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Mardi
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 9 December 2025

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 9 décembre 2025

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

KEEPING CRIMINALS BEHIND BARS ACT, 2025

LOI DE 2025 VISANT À MAINTENIR LES CRIMINELS DERRIÈRE LES BARREAUX

Mr. Kerzner moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 75, An Act to enact the Constable Joe MacDonald Public Safety Officers' Survivors Scholarship Fund Act, 2025 and to amend various other Acts / Projet de loi 75, Loi édictant la Loi de 2025 sur le Fonds Joe MacDonald de bourses d'études à l'intention des survivants d'agents de sécurité publique et modifiant diverses autres lois.

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

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: I'm proud be sharing my time with the Attorney General and the Associate Solicitor General, the members from Barrie-Springwater-Oro-Medonte and from Milton.

Madam Speaker, I've said this many times in the Legislature: I'm proud to be part of a government, led by Premier Ford, that will never apologize for keeping Ontario safe; that will never apologize for standing with the brave men and women who put on their uniforms every day, our police officers, our firefighters, our correctional, probation and parole officers, our amazing 911 call operators—the unsung heroes—and the civilian members who help the fire and police services and our correctional institutions. I'm proud to stand with the animal welfare inspectors, the members of the coroner's office, the members of the Centre of Forensic Sciences, and everybody that understands that we all have a role in keeping Ontario safe.

Perhaps, Madam Speaker, there is no greater role than being here today as the Solicitor General, the minister responsible for public safety, and carrying out exactly what the government says morning, noon and night: that we will stand with the men and women, but we will also stand with the associations that represent the men and women that keep Ontario safe. That's the Police Association of Ontario. That's the Toronto Police Association. That's the Ontario

Provincial Police Association. That's the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs. That's the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association. And that's also OPSEU, which represents our amazing correctional officers.

For all those associations that take tender, loving care of their members, on behalf or our government, I simply wanted to say thank you. I'm delighted that we have representatives from them here today.

In case I did not mention it, there's one more association that's equally as important: the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police. I can't thank the chiefs enough across our province, who, together with IPCO—that's the Indigenous Police Chiefs of Ontario—also play a vital and critical role.

Madam Speaker, we're living in times that find us, globally, where geopolitical stressors are commonplace. We can't control that. This Ontario Legislature can't effect change in the regions of the world that—please, God—should find peace, especially now in this holiday season. But what this Legislature can do is do what our government said we would do if the people of Ontario saw fit, in February 2025, earlier this year, to re-elect us for an unprecedented third majority.

I want to speak for a minute about the people that find themselves in Ontario, because it is not a province that looks like the province that my late grandfather Murray Penwick, who was born steps from the Legislature in 1905, would have found when he was born here. We are a province of amazing diversity. It is something that I champion every day and say that our diversity is our greatest strength. Everybody who comes to Ontario has an equal right to succeed, to belong, to contribute and to find themselves living in a province that is safe.

Earlier this summer, I had the privilege of being invited to many cultural picnics in the beautiful riding of York Centre that I'm honoured to represent. When I attended these picnics, my eyes opened up even wider. I met people from the Owerri Nigerian community, I met people from Ghana. I met people from the Ivory Coast. I met people from Cameroon and, of course, the Philippines and Vietnam and Italy. Many communities have proudly called our riding, our constituency and our province home. I couldn't be happier to attend.

I remember what one gentleman said to me: "For years, we asked elected representatives to attend, and none showed up until you took the invitation seriously and showed up." It opened my eyes to how wonderful and special and diverse our province is.

The common thread that binds our province is public safety. It is the simple right—and I've said this many

times—that simply allows us to wake up our kids in the morning, see them off to school, check in on our loved ones and seniors, and to go to work and to shop and to pray safely. We bind ourselves together in not only the love of our province—and, boy, today, I say to my friends down in the States, “Don’t underestimate our pride and patriotism. Don’t do that.” Because the people that call Ontario home are proud and we understand that we all belong here. We share common values of decency and tolerance, and in spite of the rise of worldwide hate that is finding its way here and thinking it can wedge through a crack and change how we feel—we say we have to love thy neighbour, but Ontarians understand that.

In my riding of York Centre, probably the most diverse in the province, where we also have a very proud—one of the largest Russian-speaking diaspora communities in Ontario is proudly located in York Centre. We are a microcosm of people getting along, understanding that we can rally behind a simple fact: All we want to do is live our lives and to do it safely.

0910

This diversity actually moves forward in public safety. I’ve had the honour, which is quite remarkable, to have attended 14 march-past ceremonies at the Ontario Police College. I’ve marched past now 6,400 men and women who are now police officers, wearing flashes of their police service that represent a bond of the past, a bond to the present and that will connect to the future.

It’s equally an honour to attend many fire graduation ceremonies of our newest firefighters. I’ve watched and received their helmets bestowed on them by the chiefs and I can tell you, the interest of people who want to become police officers and firefighters has never been higher.

I’ll tell you why: because we have a government, led by Premier Ford, that gets it, that is not afraid of coming forward, like we are today, to introduce the debate on the Keeping Criminals Behind Bars Act, Bill 75, because we know everything revolves around public safety—everything: economically; from a health care perspective; from an infrastructure perspective. Absolutely everything revolves back.

I can’t tell you how honoured I have been when I attend the ceremonies on the firefighters’ side, on the policing side, and to welcome also our newest correctional, probation and parole officers. The common thread that I ask them is a simple thing: How did you know who you were until you crossed the line and made a decision that “I wanted to help add my name to keep Ontario safe”? Who were you before and who are you now? Each time, I hear these miraculous stories of thanking the government, led by Premier Ford, that is so strong on public safety.

And we don’t do it alone. We are supported by incredible public servants through the OPS here in Ontario. We have two of the finest deputy ministers ever, Deputy Mario Di Tommaso, the Deputy Solicitor General on the public safety side, and Deputy Erin Hannah, who is the Deputy Solicitor General for corrections. They lead a department that is committed every day to keep Ontario safe.

I want to shout out also another individual who is exceptional. We’re proud that the Ontario Provincial Police

is part of the Ministry of the Solicitor General, and it’s led by an incredible individual, Commissioner Tom Carrique. I want to thank him and his deputy commissioners and everyone who is part of the OPP. I am so proud to champion the Ontario Provincial Police, which protects over 330 municipalities every single day, 75% of the land mass. Thank you to the OPP.

When we talk about why we are coming forward today to debate Bill 75, you have to look no further to our track record that we have done to date. When I became and I had the honour of being sworn in not once but twice as Solicitor General, in June 2022 and in March 2025, I committed that I would work as hard as I could to support everyone that keeps us safe. But they can’t do it alone. They need a government that, as Premier Ford says many times, gets it, that we have to have their back. We say it; it’s true. People will agree with us. But we have to come forward with legislation, with regulations, with an expectation and with a tone. The words have to match the actions.

I couldn’t be prouder to work alongside my great friend and colleague the Attorney General. By the way, getting to know the Attorney General as I have, we are an incredible team when we go to the federal, provincial and territorial meetings, this year to be joined by my associate minister, the member from Milton. We were a force par excellence that sent a message around the table to our provincial and territorial partners: “Look what Ontario is doing. Look when you have a government that gets it in public safety.” We have not only, what I’ve said, the inherent right to be fulfilled, to live safely, but we lay the seeds for people to want to invest in the province.

We have a Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade that travels around the world selling Ontario. But he has to also be able to tell people and look them in the face, “We are a province that believes that some things have to matter, that the rule of law has to matter, that people’s rights to live free and be in a democratic society where they have the surety that if they need help from a first responder, that help will be there.”

I want to also acknowledge the municipal partners, who understand that when we support our local municipal police services, we have an unstoppable way of keeping Ontario safe.

Let me touch on a few things that are in this bill that will showcase how hard the Ministry of the Solicitor General, the Ministry of the Attorney General, the Ministry of Transportation and the other ministries who have collaborated with us have come together in this fall justice bill.

One of the things we wanted to do is to send a message for people that think it’s okay to break the law. Firstly, number one, I have room for you in our jails. We’ve been very, very transparent in how we are not following what happened in the prior government, led by the Liberals, where they didn’t prioritize public safety. That is something that we can’t forget about, but I’m not using that as the yardstick of how we’re going to go forward. It’s not about the seven jails they closed and the 2,000 beds they took offline. It’s about how a government should be transparent.

Where are we building new correctional capacity? I've said it in this place. I've said it at this desk: We're building in Thunder Bay. We've completed a modular build in Kenora. We're building a new modular build in Niagara. We're building a new modular build in Sudbury. We are expanding units that were previously closed in London and in Toronto. We're not going to stop. We're going to be ambitious in eastern Ontario. We're going to build in Kemptville. We're going to expand in Brockville. We're going to build an expansion in Quinte. And we will be transparent, to the last bed, where the capacity is going and how many correctional officers we are hiring.

But at the end of the day, we have to have greater deterrence on people that can't live peacefully. I call our society the 99.99%: the people that can come into this Legislature and listen to our debates and understand that we want to obey the law because it's ourselves and our fellow neighbours, and we want to be able to have this this level of public safety because we do obey the law. But there's that 0.01% that can't do it. And for those people, we need to have the greatest deterrence possible so that they don't reoffend, so that they don't get stuck in the first place. And for that, we've made some very, very important changes in this bill.

One of the things we have done, and the Attorney General will talk about it more, is having mandatory full-cash security deposits. What does this mean? It means that when you are leaving jail or our correctional facilities with a court-ordered condition, it's the court that will set the terms. We just can't have a promise that you're going to be good. There has to be consequences for what you have done. The courts will set the deposit, by the way, and that is an important distinction to make.

With this change, it might strike a chord in somebody that's coming back into their community: Don't do it again. Don't be a repeat and violent offender. Don't do it. People forget why you're in jail. So let me re-explain that: You're in one of our provincial jails because you've been sentenced to two years less a day. It's a court sentence. You're there. The second reason: You have been arrested by the police—you've been placed there awaiting trial, and some of the people who have been arrested awaiting trial, let me tell you, are really bad people. They're a threat to our community. They're a risk to our right to live safely.

0920

I want to, again, thank the Attorney General and the Associate Solicitor General for their advocacy to the federal government, and I want to acknowledge that the federal government did come forward, and we appreciate that. In many ways, I think they came forward to introduce federal changes to make sure that there are also more consequences at the federal level, that bail reform is an important topic, and our Premier led in that discussion courteously, respectfully to the Prime Minister.

I want to acknowledge that you can't be an island unto yourself; you have to work every day with your federal counterpart and your municipal counterparts every single day. That's how you get it done, that's the leadership of Premier Ford and that is something that, long after my tour

of duty here is over, I'll remember how Premier Ford was able to bring people together for the betterment of Ontario. That's one thing we're doing to have the mandatory cash security deposits.

The other thing we're doing is acknowledging that what happened on October 3 when 35-year-old Andrew Cristillo was tragically killed in a car accident was unbelievable. He left behind his wife, Christina; his brother, Jordan; and Andrew's three beautiful young daughters, Leah, Chloe and Ella—three children who no longer have a father.

Andrew was killed because somebody drove recklessly—actually, somebody who was out on bail drove recklessly. That should never have happened. Reckless driving, stunt driving—it's something we cannot allow, because driving a car isn't a right, it's a privilege, and we must respect the fact that when we're on the road, not only it is our responsibility to take every precaution, to look around us, but we have to hope other people driving respect us just the same.

If passed, the changes in this act will improve the safety on Ontario roads and highways by introducing new measures to target high-risk driving behaviour, including driving dangerously, careless driving and driving while suspended. The changes in this act will include:

—the police having the immediate right to suspend a driver's licence for 90 days and impound a vehicle if they have a reason to believe a person was driving dangerously;

—an indefinite driver's licence suspension upon conviction of dangerous driving causing death;

—increased fines and impoundment; and

—new immediate roadside driver's licence suspension and increased fines for careless driving, dangerous driving and impaired driving—totally unacceptable.

Let me just draw a distinction about impaired driving, especially now in the holiday season when many RIDE programs are on. I happened to kick off the RIDE program in beautiful Durham. What I can tell you is what I learned from the local chapter at MADD—that's Mothers Against Drunk Driving—impaired driving is not, perhaps, what my generation might remember, exclusively. When you drink alcohol to excess and you operate a vehicle, you're impaired, but it's more. It's consuming cannabis, it's consuming legal prescriptions when you shouldn't be driving and it's consuming illegal substances when you shouldn't be taking those to begin with. Impaired driving kills people on the road. It alters people's lives. We have to work harder this holiday season to make sure we don't drive impaired.

I believe something else: I believe one of the things also in our bill, and I want to touch on this for minute, is something that the Ontario government will look at—actually, two things. I've spoken about it in the Legislature as well. We want to look at making public information from the Ontario sex traffickers registry.

I want to give a shout-out again to former Premier Mike Harris. I have a lot of time to listen to Premier Harris, and I get to sit next to his son, because Minister Harris brings the same enthusiasm and commitment that his dad did in another generation. Premier Harris had to meet the Stephenson family when their son was tragically murdered in 1988. He came forward. He came forward when others

said, “You couldn’t do it.” He came forward before the government of Canada had a sex offender registry. He changed forever the fact that, by having the registry in place, the police, law enforcement and justice partners have more of a capability to keep the province safe.

We made changes last fall to this so that people can’t hide behind an alias or another name and think they can get away with it, that they can’t appear in social media without telling the law enforcement authorities what their social media handles are. We changed it. I think the changes that we want to make now to meet and to speak to our law enforcement and policing partners to determine what we could release potentially of information, that’s important.

Equally important, Mr. Speaker, is that we’re going to explore what we call barrier-free access to key places of infrastructure. Ontario has had enough of individuals and groups blocking our roads, our transit during our commutes, harassing people in our communities, and intimidating them and blocking access at our schools and houses of worship. We’re going to work with our partners, as part of the Keeping Criminals Behind Bars Act, to explore ways to give law enforcement the tools they need to protect our communities. Again, this is to make sure that critical components of our infrastructure, our cultural centres, our places of worship—we want to ensure that all Ontarians can access these spaces free from fear, violence and intimidation. I’m really proud that we will do this because hate has no place in Ontario.

I got to know the former member from York South-Weston very well, Minister Michael Ford. Minister Michael Ford was an exceptional individual who, in that moment of time, took his place to represent his community that he loves, but also have his voice heard in the Ontario Legislature. I worked with Minister Michael Ford at the time to make sure that the message in our government was resolute, that we will never accept one act of hate, one act of Islamophobia, one act of anti-Semitism, one act of anything that is not going to the root of who we are as Ontarians to be acceptable.

I’ve stood up here, as many members have, to talk about the goodness in our province as opposed to the darkness; to talk about the light that guides us every day to go forward as legislators; to work, at many times across the party aisles, not only to debate legislation that comes forward but to find a way of extending a hand and simply wishing a person happy holidays.

There’s so much here, especially now as the holidays of Christmas and Hanukkah and other holidays converge at the same time. Maybe it’s not so coincidental. I’m beginning to believe it was not so coincidental because there’s enough good cheer to go forward.

I am so proud of the pride that has been unleashed, thanks to Premier Ford. People understand, as we’ve debated this week, why we need to “Buy Ontario;” why we need to support Ontario jobs; why we need to understand that we want to make affordability a centre point of our government’s priority by cutting red tape; why we want to go forward in making sure we have the best health care ever; why we have built an infrastructure that is not

exclusively for us, but for the generations like my kids, who will come after me, and perhaps here—an understanding that the seeds that we plant, the flags that we fly, the anthems that we sing represent a pride in our province that’s unstoppable.

0930

At a recent graduation of Toronto police officers, which I was proud to attend, I asked this class of 88, “Why are we here tonight? Why are we here to see this badge be presented to you individually?” And then I said to them, “This is exactly where we were meant to be.”

So, friends, as we’re debating this bill, the Keeping Criminals Behind Bars Act—with a commitment of a government that is absolute and constant. *Et en français, monsieur le Président : le soutien de notre gouvernement à votre égard est absolu et sans relâche. Pour le premier ministre de l’Ontario et pour moi, c’est personnel. Tout le monde a le droit de se sentir en sécurité chez soi et dans sa collectivité.* We all have that simple, inherent right to live safely in our own homes and communities.

As we make our mark in this Parliament, having had the honour—each 124 of us—of being elected by our constituents to bring their concerns here, all I can say is, for me, this has been something of a humbling experience that I will never forget.

I want to thank my colleagues who are working hard with me to bring this bill to this day.

And I want to reassure Ontarians that “Protect Ontario” doesn’t just mean anything; “Protect Ontario,” to our government, led by Premier Ford, means absolutely everything.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I recognize the Attorney General.

Hon. Doug Downey: I’m really pleased to rise in the House for the second reading debate of the Keeping Criminals Behind Bars Act.

I want to thank the Solicitor General for sharing his time today. I’d also like to thank the Minister of Transportation for his parts of this bill that are very important, that the Solicitor General spoke about. Also included are the Associate Solicitor General, the Associate Attorney General—there were a lot of people working together to bring this bill to life. I also want to say a special thank you to the ministers’ offices, to my office, to the people working behind the scenes at MAG and Sol Gen. It has been a tremendous team effort. I’m grateful to everyone who worked so hard to keep the legislation cogent, to keep the legislation relevant and to help us move it forward.

Let me be clear: The proposed new measures and comprehensive reforms that I’m going to discuss today are just the latest step in our government’s ongoing work over the many years that we’ve been here. They’re also part of our plan to help build safer, stronger communities.

Speaker, our government, led by Premier Doug Ford, received a very strong mandate from the people of Ontario in our third majority re-election. It’s a mandate to protect Ontario. That’s literally what we campaigned on. That was our slogan. You saw it on sweaters. You saw it on materials. People resonated with that. They said, “We do want you to protect Ontario. We want you to strengthen the

justice system. We want you to strengthen all parts of Ontario.”

So we’re challenging the status quo. We’re not going about business as usual. We’re doing things differently. We’re innovating. We’re making sure that we are meeting the context of the times, and we’re going to continue down that road.

It has been a motivation for me to look at long-standing principles, long-standing processes and say, “Why are we doing it this way? What is the rationale behind that? What is the reason that this particular thing happened, and how did we get here?”

All too often, as things creep along, the inertia that happens—because nobody sometimes remembers why we did something in the first place. A change came about because it was a chance to solve a particular problem of the day, but that problem is not there anymore.

It reminds me, Mr. Speaker, of a re-enactment at an old fort where there were five soldiers standing. Each of them had a job to do: One stood by a cannon, one stood by the cannonballs, one stood with a wick to fire the cannon, one stood on lookout and there was a fifth person standing there. Nobody knew why. We said, “Why is that fifth person there?” They’re just standing there, doing absolutely nothing. Well, in the re-enactment, they kept going forward as they always had for 200 years. That fifth person was supposed to be holding the horses, but there were no horses there. But we continued to do it anyway.

That may be appropriate for a historical re-enactment, because we can have that conversation. But all too often, we have somebody who is standing there using resources and taking up space, with no horses. Well, we’re putting the horses back into the machine, Mr. Speaker. We are making sure that everything we do is effective and purposeful and not wasteful. I can give you several examples, and I may come back to that in my speech.

Our government’s work over the years has been largely fuelled by the understanding that we must always be prepared for the future. And that has always been clear to me. Because if the system slows down or if processes become too complex or too costly, the people we serve will feel it first, such as victims of crime waiting for closure or a family waiting for vital support. These are the people who are often last in line when we waste resources, when we’re not focused.

That’s why we’ve driven a very historic transformation across Ontario’s justice system: modernizing how it works, investing in people, ensuring it meets the needs of our rapidly evolving province. And our province is changing, our province is growing, and the needs and the impacts on the individuals who are living here have changed. So, we need to change what we do and how we do it to meet the needs of the day.

Speaker, our courts face an unprecedented backlog of cases resulting from the global health crisis, but we responded. We responded in real time and we’re continuing to respond. Just to give you a sense of the magnitude of our effort, by 2027-28, we will have invested more than half a billion dollars to address the backlogs that will build

a more sustainable justice system and strengthen public safety.

Now, I do this on occasion when I use the word “billion”—because people don’t understand the magnitude of what that is, what \$500 million is, over a fairly short period of time. The way I describe it, Mr. Speaker, is we all have a sense of a million. We can picture what a million-dollar house is, or in Toronto, a million-dollar condo. We have a sense of what the magnitude of that is. But a billion dollars is something very different. It is a significant investment. If you take a million seconds, you will get to 11 and a half days. But if you take a billion seconds, you will get 32 years. Those numbers are not close.

We are investing over half a billion dollars just in backlog, on top of the other things that we’re investing in the justice system. Mr. Speaker, this is a significant investment and not just tinkering around the edges. It started in terms of judges. The Ontario Court of Justice alone had a complement of about 300 judges. We added, in 2024, an additional 25 judges to that complement at a cost of \$29 million. We have filled 21 of those 25 seats, in addition to the regular 300 seats that we continually fill, but that wasn’t enough, because in April 2025, we added an additional 17 new judicial seats. And again, to build capacity across the system, in May 2025, as part of Minister Bethlenfalvy’s budget, we added another 10. That’s 52 new judges to a complement of 300. That is a historic investment in our system, but here’s the magic. It’s not just about the judges. Every time you add a judge to the system—we have a formula—we add seven full-time staff: crown prosecutors, victim service workers, court administration staff. And I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, by 2027-28, we will have added 700 new full-time staff to the justice system.

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When the opposition likes to talk about us not investing in the justice system, cutting this or whatnot, they’re totally in the wrong direction. Mr. Speaker, we are investing so much in so many parts of our system, it really is historic. This level of capacity building is something we’ve not seen in—they say in decades, but I would challenge and say ever. I don’t think we’ve ever seen this level of investment in the justice system. I can tell you, when we took office in 2018, there was not a lot of attention paid to it in the previous 15 years. There just was not. And anybody who looks at the data, anybody who looks at the finances, will say that that is true.

Something else changed in 2018. Something very important changed. When we came to government, we came and looked at it as a whole, so that it wasn’t just the silos that we were left with that often government works within. We had a concerted effort to attach the movement of the Attorney General’s office or the movement with the Solicitor General’s office to each other so that when one part of the system moved the other part of the system moved, as well. So we came at it as a systems issue and not a siloed issue.

And I can tell you, back when the Minister of Health was the Solicitor General, we had a joint staff member who was part-time in my office and part time in her office.

And that's how we started in working in collaboration to build a better system. And it has worked, because as we've increased the very important front-line resources, the police officers and the parole officers and all of the people who work on that part of the justice system, as we increase those resources—and the amazing work that the Solicitor General has done in terms of recruitment and making sure that the we're covering the costs of training, to make sure that we're building capacity in all parts of that system. As that builds, we are also building on our side, to make sure that the whole system moves in the same direction at the same pace ultimately to protect Ontario and to hold offenders accountable and to make sure that the people on the front lines are not wasting their time with files that won't go forward.

Now, Mr. Speaker, under the leadership of Premier Ford, who understands systems and understands business, this is a critical innovation in how government works, and I can tell you, it is working, and there is more to come.

We all see the violent crime in the province is a problem. We all know that something needs to be done, and far too often, these dangerous and often repeat offenders are let back on the streets because the system is broken and it just isn't good enough. The proposed changes in the Keeping Criminals Behind Bars Act underscores our government's commitment to crack down on violent crime and to keep our communities safe. That is the purpose of these changes, and it will have that effect.

I've talked to many people. I've talked to families, businesses across the province, and the resounding message is very clear: Stronger action is needed to protect communities. And it's such an obvious piece—and I'm going to come back to this later—but it's such an obvious dynamic happening in our communities. When I hear from people who can talk about their neighbours, either their house is being broken into, or the car is being stolen, or just the fear that they feel in their own community—that wasn't happening 10 years ago. It's been building over time, and it's a complex, complicated dynamic that got us here. But it's not too complex and complicated that we can't respond, that we can't adapt. But the old system isn't working. We need to do better, and we need to do more.

The current bail system is failing the people of the province. It's allowing dangerous offenders, repeat offenders, back on the streets and putting innocent people at risk every day. This has to stop. And even if they're not actually at risk, they feel at risk, and that has an effect on people. It has an effect on their productivity, has an effect on their families, has an effect on their entire life when they don't feel safe.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, the first thing you learn in psychology 101, the first thing that you understand when you start taking courses in university is the Maslow hierarchy of needs, and safety and security are part of that. We are dealing with the fundamental needs of individuals in Ontario, and they want us to do it.

I'm going to come back to the federal government in a moment, Mr. Speaker, because that is a very important part of what we need to do next.

