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Lundi
1^{er} décembre 2025

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Clerk: Trevor Day

Présidente : L'honorable Donna Skelly
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 1 December 2025

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 1^{er} décembre 2025

The House met at 1015.

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

Prayers.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ONTARIO FILM AND TELEVISION INDUSTRY

Mr. Deepak Anand: What is common in the Oscar-winning films Good Will Hunting, Chicago, The Shape of Water? All were made in Ontario, our Hollywood North, our true film production powerhouse, a global village with 150 nationalities speaking 200 languages, enriched with untouched natural beauty and ample resources.

In 2022, Ontario hosted 419 productions, contributing \$3.5 billion to the economy and supporting over 45,000 jobs. Thank you to Ontario Creates, FilmOntario and independent filmmakers of Toronto for championing our creative sector and empowering local talent to reach global audiences. Your commitment strengthens our industry every day.

The Ontario Film and Television Tax Credit supports production with a 35% labour credit. Ontario Production Services Tax Credit provides 21.5% on eligible production expenditures, and the OCASE strengthens digital animation and visual effects with an additional 18% credit.

To everyone around the world searching for the perfect place for the next project, Ontario is ready to support. We are growing into a global hub of film production, creating stories in every language that speak to the people of every culture and every background. We are ready to rise, to excel and to build a stronger economic and cultural Ontario for generations to come.

ENTRETIEN HIVERNAL DES ROUTES

M. Guy Bourguin: Encore une fois, nos routes du Nord ont été fermées.

Jeudi, nous avons demandé au ministre des Transports pourquoi il refuse de changer un plan qui, clairement, ne fonctionne pas. La réponse est une liste de projets du sud de l'Ontario et la répétition que nous avons les meilleures routes de l'Amérique du Nord. Cela ne reflète absolument pas la réalité de ce week-end.

La semaine dernière, l'autoroute 11 de Cochrane à Kapuskasing et la 655 ont fermé à partir de mercredi jusqu'à vendredi après-midi, un total de 53 heures, quand la qualification de classe 2 pour l'autoroute 11 dit qu'elle devrait être nettoyée après 13 heures.

Ça veut dire : les écoles étaient fermées. Les épiceries manquaient de nourriture. Les patients ont manqué des appontements médicaux. Les travailleurs sont restés bloqués—moi y compris, coincé à Timmins pendant des heures. J'ai même changé de vol de jeudi à vendredi.

C'est une réalité des gens du Nord. Et malgré la promesse d'Internet à haute vitesse partout, une grande partie de nos autoroutes n'a toujours pas de service cellulaire—impossible de vérifier le 511.

Une fois la route ouverte, les longues lignes filées de camionneurs tentent de rattraper le temps perdu, rendant les routes étroites enneigées encore plus dangereuses. Les fossés sont remplis de camionneurs.

J'espère que le ministre prendra enfin la voix du Nord au sérieux et viendra conduire sur nos routes cet hiver pour comprendre la réalité des gens du Nord.

1020

FIRE IN DON VALLEY WEST

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: I had planned to speak today about the challenges facing Thorncliffe Park residents in my riding of Don Valley West from the construction of the Ontario Line. That will have to wait. Unfortunately, on Thursday, a very serious fire started at 11 Thorncliffe Park Drive and 21 Overlea Boulevard, affecting over 400 families who have been displaced from their homes and still don't know when they can return.

I visited the site and spoke to residents. They and I are so grateful for the amazing work of the first responders who made sure every resident got out safely. I visited TNO, a fantastic community hub in the neighbourhood of Thorncliffe, initiated by Kathleen Wynne's government. TNO was able to provide emergency shelter and is now supporting residents who are scared and worried about their homes.

I want to give a very big thank you to Toronto fire, Toronto police, Toronto Emergency Management and TNO, who have been working around the clock to make sure residents are safe and supported.

Thank you, Red Cross, and your dedicated volunteers, and Councillor Rachel Chernos Lin and your staff, as you work closely with these groups to support our Thorncliffe Park community through this very difficult time. Thank you.

CONSTITUENCY STAFF

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: It is a pleasure to rise today to welcome my constituency staff to Queen's Park: Adam Bramburger, Danielle Letersky and Trisha Pretty. Thank

you for coming and for all that you do for our residents back home in Bay of Quinte.

As many of you in this room will appreciate, they are often the unsung heroes of provincial politics. Constituency staff play a vital role, connecting our constituents to the services that they need.

Our staff attend events on our behalf when we are double-booked or when a local business has a grand opening but we're up here at Queen's Park. They help ensure that our communities can connect with us and that we stay connected to our communities while we are away.

Thank you to Adam, Danielle and Trisha for the great work that you do. Thank you for making me look better than I deserve and thank you for always going the extra mile to provide support to everyone back home in Bay of Quinte.

I hope that you enjoy your time here today and I look forward to our lunch together following question period.

ROLEX SAILGP CHAMPIONSHIP

Mr. Chris Glover: Today I'm encouraging all parties in this House to seize an opportunity to showcase Ontario to the world. On Saturday, I was at a watch party for the Sail Grand Prix Championship at the Amsterdam brew pub on Toronto's iconic waterfront. Maybe I stayed there too long.

SailGP is the world's fastest sail racing league. It's 50-foot carbon fibre catamarans that don't sail across the water, they fly over it on hydrofoils, reaching speeds of up to 100 kilometres an hour. This is a made-in-Ontario technology. The first sailing hydrofoils came out of the Royal Canadian Yacht Club right here in Ontario.

And there's another Canadian dimension here: The Canadian NorthStar SailGP Team won the championship in Los Angeles last year, bringing pride to all of us in Canada. So here's the opportunity: There's a dedicated team trying to bring SailGP to Ontario in July 2027. We could have over 150,000 spectators watching from the shore of Toronto's inner harbour and a global audience of 3.5 million people, but time is of the essence. The team needs a commitment for seed funding from the provincial and federal governments by the end of the calendar year to bring this this iconic event to our beautiful province.

I encourage the Ministers of Sport and Tourism—let's work across party lines and with the federal government to seize the opportunity to boost Ontario's tourism and to showcase Ontario to the world. Let's bring the SailGP to Ontario in July 2027.

HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES

Hon. Steve Clark: Speaker, the signs of the Christmas season are everywhere, including right here at Queen's Park, where I must say that you've decked the halls beautifully.

On Friday it was incredible to join thousands of people to welcome the spectacular CPKC Holiday Train to Merrickville.

Speaker, I'm also feeling very festive, and I'm not talking about cancelling a night sitting. Today marks the start of my annual Spirit of Christmas Awards. I'm inviting residents to send me information and nominations for their favourite decorated homes so I can recognize those folks that go the extra mile to brighten up those frosty nights.

On Saturday, my team and I will be at the Brockville Santa Claus Parade, serving free hot chocolate to keep children of all ages warm while they wait for Santa.

On Sunday, December 14, it's my free skate with Santa, from noon to 1 p.m. at the Alaine Chartrand Community Centre in Prescott. In addition to a visit from old Saint Nick, we'll also have complimentary refreshments from the canteen.

I want to take this opportunity to thank all the volunteers who make all those special Christmas events in our communities happen, and those who give what they can to help the less fortunate and families. Your efforts are really the joy of Christmas. It makes Christmas shine brighter.

Merry Christmas, everyone.

VOLUNTEERS

MPP Lisa Gretzky: As the holiday season arrives in Windsor West, I'm filled with pride and gratitude for the generosity and community spirit that define my region. As many families feel the squeeze, especially with the ongoing tariff war, my community never fails to meet challenges with compassion and generosity. There are countless opportunities, especially at this time of year, to lift one another, and I'm inspired by the people and organizations who step up to make a positive difference in someone else's life.

One of our most cherished traditions is the Windsor Goodfellows paper sales campaign, which is in its 111th year. Last week, I joined volunteers on the streets for a few hours. Everyone was bundled up and determined to help raise funds that ensure families across our community can enjoy a brighter holiday season.

Thank you to the Windsor Goodfellows volunteers and to everyone who donated. Your generosity makes a significant impact.

I also want to recognize the vital work of other charities, food banks, shelters and community organizations that give so much year-round—the Windsor Youth Centre, Downtown Mission, UHC Hub of Opportunities, Street Help, Salvation Army, United Way, Hiatus House, the Welcome Centre Shelter for Women, and so many others. They are pillars of hope for those who need it most.

I encourage everyone who can help, whether through a donation or volunteering some time, to support one of the many incredible organizations that serve our community. When we come together, we build a community where every person is valued and supported.

To all of my constituents in Windsor West, I wish you a safe and happy holiday season.

RURAL HEALTHCARE SYMPOSIUM

MPP Paul Vickers: Madam Speaker, on November 14, I had the privilege of attending the Rural Healthcare Symposium hosted by the South East Grey Community Health Centre. It was a great event. Over 70 health care and community leaders came to discuss opportunities for collaboration, network with their peers, and hear presentations about the state of health care in our region from these organizations' own experiences. We heard from the mental health sector about how they are solving addiction issues on the ground. We heard from the long-term-care sector about how our community paramedicine regulations are helping seniors access care faster—including almost 4,900 home visits last year. And we heard from a local hospital network about how they are preparing for our aging population. But the presentation from our local Ontario health team really stuck out to me.

Through this government's primary care action plan, the Grey-Bruce Ontario Health Team received over \$1 million to attach 2,200 patients to primary care in the N0H postal code region. Project partners include the Bruce Peninsula Family Health Team, the Meaford and Thornbury family health organizations, and the South Bruce Peninsula family health organizations. This is only possible because of our government's commitments to primary care.

I want to thank my friend Alex Hector and his team from the South East Grey Community Health Centre for organizing such a great event.

STEVENSON MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

Mr. Brian Saunderson: This government, under Premier Ford, is working with the Stevenson Memorial Hospital and the surrounding communities to build a new hospital in my riding of Simcoe—Grey.

Stevenson Memorial opened its doors over 60 years ago, in 1964, to support a population of just under 10,000 people. Today that population is over 50,000 and is projected to grow by another 20,000 by 2051.

This project will transform the Stevenson into a modernized, state-of-the-art facility that will triple the size of the emergency department and add a new diagnostic imaging suite to house Stevenson's first MRI. Surgical services will be expanded with two fully equipped operating rooms.

Speaker, the Stevenson Memorial Hospital Foundation is hard at work on its Because of You campaign, to raise the projected \$80-million local share. And I'm happy to report that the community is stepping up. To date, the foundation has raised almost half that target, at over \$36 million and counting.

Recently, I had the pleasure to attend the foundation's Energy Experience 2025 event, to witness the power of that community first-hand. The MC announced that the goal of the night was to raise \$80,000 for a new portable X-ray machine and within 15 minutes, the community

pledged over \$120,000 for that machine, with the women's auxiliary leading the charge with a pledge of \$40,000.

1030

I want to recognize and thank foundation board chair Ted Vandevis, CEO Frank Cerisano, campaign chair Sylvia Biffis and the entire foundation team for their incredible work and determination to make that new hospital a reality. Thank you very much, Speaker, and merry Christmas, everyone.

FIRE IN HONG KONG

Mr. Billy Pang: Madam Speaker, if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to have a moment of silence in honour of the recent tragedy in Hong Kong on November 26, where 151 people lost their lives during a disastrous fire, and over 40 are missing.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): MPP Pang is seeking unanimous consent to have a moment of silence in honour of the recent tragedy in Hong Kong. Agreed? Agreed.

The House observed a moment's silence.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Kevin Holland: I would like to welcome today, from my constituency office in Thunder Bay, Mr. Harold Wilson.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I want to wish a warm welcome to my ever patient and tolerant wife, Mary, with us in the Speaker's gallery this morning, as well as my constituency's office staff Salam Esho, Cole Gorham and Jada Malott. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I'm very pleased today to welcome my parents and my husband to the Legislature: Geoff and Kathy Stiles, and my husband, Jordan Berger, with us in the Speaker's gallery.

Mr. Rob Cerjanec: I'd like to welcome Dorothy Noronha from Northumberland—Peterborough South to the House today and Khurram Qureshi from my community in Ajax. Welcome to your House.

Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady: I'd like to welcome to the House, from the beautiful riding of Haldimand—Norfolk, Katrina and Abbey Ferguson. Welcome.

Hon. David Piccini: It's an honour to introduce today's page captain, Lucas, along with his mom and dad, Emily and Daniel, and his sister Madeline, who are all here from the riding of Northumberland—Peterborough South. Welcome to Queen's Park.

In addition, I'd like to welcome Chloe and Allie from my constituency office who are here today, and Bonnie who's watching back at home on the telly. Welcome to Queen's Park and thank you for all you do for the people of Northumberland—Peterborough South.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: People from across rural Ontario are in the House today. I'm very proud to welcome class 21 of the Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: I would like to welcome McKinnon primary school from my riding in the gallery today. They're going to sing O Canada soon.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It gives me great pleasure to welcome Cynthia Lynch, Angela Mastronardi and Jane Tattersall from FilmOntario. I encourage all members to attend their reception at 5 o'clock today in room 230.

Mr. Chris Glover: I want to welcome the Spadina-Fort York youth council to the galleries today: Mayson, Fouad, Heike, Diego, Jennifer, Prisca, Andrew and Bianca. They're accompanied by Kaia and Keana from my office. Welcome to the Ontario Legislature.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: I have a few people to introduce on World AIDS Day. I want to introduce a fantastic East York community leader Justin Van Dette, who has been advocating for better access to prescription drugs for people living with HIV and AIDS for a long time, and a wonderful young graduate Olivia Howells. It's her first time at Queen's Park, so I hope we impress her and not scare her.

And number three: I'd like to welcome the wise waste wizards from Waste to Resource Ontario. They're worried about our landfill capacity. They're in the House today—

Hon. Nolan Quinn: I'd like to welcome my team from Cornwall here: Harry, Brittney, Jaxon and Adrian to the house. Welcome.

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: I'd like to recognize Waste to Resource Ontario members who were in the Legislative Assembly today including Ashley De Souza, CEO of W2RO; Darryl Wolk, manager of policy and government relations of W2RO; and all the members from across Ontario who are at Queen's Park today.

I also want to welcome Rachael Wood-Harman from my constituency office.

Ms. Natalie Pierre: I'd like to welcome, from the riding of Burlington, Michelle Perrone-Bonavita who is here with the grade 5 choir from McKinnon Public School.

Hon. Stan Cho: I want to also welcome FilmOntario. And I'm delighted to let you know that Drewry Secondary School is back from Willowdale. There's a concert today at 12:15 for Christmas.

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: I'd like to welcome Sonia Fiorini, a member of my constituency staff and constituent. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I'd like to wish welcome from the riding of Dufferin-Caledon: Boda Sloboanka, Karol Jakubczak and Calista Plourde. Welcome.

Hon. Michael Parsa: I'd like to welcome to the House my amazing team from the constituency office: Anna Nguyen, Saya Moaf, and Sina Madhiyan. Welcome to Queen's Park.

M. Stéphane Sarrazin: J'aimerais souhaiter la bienvenue à mon équipe : Noémie Prevost, Emilie Sabourin et Connor David sont ici. Merci pour le travail que vous faites auprès des gens de Glengarry-Prescott-Russell.

Mme Dawn Gallagher Murphy: I'd like to welcome the members of my constituency office: Rayane Boumala, as well as Olga Zavidovskiy, Daniel Goutovets and Elena. Thank you so much.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Members, if I could have your attention.

Joining us in the Speaker's gallery today—this is going to take a while—we have my mentor, the former Speaker, Ted Arnott, member for Wellington-Halton Hills in the 43rd Parliament, 42nd Parliament, 41st Parliament, 40th Parliament and 39th Parliament; representative of Waterloo-Wellington in the 38th Parliament, 37th Parliament; and the member for Wellington in the 36th Parliament and the 35th Parliament. Welcome back.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): None of us will be able to achieve that—none of us. You hold that record for sure.

This morning in the public gallery, we are joined by grade 4 and 5 students from McKinnon Public School in the riding of Mississauga-Erin Mills. They will perform O Canada and God Save the King, while signing the songs in American Sign Language. Please stand and join them with a vigorous rendition of our national and royal anthems.

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

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

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): You may be seated. That was wonderful. Thank you so much. That was brilliant.

1040

HOUSE SITTINGS

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

Hon. Steve Clark: I just want to advise the House that the night sitting scheduled for this evening has been cancelled.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I know; he's so disappointing, isn't he?

QUESTION PERIOD

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Marit Stiles: Good morning, Speaker. My question is for the Premier. I think I have some pretty incisive questions for him this morning.

