is critical to ensure taxpayer dollars truly stay in Ontario and strengthen our economy. This legislation must guarantee transparency, track Ontario contracts and ensure compliance across the broader public sector. Ontarians expect action, and they deserve to know that every procurement dollar stays and supports local businesses, creates good-paying jobs and builds prosperity right here at home.

Speaker, can the minister tell us how this act will ensure real accountability and deliver measurable results that protect Ontario workers and strengthen our economy?

Hon. Stephen Crawford: Accountability is the backbone of the Buy Ontario Act. Ontario spends over \$30 billion annually on goods and services. This legislation ensures that those dollars protect Ontario businesses and jobs. The broader public sector will report on procurement practices, track Ontario content and meet strict transparen-

cy standards so taxpayers know their money works for Ontario.

With our historic \$220-billion infrastructure plan, we're prioritizing Ontario steel, Ontario lumber and vehicles. Backed by Supply Ontario and new enforcement tools, compliance is not optional. This act gives Ontario businesses a competitive edge against US tariffs.

Speaker, this is about measurable results, protecting jobs, defending our economy and ensuring every procurement dollar stays right here in Ontario.

ANNUAL REPORT, AUDITOR GENERAL

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I beg to inform the House that the following document was tabled: the 2025 annual report from the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario.

DEFERRED VOTES

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT
AND SAFETY ACT, 2025LOI DE 2025 SUR LA GESTION
DES RESSOURCES ET LA SÉCURITÉ

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

Bill 27, An Act to enact the Geologic Carbon Storage Act, 2025 and to amend various Acts with respect to wildfires, resource safety and surveyors / Projet de loi 27, Loi édictant la Loi de 2025 sur le stockage géologique de carbone et modifiant diverses lois concernant les incendies de végétation, la sécurité des ressources et les arpenteurs-géomètres.

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

The division bells rang from 1142 to 1147.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Members, please take your seats.

On December 1, 2025, Mr. Harris moved third reading of Bill 27, An Act to enact the Geologic Carbon Storage Act, 2025 and to amend various Acts with respect to wildfires, resource safety and surveyors.

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

Ayes

Allsopp, Tyler	Ford, Doug	Racinsky, Joseph
Anand, Deepak	Fraser, John	Rae, Matthew
Babikian, Aris	Gallagher Murphy, Dawn	Rickford, Greg
Bailey, Robert	Grewal, Hardeep Singh	Riddell, Brian
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Hamid, Zee	Rosenberg, Bill
Blais, Stephen	Hardeman, Ernie	Sabawy, Sheref
Bouma, Will	Harris, Mike	Sandhu, Amarjot
Brady, Bobbi Ann	Hazell, Andrea	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Bresee, Ric	Hsu, Ted	Sarrazin, Stéphane
Calandra, Paul	Jones, Trevor	Saunderson, Brian
Cerjanec, Rob	Jordan, John	Scott, Laurie
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Kanapathi, Logan	

Cho, Stan	Kerzner, Michael S.	Shamji, Adil
Ciriello, Monica	Khanjin, Andrea	Smith, David
Clark, Steve	Kusendova-Bashta, Natalia	Smith, Graydon
Collard, Lucille	Leardi, Anthony	Smith, Laura
Cooper, Michelle	Lumsden, Neil	Smyth, Stephanie
Crawford, Stephen	McCarthy, Todd J.	Tangri, Nina
Cuzzetto, Rudy	McCrimmon, Karen	Thompson, Lisa M.
Denault, Billy	McGregor, Graham	Tibollo, Michael A.
Dixon, Jess	Mulroney, Caroline	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Dowie, Andrew	Oosterhoff, Sam	Tsao, Jonathan
Downey, Doug	Pang, Billy	Vickers, Paul
Dunlop, Jill	Parsa, Michael	Watt, Tyler
Fairclough, Lee	Pierre, Natalie	Williams, Charmaine A.
Firin, Mohamed	Pinsonneault, Steve	

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

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gilmour, Alexa	Schreiner, Mike
Begum, Doly	Glover, Chris	Shaw, Sandy
Bell, Jessica	Gretzky, Lisa	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Bourgouin, Guy	Kernaghan, Terence	Stiles, Marit
Clancy, Aislinn	McKenney, Catherine	Tabuns, Peter
Fife, Catherine	McMahon, Mary-Margaret	Vanthof, John
French, Jennifer K.	Pasma, Chandra	Vaugeois, Lise
Gates, Wayne	Rakocevic, Tom	West, Jamie
Gélinas, France	Sattler, Peggy	Wong-Tam, Kristyn

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day): The ayes are 76; the nays are 27.

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

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

Third reading agreed to.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT MODERNIZATION ACT, 2025

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

Deferred vote on the motion for third 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): Call in the members. This is a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1151 to 1152.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): On December 1, 2025, Ms. Dunlop moved third reading of 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.

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

Ayes

Allsopp, Tyler	Fraser, John	Racinsky, Joseph
Anand, Deepak	Gallagher Murphy, Dawn	Rae, Matthew
Babikian, Aris	Grewal, Hardeep Singh	Rickford, Greg
Bailey, Robert	Hamid, Zee	Riddell, Brian
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Hardeman, Ernie	Rosenberg, Bill
Blais, Stephen	Harris, Mike	Sabawy, Sheref
Bouma, Will	Hazell, Andrea	Sandhu, Amarjot
Bresee, Ric	Hsu, Ted	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Calandra, Paul	Jones, Trevor	Sarrazin, Stéphane
Cerjanec, Rob	Jordan, John	Saunderson, Brian
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Kanapathi, Logan	Scott, Laurie
Cho, Stan	Kerzner, Michael S.	Shamji, Adil
Ciriello, Monica	Khanjin, Andrea	Smith, David
Clark, Steve	Kusendova-Bashta, Natalia	Smith, Graydon
Collard, Lucille	Leardi, Anthony	Smith, Laura
Cooper, Michelle	Lumsden, Neil	Smyth, Stephanie
Crawford, Stephen	McCarthy, Todd J.	Tangri, Nina
Cuzzetto, Rudy	McCrimmon, Karen	Thompson, Lisa M.
Denault, Billy	McGregor, Graham	Tibollo, Michael A.
Dixon, Jess	McMahon, Mary-Margaret	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Dowie, Andrew	Mulroney, Caroline	Tsao, Jonathan
Downey, Doug	Oosterhoff, Sam	Vickers, Paul
Dunlop, Jill	Pang, Billy	Watt, Tyler
Fairclough, Lee	Parsa, Michael	Williams, Charmaine A.
Firin, Mohamed	Pierre, Natalie	
Ford, Doug	Pinsonneault, Steve	

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

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gélinas, France	Schreiner, Mike
Begum, Doly	Gilmour, Alexa	Shaw, Sandy
Bell, Jessica	Glover, Chris	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Bourgouin, Guy	Gretzky, Lisa	Stiles, Marit
Brady, Bobbi Ann	Kernaghan, Terence	Tabuns, Peter
Clancy, Aislinn	McKenney, Catherine	Vanthof, John
Fife, Catherine	Pasma, Chandra	Vaugeois, Lise
French, Jennifer K.	Rakocevic, Tom	West, Jamie
Gates, Wayne	Sattler, Peggy	Wong-Tam, Kristyn

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day): The ayes are 76; the nays are 27.

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

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

Third reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): There being no further business, this House stands in recess until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1155 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

TRANSPARENT AND ACCOUNTABLE HEALTH CARE ACT, 2025

LOI DE 2025 SUR LE FINANCEMENT TRANSPARENT ET RESPONSABLE DES SOINS DE SANTÉ

Madame Gélinas moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 85, An Act to promote transparency and accountability in the funding of health care services in Ontario / Projet de loi 85, Loi visant à promouvoir le financement transparent et responsable des services de santé en Ontario.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: Under the act, any agency or person who receives more than \$1 million would be required to comply with the Broader Public Sector Executive Compensation Act and the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act. They would be covered by the Ombudsman Act. The Auditor General of Ontario would be authorized to do an audit on any aspect of their operations.

The same requirements would apply with respect to publicly funded suppliers and a publicly funded person who receives at least \$1 million.

We need guidelines for transparency and accountability in our health care system, to make sure that taxpayer dollars go to care. I hope you'll agree.

PETITIONS

SOINS DE LA VUE

M^{me} France Gélinas: J'aimerais remercier Marcel et Lorraine Lanouette, qui sont d'Azilda dans mon comté, pour ces pétitions. La pétition s'appelle « Assurer une vision claire pour » toutes les personnes « aîné(e)s ».

Comme vous savez, madame la Présidente, la vision est une partie fondamentale de notre qualité de vie. Une bonne vision est essentielle pour que les personnes aînées puissent maintenir leur indépendance.

Plusieurs personnes aînées ont besoin de lunettes mais sont également à faible revenu et ne sont pas capables de se payer les lunettes. Mais malheureusement, il n'y a aucun programme du gouvernement qui peut les aider. Donc, les personnes qui signent la pétition demandent d'établir un programme de remboursement ou de rabais gouvernemental pour permettre aux aînés à faible revenu d'acheter des lunettes de prescription.

J'appuie cette pétition, je vais la signer et je demande à Anna de l'amener à la table des greffiers.

ACCESS TO MENSTRUAL PRODUCTS

Ms. Chandra Pasma: It is my honour to rise today to present a petition of signatures that have been collected by students around the province addressing access to menstrual products and menstrual health and equity education in schools.

There is a pilot project that's being run by the Ministry of Education, but students have told me that the access to menstrual products varies greatly by school board. All too often, the products that are offered are not of great quality, so students don't want to use them. In some cases, students are also required to go to the principal's office to ask for a product, which no high school student wants to have to do.

There's also a lack of education on how to properly use these products and, in some cases, how to safely use them—such as avoiding toxic shock syndrome with tampons. But educators don't always have the information that they need in order to properly provide this information to students.

What the students are asking for is for the Ministry of Education to conduct a comprehensive review of the current menstrual pilot project, in collaboration with school boards, with students, and with organizations such as Auntie, Period Ontario, and Moon Time Connections; that we update the curriculum in the province to ensure consistent and supportive menstruation education, starting in grade 5, as well as education and training for educators so that they can adequately lead discussions about menstrual health; and that we begin phasing out the current pilot project in favour of environmentally friendly menstrual products.

I fully support this petition. I will add my name to it and send it to the table with page Shriya.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

MPP Andrea Hazell: It's my honour to rise today to table a petition entitled "Demanding Accountability and Real Transit Investment for Scarborough." The people of Scarborough are calling for real transit investment and accountability. This petition has over 1,000 signatures from residents who are fed up with long, unreliable commutes and lack of connections within Scarborough. They're missing school, not getting to school on time, and not getting to work and to their medical appointments on time because transit connections to the rest of Toronto are slow and unreliable, earning the area a reputation, in Scarborough, as a transit desert.

The petition highlights that Metrolinx and the provincial government have failed to provide adequate relief and support to small businesses and communities affected by these delays.

Residents who signed the petition are calling on the Legislature to hold a public inquiry into the rising costs, delays and mismanagement of Scarborough transit projects; to be fully transparent about how taxpayer dollars are spent; and to create a support and compensation frame-

work for residents, workers and businesses impacted by these delays.

I am happy to sign this petition and ask Emelin to bring the petition to the table.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Mr. Bryan Smith. He's from the Oxford Coalition for Social Justice, and he collected hundreds and hundreds of names on this petition.

The petition basically has to do with it having been revealed that the price of surgeries in private clinics and independent health facilities significantly exceeds what we pay in public hospitals.

It also talks about how the backlog of surgeries in British Columbia was not reduced when they introduced private, for-profit clinics for routine surgeries.

In Ontario, right now, all hospitals have the capacity—they have underused surgical rooms—for both routine and complex surgeries.

They petition the Legislative Assembly so that all the funding to private clinics and independent health facilities ceases immediately, and that adequate funding to perform medically necessary surgeries be allocated exclusively to public hospitals.

I fully support this petition. I will affix my name to it and ask Manaswini to bring it to the table.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I'm pleased to rise to table a petition entitled "Repeal Bill 33."

We know that since 2018, the Conservative government has taken more than \$6 billion out of our education system. Unfortunately, young people, like our pages, see the consequences of that every single day in our schools, with larger class sizes, cuts to special education, the lack of mental health supports, real mental health challenges, and a growing violence crisis.

What our schools actually need is urgent investments; it's more caring adults; it's access to mental health professionals, and ensuring that there are appropriate resources and supports to provide to kids when they need help academically or for special education.

What the government has done instead is give itself the power to take away the rights of parents and workers and communities to have a say in our local schools, at any time that they want, for whatever reason that they want.

This doesn't actually provide our kids with a single additional resource or support. It is the opposite of solving the problem. And it means that parents are no longer allowed to be partners in our children's education.

We know that research shows that hiring qualified educators and reducing class sizes are actually the most effective tools that we have to improve education outcomes for our children—not to mention their mental and physical health.

1510

The petitioners are calling on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to repeal Bill 33, to fund our education system properly, to respect the rights of parents and communities to have a say, and to stop playing political games with the well-being of our children.

I wholeheartedly endorse this petition. I will add my name to it and send it to the table with page Anna.

HEALTH CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Mr. Dave Reilly, who is from Hanmer in my riding, for this petition. The petition is called "Improve Access to Primary Care."

You know, Speaker, that medicare is a program that defines us as Canadians, as Ontarians. We get care based on our needs, not on our ability to pay.

Right now, close, to 2.3 million Ontarians do not have access to primary care. They don't have a family physician. They don't have a nurse practitioner.

Community health centres, Indigenous primary health care teams, nurse practitioner-led clinics, and family health teams are all willing and able to take on more patients, if only the government would fund them.

We all know that the best-quality primary care is delivered through an interdisciplinary team; that is, a team of physicians, nurse practitioners, nurses, social workers, dietitians, and physiotherapists working together. This is how we keep people healthy. This is how we keep them out of hospital. This is what people want.