Now, the changes I'm going to speak about build on our latest efforts in the Protect Ontario Through Safer Streets and Stronger Communities Act, which passed earlier this year. As part of this legislation, we made our intensive serious violent crime bail teams permanent across the province. These intensive serious violent crime bail teams are very focused on bail hearings for individuals who are violent, who are using firearms, who are doing things, clearly, that they're not supposed to do—allegedly, I should add. But we put our best foot forward. We make sure we have the best evidence there. We make sure that we have all the components that we are allowed to have in front of the JP, the justice of the peace, or the judge, to make sure that they have all the information to make the best decision possible. We put them in place a few years ago. They're working very well. I can tell you these teams, made up of dedicated crown prosecutors who partner with provincial and local police services, help prepare the strongest possible case to put forward.

The teams have managed over 4,100 cases since 2023—in only two years. They're permanent as of spring of this year, 2025, and again, they're focused on violent repeat offenders.

This past spring, we also announced that our government has permanently established a specialized prosecution team to work directly with police and to provide advice during investigations. This includes the provincial gun-and-gang support unit, which supports inter-jurisdictional gun-and-gang investigations and prosecutions, and the gun and gang teams are the best in Canada. We do training in other provinces. We help other prosecution teams, because, quite frankly, we know that the criminals—those who are doing the worst of the worst—are moving between provinces on occasion. So we're coordinating and not just keeping all the expertise right here.

We are going further. We're taking action and delivering on our promise to fix the broken bail system by making bail more real and consequential for people accused of serious crimes.

We're putting forth tough new measures that will expand the collection tools available for the province for the bail debts of accused persons and their sureties. A surety is somebody who pledges money or assets on the promise that they'll supervise an individual released on bail so that they'll obey curfews or deal with house arrest. There are conditions: They won't have firearms; they won't do a number of things.

Right now, in Ontario, bail money put up by a surety is ordered as a pledge or a promise. It's not money up front. It's not money on hold. It's not money on deposit. It's simply a promise to do something. If the accused follows all their conditions, well, we don't need to have the conversation because the money becomes irrelevant. They followed the rules. But for those that don't follow the rules—and it does happen, and you hear about it regularly—the court can order payment.

But sometimes these payments are still not met, and our proposed amendments would help Ontario increase the power to collect bail debts. It will increase the ability to

garnish wages, to recover money through bank accounts and other assets. We're applying to the Canada Revenue Agency to recoup bail debts for things like income tax refunds. To take things a step further, we'll be working collaboratively with our colleagues at the Ministry of Transportation to see whether we can suspend drivers' licences as part of those collection efforts.

Bail needs to have consequences. It can't just be a promise and, as in a Monty Python skit, "We say stop, so stop, or we'll say stop again." Something has to happen. We can't just keep saying stop again. There has to be a consequence. So we're strengthening that system and we're making sure that our bail reform strategy is effective and making sure that it holds people to account.

I see my friend the Associate Solicitor General has come in. Just give me the eye when you want to jump in, because I know you've got lots to say about this as well.

We were out in Alberta at the federal-provincial-territorial meeting. I'll just say this: I've been working with the federal government over several years, several different Attorneys General, and the current Attorney General, Sean Fraser, I have to say, heard from the people that we heard from. He heard from the police officers on the front lines and he heard from the provinces. And when we sat down in Alberta, we said, "We need change." We need change not just to reverse onus provisions; we need change on what "reverse onus" means. We need it to be a higher standard. We need more tools and we need it to be more effective.

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I'm pleased to say, although we didn't get everything that we've asked for, we got some of the things that we asked for in the current bail bill. And so I want to publicly thank Sean Fraser for his work in this regard and for listening to the people that we hear from—from the public, from the police officers and those affected. We are together, making change. We are going to stay on them, as the Premier says, like an 800-pound gorilla. We have more to do. We're not done yet, but we're happy to see some movement in that regard, and so I want to thank them for that.

I'm going to pass it over to the Associate Solicitor General.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresce): I recognize the Associate Solicitor General for Auto Theft and Bail Reform.

Hon. Zee Hamid: I'd like to thank the Solicitor General and Attorney General as well for all the work they've done. It is an honour to stand before the House today to share my enthusiasm about this bill.

As both the AG and SG mentioned, this was a team effort, building on the work of numerous ministries, agencies and organizations. If passed, this bill will make our highways safer, provide stronger protection for children and other victims of crime, and hold offenders more accountable while enhancing bail compliance and enforcement.

Through this bill, our government is standing up for police, firefighters, correctional officers and all other public safety personnel. Critically, the Keeping Criminals Behind Bars Act reaffirms our government's commitment

to remain tough on crime and do everything in our power to protect Ontario.

I'll focus on a few key elements of this justice bundle, particularly those pertinent to the bail reform and enhancing support for public safety personnel.

A critical part of this bill is to focus on protecting responsible drivers and making sure impaired and dangerous drivers are held accountable. Ontario already has some of the toughest penalties in North America for impaired and dangerous driving behaviours. We want to build on this foundation to find other ways to ensure that these drivers are held accountable and the victims receive equitable and meaningful support.

We're proposing measures developed after heartfelt reflection on the death of Andrew Cristillo, a young husband and a father from Stouffville who was killed in a car accident this summer. In response to this tragedy, we're proposing tougher measures for dangerous drivers, including commercial vehicle operators who speed or drive while distracted.

One thing I'd like to talk about is our ongoing work to support the spirit of this legislation. Specifically, we're looking at a policy proposal that will explore options to require impaired drivers who kill a parent or guardian to provide financial support to the children of their victims.

Surviving family members can already sue drivers in civil court, but we need to go further. In coming months, we will engage with legal experts and community partners with the goal of finding the most effective way to hold impaired drivers accountable to support children and families.

I'm a big advocate for making our communities safer and stronger. I believe that collaborative efforts, supported by effective legislation, create the most effective, positive impact on public safety. As Associate Solicitor General for Auto Theft, I'm encouraged by the success we've seen in this space. Just two years ago, auto theft was out of control in this province. Theft rates had been rising across the country for a decade, with Ontario and Quebec leading the way. In fact, in 2023, stolen vehicle claims surpassed \$1 billion for the very first time.

The numbers on a city-by-city basis were even more remarkable. Between 2018 and 2023, Brampton saw a 719% increase in claims costs; Pickering saw a 1,228% increase; and Whitby, a jaw-dropping 2,269% increase.

Of course, higher claims costs do not necessarily mean that more vehicles are being stolen. In part, increases were the result of increasing sophistication of auto thieves themselves. They weren't just kids out for a joy ride. They were calculated thefts, perpetrated by members of organized crime groups, targeting high-end luxury SUVs, cars and trucks. This was a new kind of auto theft, Speaker, sophisticated in design and international in scope, which made combatting it even harder.

But in 2024, we saw that our efforts to tackle the issue were taking root. According to Équité, a national not-for-profit and valuable partner in our fight against vehicle theft, Ontario saw a decrease of over 17% last year.

Interjections.

Hon. Zee Hamid: That is worth celebrating. And in mid-2025, that decrease stood at over 25% over the same

period, over the previous year. The turnaround was a result of the concerted efforts of legislators and law enforcement, working side by side together. And thanks, in no small part, to the innovative work of this partnership, vehicle theft continues to decline across Ontario.

In 2023, our government announced a suite of measures aimed at identifying and dismantling organized crime networks and putting auto thieves behind bars. This \$51-million investment over three years supported a range of measures, including the Preventing Auto Thefts Grant, which provides police with funding for education, enhanced surveillance and tools to help identify stolen vehicles; and the OPP-led organized crime, towing and auto theft team, with a mandate to disrupt and dismantle vehicle theft networks.

The government also set up major auto theft prosecution response team, which provides dedicated support to police preparing complex cases for prosecution, to make sure we can put the strongest case forward. In the past year and a half alone, this team has prosecuted over 80 cases and supported over 20 major investigations covering 1,700 stolen or targeted vehicles.

Last year, we took the fight to the skies with the launch of \$134-million joint air support unit, which will provide support for the acquisition of five police helicopters for use in Ottawa and the GTA. In this year's budget, Premier Doug Ford announced a \$57-million investment for two additional police helicopters: one for Windsor and the other one for the Niagara region. And just a few months later, we used legislation to give police even more power to fight auto theft.

The Protect Ontario Through Safer Streets and Stronger Communities Act, 2025, was focused on protecting families and supporting victims of crime, including human trafficking. But the act included amendments to the Highway Traffic Act that gave police authority to seize key-fob scanners and programmers, along with other devices auto thieves use to steal cars. I was proud to be part of this legislation, which passed into law last year, giving police enhanced powers to stop criminals from accessing this technology.

Of course, while we've made progress on this front, we will not be complacent. After all, thieves will still try to steal vehicles. It's important, therefore, that we build on our achievements and continue to work together across government and law enforcement.

Auto theft doesn't occur in a vacuum, Speaker. It is often the work of sophisticated criminal networks, organizing everything from gun-running to illegal trade to international smuggling and, yes, even human trafficking. And, unfortunately, this criminal activity is enabled by a weak national bail system that is in urgent need of reform.

The details paint a bleak landscape. In 2024, a study by Équité Association estimated that organized crime is responsible for about 75% of auto theft in Ontario. At the same time, we're finding out that a lot of car thieves have bail issues. Peel Regional Police, in 2024, reported that a third of people arrested for auto theft were out on bail for similar offences. The problem is clear: If we want to have

a meaningful impact on auto theft, then we must do something about the current bail system.

And I'm proud to say, as always, Ontario is leading the way when it comes to bail reform. We've called for a crackdown on forfeited bail, we've relentlessly pushed the federal government to do a full review of the interim release system, and we've also launched the Provincial Bail Compliance Dashboard, a state-of-the-art tool that tracks people on bail for firearms-related offences. The dashboard coordinates information across police services, giving front-line officers timely information about repeat violent offenders with a history of using firearms and breaching conditions. Right now, the dashboard is tracking 2,300 offenders.

We've also allocated \$112 million over three years to strengthen Ontario's bail and justice systems through innovative programs, including the Bail Compliance and Warrant Apprehension Grant, which supports dedicated police teams to monitor high-risk offenders out on bail.

But it's not just auto theft that's being enabled by holes in the federal bail system. Crimes are being committed by dangerous repeat offenders who have been granted free rein in our communities. When it comes to bail reform, there is still a lot of work to do, and that's why our Bill 75 proposes measures that would strengthen compliance and keep repeat offenders off the streets.

It's part of a four-point bail reform strategy.

First are legislative changes that would enhance administration of bail liens and collection tools to help ensure bail debts are successfully collected.

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Second, we're proposing changes that would make cash security deposits mandatory. Currently, the system relies on promise to pay by accused persons and their sureties more often than requiring cash up front. And in cases of bail non-compliance where forfeiture is ordered, it can take time and resources to collect. Mandatory cash deposits would encourage compliance and address challenges with collection.

Third, we want to support legislation with a bail reform strategy that incorporates the latest technologies to monitor offenders and sureties more effectively. We also need to take a close look at bail prosecution systems, to make sure we have the capacity and expertise to meet the challenges of today's ever-evolving criminal landscape.

Finally, we would move to a user-fee system for GPS monitoring. I'm talking about electronic tracking devices like ankle bracelets. They're a great way to monitor people on bail, but they are expensive. A user-pay approach would offset the cost of this service and could be used to support victim services and other vital justice programs.

Another proposal within the bill relates to the changes we're proposing to support the province's public safety personnel. I see some of them in the audience today. These dedicated men and women work tirelessly to keep our community safe. They have our backs every day and we want them to know that we have their backs as well.

Some of the steps may appear insignificant but, in truth, are essential and massive. For example, we're proposing

changes to expand the canine detection program, increasing the number of searches to keep dangerous and illegal substances out of our adult correctional sites, remand centres and jails.

These changes are in line with our government's broader effort to modernize correctional facilities and enhance capacity, so front-line staff have the space and resources to do their job safely.

Corrections is an essential part of our government's plan to protect Ontario. We're investing over \$55.4 million over three years, including \$30.1 million this year to add more beds to the system. We've made progress, Speaker. We've added 395 beds since January 2024, and we have plans to add over 700 more beds by the end of 2027.

This includes a new facility in Thunder Bay with at least 345 beds; new modular adult facilities in Sudbury, Niagara and Milton with at least 150 beds; and the expansion of Toronto South Detention Centre by 350 beds.

There's a lot to talk about in this bill, but in conclusion, it covers a lot of ground. If passed, it will help protect responsible drivers, keep our community safer, stand up for our most vulnerable citizens—especially children—stand up for our first-line officers, make it harder to manipulate the bail system, and improve the lives and working conditions of public safety personnel.

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

MPP Alexa Gilmour: I want to thank the honourable members across the aisle for opening the debate on Bill 75, the Keeping Criminals Behind Bars Act. However, this bill is a little misleading—quite a bit, actually—because in his lead speech, the Solicitor General spoke about people awaiting trial.

In our justice system, people are innocent until proven guilty. The minister correctly said that some of these people awaiting trial are bad people that may have been accused of crimes before. I am not necessarily going to weigh in on that, but I also note that the Solicitor General didn't mention that many people are found not guilty. I want to note the Canadian Registry of Wrongful Convictions, which lists 83 names of people whose lives were devastated. And this minister—

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

MPP Alexa Gilmour: Yes, this minister—my question is this: We're looking at an American-style failed policy, where charities in the States have to pay bail.

My question is this: If you're rich and if you are poor, you shouldn't have—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I recognize the Solicitor General.

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: I have a lot of respect for the member opposite, because as many of us know, she's a United Church minister. I have had the opportunity of listening to her in her church.

I want to say this: What I said in my remarks is that it's the courts that will decide the amount of the cash deposit. At the end of the day, what we really want to do—and I'm sure the member opposite will agree—is we want to stop the people that are knocking down our doors at 4 in the

morning, holding a gun to our head, scaring our kids and, if not, even worse. What we want to do is make sure the 99.9% of the population can live peacefully.

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

M^{me} Lucille Collard: I've heard the minister speak about this bail, and what I hear is a bit of fearmongering, like telling people—just like you mentioned, Solicitor General—about having people come at 4 in the morning with a gun pointing at your head to get your car keys. I'm just wondering, how often does that actually happen? Are we creating a big punishment regime for some bad actors? I do agree that they exist, but are we going overboard to just try to jail many people that are seen as a nuisance in our community, instead of looking at the underlying reason why people find themselves in that situation in the first place and finding a solution to help them, instead of jailing them?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: I really appreciate the question from the member opposite. What I can say is the greater deterrence that we have goes to the 0.01%. It is that fraction of 1% that can't live within the norms.

She asked, "How often does it happen?" It happens every day. It happened last week down the street on York Downs. It happened in my own constituency. I get calls every single day that something horrible has happened: a house robbery and, worse, a door being knocked in.

The greater deterrence that we have will send a message.

Also, to the youth that are being inculcated in having a life of crime and being induced into it: Don't do it. It's not worth it. Be part of the 99.9%, because you're welcome as the 99.9%.

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

Hon. Laurie Scott: I want to thank the Solicitor General and Attorney General and all their team for bringing forward a strong justice bill.

As many of you know in the Legislature, I've worked a lot on anti-human trafficking legislation and also on Christopher's Law, the sex offender registry, which part of this bill addresses. With my colleague from Thornhill, we have brought forward changes, and we appreciate what our government has done so far.

I'm very happy to see another step forward to change the Ontario Sex Offender and Trafficker Registry to possibly allow the public to know who may be living next door and further protect victims and the communities. I just wonder if one of the ministers would like to expand on that change.

Hon. Doug Downey: I want to thank the member, who has been working in the justice sector as an advocate for women and human trafficking since before I came to this House in 2018.

She is the one who is the driving force on human-trafficking reform. Any time we can strengthen the system to protect people and to make people feel protected, we need to do that. This is one of the areas that we're strengthening to make sure that we know who's in our community, that we know who is among our young women and who are potential threats within our space. We're working hard

to make sure that we're enhancing every part of the justice system. This is a really important piece. We have so much more to go, but it's a welcome change, and I want to thank the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock for all of her advocacy in this area.

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

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Thank you to the Solicitor General as well as the Attorney General and the associate for their remarks this morning. My question is really about the capacity of the corrections system at this moment.

We know that, online, we have 8,500 beds, but yet, right now, there's a lot of overcrowding. We see two or three inmates per cell, and I've heard from crown attorneys that sometimes there are four. There are about 10,800 inmates in corrections right now.

We are seeing record high lockdowns, segregation, largely due to the understaffing of these facilities. Out of the 24 facilities that we have in Ontario, 22 of them have experienced significant lockdowns. OPSEU, who represents the corrections staff, are quite alarmed, and they've been raising this alarm bell for years, because it's leading to violence and instability, including attacks on their workers.

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My question to the Solicitor General is what investments are coming to ensure that corrections officers are made safe, that you can actually keep the criminals behind bars, but also not penalize those who are there on—

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: I want to thank the member opposite. We have been transparent, without precedent, exactly where we're building spaces. I don't agree with her number of what our capacity is. The fact that it's reported in the paper doesn't mean it's accurate, and it's not. But what I can tell you is that when we said we would bring over 1,000 beds online—in my remarks, I said where: in Niagara, in Sudbury, in Thunder Bay, in Kenora, in Toronto, in Brockville, in Quinte, in Kemptville. I was specific down to the location.

It goes to one thing that I totally want to make clear: Our correctional officers are irreplaceable in the fabric of public safety. When OPSEU had the memorial day here in Toronto, they came to the minister's office—the first time, probably, ever. And I'm proud to say, I am a good listener because they take good care of us.

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

Mr. Adil Shamji: My question is to the Solicitor General. In regard to schedule 3 of this legislation around the Constable Joe MacDonald Public Safety Officers' Survivors Scholarship Fund Act, you are almost certainly aware that the member for Hastings–Lennox and Addington introduced a private member's motion in regard to that. I wondered if you might elaborate on whether you've taken any advice from that and whether that is reflected in this legislation.

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: The member opposite—and I want to thank him for bringing this forward. The Joe MacDonald fund is a fund, tragically, that none of us should ever have to experience; that is, when an officer is

lost in the line of duty presently, their children, as they go forward into college and university, have an opportunity to have that fund assist them, almost like their father or mother would if they were alive.

I've signed letters to our children that we're supporting. These are children of officers that have been lost in the line of duty. What we want to do is to broaden this to make sure that there is a greater scope. Because it's not only in the line of duty; there's also because of the line of duty. And we have to always stand with the families who shoulder a burden that is impossible for us to realize.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HOLIDAY EVENTS IN KITCHENER SOUTH–HESPELER

Ms. Jess Dixon: This past weekend concluded the last of my two Santa Claus parades. I know I'm in a House where some have seven, some have twelve, and I just have the two in Cambridge and Hespeler.

I've joked before, except it's not really a joke, that I'm an only child, and as an adult and a politician, I am just far more work for my parents now, particularly my mother, than I ever was as an actual child. Early on, I had decided with Santa Claus parades that I would dress up as an ice princess, because parades are for kids and they don't need another politician waving at them out of a dealership vehicle. But it does mean that it requires a lot of work to make a float.

And so I really have to shout out particularly my mother, as somehow or other she has ended up being the person that gets the balloons and the trees and puts everything together, and my dad, who takes my truck and goes and picks up the trailer. I do almost none of the work. I'm not entirely sure how I ended up at that, but I just show up.

Also, a huge thanks to our friend Jim, who does all of the set-up and connecting the generator because none of us can figure it out; and, of course, to my staff and volunteers, who take time away from their weekend to come hand out hot chocolate and wave.

Thank you so much to everybody for everything you do, but particularly my parents.

VICTORIAN ORDER OF NURSES

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Home care nurses who work at the Victorian Order of Nurses are essential to our health care system. They provide specialized care and keep people out of hospitals and long-term care. But after years of wage cuts and soaring inflation, they are the lowest-paid registered nurses in the province, and as a consequence, people are leaving for better-paying jobs elsewhere.

In the words of a VON nurse from my riding, "I have worked at the VON for over 25 years. I have between 15 to 25 clients at a time and I work 10 to 12 hours a day,

seven days a week. Sometimes I need to drive for an hour or two between clients in remote areas with no cell service. Our work is unsafe and understaffing is the norm because of poor working conditions. I would like to quit but cannot because what would happen to my clients if I did?"

The Ontario Nurses' Association is calling for improved benefits and pensions, and wage harmonization and parity with hospital nurses; otherwise, recruitment and retention will continue to fail.

Paying fair wages for home care is vital.

To VON nurses: We see you, we hear you, and you have our support.

Meegwetch. Merci. Thank you.

FERRY SERVICE

Mr. Ted Hsu: Speaker, the Wolfe Island ferry is a warning to all of rural Ontario. This PC government will forget about you and leave you behind.

Whether it's unacceptable or unending ferry disruptions—could be a paramedic call, an equipment failure, or a crew shortage. All of these disruptions mean that hundreds of people miss appointments or events, or get stranded and need a place to spend the night, or they just avoid the island altogether.

The medical clinic closed. Contractors turn down work because they can't afford to waste time. Local tourism laid off workers. And businesses risk bankruptcy.

The median age went from 50 years in 2011 to 60 years in 2021. Young families are moving off the island. Marysville Public School had only two registered students in September.

It's a vicious cycle.

For rural Ontario to thrive, we have to invest in moving people and goods. Communities need health care, education and jobs. We can't ignore rural infrastructure like the Wolfe Island ferry.

The skilled workers shortage is greater in rural Ontario. For years now, the PC government has known about a shortage of captains and mates for the ferry. These MTO employees are crucial to the entire island. There are so many options to significantly improve the situation, but the failure of this PC government to act on any of them is a warning to the rest of rural—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresce): Members' statements?

HOLIDAY MESSAGES

Hon. Laurie Scott: 'Twas three weeks until Christmas up north in our towns

While snowflakes were drifting and calm had come down.

The Santa parades finished, 16 in all

With bright lights, and children, and crowds standing tall.

As the year closes we remember too

The March ice storm that cracked ancient trees through

And the August fires that swept through warm air
Our thanks to first responders who were everywhere.

But hope carried on and our progress was real
A brand new school in Beaverton, making learning ideal.

We have new doctors to welcome, and new homes soon to build

A future of promise our community will fill.

And through the year we found joy with the arts

At the Grove Theatre, Buddy Holly danced into our hearts.

And joy has its flavours, quite literally this year

Two new Kawartha Dairy treats have brought plenty of cheer.

Eggnog and candy cane, each festive and sweet

A seasonal scoop no one can beat.

And behind every scoop are the cows and dairy farmers we praise

Working early each morning and late into the day's haze.

Their dedication and care helps keep spirits bright
Bringing local goodness to every table each night.

So as families gather with loved ones held dear
Let's raise up a toast to the close of the year.

To friendship and kindness, to peace far and near
Cheers to good friends, and to local craft beer.

Merry Christmas to all and to all a good night.

1020

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: I rise to call out the troubling misuse of public dollars by this government and their endorsement of employers who mistreat their workers. Through the Skills Development Fund, this government has given almost \$10 million to a low-scoring numbered company. The so-called Social Equality and Inclusion Centre, or SEI, has an Instagram account with one single post from 2023 and a website that hasn't been updated since its 2021 launch.

Jenny Andonov, the sole director of SEI and a PC donor, told the Trillium that she partnered with companies owned by her then boss, Zlatko Starkovski, who also happens to be a long-time Ford supporter, at the nightclub Muzik. Mr. Starkovski now owns and runs Grand Bizarre, Toronto Event Centre and FYE Ultra Club at the CNE. He controls every asset at the horticultural building. All his businesses are stacked on top of each other, paying each other rent, sharing employees, vendors and payroll resources. This circular economy makes Ms. Andonov's claim that no SDF funding was reaching the FYE Ultra Club unbelievable.

Mr. Starkovski's new burlesque club now operates under a strip club licence. Servers are scantily dressed or topless, and lap dances are offered in \$400 private rooms. They've been actively recruiting from other strip bars. They've encouraged pretty servers to become strippers and strippers to become aerialists, and they've actually forced their employees to sign non-disclosure agreements.

Did the government have money that goes to a strip club—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Members' statements?

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Natalie Pierre: I'm pleased to rise today to highlight an exciting milestone for my community of Burlington: the official opening of the new Drury Lane Pedestrian Bridge over the Lakeshore West rail corridor.

This project holds real significance for residents in my community, especially those in the Glenwood neighbourhood. Since the 1970s, this crossing has been an essential link: a pathway for students, families, and one that commuters rely on every day.