Last week, Trillium reported that Dentacloud, a company run by the Ford family dentist, received over \$2 million from the government's Skills Development Fund. This is another instance of taxpayer dollars going to a business with close personal ties to the Premier.

My question to the Premier is, did he give \$2 million of government funding to his personal family dentist?

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

Hon. David Piccini: The Premier has already said that's incorrect.

What we are doing is making sure we've got a next generation of health care professionals trained in the province. In fact, we were the first—before the federal government—to introduce free dental care for low-income seniors. This has been impactful in my community and communities across Ontario.

It's estimated by the Canadian Dental Association that it will require thousands of additional dentists and health care professionals to support. We're going to keep making investments to support those front-line health care professionals and we're proud to support them on their training journey.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: I will say, I think the Premier is really putting his money where his mouth is.

Skilled workers are getting shut out of training and apprenticeships, all because of this government's under-funding, and then the Premier hands over SDF cheques to his dentist. Like, that's what's going on here: Workers falling behind while Conservative donors and lobbyists get a leg up. We've seen it over and over again.

Can the Premier explain why his close, personal friend and dentist—all you have to do is go to the dentist's website; the Premier is all over it—why they got \$2 million from this government?

Interjections.

Hon. David Piccini: Thank you. I hope I heard that correctly: "Sham training." Say that to every training union in every corner of Ontario that's benefiting from meaningful training—higher completion rates, higher apprenticeship rates. We have a record number of youth in apprenticeships today thanks to the incredible work that's doing.

That member opposite can't even name one training hall—not one—that she has visited in the last number of weeks. I know they have invited her. Organized labour abandoned her because she abandoned them when she opposed the 413, opposed the Bradford Bypass, opposed actually building, Speaker.

That's what these people do. That's why they're supporting this government.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: I would say this to the Minister of Labour first: I don't have to engage in this kind of labour cosplay because they know where I stand—working people in this province. It's absurd.

Anyway, back to the Premier: We know that the government ignored the objective ranking criteria because the minister has admitted that. We know that they hand-picked low-scoring applications that benefited their friends and insiders, over the stronger applications that would benefit workers. The Dentacloud website brags that they make clients "feel as comfortable and relaxed as the Ford family has" during visits. The Premier has even said that to get in touch with him or with the dentists, people can just call the Premier's personal phone number.

Again, back to the Premier: Could the Premier explain why a private dental clinic with close, personal connections to him and his family received \$2 million from this government?

Hon. David Piccini: Again, that's incorrect. Workers do know where the Leader of the Opposition stands, and it's sure as heck not with them. It's not with them.

How do I know that, Speaker? Because if it was up to them, they would have given pink slips to the men and women of Pickering Nuclear Generating Station, not to mention Wesleyville's new nuclear. They wouldn't even contemplate that, because they can't contemplate nation-building. They had the opportunity when they propped up the previous Liberal government. They didn't build anything, not long-term-care homes, not new hospitals, like Campbellford hospital in my riding.

New nuclear generating in Wesleyville, the Pickering refurbishment: These are things that are going to put men and women of this province to work. It's going to result in a higher number of apprentices training in Ontario. In fact, today we see a record number of youth registering for apprenticeships and a doubling of the number of women registering for apprenticeships. Speaker, this is all meaningful work taking place because the Premier is nation-building, and it's putting workers to work.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Marit Stiles: Trying to get answers from this government is like pulling teeth. And I will say, Speaker, it is very unfortunate that once again the Premier is not present in the House to answer the questions.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Order. The member knows better.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Last week, the government House leader got up in the House to try to lecture me about decorum and our responsibilities as MPPs, so let's talk about it. This same member was removed from his role as housing minister because of his role in the greenbelt scandal. This member is currently under RCMP criminal investigation, and now the same government is being investigated by the OPP anti-racketeering branch.

Is there a single decision this government made that won't require them to be investigated?

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

Hon. David Piccini: Speaker, let's talk about decisions this government has made: a decision to actually realize the potential of the Ring of Fire in the north. The Premier, last week, signed another historic agreement. We're making important investments into the Ring of Fire with Marten Falls and Webequie. This is going to bring unparalleled economic success, driving prosperity in the north, which will ensure prosperity across our province.

How about a commitment to actually build hospitals and expand health care capacity? That's what this Premier is doing. Or schools: The previous Liberal government was famous for shutting them down in rural communities

like mine. I remember picketing the lines in Norwood with members of my own community when they threatened to shut down Norwood high school. Well, under this Premier, we're building. We are building new schools in every corner of Ontario. We're also building critical infrastructure: roads, bridges and highways. They're against road building. They are part of that crazy mantra that doesn't even want to build roads. The men and women of the working class, men and women of the skilled trades, know that when we build those things—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Supplementary?

Ms. Marit Stiles: Last month, Speaker, the infamous John Mutton, who we all know as "Mr. X"—the House leader will certainly remember him—claimed that he was tipped off by the now Minister of Labour about the government's planned changes to the greenbelt at a Conservative Party fundraiser. He says the Minister of Labour told him about the changes before any legislative changes or public consultations had started. Last month, Trillium obtained a transcript of an interview where Mr. X told the exact same thing to the Integrity Commissioner under oath.

Does the minister still confirm or does he actually continue to deny this story?

1050

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

MPP Mohamed Firin: We were sent to this House to protect the workers of this province, and that's what this program is doing.

So 600,000 individuals have been trained; 100,000 have received a job within the first 60 days—Speaker, that's one in six. There is no other program across this country that does that, but the Leader of the Opposition continues to attack the unions and continues to attack the workers—the same unions that invited her. LIUNA 183—Victoria Mancinelli invited her to visit the same training centres and she doesn't want to go there. She does not want to go there. Maybe she can tell us why.

But, Speaker, our job is to protect the workers of this province and that's what we're doing. We're not going to take any lessons from the NDP.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Well, that sure is tough talk when the minister couldn't get out of here fast enough—

Interjections.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I'll withdraw.

Interjections.

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

The member knows better. The member will withdraw.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I did withdraw.

How can anyone believe this minister though, Speaker? During the greenbelt scandal, the Integrity Commissioner found that developers had improper influence in deciding which parcels of land were to be removed. There are serious allegations that the now Minister of Labour provided privileged information to a lobbyist.

Now, we have another instance where the same minister has been accused of giving preferential treatment to Skills Development Fund applicants with close personal ties to this government—even the Premier's family dentist.

How can Ontarians trust a government that is always clouded in scandal?

MPP Mohamed Firin: It's really sad because the leader does all these stunts where she will mention individuals that are not here, knowing that she's not supposed to, but she does these stunts to get the videos, just like the same stunt where she had those protesters.

But, Speaker, we're here to talk about the workers of this province and that's what our government continues to do. One in six workers that have been trained have received a job, and that's what this program is about.

I'll tell you the story of Joanna, a young lady that immigrated from Venezuela who got trained through—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The member for Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas will come to order.

MPP Mohamed Firin: —Local 75. Today, she has a career; she's putting a down payment on a home. That's what this program is about. It's about giving hope to the generations. It's about giving hope to Ontarians, and that's what we will do. We will never take lessons from that leader.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. John Fraser: Another day, another revelation about the rot that is the Skills Development Fund. It turns out that the dentist at the centre of Dentacloud, John Maggirias—well, he's not just a donor; he's the Ford family dentist. You remember that Dentacloud got \$2 million from the Skills Development Fund.

You know, there's a show called *Stranger Things*. This is a stranger thing. How does the Premier's family dentist get \$2 million? I don't think it can get much stranger than this, but maybe it will.

With 700,000 people out of work in this province, how does the Premier justify giving \$2 million to his family dentist?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The member for York South-Weston.

MPP Mohamed Firin: Speaker, I mentioned in this House a few weeks ago that under his leadership—the leader of the third party, for the third time—nothing in this province was being done. We lost 350,000 jobs that went to the US.

He had an opportunity to create the same jobs that we're creating now. One in six people are getting jobs within 60 days, Speaker. In his riding of Ottawa—I told you the story of Kevin, who put a down payment on his home now and he's on his way to getting married. This is what this program does—600,000 trained; 100,000 with a job within the first 60 days.

Maybe he can tell us what he did when he was in government.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Supplementary?

Mr. John Fraser: Trying to get an answer out of this government on anything to do with the Skills Development Fund is worse than a root canal, and I've had quite a few. I know I'm touching a nerve though, I can tell.

There are so many connections in this thing. The Premier says, "I don't know the dentist," but like the Web is full of the dentist, John Maggirias, and the Premier together. There are some videos and they're actually pretty chummy, kind of hubba-chubba there; talking about each other and having a good time. But the Premier says, "I don't know him, never seen him. I don't know who he is." That's kind of strange. This denial is a pretty thin veneer.

So, Speaker, I guess the question is, is the Premier on the dentist's family plan or is the dentist on the Premier's family plan?

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

Hon. David Piccini: Speaker, I'm sorry to hear he's had so many root canals; he should eat less candy.

We're not going to apologize for making investments in health care professionals. He had the opportunity when he was parliamentary assistant, and he didn't invest in long-term-care homes, didn't invest in the front-line heroes. We know they fired nurses when they had the opportunity. So we're going to make investments in health care professionals to support their training—to make investments in every corner of Ontario to support pathways into meaningful jobs, Speaker.

They had the opportunity to stand up here. They may not like the answers, but the reality is we are investing in meaningful apprenticeship pathways, we're investing in training centres in every corner of Ontario, we're building a stronger Ontario and we're creating the talent pipeline needed to do it.

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

Mr. John Fraser: Back to the minister: If there's any decay going on, it's over there.

Whatever the family plan is, we know that there are lots of reward points, right? Lots of reward points that never expire. But ironically, the Premier is sneaking through a piece of legislation that will allow everyday Ontarians' reward points to expire, favouring big corporations over everyday Ontarians—rewarding people the Skills Development Fund, allowing big corporations to take away people's reward points just before Christmas.

So, just who is the Premier for? His friends or the everyday Ontarians who need support and help every day?

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

Hon. Stephen Crawford: I will say to the member opposite of the third party: I will definitely give you an A for acting but an F for the facts, because you are way, way off base.

Speaker, strong leadership requires a steady hand. It requires being calm. It requires looking at the facts before you speak. What I can say is if these people were in charge

during COVID or during our current US tariff war, people would be running for the hills in panic.

First off, let me be very clear: Absolutely nothing in our bill makes it easier for companies to take away your reward points. Can I repeat that? First off, nothing, absolutely nothing—

Interjections.

Hon. Stephen Crawford: Are you listening? You're talking over there. Do you want to listen to the facts?

Nothing in the bill makes it easier to take away reward points, full stop.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. John Fraser: Well, I'll give the minister an S for spin, because he's taking away the only protections that exist for reward points in legislation. He'll have a chance to prove that a committee.

But my question is for the President of the Treasury Board. I've asked the President of the Treasury Board several times about why Keel Digital Solutions, a company flagged for forensic audit, under a forensic audit and then referred to the OPP, continued to receive money—tens of millions of dollars.

It's hard to understand why the President of the Treasury Board will not even look at me when I ask this question, so I'm going to ask it once more: How is it that a company under a forensic audit in this province can continue to receive tens of millions of taxpayer dollars? How is that?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery.

Hon. Stephen Crawford: The member of the third party started off this round of questions talking about reward points, and I think he didn't get the answer he wanted, because he hasn't gone back to that, as is parliamentary tradition. But let's go back to that.

Speaker, our goal is simple: We want to make sure people in this province buy with confidence and keep every dollar they earn in their reward points with confidence. Whether it's your Optimum cards or Petro-Points, your credit card points, anything online, new protections are actually going to protect those further.

Here's what our proposed changes actually do: They strengthen consumer protections; they give people more rights, not less. Number one, businesses will have to respond when someone asks for their points back. If your points were frozen, cancelled or disappeared, companies will now have an obligation to respond back to that, and for the first time ever, you will have the opportunity to take legal recourse. Is that not something you can support?

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

1100

Mr. John Fraser: The only PC points that this government is taking care of are the ones that they award. That's it. You're taking out protections and legislations on this.

The President of the Treasury Board is refusing to answer these questions, and that's because she doesn't

want to be covered with the stench and the stink that's here. The president's job is to protect taxpayers' money. And if you take a look at not just this forensic audit, but the whole—the whole—of the Skills Development Fund, what the Auditor General said and all the muck and dirt that's there, for the President of the Treasury Board to refuse to respond to the people of Ontario as to what she's doing to protect taxpayers' money—it's just wrong.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Government House leader.

Hon. Steve Clark: You know, when you became the third party, you got extra dollars for your research. But to recycle your questions over and over every week—you're going to get the same answer, right?

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

Hon. Steve Clark: I was very clear last week: the Ministry of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security did a routine audit where they found enough information back in 2023 to ask for a forensic audit—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The member for Orléans will come to order.

Hon. Steve Clark: The Ministry of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security ultimately received the results of that forensic audit, and as has been put into Hansard numerous times, within 24 hours the Minister of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security forwarded it to the Ontario Provincial Police—end of story, asked and answered.

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

Mr. John Fraser: The clock starts at the end of the first audit that flagged a forensic audit. That's when the clock starts, and that's almost two years ago.

And the President of the Treasury Board can't answer one single question, won't even stand up and give a non-answer. What does that tell you, folks? She doesn't want to have anything to do with this, just like the rest of the members over there.

It's \$27 million to bars and nightclubs, \$10 million to strip clubs, \$2 million to the Premier's family dentist—should I go on? Is there more? What's it going to take for the President of the Treasury Board to stand up and take responsibility for her job: internal audit and protecting taxpayers' money?

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

Hon. Nolan Quinn: The results of that audit—I took leadership and I reported it to the OPP within 24 hours. I'll repeat it again, because it doesn't look like any of the third party is listening: Within 24 hours, the OPP had the results of that audit.

He's shaking his head. I guess he's just not listening that well, Speaker.

But you know what? We'll talk about what we are doing for the post-secondary sector that he continues to vote against, our billion-dollar investment in budget 2025 that that member voted against and he continues to vote

against. He seems to be proud voting against our billion dollars that we're investing into post-secondary, Speaker. That whole party seems to be really happy with the fact that they voted against budget 2025.

You continue to stand up here and preach about caring about post-secondary, but you vote down over \$2.5 billion that we've invested into the post-secondary sector, and both the third party and the NDP—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The leader of the third party will come to order.

Hon. Nolan Quinn: —will continue to vote against the post-secondary sector. Will—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The leader of the third party will come to order. This is the final time I'm going to ask you to come to order. I will start warning and then naming people.

ROAD SAFETY

Ms. Jennifer K. French: My question is for the Premier. The Ford government has provided municipalities with speed limit signs so large that they don't fit on existing poles. They're so big that they could make roads less safe by creating blind spots for children crossing the street.

Meanwhile, the government refuses to invest in proven measures that actually slow drivers down. Why is this government more focused on photo ops and supersized speed limit signs than on keeping kids safe?

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

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: I can't believe that we have to stand here and talk about a municipality not being able to install a sign, Madam Speaker—that too?—when we offered to install those signs for them, gave them over a month's worth of time to do so.

Interjection.

Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I am warning the member for Orléans.

Back to the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Thank you, Madam Speaker. We continue to be focused on proactive versus reactive measures when it comes to safety. We know that, time and time again, these cameras—there are specific ones. One—let's take an example from the city of Toronto—issued 70,000 tickets every single year. The number of tickets went up every single year. What does that tell us? It's not working.

These were cash grabs in certain areas, so we've got to focus on how we can limit the speed at the point of entry. How do you do that? Traffic-calming measures. Speed bumps are what can help, and that's what the \$210-million fund is meant for. We'll work with municipalities to deploy that.

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

Ms. Jennifer K. French: It was a mistake to outlaw automated safety cameras in school zones and legislate giant oversized speed limit signs to replace them. They're not going to keep kids safe.

This Premier will remember Parkside Drive. We have talked about Parkside Drive in this chamber before. Mr. and Mrs. Avila were killed there in 2021. Within days of this Premier's decision to ban speed cameras on Parkside Drive, we have already seen a collision that has put a pedestrian in the hospital.

So my question is, how many more people are going to be hospitalized before this government finally takes road safety seriously?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: That's why we're focused on measures that will actually stop the individuals from speeding in these zones like school zones or community safety zones. You put a speed bump in place; it is physically impossible for any individual to go through that at a very high speed. Getting a ticket three weeks later is not effective. That's why we've moved towards a \$210-million fund, of which over \$42 million has gone to municipalities already, to help support additional traffic calming measures that will actually work and reduce the speed within these zones.