People have signed the petition to immediately increase funding to community health centres, Indigenous primary health care teams, family health teams and nurse practitioner-led clinics, to give access to primary care to every Ontarian who needs it.

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

CHILD CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Michel Huard from Val Caron in my riding for this petition. The petition is called "A Future for Child Care in Ontario."

Interjection.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you. You made me laugh.

Child care centres are often forced to limit enrolment—not because there are not long wait-lists of children who need daycare, but because of staffing shortages—which means that it's really difficult for parents to be able to go to work. Right now, in Ontario, there are as many as 65,000 new child care workers to meet the demand—we would need 65,000 new child care workers to meet the demand for \$10-a-day child care.

Without proper funding and a strategy to recruit and retain child care workers, we're not going to be able to meet the needs of everybody who needs child care in order to be able to go to work.

The people signing the petition want the Legislative Assembly to realize the important work that early child-

hood and child care workers are doing, and that their work has been historically undervalued, with low pay, poor working conditions and high turnover.

They want the government to immediately establish an early years and child care worker advisory commission to develop recommendations on how to support the early years and child care workforce and address the staffing shortages, including through a salary scale, increased compensation and improved working conditions.

I fully support this petition. I will affix my name to it and ask page Shriya, who is very patient, to bring it to the Clerk.

PHARMACARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Kirby Steinhoff, who is from Garson in my riding, for this petition. This petition is called “Pharmacare.”

We all know that access to prescription medication is a basic and essential part of our health care system, and that, currently, the programs we have—and we have many of them—still leave many, many Ontarians facing high costs and barriers to access the prescription medication that they need.

I think we all agree that no one in Ontario should be forced to choose between paying for medication or covering everyday necessities.

And we all know that gaps in coverage force too many Ontarians to skip medications, putting their health and sometimes their lives at risk.

There are many expert recommendations and national studies that support a universal single-payer pharmacare system as the most fair and effective approach. Right now, three provinces and one territory have signed the pharmacare offer from the federal government; Ontario is not one of them.

The people are signing this petition because they want Ontario to sign on to the federal pharmacare program so that people, on the first day, gain access to all the medications for diabetes, as well as contraception.

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

SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Mr. Steinman, who is from Kitchener, for these petitions. The petition is called “Supportive Housing.”

We presently have, in Ontario, close to 2.6 million people who live with disabilities that need different degrees of support.

Ontarians with disabilities face an increased risk of institutionalization because there is no supportive housing for them.

The new housing starts are neither accessible nor inclusive to people who live with disabilities.

Accessible supportive housing allows adults with disabilities the autonomy to live their lives the way they want, as well as independence.

So a lot of people have signed the petition to ask the government to invest and expand Ontario’s supportive housing sector with the goal of encouraging and respecting resident autonomy.

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

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Roger Jankiewicz from Hanmer in my riding for these petitions. It’s called “Let’s Fix the Northern Health Travel Grant.”

You know, Speaker, that I live in northern Ontario. People living in northern Ontario don’t have access to all of the health care services that are available in Ontario, but we do gain access by travelling. But there are high costs associated with travelling to Toronto or Ottawa for those services.

The Northern Health Travel Grant has not been reviewed fully for a very long time, which puts a massive burden on northern Ontarians who are sick.

Just to look at the price of gas in northern Ontario compared to southern Ontario is enough to justify an increase in how much they get paid per kilometre to travel.

So they would like the government to establish a committee with a mandate to fix and improve the Northern Health Travel Grant.

The committee would be made up of health care providers from northern Ontario and recipients of the Northern Health Travel Grant. They would make recommendations to the Ministry of Health that would improve access to health care for people from northern Ontario as well as improve reimbursement of travel and accommodations costs.

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

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): That concludes petitions.

Mr. John Vanthof: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I recognize the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane on a point of order.

Mr. John Vanthof: I believe that if you request it, you will find that we have unanimous consent that, for the rest of this session, members of the Liberal Party need to wear Santa hats.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I do not accept that as a point of order.

ORDERS OF THE DAY**PEEL TRANSITION IMPLEMENTATION
ACT, 2025****LOI DE 2025 SUR LA MISE EN OEUVRE
DE LA TRANSITION DE PEEL**

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 2, 2025, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 45, An Act to make statutory amendments respecting the transfer of jurisdiction within The Regional Municipality of Peel and the appointment of Deputy Provincial Land and Development Facilitators / *Projet de loi 45, Loi apportant des modifications législatives en ce qui concerne le transfert de compétences dans la municipalité régionale de Peel et la nomination de facilitateurs provinciaux de l'aménagement adjoints.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further debate?

Mr. Deepak Anand: Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure, when I debated it in the early morning session, whether you were there or not.

To refresh everyone's memory, I'm just going to recap. Let's start where we left off. We were talking about Bill 45.

I have a tradition: Every time I stand and rise in this House and talk about a bill, in the remarks, I like to start by thanking God for giving me the physical and mental health so that I can represent the residents of Mississauga–Malton.

Thank you to the residents of Mississauga–Malton, my staff, my family, for always being there to support our effort—I use the word “effort” because they're a part of the same integrated family.

1520

Bill 45: What is it doing? It creates a clear, unified system.

It means that our regional roads, the ones people rely on every day, will now be planned, maintained, repaired and upgraded by the same city that manages the rest of the transportation network. Snow clearing, long-term planning and transit coordination will all operate under one roof, making the system smoother and more responsive.

It also means that the stormwater system connected to those roads will be managed locally, giving Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon the ability to modernize drainage, prevent flooding, and fix long-standing issues in older neighbourhoods—I will be talking in a few minutes, as well, about Malton village and Hull Street.

And finally, waste collection will be handled directly by the cities, giving them the flexibility to tailor service levels, redesign routes, and respond more quickly when their residents reach out to them.

Speaker, this is the governance that our communities deserve.

I will give you a shout-out that we received from the mayor of Mississauga. Carolyn Parrish said, “The transfer of these essential services to the municipal level is a

significant step forward for Mississauga allowing us to oversee our own budgets and our own services.”

So the people who are paying for it have more control on what they're paying for it.

Bill 45 brings down costs for residents by reducing the barriers to local governance and making services more reliable and efficient.

One of the biggest cost drivers for fast-growing municipalities has always been a heavy reliance on development charges to fund major infrastructure—and those who are creating these homes always talk about overlapping permit costs, which, of course, nobody else pays; it's the buyer who pays for it. So this bill makes sure that we reduce the red tape and the pointless bureaucracy, which, in other words, reduces the cost of those charges.

The municipal service corporations model makes large-scale water and waste water projects faster and more cost-effective. These savings mean lower utility bills, less pressure on municipal budgets, and more money in people's pockets. This is something which our government has always been advocating for.

This bill also talks about collaborative planning. I want to emphasize how much care our government has put into planning this policy. I always say that as elected members, it is our job to listen to the people, to the local voices and what they want us to do; how we can reduce their costs and give them better service.

We are committing to a clear and non-disruptive transition timeline. We are making sure the effective date for transfer of these roads and associated stormwater infrastructure would be July 1, 2026, on Canada Day. And the transfer of waste collection would be effective October 2027, so there is enough time to prepare for it.

This implementation timeline validated by the Peel transition board was put forward by Peel's own municipal leaders and local decision-makers. The plan for implementing this policy comes from months of technical analysis and direct engagement with regional staff.

The transition of services has been a deliberate, collaborative process. We have made sure the municipalities have the time they need to plan for everything, from staffing shifts to fleet transfers to service integration—something which I know I've talked about many times with CUPE president Fabio; he's always concerned and worried about his members—and to make sure to work with them at all stages to ensure the transition is smooth.

The bill promises residents better long-term local governance, while maintaining service continuity.

It is because of the continued partnership and dialogue with Peel that I know we'll make good on our promises.

Let's talk about Malton, which I just started talking about. It has grown dramatically—the number of people who have come to Malton, especially the international students and the newcomers. By the way, many times when I see a lot of delegates, they say, “Oh, we need workers. We need people.” And I always tell them, “You have jobs, and you need people? In Malton, we have lots of people. Every year, 11%—imagine that—new people come to Malton. They're looking for a job. They're

looking for work. If you're looking for people, well, talk to us, we'll be happy to help you. It's a win-win situation."

I'll give you an example of what happened during COVID. The Greater Toronto Airports Authority was a little low on revenue, so they wanted to utilize their assets. One of the assets was right next to Malton village. There was a big piece of land which was underutilized—or, technically speaking, it was not even utilized—so they converted that into a parking lot so they could get some revenue out of it. When they paved it—before, when it used to rain, the water would go straight in. The same parking lot—because it's a truck parking lot—when the water falls onto it, it doesn't seep in; there's not enough time, and it actually moves to the neighbouring streets. One of the streets happens to be Hull Street. If you have ever been to Hull Street—you will see that on one side there is a train track, and the other side is this parking lot.

Every time it rains, the people of Hull Street and I get worried. Whether it is Bal Krishen Tangri, Eva, Mike, Kanta Bath—each one of them will start texting. "Oh, my goodness, it's raining a lot"—it's kind of saying that there are banana peels on the road, and now we have to slip on them. So this is heartbreaking.

Interjection: Did you say "banana peel"?

Mr. Deepak Anand: Well, if there's a banana peel on the road, then you have to say, "Oh, I have to slip now."

So this is what happens every time there is rain. The rain is going to go to the parking lot, and the water is going to come to Hull Street, and Hull Street is going to flood. And what's going to happen? People will have to worry about it—and it's not us; it's Mother Nature. We know we cannot control the rain, but what we can do is, we can control how we prepare for it.

We can build better systems. We can update old infrastructure. We can modernize planning.

And that is exactly what we're doing in this bill, Bill 45. By giving Mississauga full responsibility for its own roads and stormwater network, we will finally be able to fix chronic issues in older communities that have been waiting so long for upgrades.

So, to my Mississauga–Malton family, we will get these benefits from Bill 45: faster decisions, clearer accountability, and infrastructure that keeps pace with the weather challenges we know are always coming to us.

Sometimes we're thinking of two situations, and we think they're the same or similar. No, it is not the case. Imagine two cars: One is incredibly fast, and the other one is good at control. Well, of course, the one car which is incredibly fast is going to drive faster. But think about a situation when there is a sudden curve. It is the car with more control that is going to be safer; it is going to be more promising.

If you look at Mississauga, we want to be moving fast, but at the same time, because we are a growing city with a growing population—we have a lot of curves. We have a lot of challenges. With the severe weather, aging infrastructure, new pressures on waste and transportation, we need to be agile.

Mississauga is growing, and infrastructure must keep pace. That means roads that move people efficiently, storm-water systems that protect homes, waste water collection that keeps neighbourhoods clean, and coordinated planning that removes duplication. So this is what we're doing through this bill.

This model strengthens our ability to plan for the long term, especially in fast-growing communities, where every improvement has a direct impact on day-to-day life.

This bill matters because people deserve faster responses and clearer accountability; cities deserve the tools to manage their own growth; communities deserve infrastructure that matches the pace of today, not 1974; and families deserve safe roads, reliable services, and neighbourhoods that are well cared for. That's what this bill is doing.

1530

By the way, every time I'm driving through my riding and I take the 427 and I look on my right side, I see a beautiful white building. If you're driving on the 427, going north, before you exit to Finch, you see, on the right side, there's a white, beautiful building. What is that? It's not a trivia question. I'll tell you what it is: It is called BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir. It's a beautiful temple.

BAPS is a global, spiritual, cultural and humanitarian organization making a profound impact here in Ontario. Guided by His Holiness Mahant Swami Maharaj, BAPS promotes harmony, selfless service, moral living and community upliftment. Their values shine through their temples across Canada—and across the world, actually—including the one beautiful BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir in Toronto, Canada's first traditional stone Hindu mandir.

Across Ontario, BAPS mandirs are the hubs of community life, where families learn, youth grow, and volunteers strengthen societies. Their humanitarian arm, BAPS Charities, delivers health, environment and educational initiatives nationwide. Thousands participate in their walkathon every year.

I recently attended their annual food drive, and you will not believe this: We were hoping to collect about 20,000-odd pounds of food; actually, they collected over 50,000 pounds of food—a remarkable act of compassion.

I urge all the members, if you're driving towards Brampton or Mississauga, to visit and thank BAPS for their remarkable contribution and their enduring commitment to uplifting communities across Ontario.

Speaker, how does this relate to Bill 45? Bill 45 is uplifting others, making sure that we live together and support each other.

Bill 45 comes as synergy with another bill, Bill 60. What is Bill 60 doing? It is streamlining the management of the \$40 billion in water assets, which means major industrial and housing projects can secure crucial servicing approvals without prolonged regional bureaucratic delays. That's what Bill 60 is doing in line with Bill 45. We are making sure that these municipalities—the engines of Ontario's growth—have the agility they need to compete globally.

The transfer of these key public works services has been identified as a necessary step to empower the lower-tier municipalities—something we have been asking for for a long time.

It will place Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon in a better position to support long-term growth and solidify their economic strength. It cuts through the complexity of the old structure, putting local decisions in local hands, and ensuring greater accountability to the local taxpayer.

I have detailed the long, continuous history of Peel's evolving governance and the overwhelming pressure of recent population growth that makes this evolution an emergency, not a choice.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 45 is straightforward. It strengthens service delivery. It modernizes aging systems. It improves accountability. It makes life better. It is about building a future where our cities can respond faster, plan smarter and grow stronger.

I ask all the members to come together and support Bill 45. When we support Bill 45, we support a better, stronger Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Questions?

M^{me} France Gélinas: We saw this bill under the previous mayor of Mississauga. We saw, then, the withdrawal of part of the bill. Then, the bill was reintroduced and it died, and it was reintroduced for the third time.

Would the member agree that we should make sure, on the third trial, that we get it right? To get it right is to follow due process. Due process in this House means, after second reading, we send it to committee. We give people, agencies an opportunity to come and talk to us, to see what works, what doesn't work. We go through clause-by-clause to make all the changes that the people of Ontario want us to make, and then we bring it back for third reading. Will you agree to that?

Mr. Deepak Anand: Thank you to the member opposite for that question.