While the original bridge served the community well, it was time for an accessible and future-ready structure that meets the growing needs of a growing city. The new bridge ensures Glenwood is safely connected to Fairview Street, the Burlington GO station and Burlington's broader public transit network.

I am proud that our government supported this project and continues to invest in the public infrastructure that people count on. This bridge is just one example of the public transit infrastructure work currently under way in Burlington.

Construction on the underpass at the Burloak Drive level crossing over the Lakeshore West rail tracks is well under way and will reduce congestion, making it safer for pedestrians, for cyclists and for motorists.

We're also delivering more frequent GO train service along the Lakeshore West line, upgrading rail infrastructure for future electrification and supporting public transit through our One Fare program, saving Burlington commuters more than \$1,600 each year.

Thank you to everyone who helped make the—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Thank you. Members' statements?

DISASTER RELIEF

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: I rise today with a heavy heart to speak about the deadliest cyclone, Ditwah, which destroyed the island of Sri Lanka on November 28, leaving behind unimaginable loss. This is even worse than the 2004 tsunami. More than 600 people have died, 190 remain missing, over 500,000 families have been displaced and more than 1.7 million have been affected.

The central and upcountry region, especially Kandy, Nuwara Eliya and Badulla, were hit the hardest, with entire villages lost to landslides. Severe flooding also affected

places like Puttalam, Gampaha, Mannar, Mullaitivu and more, leaving communities isolated, homes destroyed.

Speaker, more than 400,000 people in Ontario have family in Sri Lanka, and many are deeply concerned about the safety and well-being of their loved ones, including my riding of Markham–Thornhill. The resilience of the people will help them heal and emerge stronger than ever on this beautiful island in the Indian Ocean.

At this time of great suffering, I urge everyone to stand together in support of Sri Lanka as people begin rebuilding their lives. Dreams will live and hope will rise again.

VICTORIA MBOKO

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: It is truly a pleasure to rise today to recognize Victoria Mboko, an exceptional young woman from Burlington. Recently, I was able to join the mayor of Burlington and my colleague the MPP for Burlington at a special event in which Victoria was presented the key to the city of her hometown.

At just 19, Victoria is ranked the number-one singles player in Canada and currently sits at number 18 in the Women's Tennis Association. Earlier this year, she won 22 successive matches on the World Tennis Tour without dropping a set to claim four International Tennis Federation singles titles.

Victoria is not only an extraordinary athlete but a role model whose achievements inspire young people across my community of Oakville North–Burlington and beyond to pursue their own dreams in sport, academics and any path they choose. Sport plays a powerful role in shaping young leaders. It teaches teamwork, perseverance and the courage to meet challenges head on.

Our government is proud to support women and sport and invest in community-based programs which encourage girls to participate in sport and lead healthier lives. Victoria serves to highlight just what girls and women can achieve.

Victoria, your community is so proud of you as you continue to realize your dreams.

HOUSING

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: As temperatures drop below zero, my office has seen a marked increase in constituents requesting help due to housing instability. We are receiving calls from families with young children, seniors and individuals with disabilities—all suddenly without safe or adequate housing.

Shelters in our city remain at capacity. People are sleeping in their vehicles, in hospital waiting rooms or outside in dangerous weather conditions. Social housing wait-lists are stretching years into the future, and many feel they are without options. Meanwhile, the government is advancing legislation such as Bill 60—legislation that weakens long-standing tenant protections.

When so many Ontarians are hanging on by a thread, these policy changes can have devastating consequences, pushing people into housing precarity or homelessness.

Since taking office, this government has cut spending on community housing by 70%. More than 80,000 Ontarians experienced homelessness last year. That's a staggering 25% increase in two years. These are not just statistics; they are our neighbours, our co-workers, our parents and our grandparents.

People in our communities are suffering right now. I urge the government to take this crisis seriously, to listen to municipalities and front-line service providers and to act immediately, both to prevent people from becoming homeless and to build the affordable, accessible housing Ontarians urgently need today.

EMANCIPATION MONTH

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I'm honoured to rise on the fourth anniversary of the passage of the Emancipation Month Act, proclaiming August as Emancipation Month, which received royal assent on December 9, 2021.

It was the first bill in Ontario history to be co-sponsored by all four parties in the Legislature. I want to thank the member from Barrie–Innisfil and former MPPs Mitzie Hunter and Laura Mae Lindo for co-sponsoring the bill. I thank the member from Markham–Stouffville who, as House leader, helped us get it across the finish line.

Finally, I want to thank Dewitt Lee, founder of Emancipation Month Canada, who approached me with his vision to get all four parties to support a month of celebration and education about the abolition of slavery in the British Empire and Canada on August 1, 1834. It's a time to learn from the courage of freedom fighters who inspired opposition to slavery and to understand how the legacy of slavery persists in Canada today through systemic racism. We all have a role to play in continuing the fight for freedom and justice.

I congratulate Dewitt Lee and Emancipation Canada on the recognition Emancipation Month has received not only in Canada but across the US and in the Caribbean. Thank you for your work on this, Dewitt.

1030

HOUSE SITTINGS

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

Hon. Steve Clark: I just wanted to advise the House that tonight's night sitting has been cancelled.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): You are always full of bad news.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: I'd like to welcome Newmarket's Huron Heights Secondary School Warriors football team to the Legislature this morning.

A huge congratulations to the senior team on winning the OFSAA Southern Bowl—champions, ranked the

number-one team in Ontario and number-one team in Canada; and to the winning team of the juniors, winning the Junior Metro Bowl—champions, ranked the number-one junior team in Ontario.

Congratulations, Warriors.

Mr. Steve Pinsonneault: It is an honour to recognize members from my beautiful riding of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex: Peter Twynstra, Kurtis Twynstra and Danielle MacKenzie.

I look forward to having lunch with you.

Hon. Laurie Scott: The page captain today is Maggie Charpentier, and it's her birthday also. She welcomes her family: mom, Christina; dad, Josh; sisters, Eve and Catherine. Welcome.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'd like to welcome Brianna Miller. She's a young leader from Waterloo with the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, a third-generation farmer and first-generation meat goat producer who serves on both the Canadian Meat Goat Association board of directors and the Waterloo Federation of Agriculture board of directors.

Welcome to your House.

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: I'd like to welcome to the House Ms. Bilmer's civics class from North Toronto Collegiate Institute, including my nephew John Mulroney. Welcome to Queen's Park.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: I'd like to welcome, for the first time to Queen's Park, my constit assistant, Nick Eisert.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: I'd like to welcome William Breukelman, director of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture for all of northern Ontario.

Welcome. It's great to—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Guelph.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I'd like to welcome Dewitt Lee, founder of Emancipation Month Canada, to Queen's Park today. Welcome.

Everyone is welcome to a reception: 3:30 to 5:30 in room 228.

I also want to welcome everyone from the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, with a special shout-out to Cathy Lennon, who leads the team in Guelph at the OFA office—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: I wish to welcome to Queen's Park today, for her first visit, Spencer Mackenzie, with her father, Matthew Mackenzie, both from Durham.

And, of course, Matt Mackenzie is part of the team at Ontario Tech University.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Today, I'm pleased to welcome two constituents from Simcoe North: Tim Kastelic, who will be joining me for lunch, and I saw Paul Maurice up in the crowd, who is an executive member with the OFA.

Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Joseph Racinsky: I'm happy to welcome regional councillor for Halton Hills Clark Somerville to the Legislature, who announced yesterday that, after nearly 30 years of service to our community, he will be retiring next year.

Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: [Inaudible] the Ontario Federation of Agriculture here today, especially Andrea McCoy-Naperstekow, Angela Field, Clint Cameron and Katie Stewart.

Mr. Chris Glover: I want to welcome the Ontario Federation of Agriculture.

I also want to welcome two special guests: Binesikwe, from Sisters in Solidarity, and Mark MacKenzie, from Restore Democracy.

Mrs. Michelle Cooper: I want to welcome our page captain Mila and her parents Neeral, Anik and Asha. I know her brother is in the mix.

Welcome to Queen's Park; you have a wonderful daughter here.

Hon. Nolan Quinn: I have two introductions. I'd like to welcome Ithaca Silva, from my riding, as a page. Today, I'll be having lunch with her.

As well, I'd like to wish my seatmate, Minister McCarthy, a happy birthday today.

Singing of Happy Birthday.

Ms. Lee Fairclough: Welcome to the students who are here from York University today. Welcome to your House.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): And I'd like to welcome Drew Spoelstra. Hi, Drew. He's from my riding and from the Ontario Federation of Agriculture.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: I would like to welcome Middlebury Public School from my riding. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Laurie Scott: I'd also like to welcome the people who keep me together at Queen's Park, Victoria Hume and Owen Beattie. Thanks for being here.

QUESTION PERIOD

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Marit Stiles: My question is for Premier. It's the holiday season, and now we've got the gift that keeps on giving. Yesterday, the OPP confirmed that they are actively investigating Keel Digital Solutions, the company that the Minister of Labour admitted that he personally handpicked to receive Skills Development Fund, despite their low-scoring application.

Let's not forget that this government is already under criminal investigation by the RCMP over the greenbelt scandal, so why did the Minister of Labour ignore red flags from bureaucrats and tip the scales in favour of Keel Digital Solutions?

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

Hon. David Piccini: Speaker, as the Minister of Colleges and Universities has said multiple times in this chamber, in 2023, a routine audit raised concerns about a service provider, the process identified irregularities and that lead to a forensic audit. When the results of that audit were complete, within 24 hours the matter was referred to the OPP.

Out of respect for this process, I should say, I cannot and will not comment any further.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Well, Speaker, how convenient.

I asked why. Why did the Minister of Labour, despite red flag after red flag that were raised by the civil servants—we know, and he admitted he hand-picked this company. Why did he continue to move forward with it?

The why, I have to say, starts to become clear when you consider that the Minister of Labour was probably already booking his tickets for a suite on the Champs-Élysées, jetting off to join the lobbyist who worked for Keel Digital Solutions, who is his bestie, off in Paris for their wedding; or sitting rink-side with the CEO of Keel Digital Solutions. This is not coincidence; this is a pattern and it is repeated over and over again by this government.

Has the Premier and his government had enough, or are they going to keep standing by this minister?

Hon. David Piccini: Speaker, that's incorrect. At the time, we didn't have the results of the forensic audit, and when we did get the results, as the Minister of Colleges and Universities has said multiple times, within 24 hours that was referred to the OPP.

Again, out of respect for that external process, I cannot and will not comment any further.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: The audit had started, the civil servants had already ranked this proposal low, and yet somehow, some way, this Minister of Labour dipped his hands in, pulled out that application and put it up at the top of the file. Regardless of where this investigation goes, it is time for the Conservatives to be held accountable to the people of Ontario. The Premier may not want to answer questions, but we are going to get some answers soon.

In the midst of an absolute jobs disasters in this province that this government created, they are focused only on funnelling money to their friends and their insiders. The gift has gone long enough. The Premier can no longer ignore the calls to fire his Minister of Labour. When will the Premier fire this minister?

Hon. David Piccini: Speaker, again, I would say that at the time, we had no results of any audit. Once we did, as the minister said, a referral was made to the OPP within 24 hours. It shows that the system is working.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Marit Stiles: Back to the Premier: This minister should do the honourable thing and resign. I think it's very clear the only people who this government is working for are their insiders, their donors.

But I want to talk about this government's track record of disrespecting taxpayer dollars. At every turn, the only people who ever seem to win from this government are Conservative insiders.

1040

During the pandemic, we saw companies like Facedrive, Shoppers Drug Mart, Galen Weston and Keel Digital Solutions receive government contracts. And now those same companies are getting Skills Development Fund money.

Why does the same cast of characters keep cashing in on this government's graft?

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

Hon. David Piccini: As we've said on multiple occasions, the Skills Development Fund has gone to organizations that used to traditionally support the NDP, who've abandoned them because they abandoned them. They abandoned them when they opposed Highway 413 and the Bradford Bypass. They abandoned them when they opposed our infrastructure plan.

Those organizations and those unions are supporting this government because we've got a plan to nation-build. We've got a plan that's going to put their workers to work, that's going to ensure we build a stronger Ontario, Speaker. We're going to keep working for those workers, providing training pathways for them to build a stronger Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Supplementary.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Well, let's look at Supply Ontario as an example, shall we? There are so many examples. This was something that was supposed to help Ontarians, and it is, once again, helping well-connected Conservative insiders by the looks of it. There's \$1.4 billion—taxpayer dollars—going up in smoke because of this government's bad deals. And guess who's in charge, Speaker? The Premier's own former chief of staff.

This is either gross mismanagement, or it is a total graft once again. Was Supply Ontario set up to be another pay-to-play scheme for this government.

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

Hon. Stephen Crawford: I appreciate the question. We had an unprecedented situation affect the province of Ontario back in 2020. It was called COVID. Supply Ontario had to run around the world with the government of Ontario to get PPE, which the opposition actually supported. We were in a mad dash to get PPE. This government, with Premier Ford at the helm, said we are going to protect the people of Ontario. Not only protect the people of Ontario; we actually built a facility in Ontario to make our own PPE so we can keep the people of Ontario safe for generations forward. We will make no apologies about keeping the people of Ontario safe.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Licence plates that you can't see, signs too big to read, and now we've got masks that nobody can use going up in smoke. Only about 2%, by the way, of the PPE made it to our hospitals, who desperately need it. And do you know what? It is always regular Ontarians who pay the price. People out there are stretching every dollar while this government is just only ever

focused on what deals are going to make the best and the most money for their friends.

What is wrong with these people? Speaker, what is wrong with these people? Is this just another stop on this Premier's gravy train?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): That has nothing to do with the first question. Move on. That has nothing to do with the first question.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. John Fraser: My question is for the President of the Treasury Board. I'm sorry I've been slow this morning. I visited the Fraser family dentist, who's less expensive than the Premier's family dentist, and had a little bit of work done, so I'm still a bit numb. But I'm really numb from this government and learning that the OPP anti-racket squad is now investigating Keel Digital Solutions. It's a very serious situation. What's equally as serious is this government continues to send tens of millions of dollars to Keel Digital Solutions after it had been flagged for and was under a forensic audit, including \$7 million in skills development funds.

Speaker, to the President of the Treasury Board, how is it that a company that has been flagged for a forensic audit and is under a forensic audit continues to get tens of millions of dollars from this government?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: I can say that Treasury Board does important work every step of the way to oversee a robust internal auditing framework that protects taxpayer dollars and strengthens accountability across government.

OIAD, Madam Speaker, is assessed every five years by the Institute of Internal Auditors, and it consistently receives top marks for its compliance with professional standards.

Speaker, because of the great work of OIAD, our government has received eight consecutive clean, unqualified audit opinions, which the Liberals could not do when they were in government the last two years. We're very proud of the work that OIAD does.

Routine audits reduce government risk, and in this case, where a forensic audit was triggered and identified irregularities, the ministry, within 24 of receiving the report, referred it to the Ontario Provincial Police. Speaker, that is all we can say on the matter, as it has been referred to the OPP.

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

Mr. John Fraser: The President of the Treasury Board just said "when the audit was triggered," which is at the end of the internal audit. That's when the forensic audit was triggered. But she's not saying when that happened. It wasn't 24 hours after it was triggered.

And the issue here is, what should have happened was, "Guess what? We have a problem, Houston. Danger—stop sending money. If you're doing business with this company, Keel Digital Solutions, pause"—at the time that it triggered a forensic audit, not when it happened: when we knew there was a big problem.

So my question is, was the President of the Treasury Board just simply looking the other way while tens of millions of dollars and \$7 million in skills development funds went to Keel Digital Solutions after they had been flagged for a forensic audit?

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

Hon. Nolan Quinn: I'm not too sure how the President of the Treasury Board could be any more clear to the interim leader of the third party. A routine audit raised concerns about an external service provider. We do routine audits regularly of our external service provider. That process identified irregularities that led to a comprehensive forensic audit of the organization in question. The results of that audit recommended that the matter be referred to the Ontario Provincial Police. As we've stated numerous times in this House, within 24 hours we referred the matter to the OPP.

As the President of the Treasury Board mentioned, we will not be commenting any further because it's before the OPP at this time.

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

Mr. John Fraser: Well, I appreciated the earlier info-commercial from the President of the Treasury Board on what her responsibilities are. We already knew that.

When the forensic audit was triggered, that's when the clock started. Yet they continued to give tens of millions of dollars, including \$7 million to Keel Digital Solutions. And that \$7 million, the Minister of Labour intervened on behalf of the company to give it to them. And his close friend Michael Rudderham was the lobbyist. He was also hanging out at a Leafs game at the glass with the director of that company.

Yet they still got money. Even though we knew we couldn't trust them, they still got money. I don't know how the President of the Treasury Board can explain that, other than that she was either not doing her job, or she was looking the other way. Which is it?

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

Hon. David Piccini: Speaker, the member doesn't understand it because, when he was in power, they didn't have eight consecutive unqualified audits, as the President of the Treasury Board said. We have strong systems in place, and when the results of that audit were given to government, within 24 hours, it was referred to the OPP. Subsequent to that, all payments across all ministries stopped. That's the system working, Speaker.

As the matter is before the OPP, I cannot and won't comment any further.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. John Fraser: Back to the President of the Treasury Board. I don't know how I can explain this any more clearly: It's when you knew you had to do a forensic audit that you should have said, "Stop sending money."

But do you know what? This government—on Friday, we learned that they like sending money to people we

can't trust. We know that there was \$1 million of the Skills Development Fund that was sent to Connex to test their AI chatbot. And we know that the CEO, Sayan Navaratnam, was sanctioned by the Ontario Securities Commission. He received a hefty fine and a three-year ban from being a director. It's serious stuff. Yet, like in the case of Keel Digital Solutions, the government sent him a million dollars.

So the President of the Treasury Board is—like, who's watching the money? That's your job. Why is it that we're continuing to give millions of dollars to people who we know that we can't trust?

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

1050

Hon. David Piccini: Speaker, as I've said before, we've got over 400,000 tech workers in this province—another 100,000, thanks to the work of this Premier and this government. It's a sector that that member said, in their platform, they support—and then said later that it's antithetical to the idea of getting people into jobs. Well, in actual fact, it's supporting workers of this province, and it's incumbent on us to make sure we have training available and ready to support those workers.

What that member conveniently also excludes is that—he reviews the support. He should review the support that that individual provided his party.

But again, that's not what this fund is about. This fund is about training workers for better jobs with bigger paycheques. And that's what we'll continue to do.

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

Mr. John Fraser: If the securities commission stuff wasn't enough, we know that Mr. Navaratnam came to us in the pandemic and said that he had a tracking technology that was made in Ontario and that he would create 70 jobs. Well, what happened? He didn't create 70 jobs. It wasn't from Ontario. It was from China. By the time he had \$2.1 million of our money, the government stopped sending him money. He asked for \$2.5 million. We gave him \$2.1 million. So he literally told us something, and we can't trust him. He lied to us. And then the government said, "We'll still give you money in the Skills Development Fund." How can that be? How does that make any sense?

How can the President of the Treasury Board sit there and tell us that she's protecting taxpayers' money when that kind of stuff is happening in this government?

Hon. David Piccini: Speaker, when the system is in place and the system works, that protects taxpayer dollars.

As we've said, in this fund, over the course of successive rounds, we've implemented full financial audits across all programs—something that didn't exist under the previous government. A risk assessment process, monthly reporting, and the transfer payment agreement which stipulates in it specific targets—that if they're not met, funding is withheld, including a 15% holdback for all SDF-supported funds.

These funds are changing lives, and they're helping train a next generation of workers. We've pointed to the

union training halls all over Ontario, places that member refuses to visit, or he doesn't know where they are—I don't know; one or the other.

The bottom line is, for those workers—we're training them to build the nuclear plants that he opposes; to build the highways he opposes; to build the hospitals that they don't vote for and oppose in our budget. And we'll keep training—

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

Mr. John Fraser: He took the Ontario taxpayer for a \$2.1-million ride, and these guys gave him another million bucks. There's no explaining that. There must be another reason. Maybe it's that Mr. Navaratnam is an avowed Conservative partisan or, like Keel Digital Solutions—like he and his colleagues—gave tens of thousands of dollars in donations to the PC Party.

This is just another example of how this government treats skills development funds and God knows whatever other funds, under this Treasury Board president, as its personal piggy bank to reward donors, insiders, influence peddlers, lobbyists—whoever is on the docket—but not the Ontario taxpayer.

Speaker, through you: How does the President of the Treasury Board expect us to believe in any way that she's protecting the Ontario taxpayer?

Hon. David Piccini: Speaker, the fund is changing lives for workers who are getting a second chance, thanks to the work of this government. We met one last week. We've met them on job sites—actually contributing to our economy, building a stronger Ontario. It's providing opportunities for over 100,000 Ontarians to achieve employment—who are underemployed or unemployed outright—in 60 days or less.

I would challenge that member. He has failed, in the last three months, to give us one program, under his 15 years, that took a hundred thousand people off unemployment—or underemployed—and got them a better job with a bigger paycheque.

That's the work this Premier's government is doing to build a stronger Ontario.

We cited all the projects that they oppose—new nuclear, new hospitals, new highways, new roads, new bridges. When we took those projects to the people and let them vote on it—how many seats did they get in Brampton, where people are clogged and congested? None.

We're going to keep building a stronger Ontario and supporting training pathways that are training a next generation of young—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): New question?

FORESTRY INDUSTRY

MPP Lise Vaugeois: The Terrace Bay mill produces some of the best pulp in the world. But sadly, after two years, the mill is still sitting idle.

The people of Terrace Bay are feeling abandoned by this government. If the mill is not being heated, it's game over, and this important piece of forestry infrastructure

will become worthless. Does the government intend to heat the mill this winter?

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

Hon. Mike Harris: Thank you for the important question. I think it's very incumbent for us to know that a strong forestry industry means a strong northern Ontario, and a strong northern Ontario means a strong Ontario.

What I can say in regard to the question is, we're currently evaluating all options when it comes to AV Terrace Bay. It's been tough for the community for many years, obviously, having this facility idled, and we're going to continue to work with the community, we're going to continue to work with stakeholders and make sure that we do the right thing by northern Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Supplementary?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Thank you. I didn't hear the answer to the question about heating.

It's been bitterly cold in our region for over a week. Time is running out. Once the equipment freezes, cracks and toxins are leaked everywhere, the community of Terrace Bay will not only lose the mill, they will be left with an environmental disaster.

Your government gave \$128 million in grants to the owners of the Terrace Bay mill, with no strings attached. If the machinery in the mill is allowed to freeze, who will pay for the cleanup of the toxic mess left behind?

Hon. Mike Harris: Of course, we work with industry and we work with the Ministry of the Environment and the company in question to make sure that all environmental standards are followed. We venture to make sure that those investments are being upheld, when we talk about money that has been put into those projects.

What I can assure you, Madam Speaker, is that for too long, the forestry industry was ignored in northern Ontario. This government is putting its money where its mouth is, making the necessary investments to keep this sector thriving. There will be more to come over the next few months as we unveil a new plan when it comes to forestry here in the province. We're working through the process right now, and we're going to have some more great news that's going to support this fantastic industry that contributes over \$20 billion to the province's GDP.

I'm glad to see the opposition finally taking an interest in forestry, Madam Speaker.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

MPP Tyler Watt: Every single day, we get another insane skills development story. And you know that if the roles were reversed today—if this was being done under Kathleen Wynne and the previous Liberal government—you all would be screaming for our resignation here. You all know it. It stinks. This is why I see none of you standing up when this minister has to defend the indefensible, day in and day out. Let's be real.

With two police investigations now circling the government—that's two police investigations, the RCMP on the greenbelt and now the OPP investigating a recipient of the

Skills Development Fund—Ontarians are rightfully worried about the appearance of impropriety in how this government manages public money. I wouldn't trust this government to operate a snowball stand at this point.

Speaker, will the minister specify which anti-corruption safeguards were established and then ignored or overridden in support of the—

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

Hon. David Piccini: Speaker, as the Minister of Colleges and Universities said, when examining a funding recipient, the matter was referred to an audit. That audit identified the need to refer it to OPP, and within 24 hours of receiving that result, the government did just that. So that shows that the system is working.

It's a system that we've strengthened through the Skills Development Fund, through financial audits that are required for all recipients, for a program that's helped 100,000-plus people find employment within 60 days or less. There wasn't a single program like that in the 15 years that the Liberals held government because their program was to drive 300,000 jobs out of Ontario.