This is in addition to all of the measures that we have put forward. I sat there and introduced, with my colleague Minister Kerzner, the fall justice bill that strengthens provisions on those who are dangerously driving on our roads and imposes lifetime suspensions.

Our government will continue to ensure that we build our roads as some of the safest in the province and the country by ensuring that we have more rules and regulations that hold—

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

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Rob Cerjanec: Mr. Premier, Christmas is almost here, but you're acting like the Grinch. The Whos in Whoville are not very happy right now. They work hard and they save up their rewards points to spend them over the holidays. Premier, why are you trying to pull a fast one on us and take away our hard-earned rewards points?

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

Hon. Stephen Crawford: To the member opposite: I would suggest that I gave an answer to this already, but I will repeat myself. I want everybody in the House, and everyone in the province of Ontario for that matter, to fully understand what is in this bill. The government of Ontario under Premier Doug Ford have stood strong with consumers year after year. This bill is another example of that. We'll see if the opposition supports consumers because if they vote against the red tape reduction bill, this is what they're voting against.

Interjection.

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

Hon. Stephen Crawford: This is what they're voting against: Businesses right now will have to respond when someone asks for their points back. If your points were frozen, cancelled or disappear, the company now will have to respond. And, for the first time ever, consumers will have the right to take legal action against the company if they unilaterally take away your points.

So my question is, who is the real Grinch here? I think it's the opposition. I encourage you to support this bill and side with Santa Claus.

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

Mr. Rob Cerjanec: I'd encourage the minister to reread that bill and schedule 5 in the bill because it does take away reward points from the expiry of time, and we're going to leave it up to this government to trust—I don't trust them on this.

Premier, you're taking away our only protection on losing reward points. Protecting rewards points is not red tape. People are already stretched thin. Grocery prices are up. Housing is still unaffordable. People are losing their jobs and young people—they're looking for work.

These points are one of the few small breaks that people get. Instead of relief in our Christmas stockings, you're giving us a lump of coal. Mr. Premier, you like to say you're for the little guys, so prove it. Do you stand with the little guy, or do you stand with billionaires?

Hon. Stephen Crawford: Again, Speaker, I encourage the opposition to really take a look at this bill and understand what's in it. We are standing with consumers.

Speaker, let me tell you something: The only people trying to take points away from their families are the ones spreading fear instead of facts. Could you imagine if you were in a movie theatre and someone yelled "Fire!" and there was no fire? That's what the opposition is doing right now.

1110

Nothing expires because of this bill. No one loses anything. And before anything takes effect, clear regulations will have to be written and approved in plain sight. Pure fact: The government is standing up for consumers. We're making sure Ontarians keep what they've earned and we're giving families stronger tools to fight back when companies don't play fair. So stand with us, stand with the people of Ontario, stand with Santa Claus and support this change.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

MPP Billy Denault: My question is for the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery and Procurement.

Ontario families work hard for every dollar they earn, and reward points have become an important way for them to stretch their budgets. Whether it's groceries, gas or everyday purchases, these points help households save money and plan for the future.

But, Speaker, there's been a lot of misinformation spread by the opposition about our government's new rewards points policy changes. Ontarians deserve clarity—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Withdraw.

MPP Billy Denault: Withdraw.

Ontarians deserve clarity, not scare tactics. That's why our government introduced stronger protections for consumers, to ensure families keep the points they've earned. Speaker, can the minister please tell the House how these new reward points protections will safeguard consumers and dispel claims being spread by the Liberals?

Hon. Stephen Crawford: What a great question from a great member. I mean, you really understand, you've read the bill. Thank you.

Speaker, our government's rewards policy is about protecting families and ensuring they keep what they've earned. Let me be crystal clear: Nothing in our bill makes it easier for companies to take away your points. That claim from the Liberals is simply not true. The current rules already stop companies from wiping out points just because time has passed, and those protections remain in place.

What our changes do is strengthen consumer—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The member for Ajax has been warned.

Hon. Stephen Crawford: For the first time ever, companies will be required to respond when points are frozen, cancelled or disappear, and consumers will have the right to take legal action to get those points back.

We're also giving the government power to introduce strong rules against unfair expiration, cancellation or suspension of reward points. That means new disclosure requirements, penalties and remedies to protect the people of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

MPP Billy Denault: Speaker, protecting consumers means more than passing legislation; it means delivering measurable results that Ontarians can trust. Families want to know that their points are safe, that companies are held accountable and that transparency is guaranteed. The Liberals have been spreading fear, suggesting people will lose their points, but Ontarians deserve the truth.

Speaker, can the minister tell us how these reward points changes will ensure real accountability and deliver measurable protections for families across Ontario?

Interjection.

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

Back to the minister.

Hon. Stephen Crawford: I think the Liberals are getting a little upset with our response to their questions on this particular issue.

Accountability is the backbone of awards points policy, and for the first time ever, families will have the legal tools to fight back when companies don't play fair. Nothing expires because of this bill. No one loses anything. Before any new rules take effect, clear regulations will be written and in plain sight. What our changes do is strengthen consumer rights. For the first time ever, companies will be required to respond when points are frozen.

Speaker, let's talk about who's really playing the Grinch here. The Liberals have voted against every single measure we've put forward to save Ontarians money, from cutting the gas tax to scrapping licence plate sticker fees, banning tolls, freezing driver's licence fees, introducing One Fare, raising ODSP and cutting income taxes for low-income workers. We'll take no lessons from the Liberals and the ones who are spreading fear and misinformation, and this Christmas, they'll be getting nothing but coal in their stockings.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Jeff Burch: Speaker, through you to the Minister of Health: Last week we learned that Niagara Health will be eliminating nearly 100 jobs in hospitals across the Niagara region. These jobs are being eliminated to deal with a deficit of \$26 million caused by this provincial government. The same thing is playing out in hospitals all across the province, as already-understaffed hospitals struggle to deal with deficits created by this government's negligence.

Will this minister apologize to hospital workers and patients in Niagara and across Ontario, and provide the funding necessary to protect these jobs?

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

Mr. Anthony Leardi: For every year over the last three years, the ministry has increased operational funds to hospitals by \$1 billion—every year for the last three years.

And earlier this year, the minister required all hospitals in the province of Ontario to present a three-year plan to make sure that all hospitals reach a balanced budget within the next three years. We believe that it is responsible for us to ask for that plan. All of the hospitals have complied and have submitted their plans, and we anticipate that they will have the operational funding going forward.

Just as a reminder, that is an additional \$1 billion that was financed to hospitals in the province of Ontario every year for the last three years. That's a total of \$3 billion over the last three years, and we do believe that it is right for the government to ask hospitals to reach balance.

Mr. Jeff Burch: The minister has made a habit of blaming local hospitals and local hospital boards for her own government's incompetence, as if it's a coincidence that 50% of Ontario hospitals are dealing with deficits.

All across Ontario, in cities like North Bay and Ottawa, this government is pushing hundreds of overworked hospital workers out the door at Christmastime due to deficits created by their own neglect and incompetence.

This government says they support workers. This Premier says he is supporting Ontario jobs. When will this Premier and this minister finally find the courage to do their own job?

Mr. Anthony Leardi: Speaker, the hospitals in Ontario have received an additional funding allocation of \$1 billion every year for the last three years for their operations.

The member specifically referred to North Bay. The North Bay hospital specifically had an increase of \$50 million since 2020, which constitutes a 20% increase in that North Bay hospital's budget since 2020.

We believe that it is appropriate for the ministry to require hospitals to reach a balanced-budget situation, and for that reason the minister has required that hospitals submit a three-year plan to demonstrate that they will reach a balanced budget within the next three years. We believe that demonstrates the responsible use of taxpayers' money, and we will continue supporting our hospitals both in their operational phases and in their capital programs.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

MPP Stephanie Smyth: My question is for the Premier. At this time of year, people in Toronto-St. Paul's and right across the province are stretching every penny—say, using those rewards points they saved up all year long to have for the holidays. They're doing everything they can to make the holidays feel normal for their families.

And while they're tightening their belts, this government is handing out millions of taxpayer dollars through the skills development slush fund with almost no accountability. At the same time, renters are being squeezed by above-guideline increases that no one can reasonably afford.

Through you, Speaker, to the Premier: How does he keep enabling his minister, who shows so little respect for taxpayer money and so little respect for the people just trying to stay housed?

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

Hon. Stephen Crawford: To the member opposite, and to the people of Ontario, I am so thrilled that we have Premier Doug Ford and this Progressive Conservative government leading the province of Ontario right now. Because this is a government that has put forward consumer protection legislation and affordability measures. We are the government that supported cutting the gas tax, scrapping licence plate sticker fees, banning tolls, freezing drivers' licences, cutting income taxes for low-income workers—the largest tax cut in the history of Ontario—raising the minimum wage and cutting tuition to college and universities—a 10% reduction, frozen for a number of years.

You voted against it. You have stood against every affordability measure that we have put through this House. This government stands on the side of the consumers and the people of Ontario.

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

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Speaker, the people in my community aren't asking for much. They just want stability. They want fairness. They want a government that doesn't treat public money like a gift bag for political friends while ignoring renters who are being pushed to the brink.

That's why I introduced Protecting Renters from Unfair Above Guideline Rent Increases Act, because this government clearly is more concerned defending its own minister, who's signing cheques to the Ford family dentist—more concerned about that—than helping the tenants and giving them the security that they deserve.

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So I'm going to ask the Premier again: Why is this government rewarding insiders while refusing to protect—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): This has nothing to do with the original question.

Next question. I recognize the member for Cambridge.

Mr. Brian Riddell: Thank you, Speaker. This is just ridiculous, and I don't even know the proper answer for it because it's so silly.

Interjections.

Mr. Brian Riddell: Oh, my question—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Next question.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Doly Begum: Good morning, Premier.

Last week, the Premier said, "Get the damn thing moving," when asked about the Eglinton LRT. So my question to the minister is, will he?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: As we stated earlier today, we are on the last day of revenue service demonstration for the Crosstown project, after which it will follow the exact same process as Finch did. We will mark substantial completion shortly thereafter, in the next week, and the line will then go over to the TTC members, who will then tell us and work with us on an opening date. So we are committed to getting this line open. Today, we are on the last day of revenue service demonstration.

We'll continue to build transit across this province. I hope that the members across, whether it be the NDP, Liberals, support this government and our \$70-billion investment into public transit—which, to date, they haven't.

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

Ms. Doly Begum: Speaker, 15 long years, countless delays, cost overruns, opaque bureaucracy, over 100 vice-presidents—all on the public dime, and no opening date. In fact, someone actually hired a mariachi band to celebrate a quinceañera for the Eglinton LRT. It's getting that ridiculous.

The Premier now has said that he will find out when the opening date is. How is it possible that nobody in this government knows what's going on—not the minister, not the Premier?

Will the Premier or the minister get up and give us an actual answer as to what on earth is going on with the Eglinton LRT?

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

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Madam Speaker: First of all, I've got a soft spot for this MPP—I do—from Scarborough and so on and so forth. But let me just remind

her that it was a disaster started under the Liberal government. I was sitting at the table with my brother 15 years ago, and we were saying, “Let’s do it this way.” But the Liberal government said, “No, we’re doing it that way.” I agree with her frustration. We’re finally getting it going.

The good-news story is, Eglinton West was six weeks ahead of time.

We’re making a lot of groundwork on the Ontario Line—one of the toughest, toughest builds you could ever do is build underneath the city.

We’re expanding the Scarborough subway that the Liberal government would always, always vote against. When I was a city councillor, when Rob was mayor—“build the Scarborough subway.” They refused to build it. Finally, the people of Scarborough—because our government, we’re giving them love.

And we’re doing the Yonge extension as well, the LRT out in Mississauga—

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

FRENCH-LANGUAGE SERVICES

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Franco-Ontarian tenants continue to face serious barriers at the Landlord and Tenant Board. The board still doesn’t have enough bilingual judges, and francophone tenants are stuck with clumsy interpretation procedures that make it harder for them to tell their story and defend their rights.

The minister keeps saying that there aren’t enough francophone applicants for judicial appointments. But qualified candidates do exist—people like Professor Gilles LeVasseur, who has applied four times, met every requirement, and still gets rejected at the ministerial stage. What message does that send to francophones who simply want equal access to justice?

So I will ask the Attorney General: When will the government appoint more francophone judges and ensure that francophone tenants have real, equitable, bilingual access to a fair Landlord and Tenant Board?

Hon. Doug Downey: It is true that 1.5 million Ontarians do speak French, and 620,000 Ontarians identify as francophone. This is a very important part of Ontario.

I’ve been working with our access-to-justice-in-French advisory committee that we established in 2018; it provides linkages between the government and places like the Landlord and Tenant Board.

Madam Speaker, last year, the annual report indicates that we had 835 hearings in French and tribunals overall have 39 bilingual adjudicators that are cross-appointed to more than one tribunal. So the services are being provided, and we look forward to improving as we go. Everything can be improved, but we are providing the service and we’re providing the service in French. If there are improvements, I’m happy to make them.

I guess my question back to the member, Madam Speaker, is how she knows what landed on my desk.

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

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Madam Speaker, we can improve the procedures, and I’ve given cues to the minister about how to do that. He just needs to get the action.

Instead of helping tenants by fixing the board, this government keeps making life easier for bad landlords now with Bill 60, which will fast-track evictions and push even more vulnerable people out of their homes. In Ottawa–Vanier, where tenants already struggle to get help in French, Bill 60 will mean even more families showing up at Action Logement for help when the organization is already stretched to the limit. You don’t solve the housing crisis by putting more people on the street.

I will ask the Attorney General: When will this government recognize the real-world impact of Bill 60 and ensure its housing policies protect tenants—francophone tenants included—instead of making their situation worse?

Hon. Doug Downey: The opposition asked us to make sure that individuals have hearings both in French and in English. So when we bring forward reforms to tighten up the system and make sure that we continue to bring down the backlog—which we have brought down by over 80% at this point—and when we make it possible for tenants to have those hearings faster so that they can have their matters resolved, we’re hearing that they don’t support that. At the same time, they’re saying that they don’t want those improvements, but they want us to go faster. They don’t want those improvements, but they want us to tilt the board towards something that will not help anybody, Madam Speaker.

We won’t apologize for this continuous improvement. As I said, we have 39 bilingual adjudicators. That’s 10% of all the adjudicators available for French-language services and we are providing that service.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. John Jordan: My question is for the Minister of Red Tape Reduction. Ontario families want to know that our health care system is strong, modern and able to deliver the world-class care they need, when and where they need it.

Under the previous Liberal government, health care professionals seeking to practise in Ontario faced unnecessary and significant bureaucratic delays. Our government recognized that the status quo is not working. We are taking action to protect Ontarians and ensure patients receive the care they deserve. Our government has been clear: Cutting red tape is essential to strengthening our health care system and keeping Ontario competitive.

Speaker, can the minister explain how our government’s as-of-right changes of health care professionals are helping to protect Ontario families and reinforce our health care system?

Hon. Andrea Khanjin: This is another example of how our government inherited a system and a government that said “no.” We’re building a system and a government that says “go.” It’s not just about deregulation; it’s about

modernization. We said, “Enough to the red tape.” We need to reduce the barriers.

If a doctor could practise in Saskatchewan, they can practise here in Ontario, and every Ontarian is better off. Speaker, this is yet another example of how we’re putting people above paperwork. We’re putting people in the centre of everything we do, and we’re embracing technology. We’ve already heard feedback from doctors using AI scribes that have been able to reduce their paperwork by 71%, freeing up 95,000 hours every year, allowing them to do what they do best, which is take care of patients.

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

Mr. John Jordan: I want to thank the minister for her leadership.

The previous Liberal government, backed by the NDP, left Ontario with outdated systems and endless paperwork. They slowed down services and made life harder for families. But today, our government is doing the opposite. We are modernizing health care, cutting red tape and protecting Ontario. That includes using technology to help health professionals spend more time with patients and less time on paperwork.

1130

Speaker, can the minister explain how AI scribes are helping reduce administrative burdens and what the results have been so far?

Hon. Andrea Khanjin: An AI scribe is another example of how we’re modernizing our system. We’re putting people at the heart of everything we do, and it shows that we inherited a system that punished ambition. Instead, we’re replacing it with one that rewards ambition.

Speaker, we’re going to be unlocking every sector of our economy from health care to our critical minerals to manufacturing to forestry—manufacturing and the auto sector—all which have been mired by red tape.