Absolutely, when we talk about consultation—consultation is the key.

I didn't realize we have the Minister of Housing, who is here, who has done an extensive consultation on this bill.

Speaker, this bill will provide certainty and is a key ingredient in effective governance reforms. The 10-year provision gives the confidence to move forward with the new waste model. These are some of the things which we are doing.

Absolutely, the answer to your question is yes. There has been already an extensive consultation, and we will continue to make sure—we get elected to listen to the voice of our people and deliver the results, and we will continue to do that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further questions?

Ms. Natalie Pierre: My question is about empowering local decision-making.

I wanted to ask the member from Mississauga–Malton to reflect on the Peel Transition Implementation Act, 2025, and how it advances local decision-making.

We've known for years that residents and local councils in Mississauga and Brampton and Caledon have called for a governance model that better reflects their growth, their size, their economic development opportunities and their capacity to lead, and that this legislation in front of us today that we're debating calls to give these municipalities more authority over the services that matter most—being roads, regional roads, and waste collection.

I'm wondering if the member could please share how empowering lower-tier municipalities with these responsibilities will help them better plan for growth and serve their residents?

Mr. Deepak Anand: Thank you to the member for Burlington, another municipality that is growing big time. Thank you for your leadership and supporting, and being a leader in the community. What an excellent question.

The Peel Transition Implementation Act is a clear demonstration of the government's belief that decisions should be made as close as to the people who have elected us.

By transferring control over key public works from the region of Peel to their lower-tier municipalities, this bill will ensure that they can make decisions that reflect their own needs, not those of regional compromises—so they don't have to take care of the whole region, but there's something which is close to their heart, something they know about and which is a local priority. Managing growth efficiently, delivering resources more directly—ultimately, this approaches this local democracy.

This is a bill which I urge everyone to come together and support.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further questions?

Hon. Graham McGregor: Thank you, colleagues, for that rousing round of applause when I got up. It's wonderful to be so popular and so well loved—as I know that member is.

As a fellow Peel boy, I'm very proud of this bill.

Another Peel member once told me—the Brampton West member told me—that if you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together.

This bill is the result of a lot of work with the mayors of Caledon, Brampton and Mississauga—all supporting a new direction for our growing region of Peel, to make sure that we are going together and sustaining Peel's growth for the long term.

I'm wondering if the member could share with this House how important that collaboration is and do some of the detailing on the collaboration, the consultation, and the work that was done to get us here.

Mr. Deepak Anand: At the age of 52, if you have to hear a “boy”—I love it. Thank you for using the “boy” word for me.

1540

I do want to say thank you to all the Peel MPPs. We are stronger together. We collaborate together. We work together. We have wonderful examples when we talk about Canada. We have the member from Brampton West who actually came as an international student, grown to the

heights. He's taking care of a riding and being the voice of the people.

You asked about the question on collaboration. Speaker, this bill is a result of extensive collaboration between the municipalities of Peel, the region and the province. This bill reflects a collaborative, locally led plan to modernize governance in one of Ontario's fastest-growing regions. That's why Bill 45 is a bill for everyone to come together and support each other.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further questions?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: I have been a little bit confused about this process and this bill. Initially, we had a bill for the complete dissolution of Peel. Then that was withdrawn, but it was pushed very aggressively initially. So now I'm wondering if this is like a little dissolution—not a whole dissolution, but a bit of dissolution.

But I do see that there is a Peel transition board report that there have been findings and recommendations, but they haven't been released to the public nor to the affected municipalities. The town of Caledon passed a motion asking that these recommendations be published.

I'm wondering if you can tell me: Will those recommendations be published and shared, at the very least with the municipalities that are concerned with this bill?

Mr. Deepak Anand: This bill is definitely a bill which is responsive, and this bill is another example of how when we get elected, we reach out to the residents, we hear their concerns, we take it back to the caucus and we work together to solve those issues.

For years, we've been hearing it from all the mayors. When I was doing my remarks, I talked about how, in 1974, all these cities were small in size. They needed each other to support each other. Now they've all grown up.

It's kind of like saying how my brother and I, when young, used to live in one single room. When we grew up, we became independent. We had our own independent rooms. We could do things independently. That's exactly what this bill is doing. As we've grown up, we can take care of each other.

But at the same time, when it comes to taking control of many things, we need to give them the control. This is what the bill is doing, giving the control to the cities to take care of their residents directly rather than looking up.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further questions?

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I understand that what this bill will do is primarily transfer certain services related to roads and also waste collection from the level of government which is the regional government, and transfer roads and waste collection to the lower-tier governments, being Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon. I can see how that's a very good thing to do in certain circumstances.

My honourable colleague here is from Mississauga, so his municipality is going to have greater authority and control over roads and waste collection, and he probably has some positive things to say about that. So I'll give my colleague from Mississauga an opportunity to say why

having control over roads and waste collection is a good thing.

Mr. Deepak Anand: Thank you to the member from Essex for that important question.

Absolutely, Mississauga has grown up. Mississauga has a population of 760,000-plus. Mississauga is ready to take on the responsibility of taking care of their own residents and what the residents need most from Mississauga. That is why Bill 45 is making sure we have collaboration, providing modern service delivery. We are making sure of continuity of service and efficiency, that nobody is left behind. While doing this, we are making sure there's a local empowerment and accountability.

In the 10 seconds I have left, I want to say thank you to the Minister of Housing for doing an incredible job and thank you for all you're doing for the region of Peel.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further debate?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I am very pleased to stand in my place and to have a kick at this can. We're here debating Bill 45, the Peel Transition Implementation Act, 2025.

Bill 45 is the product of a three-year policy failure marked by chaos, reversals, maybe a bit of intrigue and a lack of meaningful consultation with municipalities, workers or the public. At the heart of this piece of legislation—it transfers jurisdiction over regional roads and stormwater drainage infrastructure to the lower-tier municipalities—Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon—where the infrastructure is located. And then these transfers will happen as of July 1, 2026, or a date prescribed by the minister.

Speaker, this bill doesn't do anything to stop bad sprawl-oriented planning decisions that drive up infrastructure costs and development charges that are the purported reasons for regional restructuring in the first place. This government has already reduced the region's role by taking away Peel region's planning responsibilities, transferring these to local municipalities with varying levels of planning capacity.

I'm happy to delve into what this bill accomplishes and also the story of how we got to this bill, which is an interesting winding road of different pieces of legislation, backtracking and secret reports, so I will be happy to get into that. But I want to tell you why I'm interested in adding my voice to the Peel conversation, because folks know that I'm the member for Oshawa, and I will admit freely, and as my community knows, I'm not from Oshawa, but I got there as soon as I could. But on my journey to Oshawa, I had the opportunity to live in a few different places with my dad's job—we travelled around a bit—and had the chance to call a few different communities home.

So I lived in the Peel region: I lived in Bolton, and I lived in Palgrave, and I have lots of fabulous memories of growing up in small towns and riding my bike with the neighbours. My dad built the house that we lived in in Palgrave, so I saw that home from the ground up here become my childhood home there—wonderful memories in that area.

Speaker, you may not believe it, but it's true: I used to be a figure skater many moons ago. I was a proud member of the Bolton Figure Skating Club and it was at the top of the hill, and I was independent enough that I could leave my school, Ellwood public school, and walk by myself all the way to the arena. I had free time at the library to get into all sorts of shenanigans and then skate and get picked up and we would get Bolton Pizza and drive it all the way home to our home in Palgrave. So down the hill, up the hill, along Highway 50 with that hot pizza sitting on my knee, burning a hole through my skin—and it was a really long drive. It may have only been 15 minutes or so, but when you've got some of the best pizza in the world on your lap and you can't eat it until you get home, it's a really long drive.

Anyway, I tell you that because when I think about Caledon, when I think about the Peel region, I do have connections to that area. As a figure skater, we did the skate 6 interclub and I had friends who went to Mayfield in their program. We went swimming at Mayfield.

Interjection.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Oh, I'm very excited that the member from Brampton North is here, because I threatened that I was going to talk some smack about his neck of the woods, so I will do just that.

I also had the chance to go to school in Brampton. I went to Goldcrest Public School for two years—grades 2 and 3—one of my very first field trips was I think to the library and there was a little petting zoo by Chinguacousy Park. I'm not here to represent the fine folks of Brampton, but I do have a warm spot in my memory for those parts of the world.

Interjection.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Speaker, could I interrupt the member for Guelph because I'm having a hard time concentrating? Thanks. Okay. And now I'll continue.

1550

My time, though, in Bolton and Palgrave—my mother was a teacher at Pumpkin Patch nursery school in Palgrave. I went to Palgrave Public School. I was a Girl Guide, which probably surprises no one—a bit of a super keener. Our leader was Betty Burton, who wrote “Palgrave Patter” in the newspaper. This was a small town, and when I have gone back to visit, I cannot recognize it; it has grown so much. The school that was once a small school is now a massive elementary school campus. It still has that small-town heart, but, of course, as we're here talking about changing communities and growth, it is an area that continues to grow. We're here and we're talking not just about the growth, but we're talking about provincial governments reaching into those municipalities and making decisions about what needs to happen.

I wanted to also share that one of my connections to that area was with the Caledon Community Road Safety Advocacy Group. They reached out to me because they're very concerned about safety on the roads and trucking in the area. They had put together a petition that I was very pleased to share in this room about illegal truck yards and road safety. I think that as we're talking about Peel transi-

tion implementation and we're talking about challenges of growth and we're talking about the needs of communities, this is one that I want to make sure the government understands. With all the changes in the area, the roads aren't necessarily keeping up, the laws aren't necessarily keeping up and bylaws, Lord knows, can't keep up with these illegal truck yards and road safety. I'm going to read from an article in the Caledon Enterprise: “A residents group has petitioned the province to address the illegal truck yards and road safety situation in Caledon and the surrounding areas.

“Oshawa MPP ... the official opposition critic for infrastructure, transportation and highways, tabled” the petition “in the Ontario Legislature on behalf of the Caledon Community Road Safety Advocacy Group ... on December 12.” That was a year ago, Speaker.

We had a very involved conversation, two hours, so that we could really get into the weeds and have an understanding. They came back to me with this petition, which I introduced. What was laid out in the petition but continues to be a challenge for them, the illegal truck yards—they're asking for this government to protect land use integrity. As they said, “the ability to barricade entrances to lands being used without proper zoning; increasing fines for violations and attaching these fines to the title of the property to ensure accountability.”

Speaker, we're dealing with numbered companies. We're dealing with kind of fly-by-night operations, and it's really hard to move trucks. If they can get in there, onto a piece of land, it's hard to remove them. It takes a long time to do that. They're interested in stopping them before they can move in.

“Enhancing truck safety measures:

—increasing Ministry of Transportation presence at inspection stations;

—establishing new inspection stations and conducting more mobile and surprise inspections.

“Improving truck driver training.”

These are their community roads, right? I talked about Highway 50 and going from Bolton Pizza, down the hill, up the hill and out to Palgrave where we used to live. I still recognize that stretch of road, but a lot of the roads in that area are really congested with trucks. The municipalities are doing all they can to keep up with that and keep road users safe, and it is an uphill battle.

They're also wanting to see truck drivers better trained: “Returning the responsibility for driver truck training and licensing to the Ministry of Transportation” is one of their asks in the petition; “introducing an apprenticeship program to ensure drivers are adequately prepared before operating independently”—another ask.

Franca Pisani started the Caledon Road Community Safety Advocacy Group, this Facebook group, following the death of 23-year-old Adrianna Milena McCauley, who was killed in a four-vehicle collision in Bolton. This group includes residents from Caledon and the surrounding areas of Brampton and Vaughan. They have said: “Part of the reason the task force came into being was the fact that a group of residents had submitted a petition to Caledon

council in 2023 asking for relief from a situation where there was an illegal land use on a property around the border of ward 3 and ward 1,” explained Doug Maskell, who is a councillor.

Speaker, this is a good reminder that I’ll circle back to these folks. They have their own MPP, but when it comes to road safety, we don’t have borders, do we? We like to visit our friends and family. I like to go back to my old stomping ground and maybe reminisce. But everybody wants to be safe on the roads, whether it’s northern Ontario or whether it’s the rolling hills of Caledon, so I appreciate the opportunity to share that.

But going back to the specifics of this bill, and maybe going back a little further: Again, I might have been in grade 5 or grade 6. It was a region-of-Peel initiative to introduce the black compost boxes, the compost bins. I don’t remember quite whether they were free or whether families could buy them or whatnot, but it was a new thing, composting.

And so we went to the regional headquarters and picked up our black compost bin, assembled it, set it up in the backyard, and my brother practically lived there. I mean that because there were garter snakes and there were crawling things, and so he camped out by the compost bin catching snakes. I was not there with him. But I appreciated that municipalities do show leadership and do help community members, in this case, have a compost bin and be a bit more environmentally conscientious.

Speaker, back to this bill, Bill 45, the Peel Transition Implementation Act: It’s still not clear—and we’ve been talking about this for a while—what problem this Peel restructuring is meant to solve. While cost savings have been mentioned by various proponents of restructuring and dissolution, no evidence has been published showing these changes will actually save anybody any money, and there are concerns that it might increase costs.

It has been since June 2023, so about two and a half years, since the Ford government passed—or suddenly announced—plans to dissolve Peel region, and then they flip-flopped. There have been policy lurches. There’s been a cloak of secrecy. But in 2023, the Ford government passed Bill 112, the Hazel McCallion Act, which provided for the dissolution of Peel region and the establishment of a Peel transition board to make recommendations on how that dissolution would occur.

And then Bill 112, which provided for this surprise dissolution of Peel region, ended up being time-allocated—which means, to folks at home, something about the debate and process was truncated. So it was time-allocated. It bypassed committee entirely and any opportunities for the public to make input or amendments to improve the bill. That was quite aggressive.

But despite that aggressive approach, six months later, the Ford government backtracked. They announced that it would not dissolve Peel region after all. The dissolution provisions of Bill 112 were then repealed with schedule 7 of Bill 185, which also limited the mandate of the Peel transition board to recommendations concerning land use

planning, water and waste water, stormwater, highways and waste management.