We'll work hard to put in the conditions to attract investment and to support men and women to create jobs in this province and to help the training—to help them land a better—

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

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MPP Tyler Watt: That answer wandered so far that I hope it packed a lunch. Man, you guys are obsessed with the previous Liberal government. By the way, you've had eight years—eight years. You love to pin the blame on a government that hasn't been here in eight years. What have you done in eight years? Seriously, record high unemployment, people can't find jobs, the people in my riding can't get access to health care and you stand here and try to defend the indefensible every single day.

Speaker, the minister clearly didn't answer my question, so let me try this again in the clearest terms possible. Which specific safeguards were missing from the Skills Development Fund: conflict-of-interest controls—which I would argue the minister himself is a conflict of interest—evaluation audit trails, political staff restrictions and stronger matrices? Let me know.

Hon. David Piccini: Speaker, the member himself brought up the previous government, hence why I referenced it in my response.

The member talks about the system, and as we said, the system in place—within 24 hours, this matter was referred to the OPP and all subsequent payments across all ministries were stopped. That's a system that works. We will respect that process and out of an abundance of respect for that process, I won't comment on that matter any further.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mrs. Michelle Cooper: My question is for the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery and Procurement.

Speaker, Ontario's diverse industries, from manufacturing and agriculture to technology and construction, are vital to our province's prosperity. They drive innovation, create good-paying jobs and keep our economy strong. With global supply chain challenges continuing to impact businesses, it is essential that we take steps to ensure these sectors remain competitive and resilient. That's why our government introduced the Buy Ontario Act, to keep our procurement dollars right here at home.

Speaker, can the minister explain how the Buy Ontario Act will support industries in Ontario and help them thrive in today's global economy?

Hon. Stephen Crawford: Thank you to the great member from Eglinton—Lawrence for a very good question.

Speaker, the Buy Ontario Act is about turning opportunity into action. By keeping procurement dollars right here in Ontario, we're giving local businesses the chance to compete and win. This isn't just about buying local. It's about buying a stronger supply chain and driving growth in every single corner of this province.

With over \$30 billion in annual public sector procurement and a historic \$220-billion infrastructure plan, the Buy Ontario Act ensures those dollars fuel growth in Ontario industries, from steel and construction to agriculture, forestry, advanced manufacturing and tech.

By prioritizing Ontario-made goods and services, we're creating demand for local steel in bridges, Ontario lumber in schools and Ontario-built vehicles in public fleets. This means more jobs for skilled trades, more contracts manufacturers and more innovation from our tech sector. The Buy Ontario Act puts Ontario first, ensuring that our industries have the tools they need to lead, innovate and grow. That's—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Question?

Mrs. Michelle Cooper: Thank you to the minister for his answer.

Speaker, the Buy Ontario Act is a game-changer for local businesses and workers. I can tell you my constituents are genuinely excited. Local business owners have reached out to share how much it means to see broader public sector procurement finally opening up to Ontario businesses like theirs. For years, they've wanted a fair shot at supplying goods and services to schools, hospitals and other public institutions. Now, with this legislation, they feel their hard work and innovation will be recognized and rewarded right here at home.

Speaker, can the minister share what he's heard from industry leaders about this groundbreaking legislation and how it's being received across Ontario?

Hon. Stephen Crawford: Since introducing the Buy Ontario Act, industry sources and officials have been outstanding. The response has been incredible. Leaders across key sectors see this as a turning point for Ontario's economy.

Infrastructure Ontario calls it "a partnership that strengthens the provincial economy." Metrolinx says it's critical for supporting local suppliers in major transit projects. The Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters praise

the act for safeguarding jobs and driving innovation, while Supply Ontario highlights how it modernizes procurement. The Cement Association of Canada applauds the focus on domestic supply, and LIUNA calls it a guarantee that Ontario workers and materials lead our infrastructure build-out.

Speaker, this support shows that the Buy Ontario Act is more than policy; it's a united effort with industry to build a stronger, more resilient Ontario.

TENANT PROTECTION

MPP Alexa Gilmour: Speaker, Christmas is right around the corner. Instead of filling stockings, tenants in my riding on Triller and Spencer Avenues are fighting to keep a roof over their heads. Their corporate landlords are hitting them with an 8% rental hike through an above-guideline increase. These are families, especially on Triller, who have lived with roaches, black mould, disrepair, and now Starlight, one of the worst corporate landlords, is charging them for what should be routine maintenance.

To the Premier: Will this Premier stop corporate landlords from abusing loopholes and bring back real rent control?

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

Hon. Doug Downey: What the member opposite is asking for is that there be some level of controls, and there actually is a process for that. Above-guideline increases can go to the Landlord and Tenant Board. They can be looked at to see if they are warranted or not, and both sides can have the opportunity to say their piece and an independent adjudicator will make a decision as opposed to a political decision.

It's important that we've put so many resources into the Landlord and Tenant Board to double the number of adjudicators and changed the back-office system that was left barren by the previous government. We're making sure those tenants have the ability to be heard in a timely way, to be able to have their matters heard, to be able to have an independent adjudicator make a decision, so that everyone can move forward in an orderly fashion.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the member for Parkdale-High Park.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: I think this minister's very comfortable answer about a Landlord and Tenant Board that is broken is very rich, given that it is freezing outside and there are 81,000 Ontarians struggling to live on our streets because they can't afford housing.

What tenants need most is stronger protections, but this government is giving them Bill 60, which makes it easier for landlords to evict people when they can't keep up with AGI after AGI. We are seeing that impact right now in my riding with that 8% increase.

Speaker, even Ontario's mayors have sounded the alarm last week, calling for emergency action to address homelessness. Will this Premier listen to them, reverse Bill 60 and bring back real rent control?

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

Hon. Rob Flack: Bill 60 is a great piece of legislation, and I think if the members opposite really studied it, they'll see that, with the Landlord and Tenant Board, we're creating balance and fairness.

Speaker, there are 80 more adjudicators. (1) We've doubled the adjudicators; and (2) more money to fund this work, and we have lowered the backlog by 80%.

We continue to create the conditions to get more rental housing supply in the market. That's what it's all about. With supply comes competition; with competition comes affordability. That's what we're creating, and that is what we're going to continue to do.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

MPP Stephanie Smyth: This is to the Premier. Congratulations: Another day and another company funded from the Skills Development Fund is now under investigation. Given that we're seeing repeated failures of oversight and accountability, maybe this government's new motto should be "cash first, questions later."

So, tell us: When was the moment this government decided that handouts to companies they don't even trust themselves were more important than actually protecting taxpayer money, and why exactly should Ontarians trust them now?

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

Hon. David Piccini: Speaker, I'll tell you when we decided. During the pandemic, when folks were staying at home and we had to kickstart the economy, we launched a fund that would help people get to work, that would support employers. We were the first province in Canada to go above and beyond our labour market transfer agreement to put dollars to support training—rapid training—and life-long learning. That's supporting people accessing rapid training at any stage of their career. The net result has been over 100,000 people employed—100,000 people employed within 60 days or less, Speaker. That's what the Auditor General said when assessing this program.

We have important external bodies that assess it, like the Auditor General. We welcomed that assessment. We implemented her recommendations, and we've continued to improve the program after every round.

They had no jobs plan, Speaker, and they have no jobs plan. They come in this place without a single public policy idea that is actually going to help people get jobs. On this side of the House, we're focused on nation-building, we're focused to create conditions to attract foreign direct investment, and it's helping to create the conditions for jobs.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the member for Toronto-St. Paul's.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Speaker, this isn't about our jobs plan right now; this is about a jobs plan that's gone sideways.

Again, to the Premier: When we're talking about ethics and accountability—this is the problem here—the Premier himself wrote to his ministers back in 2018 demanding that they hold themselves to the highest ethical standard, both on and off the job. He vowed that he would personally hold them accountable.

So, given that the Skills Development Fund scandal reveals a breakdown so massive even basic oversight failed, when, then, will the Premier stop talking about ethics—stop talking about it and start doing something real, and fire this labour minister?

Hon. David Piccini: Speaker, she's not talking about a jobs plan because she doesn't have one. They don't have one. They drove 300,000 jobs out of this province, and we've brought in place a fund that helps people with better training.

The member refuses to go out and visit union training halls; perhaps it's because they wouldn't be welcome. They wouldn't be welcome, Speaker, in those training halls because they oppose the very men and women there who are getting training, the under-represented groups whose barriers we're breaking down to help find them meaningful employment. Because we're nation-building: building Highway 413, building the Bradford Bypass, actually building schools in places where they previously shut them down, unlocking the potential of the critical minerals in the Ring of Fire and supporting training in every corner of this province.

I encourage them, over the holiday, to get out of the GTHA, visit corners of the province—like local ironworkers, where we're supporting them with accessing better training, or the labourers in Thunder Bay who we're supporting breaking down barriers for Indigenous youth. We're going to keep doing that to build a stronger Ontario.

They don't have a jobs plan. They've not brought one public policy idea—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Question?

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: My question is for the Premier. If I were sick, I would want the care of experts as soon as possible. Well, right now, our planet is on life support, and its condition is worsening every day. Symptoms include more intense and frequent fires, floods, ice storms, tornadoes, drought and extreme heat.

Forty years ago, Canada saw 19 dangerous weather events in one decade; this past decade, 133. But this government can't even say the words "climate change." In fact, they passed legislation on forest fires and emergency preparedness without even mentioning the words "climate change," the very cause.

Speaker, tackling the crisis takes courage, honesty and commitment. We have to work together to protect clean air, our water and our communities from dangerous weather. Through you to the Premier: Does he believe in climate change, and can he say the words in this House?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: I thank the member for the question. When it comes to fighting climate change, our Ontario government, under the leadership of Premier Ford, leads Canada. Our track record on the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions is higher than all other provinces combined. Two thirds of the reduction in greenhouse gas emissions over the last several years are due to the results achieved by Ontario, with investments in clean nuclear energy, \$10.9 billion; green steel, half a billion dollars; and \$70 billion in public transit—transformational investments that will continue to lead the fight against climate change.

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

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: This is a fantasy land. The Premier did not get up. The Premier did not say he believes in climate change. The Premier did not say the words "climate change." Indeed, in the next 10 years, emissions are said to rise 400% on our grid, so that is not in fact the case, what I hear today, because we are ramping up fossil gas plants, operating them 24 hours a day, spewing toxic chemicals into the air that we breathe.

We see worsening wildfires that cause spikes in trips to emergency rooms. We see increased rates of asthma and respiratory illnesses. In fact, last summer, Toronto had the worst air quality in the world—and this Premier can't say the words "climate change."

I am here today because this government jeopardizes the very air that we breathe, the air that I breathe, that we all breathe, that our kids breathe. Soon we won't be able to go out and play in the summertime.

Again, to the Premier: How can he claim to be protecting Ontario when he keeps putting the excess profits of Enbridge and American gas companies over people and the planet?

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: Madam Speaker, there are so many ways that we work together to protect our shared environment. It is a precious gift that we must preserve and protect for this generation and for generations to come. That's why we are so proud of the investments we're making in tackling climate change.

But when it comes to a balanced policy, it also means that natural gas, for example, is our insurance policy when it comes to energy supply. When it comes to the Independent Electricity System Operator, IESO, it found that phasing out natural gas by 2030 is not feasible and could trigger blackouts while raising residential bills by 60%. That's about \$100 more per month on average for households. It's about balance. It's about protecting the environment and delivering an energy supply that is affordable and sustainable, that creates jobs and doesn't chase jobs out of the province.

RURAL ONTARIO

MPP Paul Vickers: My question is for the Minister of Rural Affairs. Rural communities are the backbone of Ontario. They support our food supply, drive local manufacturing and contribute to Ontario's economic and social

fabric. But, Speaker, global uncertainty is certainly creating real challenges for rural Ontario. Rising costs, market instability, and the impact of US tariffs are putting pressure on our local employees, threatening jobs and making life more expensive for families.

Despite these challenges, our government has stood firmly with rural Ontario—helping communities grow, supporting local projects and strengthening the services people rely on. Speaker, can the minister share what she is doing to protect our small towns during these uncertain times and ensure rural Ontario continues to grow, thrive and stay strong?

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

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: It's a pleasure to take this question from the member from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound. He's a tremendous advocate for rural Ontario—as is our government, because we're standing firmly with rural communities and small towns, especially in the face of global uncertainty and Trump's tariffs.

That's why we doubled the Rural Ontario Development Program to \$20 million over two years, giving communities the support that they were asking for and, quite frankly, they need to grow their local economies and attract new jobs and diversify their economies as well.

The ROD program helps small towns and rural communities invest in projects to improve community spaces, support small businesses, revitalize main streets and strengthen local infrastructure. We are partnering with a whole-of-government approach to make this happen. I was proud to partner with the Ministry of Finance to announce \$600 million to our rural municipality through the Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund. This is good news and we're going to—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the member from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound.

MPP Paul Vickers: Thank you to the minister for the update. Rural Ontario is built by hard-working families and businesses who keep our province moving. These communities are resilient, but global uncertainty and US tariffs are putting pressure on local employers and threatening rural jobs.

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While our government has been stepping up with real investments and real support, rural communities still remember what it was like under the previous Liberal government, propped up by the NDP, when rural priorities were ignored and towns were left without the tools to grow. Rural communities deserve a government that stands for them and backs them with actions, not words.

Speaker, can the minister share how our government is helping rural communities stay strong, and protect local jobs and opportunities in the face of global uncertainty?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Rural Ontario is resilient, but our communities deserve programs that help them grow even stronger in uncertain times, and that's exactly what the Rural Ontario Development Program delivers.

Since 2019, Speaker, our investments have supported 473 rural economic development projects, generating

\$122 million in new economic activity. That's a return of over \$4 for every single dollar invested. That's good news. Just this year alone, for the current intake, we had over 800 inquiries, and our field staff facilitated 235 one-on-one coaching sessions. This is great news, because it demonstrates that we are a government that understands the needs of rural Ontario.

But let's talk about the outcomes. For instance, in Uxbridge, a downtown revitalization effort supported a 63% increase in local employment and over \$1.5 million in building improvements. We are making sure that we are standing with rural communities and small towns across this province, and we're going to continue to bring new things to the table.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Marit Stiles: Well, I've got a just-in-time question for the Premier. Respect for the taxpayer dollar: Remember that? That used to be at the heart of this Premier's politics. He used to rail on about stopping the politicians' gravy train.

And now, we've got a Minister of Labour who's got champagne problems. We've got him jetting off to Paris to party with lobbyists for companies that are now under OPP investigation. We've got a Premier whose family dentist is cashing in on the government's graft. We've got a campaign manager who's benefiting from the hundreds of millions of dollars from this Premier and the deals that he's making.

Is the Premier refusing to fire his Minister of Labour because the Premier is actually behind all these decisions?

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

Hon. David Piccini: Speaker, what we're behind is creating the conditions for economic opportunity; creating the conditions to attract jobs—over 100,000 people employed through this fund within 60 days or less. But you know what? They will have to have a job to go to, and that's what this Premier and members on this side of the House get up every morning to do, to create the conditions for economic opportunities.

We've grown revenue in this province by billions and billions of dollars; created the conditions to attract billions—over 50—in foreign direct investments. That has created the conditions last month to almost exceed half of what was created in the entire United States—a population far larger than ours—in one month alone. That's what happens when you commit to nation-build; when you commit to building highways, roads and bridges.

That leader has been abandoned by organized labour, abandoned by unions, because she turned her back on those workers who are collecting a paycheque thanks to investments by this government and by this Premier.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Well, Speaker, the Premier doesn't have the guts to get up and answer a question—ever. He never has the guts to get up and answer a question about this Minister of Labour. Why has he not asked for this Minister of Labour to resign? Why hasn't he fired him yet?

Speaker, the people of Ontario are looking at what is going on with this government, with the Skills Development Fund and the Premier's party, with the taxpayer dollars, and they are disgusted. They are disgusted, and I hear it every day, everywhere I go. People are tired of watching this government have a party with their taxpayer dollars while they are trying to make every dollar stretch. What is wrong with you?

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Why do you not do the right thing? This mess, this grift, has got to end.

When are we going to get a government that actually wants to help the people and not just the people who help them? What is it going to take for this Premier to get up and answer a question and fire this minister?

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

Hon. David Piccini: Speaker, when we visit places of employment across Ontario, they're concerned about President Trump, about the tariffs, about creating opportunity and nation-building. We've asked the Leader of the Opposition to name one labour union, just one that she's visited who is collecting a better paycheque thanks to the investments of this government. Speaker, she can't. She can't because organized labour abandoned them. They abandoned them because they don't take a single public policy idea to this place that will help get those people jobs.

In every corner of Ontario, we're advancing a progressive training model that's leading to more completions, more young people entering the trades, more under-represented groups entering the trades. They've all got to have a job to go to, and that's what we're doing through nation-building, building highways, roads, bridges. Organized labour has abandoned her because she abandoned them when they didn't have—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Question?

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. John Fraser: The Premier can see we're on to this game, eh? We're on to this game. We're on to the—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Order. Order. Order I will start warning people.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The government side will come to order. The government side will come to order. The Minister of Natural Resources will come to order. The next time, it's a warning. Beaches—East York will come to order.

I recognize the leader of the third party.

Mr. John Fraser: As the Premier can see, we're on to his game. We know when he's going to be here, so we'll be ready for him when he comes—

Interjection.

Mr. John Fraser: I withdraw, Speaker.

We know. We all know. Thanks for showing up. Thanks for coming out.

By the way, I missed yesterday; I was at the Fraser family dentist. I can guarantee you, Speaker, he's not nearly as expensive as the Premier's dentist.

But the question is, why does this government continue to give money to people that we can't trust? Keel Digital Solutions—a forensic audit; Connex—a company that literally told us they were going to create 70 jobs and took \$2.1 million and the Minister of Economic Development for a ride, and we still gave him a million dollars.

What kind of shop are you running, Premier?

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

Hon. David Piccini: As we've said, a system that identifies the need for an audit is a system that works. A system that, then, within 24 hours of receiving that, makes the appropriate referrals, is a system that works.

We have a skills fund that never existed under the previous government; a skills fund that, through every successive round, has incorporated additional measures to link it to the employment-management system that tracks long-term job outcomes; that requires a financial audit of all recipients; and a fund that has helped 100,000 people find employment within 60 days or less.

There is not a single fund that existed in the 15 years the previous government was in office that helped connect 100,000 underemployed or unemployed people to jobs within 60 days. That's the commitment of this Premier and this government to build a stronger Ontario. They don't have a jobs plan. They don't have a plan for the workers of Ontario. That's why workers—

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

Mr. John Fraser: It's a good thing there are cushions on these chairs, or somebody would be getting splinters.

Speaker, I'm going to ask again: How is it that the government continues to give tens of millions of dollars to people that we can't trust, people who took us for a ride, people who have been sanctioned by the OSC, people who have been fined, who have been banned from a directorship?

Yes, I'm over here, Premier. Why are we sending people money, people who we can't trust? Why are we doing that? Is it because they're a donor, they're a friend, they're an insider, they're an influence peddler, they're a lobbyist? Why is it we're giving money to people that we can't trust? It's clear that's what this government is doing. Explain to us how that can happen.

Hon. David Piccini: Speaker, when he says we can't trust folks, he's referring to unions. He's referring to unions of this province. He's referring to non-profits—non-profits who received training through this fund that's helping connect 100,000 people to employment within 60 days or less. That's what this fund is doing: supporting people.

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But you have to have a plan to create new jobs in the first place: a low-tax environment, an opportunity to attract manufacturing jobs after they drove out 300,000 of those good-paying jobs—an actual plan to build. You have

to take bold action to build new highways, to build new public transit, to unlock the incredible potential of the Ring of Fire, to actually build energy. They wanted to hand pink slips. It's not surprising they don't support building trades because they wanted to hand pink slips to all their workers.

We're creating new small modular reactors, building new nuclear plants to build a stronger Ontario. The men and women who get up every day to build a stronger Ontario see opportunity with this Premier's build agenda and this government's plan to build a stronger Ontario.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: My question is for the Minister of Transportation. As Ontario's population grows, we must continue making vital investments in critical infrastructure. Unfortunately, the opposition want to make life harder for drivers in Ontario.

Take the Gardiner Expressway, for example. NDP and Liberal politicians have called for the Gardiner to be torn down. Over 140,000 drivers rely on the Gardiner each day, including commuters from my own community of Oakville North–Burlington. They deserve common-sense solutions that make their lives easier.

Can the minister please outline what steps our government has taken to get this project over the finish line?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member for Hastings–Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Ric Bresee: Thank you to the member from Oakville North–Burlington for the question.

Speaker, just imagine—just imagine how long this project would have taken under the previous Liberal government. In fact, maybe some can help my memory, but I don't recall a project that the Liberals completed ahead of schedule.

Thanks to this Premier's leadership and our government working in partnership with the city of Toronto, we invested \$73 million to speed up construction and enable that work on a 24/7 basis. As a result of this approach, we cut the project timeline in half, from three years to only a year and a half.

Our plan is working. We're investing in highways and transit to tackle gridlock, and now the 140,000 drivers who rely on the Gardiner every day will save 22 minutes each way.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Supplementary?

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: Thank you to the parliamentary assistant for the answer.

Families and businesses remember the Liberal record, when they were in office. Ontarians paid more and got less. The Liberals watched as key infrastructure aged and congestion got worse.

Our government is taking an altogether different approach. Thanks to our investments in roads and highways, we're creating jobs and helping people get where they need to go faster.

Can the parliamentary assistant please share how our investments in major projects like the Gardiner are helping protect Ontario and making life easier for families?

Mr. Ric Bresee: Again, thank you for the question. To protect our economy, we need a strong transportation network. To make life easier for families, we need a strong transportation network. And to improve road safety, we need a strong transportation network.

It's so an electrician can respond to more calls instead of sitting in gridlock; parents can spend more time with their kids and less time in traffic; and our highways are in a safe condition so that we can prevent accidents even before they happen. This is why we're investing \$30 billion in roads, bridges and highways.

For too long, under the previous government, these projects were delayed, they were cancelled; the roads were left to crumble. This cost drivers time and cost our economy billions in lost revenue.

Speaker, we're building for families, for businesses, for workers and for our future.

HOUSING

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: My question is to the Premier.

The failures of the Conservative government are visible in London and in downtowns across Ontario. People have been abandoned, without a path forward or without housing, because of choices made by this Conservative government. Conservatives scrapped rent control, refused to build enough affordable and supportive housing, and have failed to invest properly in mental health and addictions services. Meanwhile, businesses are forced to shoulder the consequences of provincial inaction, and families are afraid to go downtown because there's heart-breaking tragedy on our streets every day.

Nobody wants to hear this government crow about all of the things they've done. Clearly, they're not doing enough. Look at the encampments the government has created. It's an emergency.

Ontario's Big City Mayors are calling for urgent action. Will the Premier open his eyes, declare a state of emergency, provide the resources municipalities need to house people and restore stability to our downtowns?

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

Hon. Rob Flack: Thank you, Speaker: \$1.7 billion has been invested with our municipal partners through the service-manager model. We are getting it done: \$700,000 for homelessness prevention, up 40% since 2023. These are the facts, Speaker. We continue to work closely with our municipal partners.

I listened to the members opposite—their plan. Do you know what it would be? One hundred and fifty billion dollars, and they would get in the housing business. How do you think that would work? They would have to spend another \$200 billion to do infrastructure. You can't afford the NDP.

The bottom line is, this plan is going to work. Why? Because we invest with our municipal partners; we don't fight against them. It's working, Madam Speaker, and we're going to continue to do it.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Pursuant to standing order 36(a), the member for Thunder Bay—Superior North has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to the question given by the Minister of Natural Resources regarding Terrace Bay mill. This matter will be debated tomorrow following private members' public business.

DEFERRED VOTES

BARRIE — ORO-MEDONTE — SPRINGWATER BOUNDARY ADJUSTMENT ACT, 2025

LOI DE 2025 SUR LA MODIFICATION DES LIMITES TERRITORIALES ENTRE BARRIE, ORO-MEDONTE ET SPRINGWATER

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

Bill 76, An Act respecting the adjustment of the boundaries between the City of Barrie, the Township of Oro-Medonte and the Township of Springwater / Projet de loi 76, Loi concernant la modification des limites territoriales entre la cité de Barrie, le canton d'Oro-Medonte et le canton de Springwater.

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

The division bells rang from 1137 to 1142.

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

On December 8, 2025, Mr. Flack moved third reading of Bill 76, An Act respecting the adjustment of the boundaries between the City of Barrie, the Township of Oro-Medonte and the Township of Springwater.