Thanks to this government we’re unlocking the opportunity so it moves as fast as the people ready to seize those opportunities. It’s all under the leadership of Premier Ford. We will not stop reducing red tape. This is why we’re building on a record of reducing \$1.2 billion in red tape every year for businesses and people, and we’re reducing 1.8 million hours for those individuals.

Speaker, we will not stop. We’ll continue to protect Ontario.

GOVERNMENT’S RECORD

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Speaker, my question is to the Premier. This morning Feed Ontario released their report and every MPP has a copy on their desk. It tallies 8.7 million food bank visits, an increase of 13% since last year—a staggering 165% since Premier Ford cruelly scrapped rent control. One million people in Ontario use the food bank. One in four users are working, but 30% of food bank users—30%—are children.

The holidays are coming. Children and families are suffering. Let that sink in for a minute.

Is Premier Ford for the people or is he for the poverty?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Merci pour cette question très importante, encore, pour le peuple de l’Ontario.

Thank you for the question, a very important question.

Madam Speaker, there’s no question that this government since day one—I repeat: day one—has been focused on affordability for all Ontarians. That’s why we highlighted in our fall economic statement again that we’ve put \$12 billion back in the pockets of the hard-working people and families of Ontario. That’s why we acted early to put more money back in people’s pockets for gas so that we cut the gas tax, brought that down 10 cents a litre along with cap-and-trade, we obviously took the tolls off the 412, the 418, the 407 east and for those who are taking transit, making one integrated fare saving people up to \$1,600 a year.

These are the type of measures this government is doing, putting more money back in all Ontarians’ pockets.

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

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: The minister says they’re focused on affordability, but it’s pretty clear that they are failing.

If this government wants to pretend it’s running like a business, their business is under RCMP investigation. Their business has stickers that don’t stick. Their business had disappearing licence plates and their business is being investigated by the OPP from the anti-rackets division. In fact, their business would cost every single Ontario \$87,000—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The Minister of Education has been warned.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It’s clear that this government is having a party with the public purse.

Food bank usage is an early predictor of homelessness, and Ontario’s jobs disaster and affordability disaster Premier is putting organizations at risk as well. Two thirds of food banks are concerned about operating for the next six months. One in two are worried they won’t have enough food. One in three will have to pause, reduce or end services.

The Premier clearly has a grift strategy and a donor strategy, but where is the strategy to help people who are at risk of homelessness?

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

Hon. Doug Ford: I want to thank the member for his question. And I just find it ironic that the member votes against everything that we do.

I want to remind him also last month the job numbers came out. Last month: 350 million people in the US created 119,000 jobs—350 million, 119,000. In Canada, there was 65,000 jobs created, but guess what, folks, 55,000 of those jobs were created right here in Ontario. The reason being is because we never ever raise a tax. We’ve seen \$70 billion of investment into our province; \$40 billion alone in investment right here. The most important thing: There are 1,080,000 more people—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The member from Windsor West has been warned.

Hon. Doug Ford: —that have a job than when you folks were in charge because you chased 300,000 jobs out of this province.

We've created the environment for our province to thrive and prosper with infrastructure—\$220 billion. We're building hospitals, we're building roads, we're building bridges, we're building schools, and you vote against it every single time—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): A reminder: I am warning people.

I recognize the leader of the third party.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. John Fraser: I'm still trying to get my head around this Skills Development Fund. We have vet clinics. We have software companies. We have lawyers. We have \$27 million to bars and nightclubs in downtown Toronto, \$10 million to the owner of a strip club.

Now we have a dentist, John Maggirias, who's at the centre of Dentacloud, who got \$2 million from the Skills Development Fund. But he's not just a donor; he's the Ford family dentist. So my question to the Premier is, how is it that—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Warning.

Mr. John Fraser: —the Premier has sent \$2 million dollars of skills development funds to the Ford family dentist?

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

Hon. David Piccini: Speaker, let me help him wrap his head around it. It's not true. It's not true at all.

What we have done is launch a fund in the wake of the pandemic to help people get jobs with monthly reporting, visits to visit the training, financial audits, improving after every round and improving with the recommendations of the Auditor General. We're going to keep training people.

I know it's a concept hard for them to understand because they chased 300,000 jobs out of Ontario. Last month alone, 55,000 jobs right here—over 55,000 in Ontario. To create the conditions for that, you've got to have talent pipelines. That's what we're doing: training in every corner of Ontario.

He's never visited one union training hall—not one. I'd invite him out to see, because these men and women are getting to work thanks to the investments of this Premier in roads, in highways, in bridges, in hospitals they couldn't build, in long-term care homes he couldn't build when he was in charge.

We're going to keep getting the job done, creating meaningful employment opportunities for Ontarians.

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

Mr. John Fraser: I don't know about you, Speaker, but whenever the Premier flashes those pearly whites, all I'm going to think is, "Skills Development Fund."

I know that they're denying that any relationship exists, and the Premier has said that publicly, but there's pictures of them together all over the Web. There's a video, and they look pretty friendly. They look like they've known each other for a while. They're pretty, as I like to say, hubba-chubba.

So how is it that when Ontarians are struggling just to pay the bills—they can't even afford a dentist—the Premier is sending \$2 million of skills development funds to the family dentist?

Hon. David Piccini: That's just weird.

This government is fighting for a stronger Ontario, nation-building—something impossible for them to understand after driving 300,000 jobs out of this province. We're creating those conditions.

The Ring of Fire in the north is going to require a next generation of miners, like Jennifer, who I've referenced in this House, supported through the Skills Development Fund, or Windsor—the incredible advancements in automotive. We're investing in hospitals, in bridges, in highways.

Literally, the Liberal Party today opposes building roads. That's why they didn't win a single seat in Brampton: because they oppose the 413 and the Bradford Bypass.

We're going to keep building for a stronger Ontario, standing up to President Trump, making sure Ontarians have meaningful training opportunities, rapid training opportunities that can help them upskill to land a better job with a bigger paycheque. That's all happening right here in this Ontario.

BAIL REFORM

Mr. Brian Riddell: My question is to the Associate Solicitor General for Auto Theft and Bail Reform.

Speaker, Ontario families and residents expect government to put their safety first. They are concerned about media reports of violent offenders being released on bail only to reoffend as soon as they are back on the street. They know the bail system is broken, and they want to see change. That's why our government has been steadfast in our demand for meaningful bail reform.

Can the Associate Solicitor General explain how our government is standing up on behalf of Ontarians and leading the call for tougher bail laws to keep offenders off our streets?

Hon. Zee Hamid: My colleague is right: Our government has been consistent and unequivocal on the need for bail reform in this country. For far too long, Canada's broken bail system has let repeat offenders out onto our street. Under this Premier's leadership, our government is saying enough is enough. We have been in constant contact with the federal government in our effort to push hard for meaningful bail reform, and our calls for action are working.

Recent amendments to the Criminal Code and Bill C-14 include several measures our government has been campaigning for, such as reverse-onus bail provision for certain serious offences, new aggravating factors in

sentencing and the possibility of consecutive sentencing. These changes are a good starting point towards a stronger Criminal Code that puts the rights of hard-working, law-abiding Canadians first and keeps criminals where they belong: behind bars.

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

Mr. Brian Riddell: Thank you to the Associate Solicitor General for the response.

While Bill C-14 appears to be a solid step in the right direction, the job isn't done. The reality is we are seeing violent crime and repeat offenders being released back into our communities, putting families at risk. Speaker, no one in our province should feel unsafe in their home or in their community. Since day one, our message has been clear: Offenders must be held accountable for their actions.

Can the Associate Solicitor General share some details on what our government is doing to keep our communities safe and to put and keep repeat offenders behind bars?

Hon. Zee Hamid: Just last month, our government introduced the Keeping Criminals Behind Bars Act, which contains proposed changes designed to strengthen justice in this province. The provisions in this bill are significant and, if passed, will help keep our communities safer. Key changes include:

—mandating that the accused person or sureties deposit entire cash specified by a court as a security upon release;

—introducing stronger collection tools, such as wage garnishment, asset seizure and sales, and property liens to recover unpaid bail amounts;

—establishing a surety database to improve efficiency and thoroughness of surety screening; and

—strengthening enforcement and oversight capabilities, including expansion of provincial bail prosecution teams.

If passed, these changes will help to restore confidence and fairness in the justice system, but we will not stop there. Our government will continue to stand with victims of crime and push for a stronger Criminal Code with real consequences for those who break our laws and protect Ontario.

DEFERRED VOTES

HOSPITALITY WORKERS

APPRECIATION DAY ACT, 2025

LOI DE 2025 SUR LA JOURNÉE

DE RECONNAISSANCE

DES TRAVAILLEUSES ET TRAVAILLEURS

DE L'INDUSTRIE DE L'ACCUEIL

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

Bill 67, An Act to proclaim Hospitality Workers Appreciation Day / Projet de loi 67, Loi proclamant la

Journée de reconnaissance des travailleuses et travailleurs de l'industrie de l'accueil.

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

The division bells rang from 1143 to 1148.

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

On November 27, 2025, Mr. Hardeman moved second reading of Bill 67, An Act to proclaim Hospitality Workers Appreciation Day.

All those in favour, please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Allsopp, Tyler	French, Jennifer K.	Quinn, Nolan
Anand, Deepak	Gallagher Murphy, Dawn	Racinsky, Joseph
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gates, Wayne	Rae, Matthew
Babikian, Aris	Gélinas, France	Rakocevic, Tom
Bailey, Robert	Gilmour, Alexa	Riddell, Brian
Begum, Doly	Glover, Chris	Rosenberg, Bill
Bell, Jessica	Gretzky, Lisa	Sabawy, Sheref
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Grewal, Hardeep Singh	Sandhu, Amarjot
Blais, Stephen	Gualtieri, Silvia	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Bouma, Will	Hamid, Zee	Sarrazin, Stéphane
Bourguin, Guy	Hardeman, Ernie	Sattler, Peggy
Bowman, Stephanie	Harris, Mike	Saunderson, Brian
Brady, Bobbi Ann	Hazell, Andrea	Schreiner, Mike
Bresee, Ric	Holland, Kevin	Scott, Chris
Burch, Jeff	Hsu, Ted	Shamji, Adil
Calandra, Paul	Jones, Trevor	Shaw, Sandy
Cerjanec, Rob	Jordan, John	Smith, Dave
Cho, Stan	Kanapathi, Logan	Smith, David
Clancy, Aislinn	Kernaghan, Terence	Smith, Graydon
Clark, Steve	Kerzner, Michael S.	Smith, Laura
Collard, Lucille	Khanjin, Andrea	Smyth, Stephanie
Cooper, Michelle	Kusendova-Bashta, Natalia	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Crawford, Stephen	Leardi, Anthony	Tabuns, Peter
Cuzzetto, Rudy	Lumsden, Neil	Tangri, Nina
Denault, Billy	McCarthy, Todd J.	Thompson, Lisa M.
Dixon, Jess	McCrimmon, Karen	Tibollo, Michael A.
Dowie, Andrew	McGregor, Graham	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Downey, Doug	McKenney, Catherine	Tsao, Jonathan
Dunlop, Jill	McMahon, Mary-Margaret	Vanthof, John
Fairclough, Lee	Mulroney, Caroline	Vaugeois, Lise
Fife, Catherine	Pang, Billy	Vickers, Paul
Firin, Mohamed	Parsa, Michael	Watt, Tyler
Flack, Rob	Pasma, Chandra	West, Jamie
Ford, Doug	Piccini, David	Williams, Charmaine A.
Fraser, John	Pierre, Natalie	Wong-Tam, Kristyn

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): All those opposed, please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day): The ayes are 105; the nays are 0.

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

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Pursuant to standing order 100(h), the bill is referred to the Committee of the Whole House—

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: The Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Is the majority in favour of this bill being referred to the standing committee

on heritage? Agreed. The bill is referred to the standing committee on heritage.

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

The House recessed from 1152 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: Members of provincial Parliament depend on their constituency offices to make sure that the needs of their constituents are top of mind.

I'm delighted to welcome my office of York Centre here today, led by our chief of staff in our constituency office, Marlene, and assisted by Jeremy, Ruth, Liam, Daniel, Christian and Robert. I want to say to them: Welcome to the Ontario Legislature.

Hon. Trevor Jones: I'd like to welcome Alexa Wade. Alexa is a new assistant at our Chatham-Kent-Leamington offices. She is here today and enjoying her House. Have a good day.

Mme Dawn Gallagher Murphy: I don't have my glasses on, but I'm pretty sure that's my York region chief of paramedics Chris Spearen—welcome—and Julia from York region as well—I forget your last name. But welcome to the chamber.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

CHRISTIAN HERITAGE MONTH ACT, 2025

LOI DE 2025 SUR LE MOIS DU PATRIMOINE CHRÉTIEN

Mr. Blais moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 83, An Act to proclaim the month of December as Christian Heritage Month / Projet de loi 83, Loi proclamant le mois de décembre Mois du patrimoine chrétien.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. Stephen Blais: Yes, Madam Speaker. From the earliest days before Confederation and the founding of Upper Canada, Christian pioneers of various denominations have played a significant role in shaping the cultural, social and artistic development of Ontario.

Today's Christian community encompasses a rich diversity of backgrounds, including Latin American, European, First Nations, African, Asian and Middle Eastern heritage. By declaring December Christian Heritage Month, we will recognize their past, current and future contributions to our province.

MANDATORY BLOOD TESTING

AMENDMENT ACT, 2025

LOI DE 2025 MODIFIANT

LA LOI DE 2006 SUR LE DÉPISTAGE OBLIGATOIRE PAR TEST SANGUIN

Ms. Smith moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 84, An Act to amend the Mandatory Blood Testing Act, 2006 / Projet de loi 84, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2006 sur le dépistage obligatoire par test sanguin.

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. Laura Smith: Currently, the Mandatory Blood Testing Act, 2006, allows a person to apply to a medical officer of health to have the blood of another person analyzed.

A new section 2.1 provides that if an application is made and the other person subsequently dies, the application shall be dealt with in accordance with such modifications to the act as are set out in regulations.

New section 2.2 will allow persons to make an application with respect to a person who is deceased at the time of the application. The minister is authorized to make regulations respecting how such an application may be dealt with.

PETITIONS

HEALTH CARE

Mme France Gélinas: I would like to thank Mrs. Freeland from Capreol in my riding for these petitions. They read as follows:

“Health Care: Not for Sale....

“Whereas Ontarians get health care based on their needs, not their ability to pay”—this is what medicare is all about.

“Whereas the Ford government” is wanting to privatize our health care system—privatization, as you know, Speaker, will mean that many physicians, PSWs, doctors, other health care professionals will go work in the for-profit system rather than in our publicly funded, publicly delivered health care in our hospitals, which will make the shortage worse.

They petition the Legislative Assembly as follows: “to immediately stop all plans to privatize Ontario’s health care system,” to fix the crisis in our health care system.

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

PUBLIC HEALTH

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I am pleased to introduce a petition that was given to me by folks who are part of the Climate Justice Durham group.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas extreme heat events are the leading weather-related cause of death in Canada”—and as they point out, extreme heat events will become more frequent and more severe as climate change intensifies.

They cite a report from 2022 by the British Columbia Coroners Service that identified 619 deaths related to heat during the 2021 heat dome.

They've highlighted that from May to September 2019, cases of heat exhaustion and heatstroke resulted in 3,800 visits to Durham region hospital emergency departments.

They cite hospitalization rates that are heat-related are projected to increase.

They are calling for all Ontarians to be able to stay cool in their homes, that the most vulnerable in our communities, who face financial, social, physical and legal barriers in accessing cooling, be considered.

They have called on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

- to track and publicly report heat-related deaths and hospital visits through the province;

- to measure indoor heat and humidity in schools, child care centres and medical facilities;

- to pass maximum temperature regulations for rental properties and farm worker housing; and also

- to expand low-carbon retrofit funding for non-market housing, landlords of private rental housing, and other landlords with low-income tenants.

Well, Speaker, I support this. I will affix my signature, and I will send it to the table with page Olivia.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

MPP Tyler Watt: I rise today to table a petition entitled “Declare Intimate Partner Violence an Epidemic in Ontario.”

I would like to start by thanking Patricia Pepper from my riding of Nepean for being a champion of women's rights and for championing this important petition.

Rates of gender-based violence and femicide have been increasing over the last several years.

These petitioners are calling on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to join the nearly 100 municipalities across the province, including Ottawa and Toronto, in accepting the Renfrew county inquest's recommendation, by declaring intimate partner violence an epidemic in Ontario.