So, Speaker, it’s been an interesting journey to get here. It was a surprise announcement to dissolve, and then the backtracking and the Peel transition board had that restricted, I’ll say, mandate. And the projected financial impact of these changes still remains a secret not only to the public but also to the municipalities themselves.

A previous proposal for the full dissolution of the Peel region was scrapped after leaked documents indicated that dissolution would come with massive costs. Dissolution would have been financially disastrous. The Deloitte analysis was leaked, and the projected \$1.3 billion in extra costs and massive property tax hikes would have broken down to, by those numbers, 17% in Mississauga, a 34% increase in Brampton, and a 256% increase in Caledon. Those are big numbers. So, taxes going up, what will happen with utility rates, the quality of services—people have questions.

1600

The Peel transition board that I mentioned earlier was kept completely in the dark, even as the government reversed its plans. FOI-released texts show senior officials repeatedly refusing to update the board chair.

So this has been an interesting journey—secretive. What’s the real reason behind it? As I said, we still don’t have a clear understanding of what problem this is meant to solve.

Who have we been hearing from? I think we’re all hearing the same things.

Caledon council informed the province of its opposition to the downloading of the responsibility for regional roads and waste management services, warning of high costs. With those high costs, what will become of the quality of services, utility rates, all of that? The folks in Caledon have real questions.

In December 2024, Mississauga’s mayor, Carolyn Parrish, wrote to the then minister to complain that Bill 240—that was basically this bill, but before the election, I think—“is unfairly keeping our city on the hook as the financial cash cow for the municipalities of Brampton and Caledon—as we have been for 50 years.”

So there are opinions; these would have been great voices, among, I’m sure, many great voices, to have invited to committee—but there wasn’t committee.

I am hopeful that we will have the opportunity for this bill to go to committee, because we do have questions. This will have real implications for folks.

Peel taxpayers were billed \$1.5 million for the transition board, despite there being little transparency around that work that was done or how the board members and consultants were selected or even compensated. All of this uncertainty meant that Peel was unable, for two years, to borrow—stalling their capital projects, jeopardizing critical infrastructure investments.

That is the legacy of this government—that’s kind of their MO: chaos and uncertainty, more chaos and more uncertainty, then some more chaos and some more uncertainty. That just seems to be Tuesday for this government.

The government's actions on this file in the Peel region story has caused severe instability and staff loss. Peel has lost roughly 400 staff, with over 13,000 years of experience combined, due to anxiety, uncertainty and poor communication. CUPE workers are very anxious about job security, collective agreements, possible privatization, and their fears are made worse by the lack of communication. So the government's refusal to engage directly with them isn't making it better.

Community agencies in Peel that do a lot of the heavy lifting, that serve newcomers, survivors of violence, seniors, unhoused residents, youth, and people with health and addiction needs, have been thrown into prolonged uncertainty by the government's actions—again, chaos and uncertainty.

I don't imagine that's what the government is setting out to do, but without the transparency, without the release of the reports, people are just guessing.

The government should be transparent. That's what should be happening.

The government continues to operate in secrecy. The transition board's recommendations are being kept secret—and not just secret from us here in this House, but from the municipalities themselves, from residents, despite the fact that, as I said, it was the Peel taxpayers who were billed \$1.5 million for the transition board.

This is a story that could happen to any municipality. It is the story of this Premier's fascination with municipal meddling.

Bill 45 is not a coherent solution. It is a watered-down response that downloads responsibilities without clarity, transparency, or a public financial plan. Again, this is a bill that is about chaos and uncertainty. After delving into this, I still am not sure what problem this bill is seeking to solve, and after listening to the government members, I don't know if they know either.

Speaker, I will leave it there, and I'm happy to take questions.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Questions?

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: Thank you to the member from Oshawa for that presentation.

I came from the municipal world. I am able to understand why this bill is very, very important. I often talk about the York regional government structure—50 years old, 60 years old. It's losing a lot of taxpayer dollars.

Today, we don't have that calculation yet—but taxpayers, especially property tax payers, are going to save hundreds of millions of dollars by doing all these changes.

Given this legislation, my question to the member—this bill engaged with the local municipal leaders along with the regional councillors, who locally passed a bylaw and a resolution. Can the member opposite confirm whether their party intends to respect the local consensus, or will they oppose a bill that simply implements what Peel's own council have asked for?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Some of the folks in this space will remember that Bill 112 was like a surprise—that the government was just going to dissolve Peel—and everyone was kind of left scrambling. Then, the recommenda-

tions from the transition board, which we haven't seen, might have impacted the fact that the government then did a U-turn and decided they weren't going to dissolve. Now, here we are, and we've had various bills and repeals of previous—it has been a bit of a dog's breakfast to get to this point.

When you say that you've consulted—well, there were no committee hearings allowed for the dissolution of Peel. So how is that consultation?

I'm reading questions and comments from Caledon council into the record, and also the Mississauga mayor into the record—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Questions?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Honestly, the pattern of legislation that this government has brought forward—I go back to 2018. Their first act was to change the Toronto municipal act, and it literally was a power grab, when they were changing the boundaries when it came to a municipal election. Continually, they're involving themselves in municipal jurisdiction, municipal laws, downloading to municipalities. And the member described very well the different bills that they've done that are basically a shuffle every day. Every time we're in session, there's a new bill for this and a new bill for that. Who are they consulting?

I want to ask the member who they think they are consulting—because this is a long-standing topic that we still don't have any clarity on. Who is asking for this legislation?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm sorry to disappoint the fine member who asked the question, but I do not have any insight and cannot answer that.

I think that in the case of Bill 112, that had been a deathbed promise. That was the Hazel McCallion Act that came from an idea from the Premier.

But I don't know who else wants this. Obviously, the government has done an about-face—this is not the dissolution in front of us; this is the Peel Transition Implementation Act.

No one's community is safe from this Premier's meddling. For the region of Durham, I hope that anything that the government decides about them will be with them—nothing about them without them. But we are seeing that the Premier just loves municipal politics so much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Questions?

Hon. Rob Flack: First of all, I want to say to the member that I enjoyed listening to your story about Caledon. Those were my background play fields, as a kid growing up in Streetsville, as I've spoken about in this House.

I can say that when I took on this ministry, this is one of the first things we had to consider, and one of the first things I did with respect to this bill was consult. I think she should know that I've spoken to every mayor in every community—the three main cities in Peel—and all, to a T, completely support this legislation.

My question to the member would be, simply: Why are you saying there was no consultation, when there was absolute consultation, thorough consultation, with all the key municipalities?

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Ms. Jennifer K. French: Well, I am very reassured to hear the minister say that the minister has talked to mayors and has done his own consultations.

As a member of this fine Legislature, I love it when I get to go to committee and hear from folks myself. I'm not actually—not yet am I a minister. I haven't had the opportunity to hear from these folks.

When government does behind-the-scenes consultations and doesn't allow committee to come to this House, then the House misses out.

As I've said, when we have stood in our place and said, "What is the problem that this restructuring is meant to solve," the folks speaking to this—their talking points don't tell them, and therefore they can't tell us.

I'm glad to hear the minister has had conversations, but what does that look like for the rest of us, if we still don't know why this piece of legislation is here?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Questions?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Thank you to my colleague from Oshawa for helping us to understand the chaos and uncertainty and confusion around this bill—when we had a bill for dissolution, a bill to repeal the dissolution, now a bill to transition; the uncertainty about who's asking for what, who's getting what.

We just heard the minister say he consulted, but we just have to take the government's word for what the people he consulted said.

Does the member agree that we could address all of this chaos and uncertainty and provide some clarity, some actual sunshine on who's asking for what, what's happening, and make sure that the third time is the charm and we actually get it right, so that we're not back here in six months debating a fourth bill; that this bill should just go to committee so everyone can hear from the stakeholders and we can make sure we've gotten it right this time?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: And further to that, consultation is one piece of it. That doesn't mean everybody wants it—that the government did consult with.

As we're hearing, in May 2024, Caledon council informed the province of its opposition to the downloading of responsibility for roads and waste management services, and they warned of high costs. So what does that look like, and will there be mitigating considerations? What is it going to look like for the taxpayers?

The leaked Deloitte report that we don't get to see—17% in Mississauga, 34% increase in Brampton, 256% increase in Caledon, for their property taxes, going up.

What will this look like for utility rates? What will this look like for quality of services? I have questions. Please let this go to committee just so that we can find out.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further questions?

Mr. Deepak Anand: I love these kinds of conversations and debates because we get to know each other.

I never realized I have so much in common with the member from Oshawa.

You lived in Peel. I'm living in Peel. You were doing skating—not the figure skating; I can't do that. But I was doing roller skating while growing up, and I loved it.

You were saying, "What is in this bill?" So let's talk about what is in this bill.

The Peel Transition Implementation Act, 2025, would give jurisdiction over waste collection and regional roads to lower-tier municipalities, to deliver high-quality service for residents. It is going to reduce the costs. It's going to give them more control on these important issues so that they can help the residents.

My question to the member is very straight and simple: What else would you have anticipated in this bill—what could have been done? And what do you think of giving this control? Do you think it will—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I recognize the member from Oshawa.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I wasn't asking about what is in the bill. I was saying, "Why? What is this seeking to accomplish?"

However, since the member just suggested that this is going to reduce the costs—that is something we've heard before. The cost savings have been mentioned by various people who are seeking restructuring and dissolution. But we haven't seen the evidence. So where is the evidence that has been published somewhere, that shows that these changes will actually save any money? There are concerns that this will increase costs, and maybe it will, maybe it won't. But what numbers are you looking at to suggest that it will reduce them?

Release the recommendations from the transition board—I think that that is fair—and let this go to committee so that people can share what they know.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further debate?

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: It is a privilege to rise in the House today to speak in support of Bill 45, the Peel Transition Implementation Act, 2025—legislation that represents the next step in a long story of growth, change and responsible governance in one of Ontario's most important regions.

This bill is about more than a transition plan. It is about more than transferring roads or reorganizing how waste collection is delivered. It is about recognizing that Peel's past, Peel's present and Peel's future look very different, and that its governance structure must evolve just as the region itself has evolved. Peel did not become what it is today overnight. Its communities did not emerge fully formed. Peel's history is long and deeply rooted, and understanding that history is essential to understanding why Bill 45 is not only timely but necessary.

Let me begin with a look back, because Peel's past is woven directly into the decisions before us today.

Peel's story, in many ways, begins in 1805. These agreements covered more than 70,000 acres of land—land that today forms the heart of the city of Mississauga. This was the beginning of formal governance structures in the area, the first step in a long journey toward the modern region we know.

Soon after, in 1806, the township of Toronto was established.

Over the decades that followed, settlement intensified, communities formed, and responsibilities grew. Local officials became responsible for the essential building blocks of any community: roads, drainage, emergency response, public health, and early infrastructure.

By 1852, Peel had grown into a fully recognized county, and Peel county assumed the responsibilities of local governance across the area.

Speaker, Peel county served its residents well for more than a century. But by the post-war period, the region was transforming again, this time at an unprecedented pace.

Southern Ontario experienced explosive growth after the Second World War. Families moved out of Toronto. Suburban communities expanded. Industry thrived. Infrastructure demands increased sharply. And the county model, which had worked for the era it was created in, simply could not keep up.

By the early 1970s, it was clear that a new form of governance was required to handle the scale of change. Roads, policing, waste management, housing, public health—all were becoming more complex and required coordinated delivery.

So, in 1974, the regional municipality of Peel was created. The county was dissolved. A regional government structure was established to ensure services could be delivered efficiently and uniformly across Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon. In 1974, that new structure made sense. Peel's population at the time was approximately 335,000 people. Coordination was the priority. Shared services offered economies of scale. A unified approach to roads, policing and waste management helped the region grow in a responsible way. But 1974 was half a century ago. What worked then cannot simply be expected to work forever. And this is where Peel's modern story begins.

Peel, today, is a dramatically different region than the one envisioned in 1974. It is home to 1.7 million people—more than four times its population at the time of regionalization. Its communities are among the fastest-growing in Canada.

Caledon grew by more than 15% from 2016 to 2021—nearly triple the provincial average.

Brampton grew by an extraordinary 17% between 2021 and 2024, making it the fastest-growing large city in the country.

Mississauga, now a fully built-out urban city, continues to grow in density and complexity under strong municipal leadership committed to balancing affordability with service quality.

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These three municipalities, each with distinct character, growth patterns and needs, are no longer small suburbs linked by shared infrastructure. They are major centres in their own right. And as they have grown in sophistication, so too have their service requirements.

Modern Peel relies on major arterial roads that now carry far more traffic than they did in 1974. It manages waste for cities that, together, rival the size of many prov-

inces. It oversees stormwater systems that require constant upgrading to support climate resilience. And it supports the largest expansion of housing and employment lands in its history.

Speaker, Peel is not the same place it was when the regional model was created. Its governance must reflect that reality.

The Peel Transition Implementation Act, 2025, is not about returning to the past; it is about ensuring that services are delivered at the right level of government, with the right accountability, and with the right tools to support continued growth.

What Bill 45 does is simple, clear and necessary.

It transfers responsibility for regional roads and stormwater infrastructure directly to Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon, as of July 1, 2026. These are local systems that influence how people move, how goods move, and how new communities are built. Local governments are best positioned to manage them.

It transfers responsibility for waste collection as of October 1, 2027. This aligns with the municipal waste contract cycle and respects the transition plan adopted by Peel regional council.

It creates a structured, orderly, and co-operative process for transferring assets, staff, operational systems and budgets, to ensure continuity of service.

It reinforces the principle of local empowerment, ensuring municipalities have the tools, flexibility and authority to plan for their own communities as they continue to grow.

These timelines were not imposed from above. They were chosen by Peel's municipalities, endorsed through motions passed by Peel regional council, and validated by the Peel transition board after extensive consultation. This is not a top-down restructuring; it is an evolution, shaped hand in hand with local leaders.