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

Ayes

Alsopp, Tyler
Anand, Deepak
Babikian, Aris
Bailey, Robert
Bouma, Will
Bresée, Ric
Calandra, Paul
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon
Cho, Stan
Ciriello, Monica
Clark, Steve
Cooper, Michelle
Crawford, Stephen
Cuzzetto, Rudy
Darouze, George
Grewal, Hardeep Singh
Gualtieri, Silvia
Hamid, Zee
Harris, Mike
Jones, Sylvia
Jones, Trevor
Jordan, John
Kanapathi, Logan
Kerzner, Michael S.
Khanjin, Andrea
Kusendova-Bashta, Natalia
Leardi, Anthony
Lecce, Stephen
Lumsden, Neil
McCarthy, Todd J.
Quinn, Nolan
Racinsky, Joseph
Rae, Matthew
Riddell, Brian
Rosenberg, Bill
Sabawy, Sherif
Sandhu, Amarjot
Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Sarrazin, Stéphanie
Saunderson, Brian
Scott, Laurie
Smith, Dave
Smith, David
Smith, Graydon
Smith, Laura

Dixon, Jess	McGregor, Graham	Tangri, Nina
Dowie, Andrew	Mulroney, Caroline	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Downey, Doug	Oosterhoff, Sam	Thompson, Lisa M.
Dunlop, Jill	Pang, Billy	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Fedeli, Victor	Parsa, Michael	Vickers, Paul
Firin, Mohamed	Piccini, David	Wai, Daisy
Flack, Rob	Pierre, Natalie	Williams, Charmaine A.
Ford, Doug	Pinsonneault, Steve	
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn	Pirie, George	

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.	Gates, Wayne	Schreiner, Mike
Bell, Jessica	Gélinas, France	Shamji, Adil
Blais, Stephen	Gilmour, Alexa	Smyth, Stephanie
Bourgouin, Guy	Glover, Chris	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Bowman, Stephanie	Hsu, Ted	Stiles, Marit
Cerjanec, Rob	Kernaghan, Terence	Tabuns, Peter
Clancy, Aislinn	McCrimmon, Karen	Vanthof, John
Collard, Lucille	McKenney, Catherine	Vaugeois, Lise
Fairclough, Lee	McMahon, Mary-Margaret	Watt, Tyler
Fife, Catherine	Pasma, Chandra	Wong-Tam, Kristyn
Fraser, John	Rakocevic, Tom	
French, Jennifer K.	Sattler, Peggy	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day): The ayes are 70; the nays are 34.

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 1146 to 1500.

ESTIMATES

BUDGET DES DÉPENSES

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the Treasury Board president on a point of order.

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: Madam Speaker, I have messages from the Honourable Edith Dumont, the Lieutenant Governor, signed by her own hand.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The Lieutenant Governor transmits estimates of certain sums required for the services of the province for the year ending 31 March, 2026, and recommends them to the Legislative Assembly.

La lieutenante-gouverneure transmet les prévisions des dépenses visant les montants nécessaires au fonctionnement de la province pour l'exercice se terminant le 31 mars 2026 et les recommande à l'Assemblée législative.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON HERITAGE,
INFRASTRUCTURE AND
CULTURAL POLICY

MPP Tyler Watt: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Wai Lam (William) Wong): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 46, An Act to amend various Acts.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Pursuant to the order of the House, dated November 24, 2025, the bill is ordered for third reading.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
JUSTICE POLICY

MPP Monica Ciriello: Speaker, I beg leave to present a report entitled Study on Intimate Partner Violence from the Standing Committee on Justice Policy and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): MPP Ciriello presents the committee's report and moves the adoption of its recommendations.

Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

MPP Monica Ciriello: Yes, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): You may go ahead.

MPP Monica Ciriello: As a member of the Standing Committee on Justice Policy, I am pleased to table the committee's report entitled Study on Intimate Partner Violence.

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

The committee extends its appreciation to the expert witnesses, ministries and the individuals who are personally impacted by intimate partner violence who attended the hearings.

I move adjournment of the debate.

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

Debate adjourned.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
AMENDMENT ACT(INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL
AND INSTITUTIONAL SOURCE
SEPARATION PROGRAMS), 2025LOI DE 2025 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LA PROTECTIONDE L'ENVIRONNEMENT (PROGRAMMES
DE SÉPARATION À LA SOURCE
DES DÉCHETS INDUSTRIELS,
COMMERCIAUX ET INSTITUTIONNELS)

Ms. McMahon moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 87, An Act to amend the Environmental Protection Act to require a Minister's review related to industrial, commercial and institutional source separation programs / Projet de loi 87, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la protection de l'environnement afin d'exiger un examen ministériel lié aux programmes de séparation à la source des déchets industriels, commerciaux et institutionnels.

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 make a brief statement?

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Indeed I do.

The bill amends the Environmental Protection Act. A new section, 47.0.1, provides that the minister shall commence a review of the requirements under Ontario regulation 103/94 to determine how to set out clear and enforceable outcomes-based requirements, such as diversion targets, disposal caps or contamination thresholds. No more than nine months after the review has been commenced, the minister shall report their findings to the Legislative Assembly.

SAFE NIGHT OUT ACT, 2025

LOI DE 2025 VISANT À FAVORISER
DES SORTIES SANS DANGER

Ms. Sattler moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 88, An Act to amend the Liquor Licence and Control Act, 2019 and the Occupational Health and Safety Act respecting training on sexual violence and harassment / Projet de loi 88, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2019 sur les permis d'alcool et la réglementation des alcools et la Loi sur la santé et la sécurité au travail en ce qui concerne la formation sur la violence à caractère sexuel et le harcèlement.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I would, Speaker.

This is the fourth time that I have introduced this legislation, entitled the Safe Night Out Act. It's intended to make licensed premises safer for patrons and staff. It does that by establishing an evidence-based, trauma-informed provincial sexual violence and harassment prevention training program, and it makes the training mandatory for servers, bartenders, security guards and supervisors.

It requires every licence holder to have a posted sexual violence and harassment policy and also amends the Occupational Health and Safety Act to include sexual violence and harassment in the definition of "workplace violence."

I want to thank my co-sponsors, the members for Parkdale—High Park, Sudbury and Toronto Centre.

MASSAGE THERAPY TAX ACT, 2025

LOI DE 2025 SUR L'IMPOSITION DE LA MASSOTHÉRAPIE

Madame Gélinas moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 89, An Act respecting taxes related to massage therapy treatment / Projet de loi 89, Loi concernant l'imposition des traitements de massothérapie.

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: The bill is quite simple, Speaker. Massage therapists are regulated health professionals in Ontario. If they provide the service, massage therapy, they have to charge HST on the services that they provide. Any other practitioners who provide massage therapy—think of physiotherapists; think of others—don't have to do that. So all they're asking is that massage therapies provided by regulated massage therapists not be taxed.

PETITIONS

GO TRANSIT

Mr. Rob Cerjanec: I rise to introduce a petition that has over 3,000 signatures from GO train riders in Ajax and Durham region who are calling on the government of Ontario to bring back the express GO train. They've been waiting for more than four years, and it's been more than a year since the express train was promised to return in 2024. My constituents are sick of hearing excuses and a lack of action from Metrolinx. They want clarity on when express service will come back—details and timelines—and they're tired of having some of the longest daily commutes in Ontario.

1510

Speaker, this petition also calls on the government to move forward without delay on electrifying the Lakeshore East line so that they can stop having to look at a schedule and get on a train that is going to get them there faster. My constituents are seeking faster, more reliable and more convenient GO train service for riders who face some of the longest daily commutes in the province. I'm pleased to affix my signature to it and leave it with page Mila.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Karen Hacala from Val Caron in my riding for this petition called "911 Everywhere in Ontario."

Bad temperatures—although I like snow—have started in northern Ontario. Our roads are not always well maintained, and, unfortunately, there have already started to be more accidents on highways in my riding, whether you talk about Highway 144 or Highway 17. What people don't know is that 911 is not available in huge parts of my riding, where you have to know a 1-800 number. I can share some of them with you: 1-888-310-1122 for police; in Gogama-Folyet, 1-877-351-2345 for ambulance; in Cartier, 705-673-1117 for ambulance—and the list goes on.

Most people expect 911 to be available. We don't wish harm upon anybody. We don't want anybody to get into an accident, but it does happen. If it does happen, you should be able to dial 911 and somebody comes and helps you. Ontario is the only province in Canada that does not have 911 everywhere.

The people who have signed the petition, often it's because they have found out in their time of need that 911 did not work, or they live in the riding and know that it is dangerous for many people to find out that 911 does not exist.

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

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

M^{me} Lucille Collard: I do have a petition here that draws attention to the severe inadequacy of current social assistance rates in our province. It notes that both the ODSP and Ontario Works fall way below the poverty line and have not been increased since 2018, despite rapidly rising costs of living. The petitioners point out that, when we had COVID, the federal CERB program recognized that \$2,000 per month was the minimum level of support needed for individuals facing financial hardships. The undersigned citizens, therefore, are calling on the government of Ontario to raise social assistance rates to a base of \$2,000 per month for those on Ontario Works, with corresponding increases to related programs.

I am pleased to support this petition. I will affix my signature and give it to page Emery to bring to the table.

TRANSPORTATION STRUCTURE

Hon. Steve Clark: I have a petition that petitions the provincial government to call on the Canadian government to fully restore full navigation of the Rideau Canal by installing a structure that will essentially enable all marine traffic to pass through the LaSalle Causeway in Kingston in time for the 2026 boating season, which marks the 200th anniversary since the start of construction of the Rideau Canal.

The federal government installed a temporary-fix bridge, which essentially restricts marine traffic through the LaSalle Causeway in Kingston for an indefinite period of time. The structure doesn't allow full navigation to the Rideau Canal, which members should know is a UNESCO world heritage site and is a vital economic driver between Kingston and Ottawa.

Speaker, it's important to note that the Rideau Canal contributes \$309 million annually to the economy in eastern Ontario, including marinas, shops and restaurants, and provides seasonal employment along the 202-kilometre historic waterway. It's very important that Public Services and Procurement Canada establish a clear timeline, a clear plan and demonstrate that there's an urgency to replace this temporary structure with a permanent bridge.

I'm pleased to affix my signature, and I'll send it to the table. Thanks, Shriya.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: This petition addresses the growing problem of when we buy digital products, we don't truly own them. Instead, we're given licences that companies can revoke at any time, leaving consumers with nothing.

We've seen this with video games like The Crew, where support ended and millions lost their access overnight. But it's not just games; planned obsolescence affects software, hardware and smart devices from phones to printers.

Quebec has already acted to protect consumers through Bill 29. Now we're asking Ontario to do the same. We must ensure that digital buyers have real ownership and the right to use what they pay for.

I'm going to be signing this petition. I want to thank all that have signed this, and I'm giving this to page Andrew.

SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

Mr. Rob Cerjanec: I'm pleased to present this petition on behalf of constituents who want to ensure that local voices matter in Ontario's public education system through elected school board trustees.

This petition highlights the need to preserve elected trustees whose oversight, accountability and community representation are important to safeguarding parental and student voices.

The petition calls on the Ministry of Education to uphold the current governance model, ensure trustees remain elected and accountable to the public, protect community input in decision-making, and commit to transparent and meaningful consultation before any changes to the Education Act are considered.

Over 500 constituents have signed this petition, and I'm pleased to affix my name to it.

INTERPROVINCIAL TRADE

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I have another petition from constituents in my riding of Essex that talks about economic issues. In my riding of Essex, people are particularly interested in economic issues, particularly in this situation where we're fighting tariffs that are being imposed on us by Donald Trump south of the border. We don't like tariffs, we don't want tariffs, and we're going to do things so that we don't make ourselves more vulnerable to tariffs.

This particular petition calls upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to take steps to make sure that we tear down trade barriers between provinces, so that we can have what I will describe as free trade between the Canadian provinces—which, as a matter of fact, does not presently exist. What presently exists is that there are trade barriers between provinces put up for various reasons across the number of years.

Now I think it's time for us to realize that we need to tear down those trade barriers and introduce real, genuine free trade between the provinces. This petition calls upon the government of Ontario to lead that charge, and I believe we are leading that charge under the leadership of Premier Doug Ford.

I certainly support this petition. I'm going to sign it and give it to this fine page to bring over to the Clerks' table.

SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION

MPP Lise Vaugeois: This petition is entitled "Stop the Cuts to Student Transportation."

What people may not know is that a formula for how much buses will be funded is used for Toronto, and the same formula is used in northern Ontario, which doesn't make any sense whatsoever. Bringing students in by bus is the most cost-effective, safest and least-polluting way to get students to and from school.

The thing is, in our region, we don't have sidewalks. In many places, students are walking along the side of the highway. It's freezing cold. It's now snowing. Sidewalks aren't cleared; sideroads aren't cleared. It's simply not safe for students to walk to school, which is what the effect of the government cuts have been.

I fully support this petition, and I will give it to Raj.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Rob Cerjanec: I'm pleased to introduce this petition on behalf of concerned people in the GTA who have

waited years for Metrolinx to deliver multiple LRT projects.

The Eglinton Crosstown is one year shy of getting its own driver's licence, and with the Finch West LRT, it's moving slower than my legislative assistant's 10K running time. These delays and performance issues reflect broader problems in how Metrolinx and the province is managing major transit builds.

Transit riders are looking for answers and deserve accountability, seeking a full inquiry to understand how these LRT projects are not succeeding, why it takes us so long to build here, and why it costs so much more than other jurisdictions in the Western world, so that we can fix what is broken and deliver the reliable, efficient transit that Ontarians rely on.

I'm pleased to affix my signature to this petition and leave it with page Ojas.

1520

SUBVENTIONS DESTINÉES À L'ÉDUCATION

Mme Chandra Pasma: J'ai l'honneur de présenter une pétition qui s'intitule « Retirer la loi 33 ».

Le gouvernement conservateur a coupé plus de 6 milliards de dollars de notre système d'éducation, donc nos enfants sont dans des classes d'une taille plus large. Il y a une pénurie d'enseignants et enseignantes qualifiés, surtout pour notre système francophone. Donc, nos enfants, nos élèves, souffrent d'une crise de santé mentale. Il y a un problème de violence qui augmente dans nos écoles et, surtout, nos enfants manquent les ressources et les soutiens dont ils ont besoin.

Mais au lieu de combler cette pénurie de financement, le gouvernement et le ministre de l'Éducation attaquent le droit des parents et des communautés d'avoir notre mot à dire dans nos écoles.

Pour la communauté francophone, c'est plus qu'inquiétant, parce qu'il y a un droit constitutionnel, protégé par la Charte des droits et libertés, pour la communauté franco-ontarienne de gérer leur propre système par et pour les francophones.

Si le ministre de l'Éducation peut imposer à n'importe quel moment un superviseur qui est choisi seulement par le ministre, et que le superviseur n'a aucune obligation de consulter la communauté et que le superviseur n'est pas responsable à la communauté pour ses décisions, alors ce n'est plus la gouvernance du système par et pour la communauté franco-ontarienne.

Ce n'est pas la solution pour les problèmes qui s'affrontent à nos élèves chaque jour. La solution, c'est l'investissement; c'est le pouvoir donné aux communautés de pouvoir dire ce dont nos enfants ont besoin.

Ceux qui ont signé cette pétition demandent à l'assemblée législative de retirer la loi 33, de mettre en avant le financement nécessaire pour notre système d'éducation, de respecter la démocratie locale et d'arrêter les jeux politiques avec le bien-être de nos enfants.

J'appuie cette pétition, monsieur le Président. Je vais y ajouter ma signature, et je vais l'envoyer à la table des greffiers avec le page Lucas.

HEALTH CARE

Mme France Gélinas: I would like to thank Bryan Smith from the Oxford Coalition for Social Justice for this petition. The petition is in favour of public, not private, health care.

It has been revealed, Speaker, that the cost of surgeries in private clinics and independent health facilities significantly exceed those in public hospitals.

The backlog of surgeries in British Columbia was not at all reduced by their introduction of private clinics for routine surgery, like the government is doing right now with \$125 million.

Ontario hospitals have the capacity in their current under-used surgical rooms for additional complex and routine surgeries.

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows: that all funding in Ontario for private, independent health facilities cease immediately, and that adequate funding to perform medically necessary surgeries be allocated exclusively to public hospitals.

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

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

MPP Lise Vaugeois: This petition is entitled "Let's Fix the Northern Health Travel Grant."

People in northern Ontario do not have equitable access to health care. The Northern Health Travel Grant is supposed to make it easier, but, in fact, the amount that's offered is far below what it actually costs for people to access this health care. For example, the mileage rate is only 41 cents a kilometre, but we, as MPPs, get roughly 60 cents a kilometre when we travel. Clearly, that's an enormous gap that leaves people paying a lot out of pocket just to get basic health care.

I fully support this petition and will give it to Thridew with my signature.

PHARMACARE

Mme France Gélinas: I'd like to thank Bev Desjardins from Lively in my riding for these petitions. They're called "Pharmacare."

You know, Speaker, that access to prescription medication is an essential part of our health care system. The current program leaves many Ontarians facing high costs and barriers to access. No one in Ontario should be forced to choose between paying for medications or covering the cost of everyday necessities. Gaps in coverage force too many Ontarians to skip medication, which is putting their health at risk. Experts' recommendations and national studies support a universal, single-payer pharmacare system as the most fair and effective approach. Right now,

they petition the Legislative Assembly as follows: to work with the federal government to implement a universal publicly funded pharmacare program, starting with birth control and medications for diabetes, and extending it to every Ontarian so that they get access to the medication they need.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PEEL TRANSITION IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2025

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

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): Back to the minister.

Hon. Rob Flack: It's a privilege once again to rise to speak to this legislation, the Peel Transition Implementation Act, 2025. This legislation reflects both the scale of Peel's growth and the need to modernize how services are delivered across one of Ontario's most dynamic regions.

Peel has never stood still, Speaker, from the early settlements that took shape after Treaty 13 agreements in the early 1800—and no, Speaker, I wasn't around then—to the creation of the county of Peel in 1852, to the establishment of the regional municipality of Peel in 1974, its governance has always evolved in response to rapid population and economic expansion.

What served the region well 50 years ago is no longer equipped to meet the realities of a community that has grown to more than 1.4 million people today—and as a youth, I got to witness that growth. In fact, Peel is one of the fastest-growing population regions in the country, and Bill 45 is designed precisely for this moment. It provides a clear and co-operative path to shift responsibility for regional roads, storm water infrastructure and waste collection from the upper-tier region of Peel to the lower-tier regional municipalities of Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon.

These changes take effect through a phased timeline reflecting a transition schedule endorsed by Peel regional council and every single municipality. This approach ensures that services essential to everyday life are transferred in a way that protects continuity, strengthens oversight and aligns responsibility with the level of government closest to the people who rely on them.

This is not top-down restructuring, Speaker. It is the result of months of collaboration involving municipal leaders, subject matter experts and the Peel transition board, whose recommendations helped shape a practical and locally driven transition and solution. It empowers Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon to manage their own infrastructure and service delivery with a greater independence while continuing to benefit from decades of shared regional expertise. It is in every respect a governance model that reflects Peel's growth and maturity as an independent region composed of three strong municipalities.

Bill 45 does more than realign responsibilities. It works hand in hand with the new municipal service corporation model for water and waste water delivery established under the Fighting Delays, Building Faster Act, Bill 60. Peel is the first region to pilot this publicly owned model—and, I repeat, publicly owned and operated, as the opposition at times continues to ignore what is clearly an inconvenient truth. However, no matter what particular spin they or their allies continue to push, there is no agenda other than serving these dynamic municipalities and taxpayers with the respect they absolutely deserve.

1530

By integrating Bill 45's governance reforms with the municipal service corporation model, or a public utility, if you will, we are creating a more efficient approach to infrastructure delivery right across Peel. Through coordinated service planning, shared capacity and improved project management, the public utility enables municipalities to build faster at a lower cost and also supports the dynamic growth throughout the entire region, not just built on DCs on new home builds.

It also reduces pressure on development charges, a major factor in the cost of building homes, by offering a more predictable and a more transparent method of funding essential infrastructure. This means real savings for municipalities, for home builders and, ultimately, for home-buyers.

The work we do in developing a strong, public and effective public utility will be able to be replicated as well throughout the province, Speaker.

In short, Bill 45 reflects Peel's history of growth while preparing for its future. It strengthens local accountability, supports responsible community planning and aligns service delivery with the realities of a rapidly expanding region. It works in tandem with modernized water and waste water delivery through a publicly owned municipal service corporation, ensuring faster timelines, lower costs and reduced reliance on development charges, something we need right across Ontario, Speaker. And it does all of this while respecting local decision-making and preserving the strong public oversight that has guided Peel for generations and generations.

With this legislation our government is taking another step towards a smarter, more efficient and more affordable model of service delivery, one that builds on Peel's past and positions its communities for decades of growth and success in the future.

Speaker, as I think I've said before, I grew up in the great town of Streetsville, Ontario, now part of Mississauga. It is, I must say, very ably represented by my second-favourite woman from Mississauga—Streetsville. My mother, who's going to be 90 in January, is my favourite. But Minister Tangri would absolutely be my second. She is a great lady. She represents her community well.

My family still lives there. I have a brother and his family—two brothers, actually—that live in Peel. It's a great place to live, to grow up and to continue to enjoy family life.

Economic growth is going to continue. The population is going to grow, and we're going to support that through Bill 45.

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

MPP Wayne Gates: I had the privilege of speaking the other day to this bill. Unfortunately, when we come to third reading, it's time-allocated. So because you cut off debate the other day, I've got an opportunity now to finish my speech from second reading, and then I'm going to talk about how this is going right across the province.

And then if it's okay with the Speaker, I'd like to do the last couple of minutes on my good friend Jim Bradley. I'm giving you a heads-up.

Caledon has said plainly that downloading roads and waste management will leave them with enormous costs they can't absorb. The Mississauga mayor has said this bill leaves them acting as a "financial cash cow" for Brampton and Caledon, just as they've been doing for decades. When municipalities are being pitted against one another, you know this government has created a situation that is fundamentally broken.

The bill fits into a broader pattern with the government downloading responsibilities, underfunding them, creating a crisis and then using that crisis to justify privatization. We've seen that in health care, long-term care, primary care, housing and now municipal services.

The government has already signalled it is interested in a corporate model for water and waste water. Once you take essential services out of direct public control, you lose public accountability, which is so important. And that leads to what, Speaker? Privatization.

Coming from Niagara, I can tell you this pattern sounds very familiar. For years, Niagara municipalities have faced threats of forced amalgamation. Amalgamation is a big, expensive, disruptive structure that nobody asked for, nobody needs and that experts warn will not save one penny—not one penny. It destroys the voices of municipalities like ones I represent in Fort Erie and Niagara-on-the-Lake.

I want to say very clearly that Fort Erie and Niagara-on-the-Lake are absolutely opposed to forced amalgamation. They love their community. They love what Fort Erie has. They love what they have in Niagara-on-the-Lake—the Shaw, their incredible history. They do not want forced amalgamation. These are small, rural communities that have unique needs, unique character, and that deserve local representation, local voices, plain and simple.

Niagara also continues to face wave after wave of provincial downloading of costs. We've been handed new housing mandates without funding—without funding—ambulance pressures caused by hospital backlogs and infrastructure costs driven up by this government.

When municipalities are forced to take on new responsibilities without new revenue tools, it leads to higher property taxes. In Niagara—listen to this—during a historic affordability crisis, this government is now pushing municipalities to raise property taxes more and more, even by as much as 10%. The Premier will stand up here over and over again and say, "Well, we've never raised a tax under the PC Party," No, what you've done is, you downloaded so much onto municipalities that they're the ones raising the taxes to the taxpayers. And in Niagara, where so many seniors live on fixed incomes and so many workers are struggling with affordability, higher property taxes mean real hardship.

What we're seeing in Peel right now—the downloading, the instability, the secrecy—could happen to any region in the province, and Niagara knows that better than most. Restructuring municipalities should never happen through secrecy, rushed legislation, or without local voices. It should be based on full public consultation, transparency, meaningful engagement with workers.

What we're seeing in Peel—a lot of those workers are scared for their jobs. At a time when we have the highest unemployment rate in the country, 8,000 people on—don't have a job; 20% of all young people don't have a job. Now we're showing that unionized workers in Peel region are scared for their jobs.

It should be based on full public consultation, transparency, meaningful engagement with workers, and a commitment to maintaining public ownership of essential services.

Bill 45 does none of this. It continues a chaotic process that the government itself created, leaves municipalities holding the bag, risks increasing costs for families and paves the way for further privatization of the services that people rely on.