I fully endorse this petition. I will affix my signature and give it to page Emery to bring it to the table.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Deepak Anand: Madam Speaker, this is not the first time I've got the petition talking about the tariffs and how it is impacting small business and the small business owners like Harpreet, who's here—is into film production, does an award called Rattan-E-Punjab—and many like him who are affected.

The people who have signed this petition are saying we need to stand up for Ontario, we need to stand up for

Canada, and the only way out is abundance—abundance because we have the Ring of Fire and we have the critical mineral resources within Ontario, which can help not only the people of Ontario but people across the globe.

1310

The wonderful people who have signed this petition, I want to say thank you to them also because I truly believe in this petition. They're saying unlocking these resources with roads, power and transit infrastructure will create thousands of jobs and protect Ontario, removing the international economic shock and making us stronger.

I absolutely agree with this petition. I want to thank the people who have signed this petition. And I want to say thank you to Andrew for taking it to the Clerk.

TENANT PROTECTION

MPP Alexa Gilmour: It's an honour to rise on behalf of the people of Parkdale—High Park. In my riding, Speaker, about 60% of the residents are renters, and for the last little while they have been struggling. In fact, ever since the government brought in the 2018 bill that allows for rent to be increased, they have found that rent has gone up 7%, 11%, and, of course, no one's salary is going up that amount.

So I have here in my hand a petition. This is a petition that speaks about the struggles that renters have been having across the province and about this new bill, Bill 60, and how that is going to exacerbate an already very difficult time for renters in the province.

This petition is called “Repeal Bill 60.” It asks for the bill to be repealed, for real rent control to be brought back, to fix the backlog at the Landlord and Tenant Board and to close the loopholes that have been used against renters for unfair evictions and the like.

I will affix my name to this, and I will deliver it with page Oskar.

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: I have a petition that says, “Improve Northern Highway Safety.”

The first “whereas” talks about how Highway 11 and 17 plays a critical role in the economic development of the north.

The second “whereas” talks about fatalities. There is twice the chance of dying on a northern highway than on a southern highway.

The third one talks about how inspection stations should be open to enforce the Highway Traffic Act because too many vehicles are not safe to be on our roads.

The fourth says the northern highways are regularly closed because of weather conditions. What happened this weekend was a perfect example: 56 hours of Highway 11 closed.

The fifth one says that insufficient oversight of new truck drivers with a lack of experience of weather conditions is putting their lives at stake and other peoples' lives.

Therefore, it says, be it resolved to adopt the measures proposed in the Northern Highway 11 and 17 Safety Act, 2025. This includes mandating that scales be open for a minimum of 12 hours; also, ensuring sufficient highway enforcement to make sure that we follow the traffic act. It also talks about guaranteeing that testing for truck drivers be returned to the MTO, with certified examiners. The last point says to restore management of winter highway maintenance back to the MTO because too many games are being played, as we're seeing on our roads regularly.

I fully support this petition. I will put my name to it, and I will give it to Olivia to bring to the Clerks' table.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: As a former school social worker, I realize how much the system has been impacted by COVID-19. The kids are not okay, and we really need increased investment in children's and youth mental health in our school system, in particular. I would have over 120 students and families to serve, which, you can imagine, is quite overwhelming, doing home visits and so on.

If you account for inflation, we've seen a drop in funding in our school system, and I'm urging the government to come up with a mental health strategy for our education system to protect workers and improve the well-being of students.

I support this petition, and I will pass it over to Emelin.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mme France Gélinas: I would like to thank Irene McGregor from Wahnapitae in my riding for these petitions. They're called "Neurological Movement Disorder Clinic in Sudbury."

I don't know if you know this, Speaker, but northeastern Ontario has the highest rate of neurological movement disorders in all of Ontario. A specialized neurological movement disorder clinic would provide essential health care services to those living with diseases like Parkinson's, Huntington's, dystonia, Tourette's and many others.

The city of Greater Sudbury is being recognized as a hub where most of those services should be available, but they are not.

So the people who signed the petition are asking the government to immediately set up a neurological movement disorder clinic in Sudbury, staffed, at a minimum, by a neurologist who specializes in the treatment of movement disorders, physiotherapists and social workers, so that people don't have to travel long distances in the middle of the winter on roads that are poorly maintained to gain access to the services that they need.

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

YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH

Ms. Catherine Fife: Once again, I rise in this House to remind the government that I've tabled a motion at social

policy committee—a motion that calls on all of us to address online predatory actions and the aggressive and addictive nature of social media platforms.

I also want to remind members of this House that the Canadian Centre for Child Protection released a report last week shedding new light on the sexual victimization of teenagers across this province and the gaps in the tech response. One in nine teenagers—teen victims—think Ontario should legally force apps and platforms to prevent harm online. Most also thought safety measures would help. They're really focused on prevention, because once these cases of victimization get to the court system, it's too late.

So why not reach across the aisle, work across partisan lines? Let's develop a strategy in Ontario to protect teens from online predatory actions. You talk tough on crime. Let's actually put some action behind all that tough talk.

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

ARTS AND CULTURAL FUNDING

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I'm here to appeal to the government to increase the Ontario Arts Council funding. The funding for the arts has been frozen for many, many years. We know that the cost of living has gone up and so have expenses for artists trying to create festivals and performances. We see festivals shutting down. So it's essential now more than ever that we support our economy by investing in artists and the arts council recipients.

I support this petition. I will affix my signature and pass it to page Anna.

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mme France Gélinas: I would like to thank Sylvie-Valerie Denis, who is from Garson in my riding, for these petitions. They're called "Make Highway 144 Safe."

Highway 144 is a highway that links Sudbury to Timmins, and the entire 325 kilometres of it is in my riding. It starts in my riding. It ends in my riding. The people of Nickel Belt use it to go to work, to go to school. We have at least eight active mines that use Highway 144 every hour. There are tons of trucks coming from the mines using it. There are many, many fatalities that happen on this highway.

The fatalities and the other accidents that happen on that highway lead to hours-long closures, sometimes day-long closures. There is no bypass. If you're stuck in the watershed, you will be there until the highway opens again.

The people who signed the petition feel like people in northern Ontario deserve safe roads in winter, like in summer.

We had a pretty bad blizzard this weekend in Nickel Belt, and the highways were really, really poorly maintained.

The people that signed the petition want the government to listen, want the government to make highways in the north safe. That starts with better winter road main-

tenance. For all of the contractors who don't do a good job, those contracts should go back to the government.

I fully agree with them, will affix my name to it and ask Adelaide to bring it to the Clerk.

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ORDERS OF THE DAY

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND SAFETY ACT, 2025

LOI DE 2025 SUR LA GESTION DES RESSOURCES ET LA SÉCURITÉ

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

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): I recognize the Minister of Natural Resources.

Hon. Mike Harris: It's a delight to be able to be here on a wonderful Monday afternoon to talk a little bit about Bill 27, the proposed Resource Management and Safety Act.

Before we really get into the meat and potatoes of third reading here today, there are a few people who I want to thank, the first being my parliamentary assistant, the amazing member from Newmarket–Aurora. She has had an opportunity to—

Interjections.

Hon. Mike Harris: Yes. Thank you.

She has had an opportunity to travel this bill, if you will, around the province. She has held many round tables, has heard from stakeholders, municipal leaders and community members in regards to what they want to see in this bill, specifically around the carbon sequestration elements—so a big thank you to you.

Also, a big thank you to the previous Minister of Natural Resources, the MPP for Parry Sound–Muskoka, for initially having the vision, and to the team at the ministry for getting this bill together. This is the second time, actually, that we've been here to debate this bill, as it was initially put forward before the past election. So it's nice to now be here and be able to talk a little bit more about it in third reading.

There are a few elements that I really want to touch on here today. The bill encompasses a few things: fire safety, and storage of carbon dioxide—which, of course, I think we can all agree is a great thing, to be able to help the environment and be able to help spur on business and protect Ontario. It also talks a little bit about engineers and a few different things. So we'll break it out into a few pieces here.

Let's talk a little bit about wildland firefighting. The forestry industry here in Ontario is a multi-billion-dollar

industry. It supports hundreds of thousands of jobs, especially in northern Ontario. We know that it's had a bit of a tough time, admittedly, over the last few years and right now, certainly, with the tariffs and duties that have been imposed by the Trump administration. We're now at 45.2% tariffs and duties. This is, in fact, one of the most punished—I'll say it, honestly: punished—sectors when it comes to jobs and prosperity here in Canada and Ontario.

But we can't have a thriving forestry sector if we don't have our sustainable forests. That's why it's important that we look at ways to manage our forests and we look at ways to try to curb the destruction that often occurs when we're looking at wildfires not only here in Ontario but across Canada.

I'm going to break a little bit into what we look at when we're talking about forest fire prevention here in the province. This is the first time that there's been any meaningful impacts to the Forest Fires Prevention Act since 1999, if you can believe that. I think we all know who was Premier in 1999; it's always nice to recognize my father here in the Legislature when we have an opportunity. He was indeed actually the Minister of Natural Resources for a brief period as well, so it's an honour for me to be able to stand here and go into my office. In our ministry offices, we've got portraits of all the ministers who have come before, and I get to see his face on the wall. It's pretty neat to be able to do that.

It's no surprise: This year was the second-worst year for forest fires from a hectares-burned perspective in the province's history, just shy of 600,000 hectares. So for all the kids that are here listening, that's 600,000 football fields, if you're not paying attention in math class. Hectare, acre—everybody gets a little wonky on that one.

But it was one of the worst years we've had. It was very challenging. It was very dry in northwestern Ontario in the early part of the year and it really, really kicked off fire season a little earlier than we're used to.

But we worked really well with our counterparts across provincial boundaries. Manitoba had a large fire as well that actually ended up joining with our Red Lake 12 fire in northwestern Ontario to become one of the largest forest fires in Canadian history. Flin Flon, Manitoba eventually had to be evacuated, along with many municipalities and First Nations communities in northwestern Ontario as well.

So a big shout-out to our wildland firefighters who did such a great job this year with mitigating as much damage as possible.

Interjections.

Hon. Mike Harris: Absolutely.

And of course, a big shout-out to our provincial counterparts who provided support here in Ontario: British Columbia, Alberta, Quebec, New Brunswick. They were all part of the fire efforts here, whether that was with folks actually coming from other provinces to help fight these fires or sending equipment or just expertise. It's great to be able to do that.

We also have reciprocity agreements, of course, with other provinces here in Canada, and the US, Mexico,

Australia and New Zealand. But we also sent over 400 fire management personnel across Canada to British Columbia, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, Labrador, New Brunswick and even Minnesota, Madam Speaker.

Earlier in April, we had some folks going down there. They had over 400 fires burning in Minnesota early this spring, which was considerable. So I think it just goes to show that this year it truly was a Herculean effort to be able to save communities, make sure we're saving property and do the best we can to ultimately support that forestry sector. A lot of good pieces are happening when it comes to changes being made to the act in this bill.

Let's talk a little bit about what this bill really represents when we talk about the carbon sequestration piece of this. It's something I think that many jurisdictions have talked about for quite some time in Canada. Alberta and Saskatchewan already have a framework in place to be able to securely store carbon emissions underground. This will enable us to now build out that framework here in Ontario.

As I said, my parliamentary assistant has led round tables all over the province, more specifically in southwestern Ontario, where the majority of underground storage will likely take place, should this bill be passed. We heard from landowners, we heard from stakeholders in the business environment that ultimately will be putting forward the dollars to be able to build out these kinds of storage facilities, and we heard from municipalities. And I think what we've been able to accomplish through this bill really highlights a lot of those good conversations that we had.

We've now gotten to a place where we're pretty confident that there are going to be some players who are very excited about the opportunities to be able to green up their business, to be able to look at ways, with carbon credits and other things, where they're able to then reinvest a lot back into their businesses to be able to make sure that they are doing the right thing. Often, these businesses and organizations are good stewards. They're good stewards of the land. They're good stewards of the province. It will be good to see, finally, a framework built out here in Ontario.

When we look at protecting Ontario, when we look at saying Ontario is open for business, I think it's important to highlight a couple of the industries that this will help support, Madam Speaker.

The cement industry: We are embarking on the largest infrastructure build that Ontario, that Canada, maybe even that North America—certainly for at least the last few decades—has seen. We're building schools. We're building hospitals. We're building highways. You can't do that without cement, Madam Speaker. So to be able to have the cement industry taking part in this—it's an extremely important tool for them.

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The steel industry: Obviously, it's an industry right now that has gone through a lot of hardship since the Trump administration has taken their seat south of their border.

Seeing what has happened to that industry, seeing the provincial government—kudos to the federal government as well for stepping up to help support that industry that has been heavily affected by 50% tariffs. It's extremely important.

We've seen their willingness to modernize by pivoting to electric arc furnaces at Dofasco and Algoma Steel. This will be another tool for them in the tool box to be able to lower emissions through their facilities, Madam Speaker.

This will be, obviously, something that the Minister of Agriculture will know very well. The fertilizer industry here in Ontario, as well, is very excited to see this bill hopefully be passed in the very near future so that they can get to work on being able to green up their operations as well—and, of course, the petrochemical industry, and oil and gas refineries as well, Madam Speaker.

One of the really interesting things—I don't think that people really know that much about Ontario, and we've got a lot of southwestern Ontario members here—is there's a little town called Petrolia, just outside of Sarnia, where crude oil was actually found back in the—gosh, it would be the mid-1800s, I think. We've had a thriving oil and gas industry here in Ontario for many, many years. This will also help them green up their operations.

A couple of other elements of the bill—if we're just on that oil and gas topic for a couple of minutes—if you'll indulge me: There are some great pieces in here that are also going to allow for some new abilities for the province to be able to step in, cap off and make safe some of those abandoned oil and gas wells that that may even date back—we've seen some date back—into the 1800s that people didn't even know about. They're not even mapped. So it will be great, should this bill pass, to have a few more tools in the tool box. I like to use that term because it's true. It works, right? It will allow us to go onto property where, perhaps, the owner has passed or has gone into bankruptcy, where we wouldn't have been allowed to actually go in and then do the work to cap those wells and make them safe. Again, there are a lot of great provisions that are contained within this bill.

I'm just trying to think if there's anything else we need to touch on here before we move on into debate. We are going to turn it over to the parliamentary assistant here after we move on with the opposition.

Land surveyors: There's quite a lot that goes into becoming a land surveyor here in the province. Again, I don't want to bore you too much with the minutia, but it takes anywhere from five to seven years to finally become licensed. What we're looking to do is be able to boost up the supply of land surveyors here in the province. They do amazing work, especially when we're looking at building out the Ring of Fire and dealing with critical minerals across northern Ontario. To be able to have more land surveyors in the proverbial pipeline to do a lot of that work will be very important: being able to introduce a limited licence, or a temporary licence, for folks who may have been educated in other jurisdictions to work here in Ontario, just like we do for many other learned professions. We've seen that with nursing. We've seen it with

doctors. We've seen it with professional engineers—civil engineers as well, to be able to unlock more housing in the province. We'll be doing some of that as-of-right work should this bill pass as well.

I think that's going to pretty much wrap it up for me, Madam Speaker. I really do appreciate the opportunity to speak this afternoon.

You'll hear a bit more from my colleague the member from Newmarket—Aurora here in a little bit, but that will do it for me.

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

M. Guy Bourgouin: C'est un plaisir de me lever aujourd'hui pour parler du projet de loi 27, Loi de 2025 sur la gestion des ressources et la sécurité.

Aujourd'hui, je veux souligner l'importance de ce projet de loi et l'avenir de notre province. Je veux aussi expliquer clairement pourquoi, malgré les intentions déclarées du gouvernement, ce texte ne répond toujours pas à l'ampleur de la crise que nous vivons.

Le projet de loi 27 reconnaît que ces feux deviennent de plus en plus fréquents et intenses, au point de permettre au ministre de déclarer la saison des feux à tout moment de l'année. Mais reconnaître un danger, madame la Présidente, sans fournir les outils pour y répondre, ce n'est pas de la gouvernance responsable, ce n'est pas de protéger les Ontariens et ce n'est pas de préparer notre province à l'avenir. C'est marquer un point politique sans régler les problèmes. Et c'est exactement ce que fait ce projet de loi dans sa forme actuelle.

La saison des feux de 2025 s'est terminée, et pourtant, les chiffres sont alarmants. Entre avril et octobre, on a vu que les équipes de pompiers forestiers ont dû intervenir sur 643 feux—une augmentation. Ces feux ont ravagé, comme le ministre l'a dit, 600 000 hectares de la forêt, et 600 000 hectares, je peux vous dire, c'est grand. C'est une grosse superficie.