Some may ask: Why roads, stormwater and waste? Why not everything? Or why anything at all? The answer lies in Peel's growth trajectory and the shifting demands that come with it.

Regional roads today function as major urban arteries. The traffic volumes, transit integration, cycling infrastructure and development pressures along these corridors require decisions to be made at the local level.

When a major development in Mississauga affects a regional road, Mississauga residents expect Mississauga council, not a regional government, to be accountable for how that road functions.

The same is true for stormwater. As climate change brings more severe weather events, stormwater management must be fully integrated into municipal land use planning. Municipalities need control over the system that prevents flooding, protects creeks and supports infrastructure resilience. That is best done locally.

Waste collection, meanwhile, has grown into one of the most complex operational services in a modern city. Aligning pickup schedules, fleet management, route optimization, and local environmental goals under municipal control ensures greater consistency and responsiveness.

The services chosen for transfer are the services where modern municipalities benefit from direct oversight, integration with local plans, and the ability to coordinate with their engineering, planning and public works teams. This is modern governance responding to modern needs.

Speaker, when we talk about structural change, people naturally worry about disruptions to front-line services. They wonder whether waste will still be collected, whether their roads will still be maintained, whether stormwater projects will continue.

Let me be absolutely clear: Service continuity is at the heart of this transition. The timelines have been deliberately paced over multiple years to allow for workforce stability, asset transfers, union discussions, fleet realignment, IT system integration, and procurement planning. Staff performing these services today will continue performing them tomorrow—simply under different employers. Their knowledge will remain in the public sector. Their roles will remain essential. And the community will feel the transition in their day-to-day lives. The success of this transition depends on doing it carefully, responsibly and collaboratively, and that is exactly what Bill 45 enables.

One of the remarkable threads running through Peel's history is that its governance has always changed when its growth required it.

In 1805, the Toronto Purchase opened the door to settlement.

In 1852, a county system was needed to manage expanding communities.

In 1974, a regional model became necessary to address the demands of a rapidly urbanizing population.

And now, in 2025, Peel once again stands at a moment of transformation. Mississauga is a global city. Brampton is one of Canada's fastest-growing urban centres. Caledon is also experiencing growth on a scale that it has never seen before. Their governance must reflect their reality. We cannot expect the structures created half a century ago, when the population was a quarter of what it is today, to be the structures that carry Peel through the next 50 years of growth. That would be like trying to fit a modern city inside the frame of a small town; something would have to give.

The Peel Transition Implementation Act updates governance so that the service structure supports—not constrains—growth.

Speaker, at its heart, this legislation strengthens local decision-making. It ensures municipalities have direct control over the services that shape how they grow, how they plan, how they build roads and neighbourhoods, and how they keep people moving. When a municipality is responsible for the land use, for the development approvals, for the community design, and for the local roads that support these communities, it creates a coherent system where accountability is clear. If a road needs widening to support new homes, the municipality is responsible. If a stormwater pond needs upgrading for a new subdivision, the municipality is responsible. If waste service standards need to be aligned with local preferences, again, the municipality is responsible. Accountability flows best when

authority and responsibility are aligned. Bill 45 aligns them.

One of the most important aspects of this transition is how it was developed. This was not a closed-door exercise. It was not a decree handed down from the province. It was shaped directly by the municipalities it affects.

The Peel transition board undertook extensive analysis, modelling and consultation. Municipal CAOs, CFOs, public works leaders, emergency response experts, waste management officials, and planners were part of the process.

Mayors Brown, Parrish and Groves have shown leadership, pragmatism, and a commitment to the long-term success of their communities. Their insights shaped timelines and priorities. Their councils debated, endorsed and approved key components of the transition plan. This collaborative approach is the reason the implementation timelines are realistic. It is the reason workers are protected. It is the reason services will remain stable. And it is the reason this transition reflected local needs, not abstract principles.

Speaker, Peel's reality is this: More people are coming, more jobs are being created, more homes are being built and more infrastructure is required. As the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Infrastructure, I can tell you first-hand, Mr. Speaker, investing in infrastructure is our government's top priority—investing \$200 billion over the next 10 years.

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When you talk about Brampton, Brampton was always a forgotten city. In the last seven years, Brampton has seen investments it has never seen before, whether you call it the new hospital, which is already under construction; whether it's a new medical school, which is already open; whether it's millions of dollars in the Municipal Housing Infrastructure Program. Also, thank you to Minister of Housing for always making Brampton a priority, always making sure that Brampton gets its fair share.

The transfer of roads, stormwater and waste collection is not a theoretical exercise; it is a concrete response to the pressures municipalities feel every day. Modern service delivery requires faster decision-making, integration with local planning, adaptability to new technologies, climate-resilient infrastructure, more efficient project sequencing and clear accountability when challenges arise. When these services sit at the regional level while planning decisions are made locally, municipalities face delays, misalignment and unnecessary complexity. Bill 45 resolves that. It gives municipalities control over the tools they rely on to build complete communities. It supports long-term infrastructure planning. It reduces duplication, and it ensures residents have a clear line of sight to who is responsible for the services they depend on.

Speaker, some may ask whether Peel will be weaker or less coordinated after these transitions. The answer is unequivocally no. Peel will be stronger, because each municipality will be empowered to plan and deliver services with great precision; stronger because its responsibilities will align with the level of government best suited to deliver them; stronger because service delivery

will be more responsive, more transparent and more tailored to local needs. Peel is not disappearing. Peel is not being dismantled. Peel is evolving. It is becoming a region where co-operation occurs through partnership, not through outdated structures. It is becoming a region where growth is supported by governance that reflects the realities of 2025, not the realities of 1974.

Speaker, the Peel Transition Implementation Act is about building for the future. It is about preparing communities that are already among the fastest-growing in the country for the next 50 years of change. It is about ensuring that as Peel grows, its services can keep pace, its infrastructure can support new families, its planning can be coordinated and efficient and its governance can adapt to new realities.

The history of Peel shows that this region has never been static; it has always evolved. Every time it has done so, it has emerged stronger, more resilient and better equipped to serve its people. In 1805, new agreements laid the groundwork for settlement. In 1852, governance adapted to a growing population. In 1974, the regional model was created to manage the pressures of suburban expansion. Today, in 2025, we take the next step in that evolution with a transition designed to support vibrant cities, growing communities and responsible service delivery.

Speaker, Ontario is growing, Peel is growing and this legislation ensures that governance grows along with it. This bill honours Peel's history. It supports Peel's present and prepares Peel for the future.

I'm proud to support Bill 45 and the vision it represents for a stronger, more efficient and more responsive Peel region.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Questions?

Mr. Tom Rakocivic: I want to commend the member on his speech.

This government has been very active when it comes to municipalities, telling them where their borders should exist, what their roads should look like, all sorts of things like that—

Interjections.

Mr. Tom Rakocivic:—allowing speeding to exist unfettered and in fact encouraging speeding in the municipalities, to the detriment of communities.

I don't know why they stopped applauding.

But the question is—as we all know, municipalities have to balance budgets in a way that federal and provincial governments don't, where they continue to run massive deficits. These municipalities have been struggling with massive amounts of costs that they have to spend without much support from this government.

I get that this government wants to interfere with the municipalities in certain ways, but why aren't they simply there when it comes to the financial support many of them need?

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: Thank you to the member opposite for that question.

As I mentioned in my remarks, Peel is a dramatically different region than the one envisioned in 1974. It is home to 1.7 million people, more than four times its population

at the time of reorganization. And when we talked to the cost of taxpayers, our government is committed to ensuring that taxpayers are protected throughout this transition and this Peel Transition Implementation Act, 2025, was carefully designed to avoid new financial pressures on local residents. In fact, the transition reflects locally led decisions supported by all three municipalities and Peel region itself.

Ontario is covering the cost of facilitation through the office of the Provincial Land and Development Facilitator ensuring that municipalities aren't burdened by administrative expenses. Each municipality will integrate services in a way that makes sense for their budget and their residents.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I recognize the member for Brantford—Brant.

Mr. Will Bouma: Speaker, through you to the member: I just heard the member for Humber River—Black Creek mention that we're ordering municipalities around. What I find so fascinating about this piece of legislation before us today, this is exactly what municipalities were asking for. This piece of legislation is a direct result of what the three municipalities that make up the Peel region are asking for, and so I'm not really sure where it's coming from that we're trampling on municipalities' rights in order to do this.

The question that I had for the member is: We're looking at allowing municipally owned corporations to be able to get investments in order to build infrastructure because we realize that we have such a huge infrastructure deficit in the province of Ontario. I was wondering if the member could talk a little bit about how great it will be to have these structures in place to finance legacy infrastructure in this Peel region.

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: The member is right. When we talk about the extensive consultation the Minister of Housing has done on this bill, the Peel transition board undertook extensive analysis, modelling and consultation. Municipal CEOs, CFOs, public work leaders, emergency response experts, waste management officials and planners were part of the process. Mayors Brown, Parrish and Groves have shown leadership, pragmatism and a commitment to the long-term success of their communities.

And these three municipalities, each with distinct character, growth patterns and needs, are no longer small suburbs linked by shared infrastructure. They are major centres in their own right, and as they we have grown in sophistication, so too have their service requirements, and Peel region relies—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further questions?

M^{me} France Gélinas: We're all very proud to live in a democracy where the legislative process allows for people to have a voice. We all know how it works. You go first and second readings. After second reading, we go to committee. After committee, we do clause-by-clause. After clause-by-clause, it comes back for third reading.

Does the government think that respecting democracy with this particular bill is a good idea and to make sure that

it goes to committee so that not only the mayors but some of the councillors, some of the residents, some of the businesses of Peel have an opportunity to have their voices heard?

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: This is what this bill does. As I mentioned earlier, extensive consultation has been done, and also the mayors of the three cities and all the local councillors support this bill.

Let's talk about the benefits of this bill. As I mentioned, Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon have grown in population, capacity and sophistication, and they deserve a governance structure that reflects that progress.

By transferring control over key public services from the region of Peel to those lower-tier municipalities, the bill ensures they can make decisions that reflect their own needs, not those of a regional compromise, and it will help them plan infrastructure that aligns with local priorities, manage growth efficiently and deliver services more directly.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I recognize the member from Markham–Unionville.

Mr. Billy Pang: I'm not from Peel, but I visit the region quite frequently, because I have a lot of friends there. So, I would like to ask—

Interjection.

Mr. Billy Pang: Yes, the minister is one of them.

I would like to ask the member to reflect on how the Peel Transition Implementation Act, 2025, advances local decision-making. For years, residents and local councils in Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon have called for a governance model that better reflects their size, growth and capacity to lead. This legislation responds directly to those calls by giving municipalities more authority over the services that matter most, from roads to waste collection.

So would the member share how empowering lower-tier municipalities with these responsibilities will help them better plan for growth, serve their residents and make decisions that are truly locally led? Thank you.

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: I appreciate the question from the member from Markham–Unionville. The member is right. Even though he's not a member of Peel region, he's surrounded by the members from Peel region. He understands the priorities, and he also understands what this government has delivered for Brampton. He always tells me that Brampton is getting so much: a new hospital, a new medical school, long-term-care homes, new schools. This is the legacy of this Premier and this government, because we believe in delivering. We believe in giving a fair share to the cities. Brampton is no longer a forgotten city. It's getting its fair share. Even the people of Brampton appreciate how much this government has delivered for Brampton.

Again, this question is a clear demonstration of our government's belief that decisions should be made as close to the people as possible. As I mentioned, Mississauga, Brampton, Caledon have grown in population, capacity and sophistication, and they require and deserve

a governance structure that reflects that progress. This is exactly what we're doing in—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Thank you.

Further questions?

Hon. Graham McGregor: Thank you to the member for Brampton North. I enjoyed my brother the member for Brampton West's speech very much. He talked about a lot of the changes that have happened in our community. We've doubled in size over the last number of years, and we need to double in infrastructure to match that growth.

We've never had a government that has invested so much in Brampton, be it Highway 413; be it the Hurontario LRT, which will go underground all the way up to Queen Street, to Port Credit; the new hospital that's coming; the medical school, which is open as we speak.

It's clear that this government has done a lot for Brampton, and we need to make sure that we're planning for the future growth of our community not only for the next five, 10, 15 years but for many years to come.

Could the member talk a little bit more about why it's so important to invest in a city like Brampton and what other kind of work the government needs to be doing to make sure that we meet that growth and meet the moment for our residents?

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: Thank you to my brother from Brampton North for that question. Nobody understands Brampton more than this member. He was born in Brampton, born at Peel Memorial Hospital—and by the way, we're redeveloping the Peel Memorial Hospital into a second full-fledged hospital with 350-plus beds.

This is what this government is doing. This government understands the priorities of Bramptonians, whether it's health care, whether it's education.

And thank you for reminding me about Highway 413 and the LRT. Highway 413 is such a critical piece of infrastructure. The people of Brampton were waiting for this highway for a long, long time, and this government is finally delivering it. That will not only reduce the traffic congestion; it will significantly boost the provincial GDP and will create thousands of new jobs for the people of this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to speak in the House on behalf of the residents of Timiskaming–Cochrane and today on Bill 45, the Peel Transition Implementation Act, 2025.

I guess the question that we really have to ask is—and I'm paraphrasing a famous quote: "To repeal Peel, or not to Peel?" That's what this whole debate is about.

What I want to focus on for a second is not the bill itself, but the process—actually, the parliamentary process, because this bill is now before us for second reading. Usually, with second reading, each recognized party has an hour lead, and sometimes they split the hour, right? Twenty minutes—because talking for an hour on anything is tough, and sometimes we split, you know, three times 20.

But this morning something happened that in my parliamentary career, I am unaware of it happening. So the

third party, the Liberals, decided that instead of splitting their hour, to take three minutes.

Interjection: No.

Mr. John Vanthof: Three minutes, basically two members' statements—and now, you have to ask yourself, why? Why would a party that claims to represent all areas of Ontario, wants to represent all Ontario, claims to want to be a government, has long, long ago been a government—

Interjections.

Mr. John Vanthof: Not supported by the NDP for two majority terms.