Ontario deserves municipal governance that is stable, predictable, transparent, accountable, and elected.

The people of Peel deserve better. The workers who keep our communities running deserve better. Those workers don't deserve to lose their jobs. And families across this province deserve better than legislation driven by politics instead of public interest.

I know, when you're saying it's Peel—well, do you know what? Yesterday, we were talking about Barrie. We're talking about the province of Ontario, and we're seeing it right across the province. We saw it in Toronto. We saw it in Hamilton.

In 2018, the Ford government cancelled Niagara's first-ever direct elections for regional chair. It happened on the last day of nominations. It removed the public from the process entirely.

In 2018, again, instead of voters choosing the chair, Niagara regional council was forced to appoint one after the municipal election. The councillors selected Jim

Bradley unanimously. Jim had the highest vote total in St. Catharines, for good reason.

In 2018, again, the province launched a major regional government review—again, this is what started the process in Peel; this is what started the process in Barrie—for Niagara and eight other regions. Amalgamation was openly on the table. The message: Everything was up for restructuring in Niagara.

After months of speculation, the government suddenly said it would not impose amalgamation at that time. The consultants' report was never released.

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So you hired consultants. They came to Niagara. They had hearings. A lot of people came and spoke against the amalgamation. I just gave you two examples: Fort Erie and Niagara-on-the-Lake. Their mayors are openly criticizing amalgamation. The mayor in Fort Erie also is, Mr. Redekop—Wayne number 2, by the way. He's Wayne Redekop, Wayne Gates. I'm Wayne number 1; he's Wayne number 2. I wanted to get that on the record so he knows.

Niagara is left guessing what the province actually concluded. Think about it: You paid all that money for consultants, and why didn't you release it? Why are you not releasing your findings?

And then, in 2022, the Ford government brings in new municipal governance laws tied to the housing agenda—very interesting. And we know we're not meeting our housing targets; we haven't for a couple years. They include the Better Municipal Governance Act, which gives the minister—the minister—the power to personally appoint the regional chair of Niagara: not an election, not by elected bodies, not by Niagara region—after they cancelled it—the minister.

And in 2022, the Niagara regional council reappoints Jim Bradley as chair, but the new law now sits in the background. The province can override the process whenever it wants. I know the Conservatives are listening over there: Do you think that's fair? Do you think that's what we should be doing in the province of Ontario, somebody appointing a Chair?

The province dissolves Peel region and announces that Niagara will get a provincial regional facilitator. The facilitator can recommend anything from a minor tweak to full amalgamation. The signal is loud and clear: Niagara is on the list for structural change—just like they did with Bill 45, just like they're doing with this bill.

I want to be clear—I want to be as clear as I can: Amalgamation will never go in Niagara; Fort Erie and Niagara-on-the-Lake are opposed. Now, when you say, "Who's going to take over Fort Erie or Niagara-on-the-Lake or both?" it would probably be a bigger community. That's what we're seeing. We saw that with Barrie obviously, with the Barrie bill that we've been doing. We're seeing this now with Peel.

So what's happening is the small, rural communities that have incredible history, lots of volunteers, lots of good things happening in the community, people living there because they love their community—they're going to

force amalgamation on it. I'm not going to guess what big city is going to take over Fort Erie and Niagara-on-the-Lake if they do amalgamation, but I will tell you that St. Catharines is the biggest in Niagara, Niagara Falls is the second biggest and Welland is the third biggest. But if they think it's going to go in Niagara, it's not going to happen without a big fight with the residents. I wanted to get that out.

With my last few minutes, I want to talk about Mr. Bradley. I know we honoured Mr. Bradley last week. Jim was a good friend of mine. We both come from St. Catharines. Jim was a lot like myself: He loved his sports, he loved his family and he loved his friends. When Jim got elected, you would see Jim at every sporting event you could find. A lot of times it was minor baseball, minor soccer. Whatever it was, Jim was there.

But what a lot of people don't know, because we get accused of this in this House, that we're at events where you're only there to get your picture taken or cut the ribbon. Well, Jim would go at 4:30 in the afternoon and drive kids out of town, whether to Hamilton, Dundas—didn't matter where it was—anywhere in Ontario. Jim would volunteer and drive them to the game.

Those that know Jim know that Jim didn't have any children, but he loved kids, he loved the community and he loved watching sports. He really loved fastball as well—it was called Thompson Products back then; I'm not sure what it's called now in St. Catharines—but they had a really good fastball team, won the Canadian championships, and you'd see Jim at all those games.

But I think my real tie to Jim outside politics was when I got elected here. I spent many, many nights with Jim, travelling to watch the Niagara IceDogs, whether it was in Mississauga—I told a story about the mayor of Mississauga just a few days ago, and we were watching the IceDogs beat up the Steelhawks at that time. We'd go to Barrie, watch the Barrie Colts. I mentioned the Barrie Colts the other day, that I've been to the Barrie Colts arena, and me and Jim would drive there from here. We'd go there.

But a lot of people might or might not know—and there's a lot of new people here, they might not know—that to Jim, sports were incredible. He just loved his sports. Jim had season tickets—think about that—for the Blue Jays. I went to a lot of Blue Jays games with Jim. I can tell you, he complained about Vlad every game we went to—every game, he complained about him. He'd go 2 for 3 and he'd be so mad at him if he didn't hit a home run the third time up. He loved the Leafs; he had season tickets for the Leafs. He had season tickets for the Sabres. He had season tickets for the IceDogs. Sports were Jim's life.

I've got to tell you one story: I love ball; I usually go away once a year. I haven't gone the last couple of years with the Trump stuff, but I would go to one spot, whether it be Chicago or New York, to go watch the Jays. That would kind of—me and my wife would go down there, take in the city, tie it around the ballgame.

So I go to Boston. The Red Sox, Fenway Park—I was so excited. My wife didn't come that day. She couldn't

come; she was a teacher. I went for my birthday. I did a birthday trip by myself because I'm a sports nut too. I don't have season tickets like Jim did, but I certainly love my sports.

So I go to Boston. On Thursday night, I go to a Montreal game against Boston. I paid \$5 from a scalper out front. It was an exhibition game—my birthday is September 24. I met a scalper who I bought the \$5 from—not the scalpers you have at the SkyDome who would charge you \$4,000 for World Series tickets, but a scalper who was actually a pretty good guy. He sold me the ticket and then I said—because I had no tickets—"Well, I want to go watch the Jays for two games on Friday and Saturday night." He gives me tickets—I paid for them; I forgot what I paid, but I know I paid for them—right behind the Jays' dugout. I mean, literally, the Jays' dugout was right in front of me, and I'm standing there and there's Bautista and all the guys right there. I'm talking to them—they probably didn't want to talk to me, but they were. They were chatting me up. It was good.

All of a sudden, I hear some guy yelling over, "Gatesy! Gatesy!" I'm going, "Who's calling me?" I'm looking behind me. I look down right at field level—I thought I had the best seats in the house. Right at field level, who was there? Jim Bradley. Jim Bradley watching the game. He had the best seats in the house. He was almost in the batter's box, that's how close he was to the game at Fenway Park. That's how much he loved his sports.

So I just want to say to Jim—the last night that Jim was alive and Mark Rupcic was beside him at his hospital bed, me and my wife, Rita, went to the Jays' game that night. They were playing the Yankees. Jim was watching the game. Me and my wife were walking into the game and I had my Blue Jays top on, and we got on the TV to start the game.

So Jim is watching the game. He saw me, but that night, the tickets that I used to go to the game with my wife belonged to Jim Bradley, and my wife made a comment on the way home after the game—because Jim was complaining about Vlad about he didn't get his three hits and I was complaining about Vlad the same thing: that he left too many runners on base. That was Jim's last night when he decided to—the end of his life.

I want to say to Jim—I want to thank him for his friendship. I want to thank him for his incredible service for 55 years. Think about that: 55 years of public service. He was one of the most honest men I've ever met. I can remember him—I think you were probably here. He was sitting right over here—I'll tell this quick before I finish it up. He used to stand like this. He used to have the paper in front of him, and all of a sudden you hear this voice, "That's not what you agreed to in 2012. Do you remember that day?" He would always—he had the history.

He was an incredible human being. This Legislature is better for having Jim Bradley be here. I'm a better person because I had the privilege and the honour to not only drive to a lot of games, go to a lot of games with him—I just want to say to Jim, please rest in peace. We all love you. We think about you every single day.

Thank you for allowing me to do that, Speaker. I appreciate it.

ESTIMATES

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Before we continue to further debate, I will ask all members to stand.

Earlier today, the President of the Treasury Board transmitted, on behalf of the Lieutenant Governor, the estimates of certain sums required for the services of the province for the year ending March 31, 2026, and recommends them to the Legislative Assembly.

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The President of the Treasury Board also transmitted, on behalf of the Lieutenant Governor, the supplementary estimates of certain sums required for the services of the province for the year ending 31 March 2026 and recommends them to the Legislative Assembly.

Thank you. You may be seated.

PEEL TRANSITION IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2025

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

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): We'll now move to further debate.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: It's always a treat and an honour to rise in this House, this beautiful place, to speak on behalf of my wonderful residents from beautiful Beaches—East York.

Today we are discussing third reading of 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. We've been at this for a while. It's been a long time comin', that's for sure. It's great that it's finally coming to a close because it was the Peel divorce; Peel kind of getting back together but not really; the Peel prickliness, awkwardness; the Peel friendship, maybe; the Peel—whatever you want to call it. Finally, we're putting Peel to bed with Bill 45, and it's been tumultuous, to say the least.

We went on this big regional governance review, as you've heard many members speak about, all over our gorgeous province with the Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy. When I was on that great committee, I learned a lot. When I first got here, as a rookie—just thrown into a baptism by fire, actually, at that committee because all the crazy bills went there, but I'm up for a challenge, always up for a challenge.

We went to different places around Ontario. We went to St. Catharines and met with local elected officials down there. It's always great to get out. I mean, it's beautiful to be in this Pink Palace, but it's also equally beautiful to be out travelling across Ontario and meeting all kinds of

people who have all kinds of ideas and issues, concerns and comments, criticisms and sometimes compliments. So it's great to get out and about.

We went to St. Catharines. We went to Orillia. We went to Ajax. We went to Burlington. And all these places we went to—it was, like, twice we went to some. And we went to Barrie, which makes me think about Bill 76. So I'd just like to take my time to compare and contrast Bill 45 and Bill 76. Bill 76 stinks, and Bill 45 does not. Bill 45 has been a struggle, I'm sure—I wasn't there for all the nitty-gritty—but I think there's some agreement of sorts with Bill 45 amongst the participants. The participants were all there, always. There's the difference with Bill 76, when there are meetings with just two mayors—the mayor of Barrie and the mayor of Springwater—and no one else, and no minutes and no agenda. So that's the difference there.

Also, Bill 45 was not rushed through at the speed of light, like Bill 76. The speed at which Bill 76 is being hammered and rammed through is probably like nothing people have seen before. So why take the time and deliberate and take a measured approach to Bill 45 when you're not doing that with Bill 76? Why not pause Bill 76 and take the time that you allotted Bill 45? Why not take a pause, because Simcoe is undergoing a big review right now, so why not just do a comprehensive review and speak about Springwater and Oro-Medonte in that with Barrie?

Again, as I mentioned yesterday, why have the ERO open for Bill 76 all the way until Christmas Day when it was already voted through this morning? Do Ontarians know that? Why would they waste their time? People have a million things to do: pick up the kids from daycare, get food on the table, get to work, get home, walk the dog—do what they're doing. But some people are going to take the time and actually write to us through the ERO process. They're going to research, they're going to edit their submission and they're going to submit, and for what? The bill is already passed. If that isn't—I don't know what to say that's not unparliamentary language there, but it's not the right message. It's giving two different messages to people.

Bill 45: You had people at the table; you had leaders, bureaucrats, facilitators. And the facilitation wasn't all for naught, because the facilitation for Bill 76 was not a proper facilitation, let's just say. Strong-mayor powers weren't used for Bill 45 the way they were used—misused and abused—for Bill 76. So 48 hours after the mayor of Springwater was given those powers—woohoo—she used them. She used them for the boundary change.

Then, when one of her colleagues, who was equally duly elected, put forth an injunction, the magic wand was waved again and the strong-mayor powers were used to shoot that down.

And then, when another one of her colleagues tried to put forth the idea of having a judicial review—which is common and needs to be done in many cases, especially this one—the judicial review into the mayor of Springwater's misuse and abuse of strong-mayor powers was struck down with strong-mayor powers. You can't make

this up. It's like—it's not Seinfeld; it's a horror show, actually. That didn't happen with Bill 45. So it seems to be preferential treatment of residents living in one area versus another area.

To my knowledge, strong-mayor powers were not used in Bill 45 to fire the town lawyer just because you didn't like their recommendation, their statement, that Bill 76 is terrible—terrible—for Springwater. I don't know; it just defies logic. But it's going to come out about Bill 76. Meanwhile, Bill 45 gets totally different treatment. I don't know how you're explaining that, but I'm open. I'm all ears to hear it.

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

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: First off, I really want to commend the member from Niagara Falls for that touching tribute to the late Jim Bradley. May he rest in peace, God bless his soul.

And before I embark on my short speech, I also want to give a shout out and an apology to my friend William, watching somewhere out there in Ontario, who's probably going to get very annoyed at me—but I've got to plow through, you know? A little bit of an inside joke there, Speaker.

Speaker, we are debating the epitome of the flip-flopping of this government. This is a government that just can't make up its mind on literally anything. We are debating a bill that began as a dissolution, then became a reinstatement; now it's a transition. I mean, we need surgeons in here. We need doctors. They just can't make up their minds.

And the only thing that this government is clear about is two things: privatization and loading the pockets of their friends. And it's actually a game that's all interrelated, when you think about it, because privatization really leads to that. A lot of the changes that they ever make begin as a phone call on a private line or a private email saying, "Hey, I've got this idea. I think it's really good." And really it's about, "I think I know how to make some money, and if you do what I say"—anyway, we won't go there. But money has a way of flowing, like a river, like water. It washes around. It gets everywhere, right?

So this bill in particular is an example of that. It's been going through different phases. They had their rationale for it, and of course there are things that will have to be worked out. Certainly one of the jurisdictions is probably going to be a major beneficiary, another one neutral and another one might have to make up for a budget shortfall. And you know municipal budgets have had a sledgehammer taken to them by this government. For them to make up the shortfall on their infrastructure, their utilities and everything else, do you know what they might have to do? Privatize. And those companies that get formed or end up being created and make a lot of monies coincidentally may end up donating to this government.

And I think this government has smartened up, because one of the ways in which establishment parties get into power and maintain it is when they figure out the money they can disburse. We see this in many forms at different

levels of government: They come into power; money gets sent to friends, associations, groups that are already friends or become new friends; and then that money makes its way back. All you have to do is look in the tight orbit around some of the leaders of these parties, and you'll find the people who are collecting that cash. It's just happening over and over and over again.

And it just begs the question. When you look at the history of the Conservative Party in Ontario, you had great luminaries of the past. In fact, this may take some as a shock, but public hydro was a Conservative creation in Ontario, a century ago. Can you imagine?

Interjections.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: A round of applause to the Conservatives of the past, who are spinning like lathes in their grave. Then—

Interjections.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Hold on a sec, guys. Sit. Hold on to the chair right now, tight. Conservation authorities were a creation of Conservatives. Conservation authorities—wow. Imagine, generations ago, before they thought the earth was flat and that all of this climate change was a made-up grift—

Hon. Steve Clark: Tommy.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I'm not saying all, all right? I'm certainly not saying all—not the friends that I have in this chamber.

Hon. Graham McGregor: Never me.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I won't put anyone in Hansard by responding, all right?

Interjection.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: All right, well, look: I hope they'll include that in their speech. I know that some members may not believe, but yes, it's round. It's a sphere. It's actually a sphere.

Interjections.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Thank you. Thank you.

So which Conservative government or stretch of Conservatives has done more damage to this province? Was it the Harris government of the late 1990s, or is it this new incarnation of Conservatives—again, a party that is the opposite of the adage—that is somehow lesser than the sum of its parts? Because when you actually meet these individuals, there are some great people in this room that I really enjoy talking to—I'm not going to name them, though—but you put them together, and, of course, what ends up happening is their ability to make decisions is taken away because of the tight orbit around the PMO that tells them what to do. It doesn't matter if you're a minister, a parliamentary assistant, an associate minister—they don't get to make the decisions around here, so I can't really individually blame them.

But as an aggregate, as they come together, they've literally taken paddles and sledgehammers to this province in a way that we can't even imagine.

Here are some of the things, as an example, during the Harris years.

Now, if you're in a municipality or on a school board, you've got to balance your budget. But if you are a prov-

incial or a federal government, you can just let it rip, and nobody in the history of this province has let it rip like these guys. In fact, as I enlighten everyone, I reached out to NASA to look deep into the universe to find other places—subnational jurisdictions—that have higher levels of debt, and there is no other place in the universe. So this isn't just something that is an issue here in the country or on the continent or the world, but in the entire universe. And it's crazy because I just remember the then Minister of Education at the time repeating that mantra over and over again about debt and the government past, but now they are the last two governments past, and then, all of a sudden, there's no more talk about debt.

So what did the government of the 1990s do? Well, do you know how they dealt with debt? They downloaded: The late 1990s government—the Harris government—just took everything they had and, like a huge pack, put it on the backs of municipalities to crack their spines. And what did they end up doing? What did they download? The cost of social assistance, they took transit, transportation—they took that heavy pack and dumped it on the municipalities. The municipalities were struggling with the heavy weight of the decisions of their fatherly Conservative government.

Their common sense—literally, take the debt from this hand, put it into this hand, and then tell everybody they saved the money. How did they end up paying it? Their property taxes, community centres closing, schools closing, firing health care workers—everything you can think of. I mean, it was just a master class in provincial destruction.

And so, we started to see crises erupt at that time—think Walkerton. What they did was they starved everybody from money, and they took away things like enforcement. They took away things like oversight. What ended up happening was poisoned drinking water because they had no money to do anything, and privatization.

But these guys don't care. Why would they care? Because the entire purpose of the Conservatives is to come in, privatize, blame everyone else, make people rich and then stand there off camera, like this, with a baseball cap open.

And we see it—just look at SDF. I feel like it's probably comparable, the amount of money that went out through SDF has come back into their donation coffers. I want to see a calculation. Someone just whip out a spreadsheet and look at the money that went out with SDF, and then look at the money that went in. In fact, I don't think we have the calculating power on the amount of money they collected as a result of SDF. I mean, we're waiting for quantum computers to be able to calculate the amount of money these guys reaped. It's just unbelievable.

Amalgamation: These guys are unamalgamating. Harris? Amalgamated. They just want to do whatever they want to do.

Neglecting infrastructure: Oh, I've got to talk about the 407 guys again. What a dumb decision, honestly—the dumbest decision made by any government. Even Donald Trump would call it dumb, and he calls everything

dumb. But he would even attest to how dumb that was. That was billions of dollars gone to an international company. Imagine, these guys are talking about Buy Ontario—the Conservatives of the 1990s came up with the whole idea of selling off this province and country to international companies and other people. These guys have been doing that; now, all of a sudden, they're buying Ontario—okay, sure. This is some of the stuff the 1990s did.

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This government never wants to be outdone.

Do you guys need me to go off—or can I just keep insulting them?

Interjections.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: All right. So this government looked at the 1990s, and they had a high bar of failure to overcome. They don't want to be outdone, so they said, "What do we do to make things worse? How can we take a bad situation and make it even worse? How do we literally destroy the province?" And they certainly have done a great job of destroying the province. Their municipal housing plan was to create tent cities all over the place. You're finding all forms of innovative housing across the province, and they've set records for all sorts of things—highest amount that students have to pay, longest waits in hospitals, most cracks on the sides of schools. It just doesn't end—highest debt, highest deficits.

I have to say, I have a huge amount of respect for the Premier. I called NASA. If we could figure out what his skin is made of, we could launch space missions and we could finally colonize Mars, because the Teflon of this gentleman is just something that I don't think has ever been seen absolutely anywhere. You can't wear hats in the chamber, but hats off to this gentleman and the Teflon that he and the people around him—on a day-to-day basis, some stupidity will happen, and they will just be like this, clenching their teeth. "Oh, my God, did we do that?" You can see in question period sometimes, when you ask questions, it's almost like they're looking around—"Well, we couldn't have done that. Did we? Really?" And then polls came out, and they're still doing okay. It's like a roller coaster.

Interjection.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Clap yourself, guys. Give yourself a round of applause.

That is some serious Teflon—ready to embark humans on the next age of space exploration, courtesy of the nonsense they're doing that is testing it.

What have they done?

Interjection.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Super slippery. That's true.

Constant meddling with municipalities, and every time they mess up—and I've shown you their game. Sure, it's all about giving money to their friends, and then it's just—"Start a culture war." I honestly think they've got a big red button in their caucus room, when they're saying, "What do we do?" and then someone gets up—culture war—and they just press it down, and then you end up with some decision that gets made that's ridiculous. Sometimes it really backfires, because they bring in strong-mayor

powers—"Oh, these councils don't listen to us. We're the boss. We want to do things. We hate consulting. We just want to do whatever we want. Let's control the mayors and give them enough power so they get to win every single vote."

What ended up happening in the city of Toronto? Olivia Chow won. They must have been slapping their heads: "Oh, my God. How did we not see that one coming?"

They bring in these strong-mayor powers, and then they don't get the mayor they want. So when they don't get the mayor they want, they start bringing in legislation—part of the culture war. "What can we do? We're in trouble. Oh, the Ring of Fire." "Let's raise the Legislature and get the heck out of here." "What could we talk about that will really piss people off? Bike lanes, speed cameras."

Imagine this: We didn't even go to committee over speed cameras. Do you know why? Do you know who would have been at committee? Police. You would have had the OPP, you would have had police saying, "This actually slows people." You put it in a school zone; people don't want tickets—unless you're one of the ministers on this side, who racked up six tickets going over 150 kilometres an hour. Do you know what? If you don't want to be an MPP, go join NASCAR. If you want to go out there, join Formula One. What are you doing, drag racing at 160? Seriously, was it one of you guys in the chamber right now? Which one of you did that? Who is it? Which one? I just want to know who went 150 kilometres an hour in a government car.

So what they did was, they made those invisible licence plates. You still see the blue ones. Maybe they thought those plates could let them get away with it. Imagine driving around in a minister's "Yours to discover" car and going 160—oops. Who could know if it was us? And then, imagine, you just do a simple plate scan and it turns out it's one of these guys. I don't know who it is. I've got my suspicions. I could see some of the people on that side with lead feet. I don't know who it was, but it was one of them.

All right. Who's heard of the greenbelt?

Interjections: Me.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Right. There's certainly not someone who cares much about anything green. They continue to fail on the environmental file, year in, year out. Just look at the AG reports; it just goes from bad to worse. Again, it's not their fault. They want to believe in the earth being flat. I can't judge people for their beliefs—respect to you guys for doing that.

The greenbelt scandal—this is another one of them. Go back to the SDF about the money—the circulating money. I don't know who that poor person was out there that took a \$30-million loan out at—no, it was like \$10 million, or was it \$300 million? I don't even know the amount of money—at 10% interest. Imagine they went out there—it was \$100 million at 30% interest; that's the numbers—and imagine finding out that land—no, no, no. I think a week—what was it? A week or two later, and all of a sudden that land became able to be developed.

I don't know where that person is. I honestly feel sorry for them. I don't know what they were led to believe by

this government, but then all of a sudden, that land, which would not have been a good purchase, just goes back down to whatever it was. Now you're stuck paying that interest. I mean, can it get any more clear? These guys are under RCMP investigation on an investigation that will never end. I really don't know when that's going to come. I mean, they must be going through so much data. Anyway, you've got the greenbelt.

This is a government unlike any government before in terms of devastating this province in every single way, shape or form, and they do it with gusto. They're happy about it. They laugh about it. They enjoy. They don't care because, at the end of the day, they're set up for life. They know it. Just look at the people that sat with Harris back then. They're all doing well because—do you know what? When you make the rich people out there happy, in the end, they make you happy here, too.

Speaker, I want to thank you all for the opportunity on discussing this government, their ability to flip-flop, their ability to destroy the province we're living in in countless ways. It's too bad I only have minutes left, but I just want to say—

Interjection: Just getting started.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Yes. I'm just getting started here, right?