Puis ce qu'il ne faut pas oublier, c'est que ce sont des ressources dont on a besoin pour l'industrie forestière. C'est leur matière première. C'est pour ça que c'est important de protéger ces matières premières-là pour notre province—un territoire plus vaste que plusieurs villes canadiennes réunies.

Et encore une fois, le nord de l'Ontario a été frappé de plein fouet. Des communautés comme Red Lake, Sioux Lookout, Timmins et Kenora ont été directement menacées. Quand je dis « menacées », je parle de véritable crise humaine. À Deer Lake, plus de 500 personnes ont dû être évacuées. À Webequie, 395 résidents vulnérables ont fait l'objet d'une évacuation de phase 1. Autour d'Attawapiskat, le feu vient s'ajouter aux inondations, créant un cercle vicieux de catastrophes naturelles.

Ces chiffres illustrent une réalité claire, madame la Présidente : la menace des incendies en Ontario s'intensifie chaque année et nos communautés sont de plus en plus exposées.

Et pendant que les communautés s'organisent et que les pompiers forestiers se battent, que les municipalités jonglent avec des budgets d'urgence, le projet de loi que

nous avons devant nous ne contient aucune stratégie de réponse réelle.

Le projet de loi 27 ne propose toujours aucune stratégie concrète pour répondre à cette crise : aucun financement supplémentaire pour l'équipe et les municipalités; aucun engagement pour moderniser l'équipement des pompiers forestiers; aucune stratégie de prévention; aucun plan pour protéger les infrastructures critiques, les routes, les lignes électriques, les hôpitaux; aucun renforcement du soutien en matière d'évacuation, de transport, d'hébergement d'urgence; aucune mesure pour répondre aux impacts économiques—fermeture d'entreprise, pertes d'emplois, destruction des ressources forestières et augmentation des coûts d'assurance.

J'ai parlé de la matière première. Moi je viens d'un comté—on est entouré d'usines de sciage, des moulins à scie, comme on dit en bon français. À Hearst, on a une des plus grosses usines de contreplaqué, qui est la plus grosse pour Columbia Forest Products. Même à travers des États-Unis, Columbia c'est la plus grosse au Canada qui produit un beau projet.

On a plein d'usines. On parlait rien que de la biomasse qu'on a voulu créer. On encourage pour la biomasse, mais si on brûle la biomasse—puis c'est important de la passer, cette biomasse-là. Il faut le réaliser. C'est ça que le monde ne comprend pas : si elle reste en forêt, la biomasse, ça devient, comme ils disent en anglais, du « kindling ». Ça devient très sec, puis ça cause aux feux de forêt d'avoir encore plus d'amplitude, de grossir plus vite, et c'est encore plus difficile à battre.

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C'est pour ça que l'industrie forestière est tellement intégrée. C'est pour ça qu'il faut sortir ces débris-là. Ce qu'on ne prend pas comme matière première, qu'on le prenne puis qu'on le passe en biomasse ou qu'on le passe pour les « co-gen » qu'on à la grandeur de—bien, à plusieurs places dans la province pour être capable de créer de l'énergie.

C'est pour ça que je pousse souvent et je dis : « Écoute, on s'en va dans la bonne direction, mais on doit en faire plus pour la cogénération et la biomasse. » Pourquoi? Parce que on voit tout ce que les pays scandinaves en font et, nous, je pense qu'on a une opportunité de faire des choses. On est dans l'opportunité parfaite pour avoir de l'énergie verte qui vient des biomasses qu'on pourrait créer puis amener l'électricité, de la chaleur, même, à des bâtiments, pour des municipalités—la liste est longue.

Reconnaitre l'existence des feux sans fournir les moyens d'y faire face, ce n'est pas un plan; c'est un pari, et ce sont les communautés qui payent la mise, madame la Présidente.

Soyons honnêtes : le gouvernement sait très bien quels outils il faudrait mettre en place. Les experts le disent. Les municipalités le réclament. Les services d'urgence le répètent année après année. Ce qu'il manque, ce n'est pas l'information, madame la Présidente; ce qu'il manque, c'est la volonté politique.

Le Nord mérite mieux. Le Nord demande depuis longtemps un engagement réel envers la sécurité des communautés. Les gens veulent :

- des équipes de pompiers forestiers complètes et bien formées;
- une base d'opérations permanente;
- un soutien logistique pour les évacuations;
- une stratégie de gestion de forêt adaptée aux nouvelles réalités climatiques;
- des partenariats avec les Premières Nations; et
- une vision à long terme.

Et surtout, ils veulent cesser d'être traités comme si leur enjeu était secondaire, comme si leurs besoins pouvaient attendre.

Quand une communauté du Nord brûle, c'est l'Ontario qui brûle. Quand une communauté du Nord doit être évacuée, c'est l'Ontario qui en subit les conséquences.

Et je peux vous dire, évacuer des communautés, ça coûte de l'argent, madame la Présidente. Comme on dit, ce n'est pas cheap, pour utiliser un terme qu'on use comme francophone. Ça coûte très cher, déménager, quand on pourrait mettre les protections puis les protéger.

Quand les travailleurs du Nord risquent leur vie, ce sont les travailleurs de toute la province qu'on expose à un système qui ne répond pas à l'urgence.

Si je peux me permettre, en concluant, madame la Présidente, on ne s'oppose pas à l'objectif du projet de loi. Je pense qu'il faut être clair là-dessus. Nous reconnaissons tous la gravité des feux de forêt. Nous savons que la crise s'intensifie. Mais si nous adoptons cette loi telle quelle, sans stratégie, sans ressources, sans plan d'action, alors nous aurons raté une occasion cruciale de protéger notre province.

Le projet de loi 27 doit être renforcé. Il doit offrir des solutions concrètes. Il doit refléter la réalité vécue par les communautés du Nord. Il doit donner aux pompiers forestiers, aux municipalités et aux Premières Nations les moyens d'effectuer leur travail. Madame la Présidente, sans cela, le texte ne fera qu'ajouter une couche administrative de plus pendant que les feux continueront de ravager notre territoire.

Nous pouvons faire mieux et nous devons faire mieux. Je peux vous dire, madame la Présidente, les Ontariens s'attendent à ce que nous fassions mieux, maintenant et pas plus tard.

Quand on voit des saisons comme celles qu'on a vues passer—nous, dans ma région, on a été chanceux; on a eu de la pluie puis on n'était pas trop exposé. Mais quand on voyait ce qui se passait à l'Ouest, puis qu'on voyait toute la boucane, toute la fumée qui venait des feux de forêt, puis que le reste de la province respirait la boucane, on a une obligation.

Quand on dit que l'air est dangereux maintenant pour les personnes qui font de l'exercice ou même les personnes âgées qui ont besoin des respirateurs ou qui ont des conditions respiratoires—je peux vous dire que ce n'est pas facile de vivre.

On a une obligation de faire mieux. On a une obligation de protéger toutes les communautés du Nord. On ne veut pas vivre ce qu'on a vu dans le Sud où des communautés au complet ont perdu des quartiers, où on a vu des maisons

brûler, où qu'on a vu tout ce qui s'est passé dans l'ouest canadien.

On doit faire mieux. Le projet de loi peut faire mieux. On peut faire les améliorations pour nous protéger encore plus que ce qu'il y a dans le projet de loi.

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

Mr. Ted Hsu: I'm very happy to get up today to speak about Bill 27, but perhaps not as happy as I should be, because we are debating this bill at third reading after having skipped the committee stage. That is one of my main complaints today: that we have skipped the committee stage. We have missed the chance for the elected members in this body who represent the people of Ontario to examine this bill in detail on behalf of our constituents.

What I want to do is to go through each of the schedules one by one to explain what I mean by that. I'll start with schedule 1, which addresses the Forest Fires Prevention Act. I'll start by echoing what my honourable colleague from Mushkegowuk—James Bay just said: that this bill is a framework, but it doesn't actually prescribe actions to protect us from forest fires—for example, to harden our infrastructure. And so it's just a framework. My honourable colleague called it an administrative layer.

Perhaps some of this framework is needed, but we should be asking, "How will this framework protect us from forest fires? How will it be used to protect us from forest fires?" The Minister of Natural Resources said that this bill gave us tools, so I think it's natural for the representatives of the people to ask, "How will this bill create tools and how will the tools be used to protect us from forest fires?" Because there are no explicit actions in here. And as my colleague from Mushkegowuk—James Bay said, "Le Nord mérite mieux." I think people, after this bill is passed, are still going to be asking the question, "How are you going to protect us from forest fires?"

One of the things in schedule 1 of the bill is section 7. What section 7 does is it gives additional powers to a wildland fire compliance officer. There are powers in this bill to inspect or seize computers, for example. Now, whenever somebody is given extra powers, I think it makes sense for members elected by the people to ask, "Why do we need these new powers and how are these new powers going to be used?" That's why I brought up a particular example, the power to inspect or seize computers. I understand that there may be similar powers in other acts, but I think we should be able to verify by asking witnesses at committee why the powers are written in detail in Bill 27 the way they are.

Let me just read you, Speaker, a little bit, just to let people know what I'm concerned about. In section 7 of schedule 1 of the bill, it talks about powers during inspection. It says, "During the inspection, the wildland fire compliance officer may,

"(a) require the production of any thing that is or may be relevant to the inspection;

"(b) require the production of and inspect any document that is required to be kept under this act"—and then later on it says, "(d) use or require the use of any equipment,

machinery or other thing in order to carry out the inspection, including the use of any computer system to examine data contained in or available to the computer system for the purpose of examining information relevant to the inspection....” It also gives the wildland fire compliance officer the power to copy information that is relevant to the inspection.

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So the question is, perhaps these are legitimate powers; perhaps inspection officers have been given these powers in other legislation, but let’s understand why these powers are necessary. We’ve been unable to do that because this bill has skipped committee stage, and I think that’s a dangerous precedent that is being established in this place, that so many government bills—I believe it’s over 15 bills—have skipped committee stage.

In schools, we teach kids, “Second reading debate is about the principle of a bill. Then during committee we listen to witnesses. We potentially put forward amendments. We vote on each line of the bill to make sure that we understand and agree or disagree with the bill in detail, line by line. And then in third reading, there’s one more debate and we have a final vote to pass or not to pass the bill.” We’re skipping that stage of examining details, and, in my view, this is one of the reasons why this whole body exists in the first place: to look at legislation in detail—in much more detail than the people who elected us have the time or resources to do. We, as the representatives, have this duty, and, in schedule 1, we have not been able to check in committee that the powers of inspectors over computers can’t be abused, and I think we should have heard from witnesses.

The second thing I want to talk about is schedule 2, the Geologic Carbon Storage Act. This is not something that’s going to happen overnight, so there’s no particular hurry on this. I think it’s good to have a legal framework, but it is something that is complicated, and it’s something that has to be done well. Why is that? Because when we store carbon dioxide in a geologic structure, it has to stay there for centuries, so we have to have a legal framework to be able to make sure that we can guarantee that it is stored for centuries.

Naturally, the question arises: How does the framework in schedule 2 of Bill 27—how does it allow the government of Ontario to ensure the permanence of carbon storage? And how is the government of Ontario, not only today but for centuries to come—for centuries to come—going to be able to verify that that carbon dioxide is stored and has continued to be stored?

Another question I’d like to ask is how this framework is going to set up the ability to pay somebody to store carbon dioxide, because that’s really important as a way to make geologic carbon storage viable, if it’s ever used. So you’ve got to guarantee permanence, you’ve got to have a way to verify it for centuries to come and you have to have a way to tie it into the economy-wide price on greenhouse gases so that the economy is working in the same direction and proponents will know whether their carbon storage project is viable or not. Because if the cost of geologic

carbon storage is too high—and this question hasn’t been settled at all—then we should not be relying on it, and using other, cheaper methods of reducing carbon dioxide emissions to the atmosphere.

This is complicated. Anybody who has read through schedule 2 will know that this is complicated. We should be able to ask expert witnesses to verify that the regulatory framework set up in schedule 2 will allow us to do all of these things for geologic carbon storage.

If I had the minister in front of me, I would ask the minister, is the man-made weathering of silicate materials included in geologic carbon storage? There are these questions like this. Carbon sequestration has been happening geologically for millions of years. Ever since plants got roots that dug into and broke up silicate rocks, there has been a lot of weathering and natural sequestration of carbon dioxide.

In my riding, in the city of Kingston, there’s a mine that mines a mineral called wollastonite. They’re doing a pilot project. I believe they have funding from Google to sequester carbon dioxide in agricultural fields, in farmers’ fields, as a fertilizer. This is a way of sequestering carbon dioxide, and I wonder how it fits into this regulatory framework of geologic carbon storage. Maybe it does; maybe it doesn’t. But I never got the ability to ask that question, because we skipped committee stage. These are very, very important questions. It’s going to matter for centuries, because that’s how long we have to sequester carbon to make a difference when it comes to climate change.

Schedule 3 amends the Oil, Gas and Salt Resources Act, and it’s meant to give us tools to make old natural gas wells or oil wells safe. We want to do things like prevent another explosion like we had in Wheatley. Again, I want to ask the question, how do these tools work? What exactly happened in Wheatley isn’t 100% clear. We have an idea, but I want to know. I want to be able to ask experts the question, how does this regulatory framework give us the tools to prevent another explosion like we had in Wheatley?

If elected members were to go to southwestern Ontario and people there were to ask us, “So what have you done to make sure we don’t have another one of these disasters?”, as members, we’d like to be able to answer that question instead of saying, “There’s this Bill 27 and there’s a regulatory framework. I don’t quite understand it, but trust the government. Things are better.” I want to be able, myself, to say, “Oh, I talked to some witnesses. I asked them during committee stage of this bill. They told me this, and I understand it. Here’s why that helps you.”

I’m not able to do that, because the government made a choice to skip committee stage. The government chose to bring the Legislature back six weeks late. The government chose to introduce this and other bills. Over 15 of them have skipped committee stage, and the government has chosen to not allow MPPs to do the job that they’re supposed to be doing, that they were elected to do, that they are paid to do.

Schedule 4 is the Surveyors Act. The minister mentioned that what this schedule does is it changes the

Surveyors Act. It allows us to have temporary licences for surveyors who come to Ontario and want to work here. We need more surveyors. I can quote him. In the minister's speech, the Minister of Natural Resources said, "I don't want to bore you ... with the minutiae." Well, sometimes the minutiae matter. When you have laws, it's like machinery. There are gears, and they have to fit together exactly right. If something is wrong, that error can propagate because of the ways laws work and are enforced.

Because I'm not a surveyor, I would have liked to be able to know what witnesses said when asked, "How does this act help? Are there any unintended consequences?" Why didn't we bring in representatives of the surveyors' association, whether provincially or nationally? I know somebody who I could have called to ask questions of publicly to understand. Maybe this is fine. Maybe the changes to the Surveyors Act are fine, but how do the people know? Well, the people will know if their elected representatives can have a chance to ask questions and to be satisfied that the legislation is okay—in detail.

1400

That's why I find it funny when the minister says, "I don't want to bore you with the minutiae," because we are paid to be here to worry about the details because the average person back home doesn't have the time to do that. We are paid to worry about the details. If we are bored by the details, then so be it, because it's our job to check to make sure that we're not doing something that is a mistake.

I remember there was a mining bill. I think it was in the last Parliament—maybe it was Bill 71 or something. In the committee hearing in Timmins, I pointed out to the mining minister at the time that there was a drafting error. It was really a very small grammatical drafting error, but it changed the meaning a lot. I remember when I asked the minister this question, immediately, the deputy minister, who was sitting beside the mining minister in committee in Timmins, said, "Oh, yes, that's a mistake." The government brought forward an amendment later on in committee in clause-by-clause consideration to fix that drafting error.

If you don't have committee, you don't get to figure out these things. In that particular case, the government didn't even realize that they had made this small but quite significant drafting error, which actually changed the meaning of the legislation.

So that's just an example of the sort of thing that you lose if many, many government bills—over 15 in the case of this government in 2025. That's what happens when you skip committee stage.

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

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: I am so happy to be able to rise today to speak in this third reading on Bill 27.

First off, I do want to give some thank-yous. I'd like to thank the Minister of Natural Resources. I'd also like to thank the previous Minister of Natural Resources, the member from Parry Sound—Muskoka. I'd also like to thank the previous PA, my seatmate, the member from Hastings—Lennox and Addington.