Now, it could be just disorganization. It could be. But even worse, it could be a choice. They chose not to take the opportunity to talk about a very important region of the province.

I don't claim to be an expert on Peel, Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon. But I do very much care about that area, and there are some very big similarities. And that's why, when asked, I take the time to actually speak on it, try and make voices heard. So I am shocked—shocked—that the Liberals decided not to speak about Peel. I guess Bonnie Crombie has really left the building.

Interjections.

Mr. John Vanthof: Seriously, I don't understand how a party can claim to want to be a government and do that to one of the biggest parts of the province, a part that, for many people, has felt ignored, a part that has issues—serious issues. We all have parts. But it has issues—and has great things happening. There are great things happening in Peel. They didn't even bother talking about the great things. They just didn't bother. They didn't bother with Mississauga, didn't bother with Brampton and didn't bother with Caledon. They don't seem to care. They didn't add into this debate later, either. I haven't heard any questions either. Perhaps we're going to initiate a couple—

Interjections.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'm hoping to. These same people wax eloquently about time allocation, as I do. I don't believe that the government should muzzle debate, but I also believe when we have the opportunity to debate, we should take that opportunity. They have decided not to bother. It's pretty hard to claim that you are being muzzled when you have the opportunity and you just—you forgo it. I'm a bit upset about it.

Mr. Matthew Rae: No.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes, I'm a bit upset. But now that I've sufficiently, I think—

Mr. Matthew Rae: Don't ruin a good speech, John.

Mr. John Vanthof: Now, in transition, I'm also a bit upset with the Clerks' table, because they gave the advice not to allow the Liberals to have to wear Santa hats because they didn't even show up this afternoon.

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I'm not really upset with the Clerks. They help me out a lot. They do fantastic work. They really do.

Getting back to the bill—I have to get my train of thought back to this bill. I've heard a lot about the bill. I'm not going to focus too much on the bill itself. It's the

process to get to the bill. It's kind of like ready, shoot, aim. Because you'll recall that the first time we heard about this was the dissolution of Peel region—that was Bill 112. And then, the next thing you know, the government proposed to dissolve the dissolution of Peel. That was the problem.

And then you have a Peel transition board, and then they appointed—didn't they appoint a five-person panel? Was that the transition board?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: It was the transition board.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes. And they met in secret, had secret reports, didn't really—it's kind of par for the course for this government. This isn't the first time that they've pushed something through—Bill 124—and then had to—although it was a much tougher process. It went to court and everything, but it was the same thing.

Hon. Graham McGregor: You voted against that too.

Mr. John Vanthof: Absolutely, we voted against Bill 124, absolutely—proud of it. We warned you that Bill 124 would cause you big issues. And, actually, it caused the province bigger issues because a lot of the problems in our health care system are a direct result of Bill 124—direct, direct, direct.

Hon. Graham McGregor: That has nothing to do with this bill.

Mr. John Vanthof: That's because you're—the member from Brampton North is heckling me, Speaker. Now, can you heckle a member when you're not in your seat, Speaker?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Order, please.

Mr. John Vanthof: He may be from Peel but that's not his seat.

I respect the member from Brampton North. I actually get along with the member from Brampton North. I do. But that is—

Interjections.

Mr. John Vanthof: Careful what you ask for.

One thing we do share in northern Ontario with the region of Peel—and the member from Oshawa spoke about the illegal truck yards and about people in the trucking industry who aren't respecting our laws, aren't respecting our rules. Well, in northern Ontario, we face that too. In northern Ontario, we fear for our lives, for the truckers who don't respect our rules, don't respect our laws and for some reason have licences issued by the Ontario government. We fear for our lives.

There are lots of great truckers from Brampton, but there are some that aren't. For some reason, they have licences, and they run us off the road and they run themselves off the road. I think they're the same people who are creating these illegal truck yards mainly in Caledon—and that is also in the region of Peel.

So while I heard members talk about how the roads are going to be put back into the municipalities, who is going to be responsible for the truck yards? That's a bigger question. Who is going to be responsible for the people who are running northerners off the road? And I'm not laughing at this one. I'm not. We need to fix that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Questions?

Mr. Will Bouma: Speaker, through you to the member: I appreciate his speech. I listened with interest to his comments on the bill. While I can see that it took us a while to get to this piece of legislation—we have a piece of legislation before us that was crafted by the member municipalities of Peel region, supported by the member municipalities of Peel region and is before us here today as that. I'm just wondering if he and his caucus will be voting in favour of this piece of legislation.

Mr. John Vanthof: That's a very good question, but if you had the original piece of legislation, if you would have allowed that legislation to run its course, to go through committee, perhaps you wouldn't have had to dissolve the dissolution bill. Perhaps people wouldn't have been as suspicious of your motives, quite frankly. If you let the Legislature do its work, you won't have the same problems. You're not letting the Legislature do its work, so that makes it a lot harder for this side to actually decide whether to vote yes or no because we don't really know what's coming next.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further questions?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I always appreciate the words from the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane. I have spent time on the roads, and that was part of what I said in my remarks. We visit other communities. We drive all across the province. We do want safe roads. The truckyards that were raised by the folks in Caledon—but even if I didn't know that, driving around with the big trucks on the roads that were not meant for that kind of truck traffic doesn't feel safe.

Knowing that truck driver training is falling apart at the seams, that this government is allowing that to happen—there's all sorts of pieces. I would ask for you to maybe share if you have that in common with Peel as well.

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you very much for that question. What we share—talk about an illegal truckyard. Last weekend, Highway 11 was blocked for 60 hours, 70 hours—2,000 trucks a day. There are a lot of trucks along the road. For some reason, some trucks thought—it's a two-lane highway—that although the road is closed, you can, like, sit next to each other on a two-lane highway, so no one could move either direction.

There was definitely a lack of training there. Most drivers know that if the road is closed, you stay on your side, because if they do need an emergency vehicle, no emergency vehicles could pass. Why? Because Highway 11 was a truck parking lot. Is that the truckers' fault? Yes. Is that the province's fault? Yes, for having no plan on how to deal with that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further questions?

Mr. Stephen Blais: The good residents of Peel are fiscally responsible. They are looking forward to a province that is going to invest in their future, and yet this government is running the biggest deficits and the biggest debt in the history of Ontario. They failed to cut corporate taxes for small businesses. They failed to introduce a middle-class tax cut. The last time there were this many people

unemployed in an economy this bad, the NDP was actually in government.

So I'm wondering if the honourable speaker can explain why this Conservative government has the highest unemployment since the NDP, the biggest debt since the NDP and the worst economic indicators since the NDP was in government?

Mr. John Vanthof: I appreciate the question from the Liberal member. I counted: He spoke for about 40 seconds. So, now on Bill 45, they have spoken for three minutes and 45 seconds. They really care about Peel, don't they? Three minutes and 45 seconds.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further debate?

Hon. Nina Tangri: It's been a very enjoyable afternoon, and I'm really pleased to rise in this House today as one of the many government members who wishes to speak in support of Bill 45, the Peel Transition Implementation Act, 2025.

Speaker, this legislation has been evolving. It's a long time coming and it reflects the vision our government has to improve service delivery for residents. As you know, our government holds every seat in Peel region, and we're doing what we can do to keep it growing. It's why the residents of Peel put their faith in us.

Now, let's turn to the topic at hand: Bill 45. This bill we are debating today is not a stand-alone piece of legislation; it is one that fits broadly into our government's plan for Peel region and beyond. As this chamber knows, Bill 60, the Fighting Delays, Building Faster Act, is beginning to set up a new public ownership model we're establishing through municipal service corporations, or MSCs, to provide water and waste water services more efficiently to remove these costs from homebuyers.

1700

Let's be clear: No matter what certain groups are alleging, nothing in this is about privatization. This is about public ownership, municipally led service delivery. Together, Speaker, these measures form a responsible and forward-looking plan to modernize how services are delivered, how infrastructure is built and how our fast-growing communities can prepare for the realities of their future.

Speaker, Peel region is not an ordinary region. It is home to about 1.6 million people and is one of the fastest-growing population centres in this country. It's an economic engine for Ontario and for Canada, and with that scale comes enormous responsibility, for governments at all levels, to ensure that the delivery of water, waste water, roads, waste collection and growth-supporting infrastructure can meet the needs of today and the challenges of tomorrow.

Our government took that responsibility seriously. And that's why, Speaker, after months of expert advice, municipal consultation, transition board analysis and local leadership, we put forward a plan that is measured, thoughtful and grounded in what residents actually need.

Speaker, Bill 45 modernizes governance where modernization is needed. It realigns services where realignment makes sense. And it strengthens public ownership where public ownership must be preserved. Under this

legislation, responsibility for two major services—regional roads and their associated stormwater infrastructure and waste collection—will transfer directly to the lower-tier municipalities of Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon.

These changes will not happen overnight, Speaker. They are sequenced deliberately, responsibly and on timelines chosen not by the province but by Peel's municipal leaders themselves. Regional roads and stormwater systems will transfer this coming summer on July 1, 2026. Waste collection will transfer on October 1, 2027, just under two years from now. These dates align with municipal planning cycles, workforce transitions and capital budgeting processes already under way. They reflect the extensive modelling and recommendations made by the Peel transition board, a board comprised of professionals whose careers have been built around responsible public service.

The goal in setting these timelines was simple: stability—stability for families, for workers, for taxpayers and for municipalities. These transitions cannot be rushed. These services cannot be put at risk. That is why this process has been collaborative at every stage. Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon have been full partners from day one. Their councils passed the motion. Their mayors endorsed the sequencing. Their staff contributed the technical expertise. That is what responsible, co-operative governance looks like.

Speaker, Bill 45 is only one part of a much larger modernization effort under way across the province, and nowhere is that clearer than in the creation of the publicly owned Peel municipal service corporation under the Water and Wastewater Public Corporations Act, 2025. The Peel MSC represents a new made-in-Ontario approach to major water and waste water infrastructure—a model that is built to meet the scale, complexity and speed required to support Ontario's housing plans.

Again, let me be very clear: The model is fully, completely and unequivocally public. Ownership remains with municipalities. Control remains with municipalities. Oversight remains with municipalities. Accountability remains with municipalities. And anyone suggesting otherwise is not reading this legislation, is not listening to experts and is certainly not interested in the facts.

Speaker, the MSC consolidates expertise, reduces administrative duplication and, most importantly, shortens infrastructure timelines. Right now, a single water or waste water project in Peel can require approval processes across multiple layers of government, engineering units and planning authorities. That may have worked 50 years ago, but it does not work in a region growing at the pace that Peel is growing today.

The municipal service corporation removes these bottlenecks. It streamlines the planning and delivery of major infrastructure, while keeping everything firmly in public hands. It lowers long-term costs by creating economies of scale. It reduces municipal reliance on development charges—one of the largest drivers of housing prices. It provides the predictability that builders need to invest, the

transparency that residents deserve and the responsiveness municipalities want.

Some of the members of the opposition have stood in this chamber and attempted to claim that the MSC represents some form of privatization, and I say again: That claim is false. The bill literally includes the words “public corporation.” Municipal councils remain the owners. Municipal councillors appoint the board. Municipal councils receive financial reporting and the performance reporting. Public ownership is not just preserved, it is fortified.

Peel's water and waste water system is the second largest in Ontario. It represents over \$40 billion in assets. It serves more than 1.6 million people. It supports the economic engine of our province. That system deserves a modern delivery model, not a patchwork of competing jurisdictions. That is why Bill 60 and Bill 45 work hand in hand—one streamlines infrastructure approvals and modernizes public delivery through MSC; the other realigns responsibility and removes duplication in road and waste management. Together, they support the construction of more homes and the creation of more predictable, more affordable and more efficient municipal services.

This modernization effort is rooted in a central principle: Municipalities must have the authority, the clarity and the tools to meet the needs of their growing communities. That is why the governance model is changing. That is why responsibilities are shifting.

To be clear: This need is not theoretical. Peel is already experiencing extraordinary population growth. Between 2016 and 2021, Caledon grew by 15.2%—nearly triple the provincial average. Brampton grew by an astonishing 17% between 2021 and 2024, making it the fastest-growing large city in Canada. My community in Mississauga, under the leadership of Mayor Parrish, has actively pursued policies to lower development charges while maintaining strong service standards. These communities are dynamic, prosperous and growing faster than ever.

But growth without infrastructure is not growth—it is strain. It means congestion, delays and unmet housing needs. It means the next generation is struggling to find a place to live. It means municipalities left without the tools to keep up. That is why this government is acting decisively to modernize how services are planned and delivered.

And while we speak about modernization, we must also speak about service continuity, because if there is one area where misinformation has been most persistent, it is the claim that these changes will disrupt front-line services. Let me be clear: Front-line services will continue without interruption. Roads will continue to be maintained, waste will continue to be collected and stormwater systems will continue to be managed.

Water and waste water systems will continue to be operated safely, reliably and publicly. The transitions have been sequenced precisely to avoid disruption.

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Staff who deliver these services today will deliver them tomorrow—just under clearer municipal responsibility or under the publicly owned MSC. Protecting workers is essential. These employees are the backbone of local

service delivery. They bring decades of operational experience, institutional knowledge, and professional skill. That is why the transition protects their employment, maintains continuity of their work, and respects their role in keeping Peel's communities safe and functioning.

But service continuity is only one part of the story.

Another core pillar of this modernization effort is affordability. Residents, families and taxpayers want to know what these changes mean for them. And the answer is this: These reforms are designed to prevent unnecessary cost escalation, not create it.

A full dissolution of Peel would have been costly, disruptive and time-consuming. It would have required dividing billions of dollars in assets, restructuring entire workforces, and redesigning major systems like policing. That would have fallen squarely on taxpayers' shoulders, and our government was not prepared to impose that burden.

Instead, Bill 45 provides a steady transition. It avoids expensive duplication. It avoids sudden shocks to municipal budgets. And, combined with the MSC's streamlined infrastructure delivery, it reduces reliance on development charges that have driven up housing costs all across Ontario.