The last thing: Can I talk about auto insurance? All right. I want to thank my colleagues. Auto insurance and auto insurance in Brampton—I mean, we're talking about Peel. There's nothing more expensive than the cost of auto insurance in Brampton. And these guys have been here for eight years, and what they keep—you know, some things they change overnight. Honestly, they'll have you in the middle of the night. They had us debating in the middle of the night to make it illegal to spend money to criticize them leading up to an election. I mean, can you think of anything more—I can't say diabolical, right? I would never use that word in this context. Okay. Thank you. I shall never use the word in this context. But it's just unbelievable.

So now, when you look at postal codes used to determine auto insurance of people with clean driving records, every year, this government gets up and says, "We're going to move the file along." They have a pile of paper, and they just push it a little bit more and just hope people forget. The announcement is always in the summer. Any time we talk about it, the Premier says—and I love this—"We're looking into it," or, "Oh, this makes me so mad," and then the Teflon is so shiny, it just stops anything from happening or anything sticking.

When it comes to auto insurance in Brampton, in the region of Peel, guys, please do better. You represent those seats. The people there can't afford the auto insurance. Stop kicking the ball down the road. It's you—you were the government before; you were the government before. People can't afford it. And as I've said before, if you can't do it, just make the call. Put the government into receivership or something because you're obviously not able to manage the budget, and we're just going from bad to worse.

Thank you, Speaker. I want to wish all my colleagues in this chamber, especially on the government side, a wonderful afternoon. Good evening. Happy holidays. God bless you, all right? Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Before I move to further debate, I beg to inform the House that the adjournment debate standing in the name of the member for Orléans scheduled for today has been withdrawn. Consequently, that adjournment debate will not be held today.

1620

Further debate?

Mr. Adil Shamji: It's a tough act to follow that rousing analysis of the last eight years of this government's failures, so I won't try.

It is an honour to join all the members in the House this afternoon to discuss the legislation before us, Bill 45, the Peel Transition Implementation Act.

Interjection.

Mr. Adil Shamji: Thank you.

I want to be clear at the outset: This bill will move forward with our support. It will move forward with our support somewhat reluctantly and with some concern about the government's repeated changes of course that have left municipalities, residents and housing policy itself in a state of uncertainty.

My fellow colleague the member for Humber River–Black Creek spent a short amount of time elaborating on some of this government's flip-flops, and of course, this legislation is the latest in that series of flip-flops, which includes a number of things: the greenbelt, unconstitutional changes directed towards education workers with Bill 28, the reversals on development charges. You briefly mentioned even the licence plates that were flip-flopped, the so-called invisible licence plates. Buck-a-beer, of course—that's a promise that rapidly disappeared. So this is the latest in that time-honoured tradition of this government. Nonetheless, it moves in a direction that I think we can get behind.

Importantly, what this legislation seeks to do is to transfer highways, bridges and stormwater utilities from Peel region to Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon. It will give Mississauga control over its own waste collection, while Brampton and Caledon will remain under Peel's system. It empowers the minister to regulate financial assets, agreements, employment matters and municipal co-operation with the Provincial Land and Development Facilitator.

On paper, these measures should provide clarity, they should align responsibility with accountability, and they should give municipalities the tools to manage services closer to the people that they serve.

But let's take stock of the context. In 2023, the government announced Peel's dissolution. In 2024, it cancelled that plan. Now, in 2025, it proposes this devolution. Each reversal has carried consequences. Municipal leaders have been forced to rewrite budgets, rethink housing strategies and reassure residents who are understandably confused about what their future holds.

I want to draw special attention to the impact that this instability has had on housing policy in our province. It is a well-known fact in this chamber and amongst the members on both sides of the House that Ontario faces the worst housing performance across our entire Confederation, and recent reports have only reiterated that fact. We are, of course, well aware of the monthly CMHC reports that consistently show a double-digit decline in housing starts compared to the same period just one year earlier.

A recent report just earlier last week from the Missing Middle Initiative shared some new findings altogether. We were already aware of this province's fewer starts, but what it also illustrated is that the number of pre-construction sales has now plummeted. The scary future that that predicts is that for whatever housing crisis we face this year, next year will be worse and so will the years after that because there is simply no confidence in the housing sector. That lack of confidence arises because of policy instability, because of exactly the kind of chaos that the citizens of Peel have been forced to endure with repeated policy flip-flops and walk-backs that we hope will end with Bill 45.

Peel region is one of the fastest-growing areas in Ontario. Families are waiting for homes that they can afford. Municipalities are under pressure to deliver infrastructure that supports that growth. Yet, instead of providing stability, the government has forced them to navigate shifting grounds.

Consider Peel regional council's recent division over development fees. Mississauga, backed by the province, pushed for a 50% cut to stimulate housing. Brampton and Caledon objected, warning of lost infrastructure revenue. The measure was only able to pass after Ontario came in, being forced to provide a backstop against those losses. This episode illustrates the tension at the heart of Peel: that different municipalities with different priorities are bound together by a regional structure that oftentimes obscures accountability, and it illustrates how housing policy has been caught in the crossfire of government indecision.

Subsequent reports have underscored the risks. Deloitte's 2019 study projected \$1.31 billion in additional operating costs and a one-time tax increase of 38% if Peel were to be dissolved. Blueprint's 2024 report showed Peel residents already receive \$578 less per person in provincial funding compared to the Ontario average, a gap of about \$868 million annually.

These aren't abstract numbers. They represent real pressures on housing affordability, on municipal finances and on the services that families rely on. So it's fair to ask, does this legislation finally offer the same stability and a framework that breaks from the chaos of the past? Well, I certainly hope so. I hope that it will empower municipalities to manage services directly, that it will create some real mechanisms for oversight and co-operation. But I have to say this: The people of Peel deserve better than the uncertainty that they have endured. They deserve a government that delivers with consistency and not one that changes course with every political calculation.

I hope that this is the final time that we have to discuss a change in the regional structure of Peel.

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

Pursuant to the order of the House from December 8, 2025, I am now required to put the question.

Mr. Flack has moved third reading of 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.

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

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

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

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

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

Third reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Orders of the day?

Hon. Steve Clark: Speaker, if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to see the clock at 6.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to see the clock at 6 o'clock. Agreed? Agreed.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

DEVELOPMENT CHARGES

Ms. Natalie Pierre: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery and Procurement should explore options that could require municipal development charges to be disclosed as a distinct and clearly identifiable line item on all purchase agreements for new home sales in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Pursuant to standing order 100, the member has 12 minutes for their presentation.

1630

Ms. Natalie Pierre: I rise today to speak in support of my private member's motion calling on the Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery and Procurement to require that municipal development charges be listed as a separate and clearly identifiable line item on all purchase agreements for new home sales in the province of Ontario.

This motion is rooted in a simple but powerful principle: consumer transparency. When Ontarians make one of the biggest financial decisions of their lives, purchasing a new home, they deserve to know exactly what they're paying for.

Let me begin by explaining what municipal development charges are. Development charges, commonly referred to as DCs, are fees levied by municipalities on new homes to help fund infrastructure and services. Examples of what

development charges pay for include new roads and transportation networks; water and waste water infrastructure; stormwater management; emergency services, including police, fire and paramedic stations; and parks and recreation facilities.

Speaker, I've heard from constituents in Burlington who were shocked to learn, after the fact, that tens of thousands of dollars of their new home purchase price went to development charges. These are not minor fees. In fact, in some municipalities, development charges exceed \$100,000 per unit. Some even range up to \$180,000 per unit. These charges are rarely itemized but instead are embedded into the purchase price of a new home.

My motion seeks to change that. It asks the Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery and Procurement to ensure that every new home purchase agreement includes a separate line item for development charges—not as a footnote, not as a vague reference, but as a clear, visible and standardized disclosure.

Why does this matter? First, because it empowers consumers. When new home buyers see the breakdown of costs and fees, they can ask questions to better understand what portion of their new home purchase is directed towards municipal infrastructure. They can compare options and municipalities and make informed decisions.

Second, breaking out developmental charges on new home purchase agreements promotes accountability. Home builders can clarify how new home prices are structured, and municipalities could show how development charges support community growth. The province would set standards for clarity and for transparency.

Third, it aligns with broader efforts to approve housing affordability.

Speaker, the motion is not about opposing development charges; it's about making them visible to new home purchasers and modernizing our approach to consumer protection to include the new housing market. As mentioned, development charges are fees levied by municipalities to fund infrastructure required to support new growth—things like roads, water systems, parks and more. These charges are used to support development, and they are substantial.

Currently, under the Development Charges Act, 1997, municipalities are required to pass bylaws to impose these charges; however, there is no requirement to disclose these charges as a separate line item on the purchase agreement with new home buyers. Most often, development charges are embedded in the overall price, and most new home buyers don't even know they exist—and if they do know they exist, most new home buyers don't know what they're paying for.

Recent legislative changes under Bill 17, Protect Ontario by Building Faster and Smarter Act, 2025, introduced deferred payment options for development charges. While these changes aim to improve cash flow for home builders and accelerate housing starts, they don't improve transparency for the end consumer: the homebuyer. Bill 60, Fighting Delays, Building Faster Act, 2025, builds on Bill 17 by

modernizing the development charge calculation and standardizing how DCs are calculated.

Speaker, these are all very important steps, but these steps don't provide information on development charges to new home buyers. My motion seeks to ensure that new home buyers understand the impact of development charges on their new home. By requiring a clear separate line item for development charges on purchase agreements, we can ensure that buyers know exactly how much of their purchase price is going towards municipal fees and infrastructure. When you buy a car, you see the breakdown of taxes, of fees, of options and add-ons. Why should a home be any different?

Transparency can also support better policy outcomes. When consumers understand the cost of development charges, they are more likely to engage in informed discussions about municipal planning, infrastructure priority and housing affordability. New home buyers who are future residents will be more informed, fostering civic engagement and accountability.

There is a long-standing debate about what infrastructure costs new home owners should pay versus costs shared by all taxpayers. This is an important policy discussion and one that needs to be open for public discussion. Transparency of DCs is an important step in supporting this dialogue.

Speaker, at its heart, this motion is fundamentally about consumer transparency and consumer protection. The Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery and Procurement has a mandate to promote a fair, safe and informed marketplace for consumers and businesses in the province of Ontario. Requiring transparency in new home purchase agreements aligns perfectly with this objective and their mission.

Our government supports consumer transparency. We put in place the Consumer Protection Act, 2023, which updated outdated legislation to provide for clearer disclosure rules for contracts, for stronger cancellation rights for unfair practices, and higher penalties for violations. My motion seeks to further this work on consumer protection and transparency.

We all know that buying a home is one of the most significant financial decisions many people will make. Families work hard and save for years to buy a new home. Yet most are unaware that a large portion of their purchase price isn't going towards the home itself but towards development charges. This lack of clarity can lead to confusion, mistrust, financial strain and sometimes unexpected surprises.

I've heard from Burlington residents who were shocked to learn after the fact that development charges had added tens of thousands of dollars to their purchase price. One situation comes to mind: There was a home builder in Burlington who didn't include the full development charges in the cost of a new home. These additional closing costs were a huge shock to the homebuyer at closing. Had it been required that DCs were disclosed on the new home purchase agreement, this situation would have been avoided completely.

This is not just a matter of dollars and cents; it's a matter of fairness. Consumers deserve to know what they're paying for so they can make better and more informed decisions.

Moreover, this motion supports housing affordability. When development charges are clearly disclosed, it creates accountability to ensure those charges are reasonable and justified. It encourages municipalities to be transparent about how those funds are charged, collected and spent, and it gives buyers the information they need to compare costs across different municipalities.

Speaker, this motion also supports the work of municipalities. When development charges are disclosed, residents better understand how their communities grow. They see the connection between new homes and new infrastructure, and they see how their investment supports public services directly in their own community.

Transparency around development charges will allow municipalities to communicate the infrastructure work they are undertaking and to share the investments they are making to support healthy and livable communities for people of all ages.

Transparency also benefits home builders. By clearly itemizing development charges, builders can demonstrate that these fees are not arbitrary markups. It helps build trust with homebuyers and reduces the risks of disputes and legal charges down the road.

1640

Speaker, over the last 10 months, I've had the opportunity to socialize this motion with constituents and stakeholders. Everyone I spoke with supported the motion.

In short, this is a win-win: It empowers consumers, it promotes fairness, and it supports a more transparent new housing market. It affects real people in real communities—people in my riding of Burlington and across Ontario.

What was once a nominal fee in the cost of a new home a decade ago is now quite significant, and new home buyers deserve to know what they receive for their money. We need to ask ourselves, is it fair to expect Ontarians to continue shouldering these costs without knowing what they're paying for? Is it fair to continue to embed these charges in the cost of a new home? The answer is no.

That's why I'm calling on the Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery and Procurement to act. The ministry oversees consumer protection, business law and service delivery and is well positioned to implement this change and ensure that homebuyers receive clear and accurate information.

At its heart, the motion is about transparency, it's about fairness, and it's about accountability. It's about giving Ontarians the information they need to make informed decisions about one of the most important purchases of their lives.

By requiring a separate line item for development charges on new home purchase agreements, we uphold the principle of consumer protection, we support housing affordability, and we foster trust in our housing system.

I urge all members of this House to support this motion and stand together for greater consumer transparency.

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

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I am glad to be able to stand in my place to speak to this private member's motion put forward by the member for Burlington. I appreciated the conversation that she and I had about this bill so that I could have a better understanding of where it was coming from. I am happy to speak a bit about that, but I'm also looking forward to having part of that broader conversation about how we encourage more protections for homebuyers.

I think the non-partisan piece to this conversation is that we want Ontarians to be able to have homes. I think that's true for all of us. So when people are goal-setting for a new home or they are making a significant purchase, the biggest purchase that most will be able to make in their whole lives, we want it to be accountable, we want it to be fair, and we want it to be successful.

So we are here talking about a very specific issue about ensuring that development charges are basically a line item—are listed, delineated—in the sale of a home so that a would-be homebuyer or a future homebuyer can see what they are required to pay. I know, Speaker, that there are cases of people who have been surprised at closing or of people who didn't budget for the significant cost. That should never happen when we're talking about this many dollars all at one time. Houses are not inexpensive, homes are not cheap, and so people budget for them. We are hearing—and I have a number of cases here—about people who have had to walk away from their dreams of a new home for various reasons.

We also have—and I'll talk about it—home builders who are forcing people to sign non-disclosure agreements, which should not be allowed. That is something that my colleagues and I have raised with various ministers on the other side, and it just hasn't been fixed yet.

But when there's a problem, we want it to be able to be solved. This is a problem that the minister, or the member from—I didn't mean to upgrade. Well, anyway. The member from Burlington has brought it forward, and as she and I discussed this, we are hearing from constituents and we are hearing from community members about real-world examples. So that is part of the power of this place: the people outside of this building that send us here to make changes, to make a difference. So, I appreciate this conversation.

But what you pay in development charges should be itemized. I support development charges, but I do know that they vary across the province and that, across the province, when they vary, it would make a difference to be able to see them. We should be able to have honest conversations about them—that homebuyers can see in different municipalities what those costs are. But if people can't budget for the charges and they're surprised by them, that is a problem.

The government of Ontario back in 2021 designated the Home Construction Regulatory Authority, or HCRA, as the administrative authority responsible for licensing and

regulating Ontario's new home builders and sellers of new homes, known as vendors. The AG report focused on the HCRA is something that I think all of us should take a look at, especially members focused on this particular ministry. The AG, in effect, said the HCRA is doing a terrible job, that, in a nutshell, the HCRA has become a licensing mill, renewing licences for bad builders, even those that it is currently investigating. It was also found to be collecting financial statements about builders but not actually looking at them.

The HCRA has a huge backlog in complaints, over 1,500, and each of those complaints takes an average of 419 days. I'm telling you this because some of those complaints are real people with real dreams who have been forced to walk away from a deal, maybe because the home builder didn't hold up their end of the bargain, didn't meet the dates. Suddenly, the home is not there, has not been built, but they get to keep the deposit. We hear about these things.

The more you hear, the more you realize it's a bit of an epidemic. It's happening all over the place, but people can't talk about it because they've been forced to sign NDAs. We are hearing from homeowners trapped in a newly built home with code violations, like health and safety issues, who are still fighting a builder or Tarion to get the home that they have already paid for, but they're not allowed to publicly speak out because of an NDA clause buried in the fine print. That should not be allowed.

While I'm happy to talk about showing development charges in front of homebuyers so that they can see that—they know what they're paying; they can budget for it—I'm not sure how I feel about what the member said—and I don't mean to misquote her—about it not being fair to embed development charges in the price of a home.

I want to be able to give those homebuyers the option to have that rolled into financing. That's my concern. If you're getting surprised with a \$100,000 development charge after you've already wrapped up your financing, how on earth can you afford that? Pulling it into purchase price—I just want there to be flexibility. I think we're on the same page in this regard. We want homebuyers to be successful in making plans to purchase their home and for that deal to be able to successfully close.

My colleague from University–Rosedale had written to Kaleed Rasheed, the then Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery, specifically about NDAs, that "Ontario legislation does not explicitly authorize non-disclosure or non-dispute clauses in pre-construction contracts, and there have been no court precedents that clarify if these clauses are banned, allowed, or even enforceable." We're calling on the government to problem-solve that.

I have written multiple letters to that minister and also to the now Minister of Infrastructure about ensuring that people can get into these homes and that deals can be closed. I've said here, "Many Ontarians are facing similar circumstances with developers across the province. Price escalations have become all too common. Complex legal language in purchase agreements and NDAs make the

process inaccessible to buyers, and leave loopholes for buyers."

If we are finding out that home builders are putting the development charges on after, when the sale is supposed to close, and that they're shifting it to the end as a surprise and then people have to walk away from the deal, that home builder gets a lot of money. This is on the developer's side—not this bill, but we're seeing things that are not being reined in by this government that are allowing fewer people to be successfully housed.

1650

So I support this, but I look forward to the many other opportunities that this government has to do a better job to ensure people are housed.

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

MPP Tyler Watt: Today we're debating motion 43, which calls on the Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery and Procurement to explore options requiring municipal development charges to be disclosed as a distinct line item on all purchase agreements for new home sales in Ontario.

At first glance, this motion sounds appealing. Transparency is important. I wish we saw more of that from this government.

Homebuyers deserve clarity about the costs they are paying, but when you look deeper, this motion does not solve the affordability crisis and it risks misleading buyers, undermining municipalities and politicizing essential infrastructure funding.

MDCs are one-time fees municipalities charge developers to fund infrastructure including roads, water systems, transit and parks for new communities. These charges are authorized under the Development Charges Act, and municipalities decide whether to use them and for which services. Currently, these charges are bundled into the total purchase price of a new home. Buyers rarely see the breakdown. These fees have risen significantly over the past decade as infrastructure costs and population growth accelerated. In fact, a 2024 CANSEA report found that taxes and fees make up 30% of the final purchase price of a new home—a 16% increase since 2021.

But here is the key issue: Development charges are not arbitrary. They fund critical infrastructure. Without these charges, these costs would fall onto existing taxpayers.

This motion seeks to improve transparency by listing MDCs separately on purchase agreements, but let's be clear: This does not reduce housing costs. It does not build more homes. It does not make housing more affordable. Rather, it risks creating an illusion of progress. Buyers might see a line item for development charges and assume municipalities are the main reason housing is unaffordable. That is not the case. Housing costs are driven by land prices, construction costs, interest rates and developer profit margins—not just municipal fees. Moreover, for pre-construction homes, development charges are often not finalized at the time of sale, so disclosure could be based on estimates, leading to confusion or disputes later.

By singling out municipal fees, this motion politicizes development charges and undermines municipal financial

stability. These charges pay for schools, clean water and transit—services that make communities livable for Ontarians. If we weaken or delegitimize these fees, who pays for them? Existing taxpayers.

The government has already destabilized municipal finances through legislation like More Homes Built Faster Act and Helping Homebuyers, Protecting Tenants Act. This motion adds another layer of uncertainty.

Let's also talk about selective transparency. This proposal exposes public fees while keeping developer profits, land acquisition costs and financing hidden. If transparency is the goal, why not require a full cost breakdown? Why only target municipalities?

This motion only asks the ministry to explore options. There is no guarantee of implementation, no affordability outcome and no real solution to the housing crisis. If we truly want to help families, we need to increase housing supply, support rental and non-profit housing, and address financial barriers for Ontarians.

Superficial changes to purchase agreements will not solve the problem. Speaker, transparency matters, but this motion is not the answer. It risks misleading buyers, undermining municipalities, and distracting from the real solutions. Instead of political messaging, we need action—real, tangible action—that tackles affordability head-on. It is pathetic how far behind we are in Ontario when it comes to building houses. We're one of the lowest in the entire country. The fact that we include residence dorms and long-term-care beds in that number is a disgrace.

Ontario families deserve more than symbolic gestures; they deserve homes that they can afford. They want to see our government actually working to get these houses built. We want to give young people the chance to actually hope again that one day, they can actually buy a home. I'm 35 years old, I have a great-paying job, and I'm still a renter. But I tell you, people in my generation, and especially younger ones like Gen Zs, think owning property is a pipe dream that they will never achieve. So when they see superficial things like this, it doesn't sit well, necessarily, with them. They want to see tangible action. They want to see those houses getting built. They want to know that they can get into the market, that they're not going to be stuck paying rent for the rest of their lives.

With how high rent is right now, you can't afford to save up 20% of a down payment on a \$600,000 home. It's just not possible. Rent is sky-high. It's sky-high in Ottawa. It's sky-high in more rural areas. We're seeing it everywhere.

Something this government could do is reinstate the rent control they got rid of back in 2019. That could be a really good start to tackling the affordability crisis but also help get those rents to not increase so much. Maybe then, people could start to save money and potentially, one day, buy their own home property.

I will end it on that note. Thank you, Speaker.

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

Mr. Matthew Rae: It's an honour to rise today to speak in support of my great colleague the MPP from Burlington's private member's motion, an initiative that advances

consumer protection, promotes transparency and strengthens Ontario's housing market, particularly for first-time homebuyers.

As we continue working to get more homes built and support affordability, we must also make sure that the process of buying a home is fair, clear and predictable. A strong housing strategy is not only about supply; it's also about ensuring that people understand what they are committing to, and that they can trust the information presented to them.

Too often, new home buyers encounter unexpected costs buried in lengthy contracts—none more significant than development charges. These charges, which help municipalities pay for essential infrastructure tied to growth, have evolved to become a major component of new home prices, especially in our large urban centres. They play a critical role in supporting expanding communities, but they must be clearly understood by the homebuyer who ultimately pays that price, Speaker.

Yet, they're rarely disclosed in a simple, clear and accessible way. Buyers often cannot see how these charges are calculated. They cannot easily compare them between municipalities, and many only learn about them at the end of the process, sometimes at closing, when they have little ability to question or plan accordingly. The lack of clarity undermines confidence in the housing market.

When a system is difficult to navigate, people begin to lose trust in that system. And trust, Speaker, is essential for a fair and functioning housing system.

Our government has been clear that transparency is essential. Whether it's public services, financial protections or the housing system itself, the people of Ontario deserve straightforward information that empowers them to make informed choices.

Requiring development charges to be displayed as a separate, clearly identified line item is a practical and effective way to deliver that transparency. It removes uncertainty. It provides homebuyers with a detailed understanding of the costs associated with their purchase. When development charges are broken down, municipalities can more clearly explain how those funds support roads, water systems, parks and community infrastructure. Builders support this initiative as customers are more informed about their purchases, and homebuyers gain the ability to compare, evaluate and budget with confidence, strengthening their trust in municipal finances.

1700

Speaker, this initiative complements our government's broader housing strategy. We've taken meaningful action to cut red tape and create the conditions to get more shovels in the ground faster for homes across Ontario to be built.

A strong, transparent housing market requires trust, and trust comes from clarity. By shining a light on development charges, we are helping restore that trust. Families buying their new home shouldn't face uncertainty. They shouldn't need to dig deep to find out what their municipality is charging for growth, and they should never be surprised by costs they don't understand. This proposal

gives them exactly what they need: clear information upfront every time. And it reflects our government's unwavering commitment to protecting consumers and supporting the dream of home ownership.

For these reasons, Speaker, I fully support this initiative and again thank my colleague from Burlington for bringing it forward.

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

Mr. Tom Rakocovic: I want to recognize the member from Burlington and her rationale, which I take at face value. I know her to be a strong member in the House and someone full of principle, who I know wants to make things better for her community, so I acknowledge and recognize that.

I have to say, when I had first heard about this and the idea the Conservatives have around development charges as a very bad thing, I had initially raised an eyebrow. I do agree with the concept of transparency, of course—I think everyone in the House wants transparency—and certainly, listing all the line items in a home purchase, sure, should be something I think would make sense. And I'm sure that new home purchasers wonder about the cost of all the inputs. What was the cost of lumber, the steel, the labour, everything? It's interesting that the government focuses on this particular part. I wonder, is this even allowable, to now all of a sudden tack on fees at the very end?