This work has been ongoing for several years now. I am proud to stand here to say that here we are, third reading, and I am thrilled that we are getting it done for the people of Ontario. The measures our government is proposing in this bill reflect our steadfast commitment to building strong and resilient communities—communities that are prospering today, better prepared for natural resource hazards, able to grow with access to the survey services they need and able to build new foundations. When uncertainty from powers abroad put our economy, workers and communities at risk, Ontario will, and we must, rise above it.

Bill 27 is part of our commitment to protect Ontario. This commitment is especially important in Ontario's resource-dependent communities, such as those reliant on the forestry industry. Some may think of resource-based industries as merely traditional, and some may fail to recognize the importance of resource-based industries in the future prosperity of this province. I am proud to say that this government doesn't see things that way, and we are completely focused on the opportunities for growth.

Now, let me start with the new legislation that is proposed in this bill, the Geologic Carbon Storage Act. I'd like to thank the minister once again for recognizing the work that I have done over the past year and a half—almost two years—in this portfolio, meeting with many proponents: municipalities, landowners etc. The work has been ongoing, and as the minister had said in his remarks, the economic impact of this legislation is indeed significant.

I want to re-emphasize how geologic carbon storage offers Ontario a unique opportunity to preserve, to create thousands of high-value jobs, attract significant investment and help our industries remain globally competitive. By enabling industries to reduce their carbon costs, this technology could protect vital sectors like manufacturing, oil and gas, and utilities, which are all essential to our province's economic prosperity. It also positions Ontario to take advantage of federal tax incentives and the growing global demand for carbon management technologies, ensuring that we stay ahead in the transition to a low-carbon economy.

Nous avons maintenant abordé la question de la prospérité économique. Qu'en est-il du développement durable et de la prospérité environnementale? Les richesses naturelles de l'Ontario recèlent un potentiel incroyable dans ce domaine également. Seul un travail en collaboration entre elles pourra permettre de libérer tout leur potentiel.

Pour cette raison précise, nous prenons actuellement des mesures pour introduire et réglementer le stockage géologique du carbone en Ontario. À l'heure actuelle, environ 30 % des émissions de gaz à effet de serre de l'Ontario proviennent chaque année d'industries essentielles, telles que l'industrie de la fabrication et les services publics. Ces mêmes industries produisent les matériaux nécessaires à la construction des hôpitaux, des routes et des foyers, en plus de fournir l'énergie nécessaire à l'éclairage des hôpitaux et des foyers de soins de longue

durée. Ces industries sont essentielles au fonctionnement de notre province.

S'il est adopté, ce projet de loi permettra à ces industries essentielles à fortes émissions de stocker de manière permanente le dioxyde de carbone qu'elles émettent dans des formations géologiques souterraines adéquates.

In just the initial phase of development, commercial-scale carbon storage projects in Ontario could lower annual industrial carbon emissions by 11% to 15%—the equivalent of removing as many as two million cars off the road—reducing Ontario's total annual emissions by approximately 3% to 4%.

Rien que dans leurs phases initiales de développement, les projets de stockage de carbone à des fins commerciales en Ontario pourraient réduire les émissions industrielles annuelles de carbone de 11 % à 15 %, ce qui équivaut à retirer de la circulation jusqu'à deux millions de voitures et à réduire les émissions annuelles totales de l'Ontario d'environ 3 % à 4 %.

This technology has the potential to significantly reduce the social cost of greenhouse gas emissions by as much as \$2 billion per year.

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The most suitable underground geologic formations for carbon storage in Ontario are saline aquifers and depleted oil and gas reservoirs found in southwestern Ontario, right where many of these industries are clustered. The proximity between industries and potential storage sites offers a significant advantage for the future development of carbon management in our province.

While geologic carbon storage is a new concept in Ontario, it has already been successfully implemented elsewhere. More than 40 carbon-capture utilization and storage projects are currently operational worldwide, including in western Canada, Australia, Norway, the United Kingdom and the United States. According to the International Energy Agency, there are approximately 700 carbon-capture projects in various stages of development across 50 countries.

Madam Speaker, this past summer, I had the great opportunity to attend the annual National Conference of State Legislatures held in Boston. One of the sessions that I attended was very interesting. The title was, “Beyond Carbon Storage.” In that session, the state Legislatures from New Mexico, as well as proponents of this technology, were talking about going beyond the storage because they've already been there, done it. Now, they're looking at what happens next with this technology.

Ontario, we need to get there. The technology has a track record of more than 50 years, and it is eliciting broad support and growing levels of investment globally. This bill would help Ontario safely and responsibly enable proponents to implement carbon-storage projects, following best practices from other jurisdictions.

Le Groupe d'experts intergouvernemental sur l'évolution du climat et l'Agence internationale de l'énergie ont affirmé que sans le déploiement à grande échelle de technologie de gestion du carbone, y compris le

stockage géologique du carbone, il n'y a pas de voie réaliste permettant d'atteindre des émissions nettes nulles d'ici 2050. Cette technologie est particulièrement adaptée aux industries à forte consommation d'énergie dotées d'actifs fixes importants telles que l'acier, la chaux, le ciment et les raffineries de pétrole et de gaz—toutes des industries qui ne peuvent pas facilement éliminer leurs émissions de carbone en modifiant leurs procédés.

Permanently storing carbon dioxide underground is a viable way for these industries to achieve their climate goals. Ontario's industrial base is a key part of the province's economy, and many communities, particularly in southwestern Ontario, depend on the jobs and economic activity generated by these industries.

Once again, I'd like to talk about the round tables and the consultations performed over these past years—not weeks, not months, over these past years, Madam Speaker. We have spoken with the proponents. We have spoken with the landowners. We have spoken with the agricultural groups. We have spoken with the municipalities. All of these groups understand the economic potential, and there's a way for government to work here and now to ensure this economic prosperity.

However, we are at a crossroads. Without carbon management strategies such as geologic carbon storage, there is a risk that industries may relocate to jurisdictions where carbon management technologies are available—and I just spoke about all of those that are available right now and just south of the border. Or they could go to those where industrial carbon emissions are not yet subject to a price. This would have serious consequences, Madam Speaker, for Ontario's industrial heartland and could result in the deindustrialization of entire regions.

Cependant, nous sommes à la croisée des chemins. En l'absence de stratégies de gestion du carbone telles que le stockage géologique du carbone, les industries risquent de s'établir dans des territoires où les technologies de gestion du carbone sont disponibles, ou vers celles où les émissions industrielles du carbone ne sont pas encore soumises à des frais. Cette situation pourrait avoir de graves conséquences pour le cœur industriel de l'Ontario et pourrait entraîner la désindustrialisation de régions entières.

That is why we are proposing the Geologic Carbon Storage Act. This bill would help secure the future of several industry-reliant communities and ensure the resilience of Ontario's industrial base, all while achieving our climate goals.

Ontario's long history of regulating oil and gas industries in southwestern Ontario gives us valuable experience in managing these underground resources safely and responsibly.

Our ministry has already overseen the storage of natural gas and hydrocarbons underground in salt caverns, as well as compressed air for electricity generation in Goderich. This expertise will help guide the development of geologic carbon storage projects in this province.

The Geologic Carbon Storage Act, if passed, would provide the necessary regulatory framework to enable the

responsible design, the construction, the operation and the closure of carbon storage facilities. Madam Speaker, let me reiterate what this framework will do: responsible design, construction, operation and closure. This is critical because it will also specify the requirements for post-closure management and ensure the long-term safety of these projects.

The act would also clarify the ownership of pore space in Ontario and facilitate access to suitable underground formations for carbon storage. This is a critical step in advancing carbon storage technologies and ensuring that Ontario remains a leader in responsible environmental stewardship. By supporting the Geologic Carbon Storage Act, Ontario will be better positioned to transition to a low-carbon economy.

La loi clarifierait également la propriété de l'espace interstiel en Ontario et faciliterait l'accès aux formations souterraines appropriées pour le stockage du carbone. L'adoption de cette loi représente une étape essentielle pour faire progresser les technologies de stockage du carbone et faire en sorte que l'Ontario reste un chef de file en matière de gestion environnementale responsable.

This technology will play a key role in helping industries meet their climate targets while ensuring the essential sectors can continue to operate and to grow.

Speaker, this bill is not just about regulation. It's about supporting our environment, helping industries reduce their carbon footprint and creating a sustainable future for all Ontarians. By embracing innovative technologies like geologic carbon storage, we can ensure that Ontario's industrial base remains a key contributor to a cleaner, more sustainable world.

1420

Now, Speaker, I would like to turn our attention to Ontario's forest sector, which has a proud heritage and a promising future. Our government is going to help the sector realize that promise. Wood may be almost as old as the hills—which it is—but it's being made into new products that are used in new ways. These novel wood-based products and new applications are poised to increase the use of Ontario wood in construction projects, growing the market for our sawmills, feeding into new manufacturing plants and building community assets right across our province.

The new building method is called advanced wood construction. It's a technology that uses engineered wood in place of more carbon-intensive products and factory-based manufacturing methods to prefabricate modular components off-site. These new materials can be used in larger and taller buildings than those that can be built using conventional wood, including taller multi-family, residential and office buildings, as well as institutional, commercial, educational and industrial buildings. And this technology can be used to build infrastructure including bridges, wind turbines, towers and sound barriers. Imagine applying assembly-line efficiency in the construction industry, using prefabricated components and just-in-time delivery.

Advanced wood materials are engineered out of wood fibre including sawn lumber, wood chips and strands. Two

products produced using this method are cross-laminated timber and laminated-strand lumber. These materials are precision-machined and assembled in factories to create sustainable and highly efficient building components.

Today, 11% of global energy-related carbon emissions comes from the building materials used in construction and the way they are used.

Element5 holds Forest Stewardship Council certification and uses wood from Ontario forests. The cross-laminated timber it produces is used in advanced wood construction. Element5 is using new technology in ways expected to transform the building industry, and that is exciting, Madam Speaker. Prefabricating buildings inside factories—this is exciting.

Madam Speaker, I'm running short on time, so I'm going to have to skip some of my stuff, but I do want to throw this story in there: The Toronto conservation authority just moved into their new building. It's one of these buildings that are made of wood, and it was so thrilling to be there for the grand opening. Madam Speaker, this building was absolutely beautiful, and all made of this wood. I'm excited to say that when I toured the building, I had so many questions for them. The architects were amazing, and they appreciated every moment of talking about the design and how they came up with certain aspects. I'm looking forward to seeing more of these types of buildings, Madam Speaker.

That's why we've drafted an Advanced Wood Construction Action Plan. This plan positions Ontario to lead in this fast-growing sector by using more wood in the construction of multi-family residential buildings, both mid-rise and tall, and in commercial and industrial buildings, creating new opportunity in the forest sector.

Madam Speaker, as I'm running out of time, I wanted to talk all about the aggregates and what we're doing with the aggregates, because to create new jobs and to build critical infrastructure—this is all outlined in this bill. I'm going to have to move quickly on some of my sections. I'm sorry this is so long.

The aggregates are critical. You know why? I have to tell you I visited three of them this past summer. What was interesting to see is that this is the material that we need that builds our transit, that builds our roads, that builds the homes. This is why it's so critical.

I'll skip to the very end because I just want to say that by embracing innovation, investing in our natural resources and working collaboratively with industry—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos):
Thank you.

Further debate?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I just want to say I think that this is going to be an especially painful Monday afternoon here at Queen's Park. This piece of legislation that is before us was already tabled prior to that—you remember that, Madam Speaker—urgent election that had to be called because the Premier of Ontario had to have a mandate to do his job. Of course, that was in the winter, and it was 18 months sooner than it was supposed to happen, but there was urgency.

You know what else? I hope that all of our hearts and our minds, not just our thoughts and our prayers, are with the 1,000 workers that just got pink slips from Algoma Steel today—1,000 workers; that's devastating—out of a total workforce of 2,700 workers. This is a bad day for Ontario.

I just have to go back to that very opportunistic, politically motivated early call of an election that brought the province of Ontario into a winter election. There's a reason why Ontarians don't have winter elections. There are a lot of people with mobility issues. It's really, really cold. I know a number of us had some pretty interesting falls during that election. Some of us fell down stairs; some of us fell up stairs.

I have to say this bill was before the House. It's been expedited once again through this Legislature. For those of you who are just tuning in to this very exciting afternoon here at Queen's Park, it's Bill 27, Resource Management and Safety Act, 2025. This, of course, died on the order paper, as did a lot of progressive pieces of legislation—I will not include this one as progressive—prior to the election.

Right now, we have two hours of time allocated debate on third reading. It did not go to committee. There has not been public consultation on it. This government demonstrates your full disdain for our democracy. It gets in the way of your agenda on a regular basis here at Queen's Park. Really, what a disservice to the people that we're elected to serve.

Quite honestly, it's a sad day. Honestly, there obviously are things that could have happened for Algoma. The federal government had promised to invest \$400 million. The provincial government lauded their \$100-million investment. But you know what they didn't do? They weren't focused on retooling, and they weren't focused on new procurement deals for that steel right here in Ontario.

When you're dealing with a bully like Donald Trump, you have to really focus on ensuring and shoring up your own economy as a province. We need to be more resilient and less dependent, obviously, as an economy. Forestry, steel and aluminum are sectors that are very exposed because of our economies being so integrated.

The urgency that was claimed to be the reason why we needed that early election certainly fell off the radar as soon as the election happened. We didn't get pulled back to this place until April, and then we only sat for five weeks. So no legislative options were proposed for Algoma, the forestry—

Interjection.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Sorry?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Twenty-three days.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Twenty-three days, yes.

We're in a very close, tight race to the bottom with Alberta right now. I have to say, I've never seen this kind of behaviour on the part of a government, and I've been around this place for 13 years now.

1430

This piece of legislation that the minister spoke for a very short amount of time on is problematic on a number

of levels. It's a very significant piece of legislation which normally would deem some attention from policy experts at committee around legislative amendments that could fill in the safety gaps in the safety bill, I would say.

But it effectively sets up a new industry here in Ontario. And since the gas companies want to use storage as a way for them to make hydrogen out of fossil gas, we are potentially talking about a lot of money and a lot of risk.

The act does reference safety—I mean, it's in the title, so therefore, there you go—which is critical because carbon dioxide tends to stay close to the ground when released. So smothering issues are substantial, and this alone needs extensive public consultation and study.

Is that happening here? No, it is not. In fact, it's part of a very large, now, plan by the government to just ram through legislation in this place, overriding other levels of government, putting safety concerns to the side—and I think that these are well documented.

I just want to say though, also, that when governments time allocate legislation, they do so because they're trying to avoid scrutiny. They time allocate legislation because they want to work around the democratic process. They time allocate because they want to silence duly elected MPPs, and we also have the right to represent our ridings and the concerns of our ridings in this place. In fact, that's why we're here, Madam Speaker.

When the government stifles that debate and that discourse and that discussion, they fundamentally undermine our democracy. This is happening in real time right now. People say, "We're never going to be like the United States." Well, people should start paying attention and get engaged, because it's happening right now.

I would say the most expansive piece of research on Bill 27, Resource Management and Safety Act, actually comes from the Narwhal. The Narwhal, of course, is an independent news source that—

Interjection.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'm sorry, are you heckling me? No? Are you sure? Okay.

The government has proposed this piece of legislation as, one would say, a silver bullet. I want to say that this is not the case at all. In fact, trying to streamline and sell the concept that this is a silver bullet piece of legislation actually adds gasoline to the whole fire.

We're talking about carbon capture here in the House today. Carbon capture and storage involves containing the carbon dioxide released when fossil fuels are burned and injecting it deep underground to prevent it from entering the atmosphere and increasing global warming. On the surface, it sounds great. Advocates say doing so could limit some of the most severe effects of climate change, like hotter and more widespread wildfires. My colleague has talked extensively about the state of 731 forest fires this year. That's a huge amount, and it's not getting any better, as the province and country have experienced in the last few years.

But critics argue carbon storage allows for the continued burning of fossil fuels, rather than transitioning away from them. By way of explanation of this, it's like

selling the idea of carbon capture as a way to greenwash more fossil fuels being expended. It's like when we talk about preserving prime agricultural land, and the member from Niagara West says, "We can just start growing things up in the tundra," as if prime farmland is something that you can just replace with a piece of legislation, Madam Speaker.

The member from Niagara West has been quite vocal on this piece of legislation. In debate, he made the case that storage is crucial because the oil and gas industry plays a key role in the life of everyday Canadians, an argument also familiar—we've heard this at the federal level by their federal cousins as well, despite oil and gas being non-renewable resources. Hopefully, we can still agree on that: that oil and gas are non-renewable resources that actually cause climate change.