Speaker, this is what financial responsibility looks like: making decisions based on evidence, not ideology; working with municipalities instead of over them; and protecting taxpayers instead of exposing them to unnecessary risk.

We cannot talk about responsibility without talking about environmental protection. Modern infrastructure planning is environmental protection. When water and waste water systems fall behind growth, when stormwater planning is fragmented, when road networks cannot support the needs of new neighbourhoods, the environment suffers. Flood risks increase. Aging systems are pushed past capacity. And communities are forced into reactive rather than proactive planning.

The MSC model creates modern, coordinated, public infrastructure delivery. It allows municipalities to plan based on watershed boundaries, long-term growth forecasts, and climate resilience—not based on outdated political structures from the 1970s.

As local roads and stormwater move fully into municipal hands, municipalities gain direct control over green infrastructure, flood mitigation, and climate-adaptation strategies. These are not a step backwards—they are forward leaps.

Peel's governance story is long. From the Toronto Purchase of 1805, through the formation of Peel county in 1852, through the creation of the regional municipality in 1974, Peel has evolved with its population. Every generation has modernized its governance structure to meet new realities.

We are simply doing in 2025 what Peel did in 1974 and what Peel did in 1852—adapting to serve the needs of its people. The difference now is scale. Peel is no longer a county of a few hundred thousand people. It's a region of over 1.5 million. Its infrastructure footprint is massive. Its

growth pressures are immense. And its service needs are far more complex than they were in the past.

Bill 45 and Bill 60 reflect this reality. They modernize governance not for the Peel of yesterday, but for the Peel of today and tomorrow.

Speaker, our government believes deeply in the power of partnership. Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon have shown leadership throughout this process. Their mayors have been constructive, pragmatic, and focused on results. Their councils have endorsed the timelines. Their staff have provided technical guidance. And their communities have voiced their needs.

This is how responsible regional reform is done: with local governments, not against them; with experts, not assumptions; with residents in mind, not raw politics.

The results of this collaborative approach are clear. We will have a stronger Peel region. We will have modern infrastructure delivery. We will have publicly owned, publicly accountable water and waste water services. We will have a governance structure that matches the scale of the community it serves. We will have a clearer path to building the homes that families need.

The choice before this House is simple. We can cling to structures built for a different era or we can embrace modern, public, reliable, forward-looking service delivery. We can expose taxpayers to the costs of fragmentation or we can protect them with responsible, steady transition. We can maintain systems that slow down housing or we can build systems that help get homes constructed faster and more affordably.

Our government chooses modernization. We choose clarity. We choose partnership. We choose public ownership. And, above all, we choose to build an Ontario that works for families today and prepares for generations to come.

For all of these reasons, I am proud to stand in support of Bill 45 and the reforms it represents. Ontario is growing. Peel is growing.

I just want to take a moment to speak a little bit about the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, someone who was raised in the great region of Peel, who understands Peel. Putting this legislation forward, he had really good insight on what Peel was yesterday, how it is today, and how it will be tomorrow and in generations to come.

With this legislation, we are going to ensure that growth is supported, sustainable and rooted in strong, publicly accountable service delivery.

I want to thank everybody for listening to me today.

I really want to say a big thank you to the municipal affairs and housing minister, who has really put a lot of thought into this legislation and, of course, the Premier, our entire team, and my great members from the region of Peel.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Questions?

Teresa J. Armstrong: In this bill, it allows the minister to make legislation on providing for these transfers, including the power to amend agreements and make financial decisions, compel co-operation of officials and take any action with respect to operational matters. It also

includes broad indemnity provisions to block lawsuits or damage awards for anything done under these provisions.

If someone has a legitimate justification to sue the government, who would they hold accountable for these decisions?

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

This legislation was a long time coming. It was well thought out. We put a lot of consultation into this, with the mayors of Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon; the chair of the region of Peel; all of the councillors and regional councillors involved; and many, many members.

I can tell you this: All of the MPPs from the region of Peel spent many, many hours speaking to all of our stakeholders within the region of Peel to make sure that this legislation was exactly what they were having. It was done responsibly. The transitional timelines are done responsibly. The workers are protected. And most of all, the residents of the region of Peel are protected.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further questions?

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: Peel's municipalities have grown into major urban and economic centres, capable of managing complex infrastructure portfolios.

Does the minister agree that empowering these mature municipalities to take direct control of key public works functions reinforces local democracy and allows councils to do more and be more responsive to the communities they serve?

Hon. Nina Tangri: I do want to thank the member from Oakville North–Burlington, who is also a former resident of the region of Peel. We did a lot of work together in the past, so she understands the region very, very well and has been very supportive in some of the legislation that is being brought forward.

1720

It is very important that local governance is respected—local governance, by making sure that the mayors of all three, including Mayor Parrish, Mayor Brown and Mayor Groves, were at the forefront of putting this legislation together. And with the timelines—together, with the transition board, they worked very, very closely to make sure it was done in a very responsible manner, which is what is at the heart of all of this legislation: making those changes that are needed, to make sure that those roads are safer. We've heard from the opposition on the issues that we've had with some of our roads. This will help endeavour to make those changes. But it will also make sure that the taxpayers and the residents of all of the region of Peel are protected and are ready for all of the growth that is happening in our region.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further question?

Mr. Tom Rakoczevic: Some years ago, this government created the legislation that enabled speed cameras to be placed in municipalities across the province, including Brampton, a municipality that spent tens of millions to install them. Then, some minister, six times, was stunt

driving, at 150-plus kilometres an hour—two instances at 160.

And then, all of a sudden—obviously, they're busy; they've got to get around quick, the laws be damned—they decided to remove these speed cameras and basically walk back the laws that they themselves created, after municipalities spent tens of millions on these cameras, and against the will of police, hospitals, parent groups, and many others.

So the question is, since you're talking about the region of Peel and of which Brampton is a city, will you be refunding Brampton the money that they have spent now having to tear down these cameras?

Hon. Nina Tangri: I do want to thank the member for the question, but I'm going to stick to the topic of Bill 45, which is what we are debating this afternoon.

Speaker, this legislation is a product of collaboration, not politics. Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon all asked for greater autonomy over their services, and this government listened.

The Peel Transition Implementation Act, 2025, isn't about revisiting the past; it's about delivering practical, locally led solutions that work for the future. Every element of this bill is grounded in consultation, expertise and consensus. We've provided the structure and support municipalities need to manage growth responsibly and efficiently.

The people of the region of Peel, I can tell you, expect us, as they should, to modernize government to reflect today's reality. And that's exactly what this bill does.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I recognize the Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism.

Hon. Graham McGregor: I thank my colleague from Mississauga–Streetsville for her speech.

I got to go to the Streetsville Christmas market recently, so I was in the member's riding. I didn't notify the member. I was there with a toque on, not looking like a politician. But we were there. It was a good time. I hope the caucus whip doesn't get me in trouble for not notifying the member.

I want to talk a bit about the collaboration that we have with the Brampton city council. We've worked with them so well over the last four years, and this term has really collaborated well with the provincial government. We've got the hospital under construction; the medical school open; the LRT; the Highway 413; collaboration on policing—300 new Peel police graduates, the biggest class that we've ever seen in Peel region.

I'm just wondering if the member would want to talk about the collaboration with her council in Mississauga and how important that partnership with our municipal partners really is.

Hon. Nina Tangri: I really want to thank the member from Brampton for visiting my riding without telling me.

I also visited the Streetsville Christmas market—absolutely wonderful, a place to have visited over the coming holidays.

The member is absolutely right, and collaboration has been essential from the very start. The transition process

began in 2023, with extensive consultation led by the Peel Region Transition Board. That board engaged regularly with Peel region. The three lower-tier municipalities, provincial ministries, local stakeholders all came together to understand each municipality's priorities. What emerged was a shared agreement that transferring regional roads and waste collection was the logical next step.

I can speak from experience; when you want to build new housing and you have regional roads and you have municipal roads, that's a lot of planning involved. This now will make that process so much faster and get housing built in this—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further question?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: The minister said several times now that this bill is the result of extensive consultations, and that the government is very confident that they've got it right.

Speaker, this is actually the third bill that we've had now. Two years ago, we had the dissolution of Peel; last year, we had the repeal of the dissolution of Peel; this year, we have the transition of Peel—which, as my colleague said, is the repeal of the repeal of the Peel. At this point, it's getting hard to believe that the government actually is having extensive consultations and knows what stakeholders actually want to see. At the very least, it's very difficult to have confidence that this time they've gotten it right, because the last two times they haven't gotten it right.

So I'm wondering, will the minister commit that this bill will go to committee for study so that all parliamentarians can hear from the stakeholders and we can all have confidence that the government has gotten this right and that we won't be here again next year with another bill on Peel?

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

I think I've said numerous times, in my remarks earlier and in the previous questions and answers, that this bill was brought forward following much consultation. This began in 2023. We've consulted with mayors, the region, councillors, stakeholders, the workforce within the region of Peel, who it really means a lot to, to make sure that this is done properly. And the Peel transition board—in collaboration with all of them, my colleagues across this side of the House, our Peel MPPs, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, have worked extensively, consulting over the past, which is why we want to make sure we get this bill to the forefront, so we can get housing built much, much faster, so everybody can have the right to be housed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further debate?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: I'm glad to hear that this version of the bill has gone through consultation. I do hope that it goes to committee and that the full democratic process is allowed to be followed.

It was clear that the first bill that came through then obviously had not had any of the kind of consultation that

the member was just talking about—otherwise, it wouldn't have had to have been rescinded.

It has all been a very interesting, somewhat puzzling process.

I'd like to take the opportunity to talk about some conditions in Brampton and conditions in Caledon with regard to the trucking industry.

I had the opportunity, last weekend, to visit Brampton and attend an event for truck drivers and owner-operators. They came together. It was several groups: Justice for Truck Drivers, West Coast Trucking Association, and AZ Canadian Truckers Association. They held a town hall to expose the industry crisis and discuss real solutions.

Truck drivers are facing rampant wage theft and a broken enforcement system. When drivers file claims with the labour program, they often wait years for a judgment, and even after receiving a payment order, they frequently never see their money. Employers face little to no consequences, leaving no real incentive for companies to follow the law.

We are currently working with over 60 truck drivers who have payment orders amounting to almost \$600,000 in unpaid wages and illegal deductions. That's why we're calling for proactive enforcement mechanisms that actually work for truck drivers.

We talk about the dangers of driving on our northern highways and the fact that 2,000 trucks a day come through and that not all the drivers are properly trained. We also know that they pay for training, but they don't necessarily get that training.

I want to take a pause here, because it's the drivers who get blamed, but it's actually the owners of the companies who are responsible, first of all. And the Ministry of Labour is responsible for not actually enforcing laws and not hiring the people to do the inspections.

1730

The deregulation of the trucking industry in the 1980s and 1990s has led to a highly competitive industry dominated by low-cost tendering practices by companies and brokers. Transport companies respond to low margins by slashing labour costs and violating the labour code. This is particularly the case for small and medium-sized employers that dominate the trucking industry. And 60% of drivers work for companies of less than 100 employees.

What people may not realize is, first of all, there's kind of a formula for distance, which doesn't necessarily represent the actual distance—but they're not paid when the truck is stopped at the border. They are not paid if the highway is closed. They might be sitting there for 11 hours, and they're not being paid. They're not being paid for loading or unloading the trucks. There has been so much downward pressure on wages, they're now making minimum wage, and that's only when they get paid.

So there's a lot going on in that industry that is not helping anyone—well, it's helping the big owners, because they're able to profit, frankly, from underpaying their employees.

Again, the employees have the least power of anyone in the whole circle of what is the trucking industry.

What the drivers would like to see is a standard of sectoral pay requirements to ensure that drivers are compensated for all miles actually travelled, all hours actually worked, with pay at or above minimum sectoral pay rates.

A fair compensation model for all aspects of a truck driver's work will contribute to safety on our roads for drivers and for the public.

We're really dealing with a system of quite extreme exploitation.

We also know that many of these drivers come from overseas and are here as—I'm not going to say, always, new immigrants.

We know that new drivers are not necessarily getting the training they're supposed to be getting, that they're paying for. Instead, there are companies that are simply self-regulating. They'll give a driver the keys, the licence, and put red tape on the brake, green tape on the gas pedal, and then the driver may not even know how to back up the truck, let alone carry a load—

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Or drive in snow.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: And in snow, dealing with snow.

It's really ineffective enforcement and gaps in the labour code that have allowed this situation to become—should I call it endemic or an epidemic? It is probably both, because it is long-standing but it is certainly in a state of crisis as well.

I'm doing okay for time, so I'm going to go sideways a little bit to talk about Caledon.

As people in this House know, a number of NDP members from northern Ontario have been campaigning very hard to improve highway safety—to make sure that drivers are trained, to make sure that the highways are cleared consistently, and to make sure that the inspection stations are staffed. Those are just the bare-minimum things that we think would make a big difference. There are still the issues of having rest stops, full shoulders, passing lanes, 2+1, whatever—all of those infrastructure pieces need to be there, but these address the particulars of the industry and the front-line work that takes place in the industry.

So it was interesting, then, to get a call from people in Caledon. I'm up in Thunder Bay, and I think, why would somebody call me from Caledon? That's because they heard about our campaign and because they are dealing with other issues with abuses from within the trucking industry.

I hear about farmland next to a—I believe it's kind of a secondary road, and that land they actually expected to have houses put on it but, in fact, there are hundreds of trucks parked there; it's illegal. We heard about it during the AMO meetings from the mayors, and we also heard about it from a local community group because not only are those trucks there illegally, they also come onto that secondary road with people trying to get to work. The situation has grown so that people in their small cars are sharing the road with hundreds of trucks. It's just a small road, so it's become quite dangerous, and this is the reason that a whole movement has grown up in Caledon to try to address this.

I bring that in here because, again, it's another indication that there is really no enforcement within the trucking industry. Now, the drivers pay for that with their lives. Other road users pay for that with their lives. And I must say, the federal government is starting to look at the misclassification of workers as self-employed, but it looks like they're actually going to come down, again, on the truck drivers themselves, who have no choice about whether they're going to be designated as self-employed or not. That is something that's imposed by the larger owners.