But if we're talking about transparency, I do want to list a couple of issues in the time we have. If you want things to be transparent, simplify the purchase agreements. When you buy a house today, especially a new home, the biggest purchase of your life, it almost requires a PhD. They are not standardized, and it becomes almost impossible for many to even understand what they're signing for. There are so many problems that arise from that.

We are seeing that the new HCRA has been built but is already failing, by the AG's reports. We're seeing builders getting rubber-stamped licences that are already being investigated. There are a lot of issues that are going on here that are leading to home purchasers ending up in a very bad place when they make the purchase. It's not just things being changed on them at the last moment.

I want to take a moment to recognize CBPH—Dr. Karen Somerville and her entire team fighting for new home purchasers—Barbara Captijn and many others that are trying to bring to light the many issues that still persist.

You want to talk about issues where there's no transparency—NDAs still continue to abound in this manner. You have people purchasing new homes, and then they have a problem with the developer, they have a problem with the builder and they're forced to sign an NDA so they can't talk about the problems that they are facing. So even if it's solved or even partially solved, they can't even talk about that, and it leaves many others to be in a similar situation where they're in danger.

There are a lot of things that are happening in today's day and age. We're in 2025, where a new DAA has been created, and problems still abound. We're still in a time when inspections and enforcement don't continue in so

many different places, and it's not just in new home purchases.

So I appreciate that the member is trying to bring, in her own words, transparency to home purchases, but I hope that the government will listen and start to work towards having simplified purchase agreements, fixing the problems at the HCRA and all the delegated authorities and ensuring that people have the home warranty protection that they seem to lack even in the year 2025.

As I said, my time is limited in this manner, but there's so much more that has to be done.

I commend the member on introducing a bill that she says is about increasing transparency. We need much more transparency in this sector in many different ways. This government needs to make a priority—if they want to build homes at an increasing rate, and they really aren't, but ensure that the homes that are being built come with protections in many different ways for the new home purchasers. The biggest purchase of their life should not be a nightmare.

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

Mrs. Michelle Cooper: Buying a new home is one of the proudest and most exciting milestones of any person's life. It should be a moment defined by hope, stability and the promise of building a future, not confusion or unexpected financial surprises that take away from what should be a joyful achievement.

But far too often, new home buyers, especially first-time homebuyers, are confronted with complex contracts and costs they never saw coming. Instead of feeling supported and prepared, people can end up feeling overwhelmed and uncertain during a process that should inspire confidence.

One of the biggest sources of confusion comes from development charges. These charges can amount to tens of thousands of dollars, yet many buyers never see them clearly outlined. They're blended into the price or only explained at the last minute, when emotions are already high and decisions have already been made.

Speaker, no family saving diligently for their first home should be put in that position. People make sacrifices, working extra hours, delaying purchases, planning for years, because they believe in the dream of home ownership. And for that reason, they deserve honesty every step of the way.

Our government believes that the people of Ontario deserve full transparency when making major financial decisions. People should know exactly what they are paying for, and they should have the information they need to feel confident in their purchase. That's why this proposal to require development charges to be listed as a distinct, clearly identified line item is so important.

It's about fairness, it's about accountability and, above all, it's about respecting the people who are working hard to build their lives in this province. When homebuyers can see development charges broken out, they no longer feel like they're guessing. They understand where their money is going. They can properly compare homes across different municipalities. They can plan their finances with

certainty, and they avoid the emotional and financial stress of last-minute adjustments.

Transparency also strengthens trust. It shows homebuyers, especially first-time buyers, that the system is working for them, not against them. It reinforces the idea that government, municipalities and builders are all committed to honesty and clarity.

And, Speaker, this aligns with our broader mission as a government: to make housing more attainable, to increase supply and to reduce barriers that stand in the way of home ownership. But affordability isn't just about building more homes; it's also about ensuring families have clear information so they never feel overwhelmed or misled during the buying process.

By improving transparency around development charges, we are taking a meaningful step toward that goal. This change doesn't create new costs; it simply makes the existing ones more visible. And visibility is power for families, for buyers and for everyone entering the housing market.

Speaker, every Ontarian deserves to feel secure when they make the biggest purchase of their life. They deserve openness. They deserve clarity. And they deserve a system that respects their time, their savings and their dreams. This proposal does exactly that.

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

Mr. Brian Riddell: I am pleased to rise today to speak in support of the motion presented by my colleague MPP Pierre that strengthens transparency in Ontario's housing market and makes the home-buying process clearer, fairer and more predictable for families buying new home builds.

Buying a home is one of the biggest financial decisions any Ontarian would ever make. Families work hard, save for years and do everything right to prepare for that moment. When they finally reach that point, they deserve to fully understand what they are paying for.

For many people, this isn't a simple transaction; it's the beginning of the next chapter of their lives. They should be able to enter that chapter with confidence rather than uncertainty.

1710

Today, development charges—fees that municipalities use to help pay for local infrastructure to support new development—make up a significant portion of the cost of a new home. These charges exist to support infrastructure, but their impact can be substantial. Yet, in most cases, these charges are buried in complex contracts or often rolled into final prices without clear explanation. Homebuyers often learn about them late in the process, sometimes at closing, when it's too late to ask questions. This can create stress, confusion and even financial strain, especially for someone purchasing their first home. Speaker, this just isn't right. The people of Ontario deserve straightforward, honest information about the costs associated with purchasing a home. When someone signs their name on a contract that represents years of saving and sacrifice, they should feel assured, not blindsided.

That is why our government has placed such a strong emphasis on consumer transparency. We believe that empowering people with clear, accessible information leads to better decisions, stronger confidence and a fairer market.

The proposal before us is simple: Require development charges to be disclosed as a clearly identifiable line item on all new home purchase agreements. This is not a complicated change, but it is a meaningful one. It brings clarity to a process that has, for far too long, been over-complicated for the average buyer to understand. This one change would go a long way in helping homebuyers understand where their money is going. It would ensure people are not surprised at closing. It would allow families to compare options fairly and it would help restore trust in one of the most important transactions of their life.

Transparency also strengthens fairness. When buyers can see these charges broken out, municipalities have the opportunity to demonstrate exactly how those costs support new roads, water systems, parks and other infrastructure. Builders and developers benefit too because clear disclosure removes uncertainty and gives their customers confidence, and builders support this change.

Most importantly, Speaker, this ensures homebuyers are never left in the dark. No one should feel unsure about what they are paying for when they are investing in their future. Our government has been working tirelessly to improve affordability, increase housing supply and cut red tape to get more homes built—

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

The member has two minutes for a response.

Ms. Natalie Pierre: Thank you to all the members in the chamber this evening who spoke to my motion.

I'd also like to thank everyone who took the time to contact me in my constituency office, to meet and to write letters of support.

I'd also like to express my gratitude to the minister, the parliamentary assistant, the team at the Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery and Procurement for their assistance as well as the team at the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Speaker, at its heart, my motion is about consumer transparency, consumer protection and housing affordability. My private member's motion calls on the Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery and Procurement to explore mechanisms to have development charges listed as a separate line item on all new home purchase agreements in the province of Ontario.

Buying a new home is a major purchase and a significant life event—whether for a first-time homebuyer, a growing family or someone downsizing later in life.

Let me close with this: Buying a home is not just a simple transaction; it's a milestone, it's a dream and it's a leap of faith. When Ontarians—when people—take that leap, they deserve to land on solid ground. Let's give them the tools to understand their purchase, let's give them the transparency they deserve and let's show that in Ontario, we put people first—in policy, in practice and in principle.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

Ms. Pierre has moved private member's notice of motion number 43.

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

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

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

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

A recorded vote being required, it will be deferred until the next instance of deferred votes.

Vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): All matters relating to private members' public business having been completed, we now have a late show. Pursuant to standing order 36, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

EDUCATION FUNDING

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): The member for Ottawa South has given notice of dissatisfaction with the question given by the Minister of Education. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the minister or parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes.

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you very much, Speaker, and, as I usually do, I want to thank the table, yourself and everybody who has to hang around because we are doing a late show. Particularly, the government House leader said he was going to hang around today.

I'm kind of like Steve Earle: I ain't ever satisfied. I was not particularly satisfied with the answer to the question I got—I think it was last week—about education and about what the minister was doing to make sure that our schools were safe places to learn and to work.

Now, we know that class sizes have grown under this government. We know that special education has been starved about \$850 million a year that boards have to find somewhere else, because the government doesn't send it. We also know we have a mental health crisis in our schools, which is just reflective of what's going on in our broader society, but it's affecting our kids. And what the minister is saying is, it's more important that we look at these people over here. He's distracting us by pointing his finger at the governance.

School boards are important because schools belong to the families and the communities that they serve. For almost 200 years, that's the way we've approached it here in Ontario. We understood that places like Thunder Bay are different from Ottawa; they are different from Windsor; they are different from Timiskaming. Schools belong to the communities.

Looking at the governance, looking at boards, looking at that right now is not the most important thing that's affecting our kids; it's that our schools aren't safe places to learn or to work.

If the government wants to mess around and crack some eggs and make an omelette in education and governance, have at it. As long as it's local, democratic, transparent and effective, I don't care whether there are five trustees, 20 trustees or whatever it is. Schools belong to the communities and the families that they serve. They are local.

What I've seen, especially in the last week or so, is the Minister of Education treating it like education is a one-man show; that he's going to run everything from his office here at Queen's Park. It's not going to work. Keeping the EQAO results back for two months, sitting on his desk because he wanted to study them, shows that he didn't fundamentally understand what those results were for. They weren't just for the minister; they were for the people who help our kids learn: the educators, the supervisory officers, the children's families. There was no reason for him not to put that out.

Now he's taken over the board and appointed himself as supervisor. He's saying, "I'm going to do something at the board. It's going to be a couple months from now. I'm really disappointed in how the ministry did in terms of EQAO results." So now, along with blaming the trustees, he's blaming his ministry when, in actual fact, this government has been on that side for almost eight years, so if you want to look at those EQAO results, the government wears all of it. Those kids? They were there in those eight years. It's a report card on the government. And what that report card for government says is we failed our kids. Our class sizes got too big. We weren't doing what we needed to do to support kids with exceptional needs in special education, and we have a mental health crisis that we didn't address. That's why those results are there.

1720

People talk about funding formulas and underfunding; I prefer to talk about outcomes. The outcomes are really an indicator of what the input was. When you have class sizes that are too big, when you have special education being starved, when you have a mental health crisis that's being ignored and you have EQAO results that show—especially in grade 6 in math scores—that kids are declining, it's a function of those inputs that we get the result, that we have an output, which is the government has failed our students. The EQAO tells us that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I look to the member from Essex.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I'm pleased to stand this evening and address the concerns raised by the member from Ottawa South and talk about this government's focus on ensuring student success in Ontario.

Since being elected, this government has invested record amounts in public education. We've increased per-pupil funding by more than 23% and special education funding by over 36%, supporting the hiring of thousands of additional classroom staff to help address the chronic

underfunding left behind by the previous Liberal government.

The facts are clear: According to the independent Financial Accountability Officer, the ratio of teachers to students has remained virtually unchanged for the past eight years. Despite the rhetoric from the opposition, the numbers show that our government has sustained and strengthened staffing levels in our schools.

But as the Minister of Education has said repeatedly, what really matters to parents is the success of their students and results. The EQAO results released just last week show encouraging signs that our back-to-basics strategy is working. They also showed, particularly when it comes to math, that we can do better. That is why the minister has ordered a comprehensive review of the EQAO results, aimed at understanding not just the results themselves, but the differences between boards—why some are succeeding and others are improving less.

Parents deserve transparency, teachers deserve that clarity and students deserve a system that puts their success first. While our government focuses on raising standards and strengthening accountability, the opposition unfortunately continues to defend the status quo, defending trustees who have failed in their most basic duty, which is serving students.

This brings me to school board governance, an area where the need for reform has never been more urgent. Far too many boards have been consumed by internal bickering, financial mismanagement and a complete lack of accountability. That is why this government brought forward Bill 33, which is legislation designed to restore order, strengthen governance and ensure boards remain focused on what actually matters: student achievement.

Just take a look, for example, at the Near North District School Board, a board so dysfunctional that parents went months without clear communication, trustees spent more time fighting each other than doing their jobs and, because of the failure of trustees, students in Parry Sound were forced to learn in a half-demolished school.

A government review exposed serious mismanagement and dereliction of duty. Families demanded action, and this government listened. The minister placed that board under supervision using the powers granted through Bill 33, helping to get that board back on track. While the opposition shrugs at these failures and tells parents to simply wait until the next election, we believe students cannot wait. They deserve accountability now, and that's exactly what we're providing.

Our government is building a modern, accountable education system rooted in high standards and student success. We're investing billions to repair and build schools, strengthen literacy and math instruction, supporting teachers and ensuring that every dollar is spent where it belongs—in the classroom, not on luxury trips, not on personal expenses or endless trustee infighting.

At the end of the day, our mission is simple: Support students, support parents, support teachers and ensure an education system that delivers real results. We are focused

on a future where every student in Ontario, regardless of where they live, has the opportunity to thrive. We will continue raising standards, demanding accountability and ensuring that resources go directly to the classroom, where they make the greatest difference, because this is what the students deserve. Students deserve nothing less.

EDUCATION FUNDING

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): The member for Kingston and the Islands has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given by the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the minister or parliamentary assistant may reply up to five minutes.

Mr. Ted Hsu: I want to talk about my riding of Kingston and the Islands where the school boards are rather healthy. Last week, there was a parents' forum in my riding of Kingston and the Islands, and one of the things they talked about was evacuations. That's when a kid becomes violent and they have to move all of the students out of the classroom for one or two hours before the disturbance is resolved and the rest of the kids can safely return to the classroom. I found out that evacuations happen about once per week on average in my riding. Maybe that's disturbing education, and it's something we should be concerned about.

I think everybody on both sides of the House is concerned about EQAO scores and student success, but we should be paying attention to the unprecedented level of violence in schools. What that means is that an old ratio of adults to kids doesn't work when kids have changed and society has changed and there's more violence in schools.

So maybe things like evacuations or other lesser disturbances are taking away the ability of kids to concentrate. I remember, when I was little, the ability to focus one's attention—and I was fortunate; I grew up in a household and in a school where I could do that. The ability to focus is critical to doing things like learning math.

Here's another poignant thing that came up at the parents' forum. Many of the little kids are seeing that something is about to happen to one of their classmates, that one of their classmates is not doing well, and they are intervening to prevent problems. There are problems occurring that the little kids are seeing, and they try to prevent these problems from escalating into violence. I'm so impressed that little kids know when something is wrong and that they do try to fix the situation. It gives me hope in people. It tells me that people are basically good. But little kids shouldn't be counted on to do the job of trained adults.

When this government is spending money on a tunnel under the 401, putting alcohol in corner stores and spending money on Ontario Place, when they're adding to the contingency fund in the middle of the year—usually the contingency fund is drawn down over the course of a

year; they added billions to the contingency fund in the middle of the year—why can't we pay for more adults per student in our schools when violence is up and disturbing education?

At that same parent forum that we had in Kingston and the Islands, we had some educational assistants, and one of them showed everybody the scars on her hands from students—little kids who are gouging her hands. It was like, "Touch my scars, if you don't believe me." She's been slapped and punched and verbally abused, and stories like this are all too common.

What's going to happen when all these little kids who are violent in the classroom and all the kids who are suffering the disruption grow up? What's going to happen to our society when they grow up and they have to become the adults in society?

1730

Let me read another testament from a parent in Kingston and the Islands. This parent says: "My son is 15 and in grade 10. He's been diagnosed with autism, ADHD, anxiety, and depression. He has an IEP and has been formally identified with an IPRC meeting. He really struggles to get through an entire day of school and has yet to complete a week in its entirety this year. Last year he was assaulted by other students at school which added to his anxiety about being there. He has a hard time articulating why he has a hard time being there, but tries. He has very supportive teachers, administrators, and an adolescent support worker that he sees once a week, but they are busy and can't really meet him as much as he needs. He needs an educational assistant, but there just isn't anyone available. He falls behind on his work from being absent and then spirals into being discouraged and overwhelmed. We really feel like if he had a regular EA to help guide him through his school day, to support him when he's overwhelmed, to talk to him when he's feeling like he can't do something, and stay on top of his assignments he would be so successful. He's a really bright, kind kid who's getting lost in the system despite caring educators who are really stretched thin."

Speaker, this is a testament to what's going on in our schools. Ontario schools aren't safe places to learn or work. Violence is up 77%, and Ontario kids are not receiving supports they need to succeed.

Ontario Liberals are calling for a \$1-billion investment to restore safety, to increase the ratio of trained adults to students or reduce class sizes, and give students the support that they urgently need.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): In response, I recognize the member from Burlington.

Ms. Natalie Pierre: I rise today to address an issue that's deeply concerning to parents, teachers and students across Ontario: the rise of violence in our classrooms.

Speaker, our responsibility is clear: to ensure that every child, including our most vulnerable learners, can learn in a safe, supportive environment where their success is a priority.

We need to begin by acknowledging a reality that families and educators know all too well: Some students with developmental disabilities may at times display violent or unsafe behaviours. These situations are not a result of bad intentions, but are often connected to the complex challenges these students face. Our obligation is to provide the right supports, and that is exactly why this government has made record investments in special education. Since 2018, we have increased special education funding by over 36%, bringing annual funding to \$3.85 billion, the highest level in Ontario's history. This includes funding that has supported the hiring of more than 4,000 additional education assistants—adults who are in classrooms every day, helping our most vulnerable students succeed.

Let's be clear: These supports would not exist today had we followed the lead of the previous Liberal government, whose decades of chronic underfunding of special education forced school boards across Ontario to cut essential programs and front-line supports for our most vulnerable students. It's precisely because of those years of neglect that our government had to step up and make these increased investments.

But Speaker, even with these historic investments, we recognize there is more work to do. For example, we've heard from parents, families and advocates across Ontario that practices around the use and monitoring of seclusion rooms vary widely, creating uncertainty for families and for educators. That is why the minister has asked the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services to lead conversations with stakeholders to gain a clear picture of what is happening on the ground and to help inform a consistent, student-centred provincial approach that strengthens safety and supports for our most vulnerable learners.

Speaker, while these efforts are essential to supporting students with special education needs, we must also recognize there are issues around rising violence that are not connected to students with developmental disabilities. The unfortunate truth is that many schools around the province are seeing rising incidents of violence, and the decisions made by some school boards have made the situation worse. Starting in 2017, several school boards made the short-sighted decision to remove police from schools. These decisions were driven by ideology rather than by evidence, and the consequences have been felt by students and staff alike.

When police are present in schools, they do more than ensure safety. They mentor students, they build relationships, they support youth at risk and they help prevent gang involvement. In fact, according to the TDSB's own data, the vast majority of students said these officers made them feel safer, and staff overwhelmingly viewed them as valuable partners.

Yet some trustees eliminated these programs anyway, ignoring the evidence, ignoring the voices of students and ignoring the voices of teachers. That is exactly why our government passed Bill 33. For too long, trustees in some

boards have failed to uphold their responsibility to students. Bill 33 gives the minister the tools needed to restore accountability and ensure school boards work with police services to bring youth engagement and anti-gang officers back into schools. This is not about policing classrooms; it's about creating safer, more supportive learning environments and making sure students have trusted adults they can turn to.

Speaker, the message from this government is clear: We will not allow ideology, chaos or trustee mismanagement to stand in the way of student safety. Every student

deserves a safe classroom, every educator deserves a safe workplace and every parent deserves peace of mind, knowing their child is protected. Our government will continue investing in the staff, resources and accountability measures needed to keep our schools safe.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): There being no further matters to debate, pursuant to standing order 36(c), I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried.

This House now stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1737.

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Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Premier / Premier ministre
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Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gilmour, Alexa (NDP)	Parkdale—High Park	
Glover, Chris (NDP)	Spadina—Fort York	
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Grewal, Hardeep Singh (PC)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	
Gualtieri, Silvia (PC)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	
Hamid, Hon. / L'hon. Zee (PC)	Milton	Associate Solicitor General for Auto Theft and Bail Reform / Solliciteur général associé responsable de la Lutte contre le vol d'automobiles et de la Réforme relative aux mises en liberté sous caution
Hardeman, Hon. / L'hon. Ernie (PC) Harris, Hon. / L'hon. Mike (PC)	Oxford Kitchener—Conestoga Scarborough—Guildwood	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Holland, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin (PC)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	Associate Minister of Forestry and Forest Products / Ministre associé des Forêts et des Produits forestiers
Hsu, Ted (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	
Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin—Caledon	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health / Ministre de la Santé
Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Trevor (PC)	Chatham-Kent—Leamington	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et de l'Agroentreprise
Jordan, John (PC) Kanapathi, Logan (PC) Kernaghan, Terence (NDP)	Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston Markham—Thornhill London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	
Kerzner, Hon. / L'hon. Michael S. (PC)	York Centre / York-Centre	Solicitor General / Solliciteur général Minister of Red Tape Reduction / Ministre de la Réduction des formalités administratives
Khanjin, Hon. / L'hon. Andrea (PC)	Barrie—Innisfil	Minister of Long-Term Care / Ministre des Soins de longue durée
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Leardi, Anthony (PC)	King—Vaughan	Minister of Energy and Mines / Ministre de l'Énergie et des Mines
Lecce, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	
Lennox, Robin (NDP)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek /	
Lumsden, Hon. / L'hon. Neil (PC)	Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	Minister of Sport / Ministre du Sport
Mamakwa, Sol (NDP)	Kiiwetinoong	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
McCarthy, Hon. / L'hon. Todd J. (PC)	Durham	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs
McCrimmon, Karen (LIB)	Kanata—Carleton	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
McGregor, Hon. / L'hon. Graham (PC)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism / Ministre des Affaires civiques et du Multiculturalisme
McKenney, Catherine (NDP)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
McMahon, Mary-Margaret (LIB)	Beaches—East York	
Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)	York—Simcoe	President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones Associate Minister of Energy-Intensive Industries / Ministre associé des Industries à forte consommation d'énergie
Oosterhoff, Hon. / L'hon. Sam (PC)	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	
Parsa, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (PC)	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires Deputy House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Pasma, Chandra (NDP)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	
Piccini, Hon. / L'hon. David (PC)	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de l'Immigration, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences
Pierre, Natalie (PC)	Burlington	
Pinsonneault, Steve (PC)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	
Pirie, Hon. / L'hon. George (PC)	Timmins	Minister of Northern Economic Development and Growth / Ministre du Développement et de la croissance économique du Nord Minister of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security / Ministre des Collèges et Universités, de l'Excellence en recherche et de la Sécurité
Quinn, Hon. / L'hon. Nolan (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	
Racinsky, Joseph (PC)	Wellington—Halton Hills	
Rae, Matthew (PC)	Perth—Wellington	
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Indigenous Affairs and First Nations Economic Reconciliation / Ministre des Affaires autochtones et de la Réconciliation économique avec les Premières Nations Minister Responsible for Ring of Fire Economic and Community Partnerships / Ministre responsable des Partenariats économiques et communautaires pour le développement du Cercle de feu
Riddell, Brian (PC)	Cambridge	
Rosenberg, Bill (PC)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Sarrazin, Stéphane (PC)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Saunderson, Brian (PC)	Simcoe—Grey	
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Chris (IND)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Scott, Hon. / L'hon. Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	
Shamji, Adil (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Skelly, Hon. / L'hon. Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	Speaker / Présidente de l'Assemblée législative
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, David (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Graydon (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre associé des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Smith, Laura (PC)	Thornhill	
Smyth, Stephanie (LIB)	Toronto—St. Paul's	
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Tangri, Hon. / L'hon. Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	Associate Minister of Small Business / Ministre associée des Petites Entreprises

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Thanigasalam, Hon. / L'hon. Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associé délégué à la Santé mentale et à la Lutte contre les dépendances
Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Rural Affairs / Ministre des Affaires rurales
Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Associate Attorney General / Procureur général associé
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	Deputy Speaker / Vice-Présidente
		Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Tsao, Jonathan (LIB)	Don Valley North / Don Valley-Nord	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Vaugeois, Lise (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
Vickers, Paul (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	
Watt, Tyler (LIB)	Nepean	
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
Williams, Hon. / L'hon. Charmaine A. (PC)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity / Ministre associée des Perspectives sociales et économiques pour les femmes
Wong-Tam, Kristyn (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	