I did receive some very interesting information from this group. You know, the fact that I was there—I was not expecting it to be particularly partisan, but in fact the group had quite a lot to say about the Doug Ford government. So I'd like to read some of this:

"Doug Ford claims he is 'working for workers,' but since he came into power in 2018, laws that are supposed to protect us have been eliminated.

"For the past seven years, the Ford government has continued to pass pro-business workplace legislation. Ford's government weakened our rights and wages in many ways:

"Ford's first move was to pass the 'Making Ontario Open for Business Act' that rolled back minimum wage increases, cut workers' paid sick days so workers would not have to be paid when they miss work, removed equal pay for equal work and much more. Ford even reduced the number of unpaid, job-protected leave days...." So if you're sick and you need to take a day off and you're willing to not be paid for that day off, your job is not even protected in that context.

"Right after Ford took office, he also instructed the Ministry of Labour to stop any new proactive employment standards inspections. All inspection and prosecution training for new staff was put on hold.

"He also passed 'Restoring Ontario's Competitiveness Act' which made it easier for employers to get workers to work more overtime for less overtime ... pay....

"The system to protect workers from wage theft was already broken when Ford came into power. But it's gotten easier for employers to violate the law and harder for us to speak out, hold them accountable, and recover what we are owed.

"The Ministry of Labour relies on employers to voluntarily follow our labour laws"—let me be clear about that, voluntarily follow our labour laws—"but voluntary compliance never has, and never will work. We need proactive enforcement and we need real punishments for employers who break the law and commit wage theft.

"The ministry also relies on workers to file complaints about employer violations—but workers know that they risk being punished by their employers if they complain.

"When the ministry does investigate a complaint, employers don't face real consequences. Most of the time they are just required to pay what they should have paid in the first place—no fine, no penalty, no interest on owed wages for the worker, no damages to compensate the worker for the theft. It's no surprise that employers risk

breaking the law and underpaying workers—more profits for them!

“Ford” also “cut workplace inspections:

“Our laws only count if they are being enforced. Under Premier Ford’s government, the number of proactive inspections to uncover wage theft before workers are pushed out of the job dropped 75% from 2016-17 to ... 2023, recovering slightly ... in 2024. The Ministry of Labour stopped running compliance campaigns (proactive and surprise inspections in sectors like construction and hospitality or in sectors known for employing young workers, where wage theft is rampant).

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“Ford cancelled more resources for investigating wage theft:

“The previous government had committed to hiring more employment standards officers so that there would be at least 415 officers available to investigate wage theft and inspect one in 10 Ontario workplaces every year. The Ford government cancelled this plan.

“Between 2014 and 2024, the number of Ontario workers grew by 16%. Yet, the number of employment standards officers (ESOs) has remained ... the same ... for the entire province. With so few investigators”—

Mr. Anthony Leardi: Speaker, I have a point of order, please.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Please hold. I recognize the member from Essex on a point of order.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I’m very interested in what the member has to say, but I’m being distracted by the prop that she’s using.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I would ask the member to refrain from using props and also remember not to refer to members of this House by their full name.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Okay, sure. Let’s try it like this. Is that better? Okay. Thank you; apologies.

Right, so then, more appropriate to say Premier Ford and his—I can say that, correct?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Just “the Premier.”

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Premier, the Premier.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): “The Premier” is the appropriate—

MPP Lise Vaugeois: The Premier “and his government ministers make a big show about increasing the fines and penalties for those who break the law. But then they don’t use them.

“For example, the” current “government increased the maximum individual fine that can be imposed for an” employment safety act “violation through a prosecution from \$50,000 to \$100,000. But in the past five years, the maximum penalty was only issued once! The use of prosecutions has plummeted 85% under” this “government to only 12 prosecutions last year. The most commonly used fine is \$250 for a first offence ... but still, the use of these minor fines has also dropped 85% since the government was elected.”

Then we can go on to the misclassification of workers.

I think there’s probably just one other piece I’d like to read from this document. It says, “A complaint-based

system on wage theft doesn’t work for workers.” The writer says:

“Why is it if you stole \$5,000 from your boss, the cops will come and arrest you, but if your boss stole \$5,000 from your wages, the police won’t do anything? Even if you file a complaint against your employer, all they have to do is pay what you were owed in the first place. That means the only real penalty for stealing is having to pay back what they stole! Employers who commit wage theft do not need to pay a significant fine or even interest on the money they owe. This matters because it can take years for us to get our money back from an employer, even when they are told by the Ministry of Labour to pay up.

“When a restaurant breaks health and safety rules, they are shut down. When a driver breaks the rules of the road, they lose their licence. But when a bad boss continues to break the law, they are allowed to keep their business licence and keep operating.

“Why is that?!”

One of the people I met at the event last weekend is owed \$10,000. He submitted a complaint to the Labour Relations Board. It took a year before the complaint was acknowledged. It’s now been three years. He still hasn’t gotten his money back.

There are clearly problems, and it’s really crying out for enforcement. And that means actually hiring public servants, hiring people who work for the MTO, hiring people who work for the Ministry of Colleges and Universities because it’s that ministry that’s responsible for inspecting the schools and making sure that the schools are providing the training that they’re supposed to be providing.

There was another article I had—it doesn’t matter. I often read articles coming out of the Ontario Trucking Association, and they are also saying that there are no inspections, that there are hundreds of companies that have never been inspected over the last five years, and that that’s not okay.

And the other consequence of this is that good, responsible companies are being pushed out of business.

I have a specific example of that from my riding: McKevitt Trucking, a family-owned business, was there 30, 40 years, and they couldn’t compete—the cost, the prices being offered were so far below the cost of actually running the vehicle that they decided, “Well, okay, we’re going to pack it up. We’re not doing this anymore.” It’s really a lot like the Wild West. Drivers are being exploited. They don’t get their wages often. I must say, that applies to drivers who have been there for a long time. I also met drivers who had been on the road for the last 20 years and were also experiencing wage theft. Some of those drivers are very experienced.

So you have experienced drivers, but you also have inexperienced drivers put on the road without the tools, without the experience they need to drive safely. And I must say, the result is a lot of racism against those drivers, because they are blamed for those conditions that are actually not their fault. They have the least amount of power in the entire complex of relations.

I would like to call on the government—this affects Brampton, it affects Caledon and, no doubt, it affects Mississauga, so the Peel region. The drivers themselves are calling out for enforcement. They need a fair deal. They need to know what the rules are and that, if they follow the rules, their employers will also be required to follow the rules. And we will see a massive improvement in highway safety. Again, we see that particularly in the north because the conditions are so much more difficult, driving there. We don't want to see more drivers dying and we certainly don't want to see more of our other highway users also dying on the highway.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Questions?

Hon. Graham McGregor: I want to thank the member for standing up and speaking—being a Thunder Bay member but standing up and speaking on a bill that affects Peel. We appreciate your thoughtful intervention on the debate. I know it's not your locale, but as a Peel member, making sure that we have contributions from all sides means a lot. I really appreciate it, and I want to thank the member for that.

And I know the member is part of the world—I've got some family in Thunder Bay, so I've been to Silver Islet and I've been to Sleeping Giant. And I'll never understand what it's like to live in the north, but I suspect there are some commonalities between what it's like living in the north and living in Brampton. We feel, in Brampton, sometimes, that our issues don't seem to matter to decision-makers in downtown Toronto. For years, we were asking for a bypass highway, the Highway 413, and a lot of the truckers that the member is talking about want that Highway 413. Will the member support it?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: That's an interesting question. I also know that the truckers would actually like to be able to use the 407 without fees, without paying tolls. So I know what we would like to see is, first, to use up that space and then look at the other considerations, whether other highways are needed at that point.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further questions?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It's very interesting, listening to my colleague from Thunder Bay—Superior North. I mean the Trans-Canada Highway 17 goes through my riding from east to west; it goes through her riding also.

She took the time to go and listen to truckers because this is the severity of the crisis that we are in right now. It shows how important it is to listen to people. Do you think the government should learn from this and make sure that this bill, after second reading, goes to committee so that, all together, we have an opportunity to listen to people to make sure that their point of view is taken into account in this democratic process, when we're about to change things for the residents of Peel for a long time?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Thank you to the member from Nickel Belt for the question.

I know that people in my riding are quite upset about the use of time allocation for bill after bill. What people want to see is that the government is respecting this institution, respecting all the people who contribute to this

institution that we have, and go to committee and hear from people from our communities about how these bills will affect them, how they'll play out, and then clause-by-clause. Then we come back and then, and only then, do we vote.

I hope very much that this bill will go to committee so that people can contribute and we know that we're getting the best possible bill.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further questions?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm very appreciative of the work that the member has been doing, especially when it comes to the trucking portfolio. That member and I have both had the occasion to meet with a number of folks concerned about safety—the Truckers for Safe Highways, the different groups who have had to organize themselves. They're not part of an organized body. It's truck drivers who want safer roads, who want to make it home to their families, who are seeing things on the road. They've been calling for all sorts of things. So thank you for your work on that and for really focusing on wage theft and whatnot.

But the scales or plates—the places that should be open for inspections are closed. Some of them have physical, permanent barriers blocking them so that truckers know they never have to stop. Tell me what that looks like on your roads and what we need to see across the province for safer roads.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Thank you very much for the question. Truck drivers actually have this app that shows them how long the stations are open. The station in Shuniah, a brand new station—\$32 million to build it—is open maybe 12 hours a week. So there's no staff there. It's very expensive.

In fact, the Minister of Transportation, in an interview with the Ontario Trucking Association, was very clear: That station should be open 24/7. It was interesting in our earlier debate, because that was contradicted from the government's side, but in fact, it is the minister himself who said that station should be open 24/7.

I would like to recommend that we create a regional employment strategy—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Response, please.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Oh, is that it? Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Question?

Hon. Graham McGregor: I want to thank colleagues for talking about the trucking associations. We in Peel region—myself and my Brampton colleagues—have been working with the trucking associations, certainly since I've been elected.

But I know my colleague the member for Brampton West has been working since he was elected all the way back in 2018, four years before I was. One of the things that we heard from them was that we need to apply common sense to how we deal with the air brake exam. I'm proud that my colleague tabled a private member's bill—it was able to pass the House—to apply common sense to how the government administers this.

Can we hear from the member? Do they agree with the work that my colleague the member for Brampton West did—a long-standing ask from the trucking associations of Brampton—on the air brake exam? Do they support that measure?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Just to be clear: The air-braking exam—is that what you said?

Hon. Graham McGregor: Yes.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Well, we know that drivers need to be trained, right? They need to know when to use the air brakes, when not to use the air brakes, so I don't think that there's a conflict there.

But I have a moment here, so I'd like to say a quote from an Ontario Trucking Association article in which they make the following recommendations:

“—expand operating hours of truck inspection stations to 24/7 at key locations across the province,” like Shuniah;

“—return to in-person audits as almost all current audits are virtual. Enhance audits to look at payroll records/TDG”—sorry, I don't know what that is—“certificates to uncover misclassification.”

There are many more things. Drive test centres—make sure that people are getting legitimate licences.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Questions?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: We've been told by members on the government side repeatedly this afternoon that we should just trust them. They've done extensive consultations. They know exactly what the regions need: “Don't worry. This bill has everything in it.”

But we also know that this is the third bill in three years on the same subject, because the government hasn't been getting it right. One of the things that I have come to really appreciate about our meetings at AMO is how when delegations come and speak to us, I learn things that I didn't even know I didn't know. One of them was when Caledon came and talked to us about this trucking issue.

Does my colleague from Thunder Bay–Superior North agree that when we actually allow organizations to come to committee and tell us, that we always learn things we didn't know we didn't know, which results in better legislation?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Thank you to the member from Ottawa West–Nepean for the question.

I mean, that is what consultation is about, right? Not one of us comes here knowing everything, and we are sadly mistaken if we think we do. The only way we move forward is to listen and be surprised—listen and be surprised.

We pushed through a number of contentious bills and this one, of course, has been through the wringer—in, out, back again in some other form. It's time to talk to the people of the province and let people contribute to how we create these bills, because it's only for the people that we're doing this work. It's not for us, it's not for our

friends and it's not for our funders. It's for the people of Ontario, and they deserve to have a voice at the table.

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

Hon. Graham McGregor: I'll be quick; I know the time on the clock here.

I appreciate the member was hearing from residents in her riding about time allocation. I understand that's a concern, maybe, for residents of that riding. I'm not hearing that from my residents. What I'm hearing is the need to move on housing affordability. The way that we do that is by building more homes, and in Peel region and across Ontario, we've got common-sense policy on the table to get more homes built, and infrastructure built to support those homes. Will the member support it?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: If I thought it would build more homes, but it's been eight years and you've been saying the same thing. We heard this all through the greenbelt scandal. It was all about building homes; no homes have been built. We're at the lowest rate of home building in the province in a very, very long time.

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

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: I rise today with honour to speak to a truly important piece of legislation: Bill 45, the Peel Transition Implementation Act, 2025. This is not merely an administrative bill; it is a strategic blueprint for the future prosperity and effective governance of one of the fastest-growing and most economically vital regions in the entire country.

The legislation is a critical, crucial and decisive step intended to fundamentally restructure the delivery of key municipal services within the regional municipality of Peel.

The goal is clear. It is to better position its growing lower-tier municipalities—the city of Mississauga, the city of Brampton and the town of Caledon—to manage the intense, sustained and unprecedented growth pressures they are currently experiencing and will continue to face. The regional model, in its current form, has served its purpose, but the pace of change in Peel demands a new, streamlined and more responsive architecture.

We are restructuring governance to meet the demand of rapid urbanization. As I detail the specific, meticulous measures contained within this proposed act, I ask all members of this assembly to gain a thorough appreciation for how these provisions would, if passed, directly facilitate improved local governance and significantly enhance the local capacity building needed to sustain a population that is outgrowing its existing—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Thank you.

*Second reading debate deemed adjourned.
Report continues in volume B.*

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Scott, Hon. / L'hon. Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	
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