He goes on to say, and this is a quote from the member from Niagara West, "A solar panel is not going to provide the case covering that I have on this phone"—so he used his phone as a prop—and he "told his colleagues, though non-plastic—as well as recycled plastic—phone cases are on the market. Some people even go without phone cases, a consumer category that is only about two decades old." This is not a relevant example to be using around carbon capture. Phone covers should not be part of a debate here in this House.

"While carbon storage can lower emissions from industrial processes, like Suncor's oil refinery in Sarnia, the greenhouse gases released into the atmosphere when that refined oil is burned by customers down the line continues to warm the climate. Some academics and activists also point out carbon storage is extremely expensive and edges out investment in solutions that could limit the production of carbon dioxide in the first place."

So it's presented as a silver bullet and it's presented as a quick solve, but, at the same time, it's preventing further innovation on the market, Madam Speaker. That's a problem, and clearly somebody has asked this government to bring in this legislation.

I do want to say, when it comes to Ontario's readiness for carbon storage, there are other pressing concerns. Ask me, what are some of those pressing concerns?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: What are those pressing concerns?

Ms. Catherine Fife: There are so many pressing concerns with this government, like an unknown number of gas wells that some critics argue could heighten the risk of leaks of poisonous hydrogen sulfide and planet-warming methane. Ontario can't afford to properly plug these wells, located mostly in southwestern Ontario—the same region where carbon storage is proposed.

So the government of Ontario is saying, through this legislation, "Listen, we've got this plan, even though we don't really know how many gas wells could heighten the risk of leaks of poisonous hydrogen sulfide, and we can't plug those. We don't know how many there are. We can't plug all of them, but just trust us with this carbon sequestration methodology."

There's this actually really good quote from the member from London West in this article, and she says, "There's a real concern about what's going to happen to those abandoned oil and gas wells once this new industry starts up," in response to the phone case example.

Dave Sawyer, who is an environmental economist with the Canadian Climate Institute, a climate policy research organization, says carbon storage has been framed as a "silver bullet" to dealing with the ballooning emissions from the oil and gas sector.

There's lots of motivation here for the government to present a solution to a problem that you've created. There's also a broader innovation agenda there that could have been driven, and the silver bullet motion takes all the oxygen out of the room—which I think that we're all familiar with, although there's certainly a lot of hot air in this room.

Bill 27 introduces a framework for commercial-scale geological carbon storage, as it's never been done in Ontario. The government through this bill is saying, "Just trust us. Trust us. We've got this. Don't worry about it." This is a government that is currently under criminal investigation by the RCMP as it relates to the greenbelt scandal. This is a government that is also, through the Skills Development Fund—this has been referred to as the anti-racketeering division of the Ontario police here.

If you're looking at records around ensuring that jobs are kept here, jobs are supported, that the rhetoric we hear from the Premier of Ontario is backed up, our manufacturing numbers are at 1976 rates. So the just-trust-us philosophy is not really flying.

Also, on a more social-emotional or social basis, we just received the Hunger Hurts Ontario report today, thanks to our member from London who delivered them all to us today. Would you trust a government where one in three people visited a food bank for the first time this last year? Would you trust a government where one in three were children under 18 years of age going to a food bank; where one in three people with disabilities had to use a food bank; where one in four were employed but still could not earn enough to make ends meet, especially on housing because this government removed the rental control? Three in four were rental-market tenants; three out of four people who are in the rental market had to use a food bank in Ontario in 2025, under the leadership of this government, who called an early, self-serving election because these numbers were coming down the pipeline.

1440

We really should be in full preparation for an election, because the election was supposed to happen in June 2026. Imagine a thousand workers get laid off today from Algoma Steel. Would that help this Premier's electoral odds? I would think not. Manufacturing is at 1976 levels; would that help this government's political fortune? I think not. The fact that we have a Skills Development Fund that has been completely and utterly covered in a black cloud of scandal which compromises even some of the good work that could have been happening in that fund—but no, this Premier had to call an early election in

February to improve his own political fortunes. That's what we're dealing with right here. It's populism 101 on speed.

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

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: It's always a pleasure to rise in this House on behalf of beautiful Beaches-East Yorkers and to represent that amazing riding.

Before I start with my speech—I don't know if my hair was curling or my eyebrows were popping off my forehead. I just don't know what to say with the member from Newmarket–Aurora's speech that was filled with such interesting information that was very different from the action that is going on with this government.

First of all, I want to commend her on being very supportive of wind turbines. That's the first time I've heard that from the members across the way, so that's great. That must mean that there's going to be a real push for renewable energy, so I'm thrilled with that. It's maybe too late for this bill, but it could be in another one. Thank you kindly.

Also, the member mentioned about speaking to all these stakeholders and communities, and went into excruciating detail about that, which is fabulous—only, that can be done at committee if you don't skip that step. We are here because we're skipping a step, as is the case, the modus operandi, with the government of late, and previously as well. We'd all like to be talking to those stakeholders and community groups with you, but we need to all do it together, as is historically what was done in this House at committee. But we bypassed committee, and that's a problem.

Then the last thing I would say: The member from Newmarket–Aurora was very keen on utilizing mass timber—cross-laminated timber, CLT—which is fantastic. Actually, there was a huge proposal for Toronto's waterfront, a climate-positive neighbourhood, and everything was going to be built out of mass timber, but that never happened thanks to this government. It's great that the conservation authority's head office is constructed out of mass timber, which the member was raving about. We'd all like to go out there. I'll be going out for a tour because I value conservation authorities, quite frankly. So it's great to have that building, but if nobody is working in it because we're slashing conservation authorities, slicing and dicing them—and taking 36 amazing authorities that are working well to protect Ontario from flooding and other disasters, and we somehow roll them, like Plasticine, into seven and expect those entities are going to work. But yes, we brag about their building. It just baffles me.

Thank you for letting me air those grievances right off the bat. Thank you for doing that beautiful therapy together.

Now we'll get to the point: the proposed Bill 27, the Resource Management and Safety Act, 2025, which, as the member next to me mentioned, had been introduced, but we had a little bit of a distraction with an ungodly, unnecessary winter election, a snap election. Anyway, we made it through, and we're here, bigger and better and stronger.

Schedule 1 focuses on forest fires. Beyond changing the title from the Forest Fires Prevention Act to the Wildland Fire Management Act, the act shifts all terminology from "forest fire" and "forest area" to "wildland fire" and "wildland area" to reflect the title change. The bill also introduces officer positions and corresponding responsibilities. The bill also provides that wildland fire compliance officers may issue permits that would authorize the holder to have a fire outdoors during the fire season, subject to written conditions. So it's great that we're caring about firefighters and wildland fires. I don't feel we're doing enough, but we'll talk about that later.

Schedule 2 enacts the Geologic Carbon Storage Act, 2025. As a new act, the legislation would provide definitions, interpretive provisions, a purpose and prohibitions.

What I would say about carbon capture is, when we're fighting climate emergencies, we want to use nature-based solutions. I don't know if we think we're smarter than Mother Nature—I feel some people in this House do—but why not just tap into what already exists? We know forests are a huge carbon sink. Why wouldn't we just be maintaining our forests, planting more trees, maybe having some incentives and some programs on that?

Also, the breathing lands—the largest peat deposit in Canada and in, basically, North America and beyond—is what the people across call the Ring of Fire, which is Treaty 9 lands, actually. That's the real name. Why would we disrupt that when that is the best carbon sink—the largest and most effective? I'm not sure why we're thinking we're going to be investing all this money that we don't have into exploring carbon capture storage when we need to be working on solutions that actually work and that are cost-effective.

That's all I will say on schedule 2.

Then we move along to schedule 3 of Bill 27. It focuses on the oil, gas and salt resources.

Schedule 4 pertains to the Surveyors Act—and that's actually not bad, for this government. I'll throw a little bone over there—although I would like to speak to surveyors at committee and hear them, and I'm sure they would like to come to our committee and share their expertise with us.

1450

But I did call my father. Although he's 88, he did have a very successful land surveying company in Collingwood for years and years. That's a profession I did not go into, obviously, but I would have liked to hear from surveyors in the here and now. But I don't think that that is too bad of a schedule for this government.

The last time I spoke on this bill, it was around the Pride flag raising, and what I recall about that was, when we were out at the flag raising trying to celebrate the occasion, you could smell smoke. There was a backdrop of wildfire-induced haze from all the forest fires in Ontario and Manitoba and Alberta and Saskatchewan. We all recall the frequency and the velocity of our fires last summer and before that and before that and probably, of course, this year as well.

We want to be serious about our climate action to deal with that. We know with the Manitoba fires, it was

terrifying. As of June 2, last year, Manitoba had a total of 27 active fires, with nine classified as out of control.

That amazing Premier out there, Wab Kinew—if we could just clone him and move him all over Canada, that would be helpful—ordered a province-wide state of emergency. The result was tens of thousands of Manitoba residents being forced to evacuate in order to survive. That was in different places like Flin Flon, Cranberry Portage and Pukatawagan.

Particularly affected were the First Nations in Manitoba. As we all know in a climate emergency, who gets hit the hardest, the fastest—and the most unfair result of a climate emergency—is usually the most vulnerable people, in many cases in Third World countries, especially people who weren't even the cause of the climate crisis.

There was a First Nations area called Pimicikamak Cree Nation and another one called Mathias Colomb Cree Nation. They had to be evacuated, and, yes, as the member across said, they were staying in Ontario in Niagara Falls hotels, which the minister of emergency management so rightly pointed out. That was great that they had a place to go, but it wasn't great that they had to leave at all. The fires were reaching thousands of hectares in size, and people were not equipped to manage the fires in their homes and in their communities. So that's Manitoba.

Lytton, BC: We all know that horrific tale. This has happened a few times in Lytton, but in 2021, Lytton suffered a truly horrendous season of wildfires, beginning with record-breaking temperatures in June of 2021, reaching up to 49.6 degrees. Lytton was dangerously hot, and the same day that Environment Canada sent out a notice on extreme heat, 74-year-old Lytton resident Eric Siwik's home burst into flames within literal seconds. The RCMP station in Lytton exploded into flames, and a home, barn, observatory and workshop, and animals were ravaged by flames in Tricia Thorpe and Donny Glasgow's property. Soon the entire village was engulfed in flames.

In total, the Lytton fire destroyed 124 structures, 45 structures in adjacent Lytton First Nation and 34 neighbouring rural properties. This amounted to 90% of local buildings taken by the fires, including Lytton's village hall, which contained official records. Two grocery stores were taken—the farmers' market, pharmacy, bank, medical centre, coffee shop and outdoor benches, along with two civilian lives.

Just think about that in your area. Some of us represent rural areas, smaller areas. Think about that loss. Whatever your population is, just imagine in your own riding dealing with that kind of devastating loss.

We know we are smack dab in the centre of a climate emergency. It's only going to get hotter, folks, and we need to do something about that.

Speaking about that, you will recall my powerful private member's bill on extreme heat. Just like the flooding awareness one, we were trying to get information into every single Ontarian's hands so they would know what to do with extreme heat when it's upon us, because not everyone has an air conditioner. Personally, I do not have an air conditioner in my home. We have ceiling fans,

and I have Lake Ontario to jump into. I have a beautiful, big, old tree in my backyard which provides a lot of cooling ability. But it's getting hotter and hotter, and that's not enough.

People living in high-rises need places to cool down. They need air conditioning. We know the best way to do that is with heat pumps that provide both heating and cooling. So it would be great if this government decided to be proactive and kind-hearted and offered incentives for that kind of life-saving infrastructure.

Wildfires and firefighter protection: We're all very thankful to our front-line workers. They risk their lives every day for us. What I would say about them especially is, our wildland firefighters are not paid properly. They are not scheduled properly.

They've come. They've talked to us. We've heard from them. We've read reports that with wildland firefighters, we need to be recruiting and retaining. That needs to be a focus, and in order to do that we need to showcase that as a career, actually, and train people. Actually, there is probably some skills development funding that could be available and that would be used properly.

But they want to be full-time. Right now, it's almost like gig work because they're not paid on a full-time basis, most of them. They're seasonal. They should be round-the-clock because they can be doing other things if there's no forest fires, as we know, in the winter, and they need to have better pay. We need to put our money where our mouth is and make that happen, and we need to showcase how great they are.

We know with the BC fires that Ontario water bombers went out to BC. We're actually famous out there for our water bombers, who help a ton with wildfire suppression. In fact, their planes are called the yellow CL-415s, and they're nicknamed the "Super Scooper planes." It's a phenomenally amazing Ontario innovation. They can scoop up to 6,130 litres of water from lakes in 12 seconds.

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So why aren't we championing this amazing innovation and technology and showcasing it to the rest of the world—because everyone is going to need this with their forest fires, not just in Canada—and investing in our wildland firefighters and the technology, and also treating them well? Because we're not going to be able to recruit more wildland firefighters if we don't treat them well, pay them well and make it year-round payment and full-time.

There's a lot more I could say on this bill—and I'm sure you're waiting with bated breath for every word—but I'm just going to end it there and say, guys, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. And fighting wildfires is not a partisan issue, so let's work together and strengthen that.

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

Mr. Mike Schreiner: It's always an honour to rise in this House, today to discuss Bill 27. I'll be focusing my remarks on schedule 1 and 2 of the bill.

I want to start with schedule 1, the schedule on wildland firefighting, and just highlight the fact that in 2022 and again in 2024, the Auditor General put forward reports

highly critical of the government's mismanagement of wildland firefighting in Ontario and the lack of financial resources going in to wildland fire prevention: support for front-line wildland firefighters in terms of them having proper PPE, equipment, preparation, plans, crew sizes, etc. And so it feels a bit rich reading this bill, knowing the government's track record when it comes to lack of support for wildland firefighters.

Now, one of the things the bill does acknowledge is that wildfire season now is essentially year-round. And I think it's important that the government has acknowledged that. I do find it a bit ironic that they're doing that in this bill, while at the same time their fall economic statement implementation bill in schedule 1 effectively cancels climate action. Basically, it says the province of Ontario will no longer have targets to reduce climate pollution, and there's no legal obligation to have a climate plan. It's just like—you can't make this stuff up, Speaker.

We have a bill here saying, "Yes, firefighting season is going to get worse." It is now all year round. Two of the last three years have been the worst wildland fire seasons in Canadian history. Three years ago, during the worst, over a four-day period when southern Ontario had the most toxic air of anywhere in the world, it cost our health care system \$1.4 billion due to additional emergency department admissions for people with respiratory issues, lung cancer, COPD, asthma.

So I'm glad the government has finally admitted, at least in this bill, that we're going to have significant wildfire seasons. But unfortunately, there's no money to actually expand crews. To put that into perspective, we had 214 wildland firefighting crews in Ontario in 2005. Guess how many we had last year: 143. So we're going to have a longer season. We're going to have more intense, frequent and severe fires. And yet we have less money being invested in crews and less support for those crews, and we have a government that essentially has cancelled climate action—thrown in the towel.

Which then brings me to schedule 2 of this bill, because, for whatever reason, both the federal government and provincial government have this pipe dream that somehow carbon capture and storage is going to be the magic bullet to solve all of our climate problems.

We've got to look at the facts on this.

Of all the carbon capture and storage projects that have been invested in around the world—and literally tens of billions of dollars invested in them—80% don't work at all; the other 20% barely work.

As a matter of fact, if you look at all the projects that have been invested in over the last decade—again, tens of billions of dollars going into these projects—do you know what percentage of emissions they've actually captured? It's 0.1%.

As a matter of fact, over the last two decades, with carbon capture and storage, do you know what percent of global emissions have been captured and stored? It's 0.0004%.

I don't know of anyone—private sector, public sector—who would invest tens of billions of dollars in such a track record of failure.

As a matter of fact, because a lot of these projects are used for enhanced oil recovery, they actually increase emissions. They drive pollution up, not take it down.

One of the things I'll give the government credit for is their hydrogen strategy. I think Ontario can be a global energy superpower through renewable energy, and hydrogen should be a part of that. But do you know what is a potential threat to our hydrogen strategy? It's that the salt caves, which are perfectly positioned to store hydrogen, could potentially be used to store carbon capture and storage—actually taking storage capacity away from hydrogen. So I don't understand why the government is investing in this.

But don't take my word for it. Let's look at the International Energy Agency. This is a very pro-oil-and-gas agency. I want to quote them. In their recent report, they said that oil and gas companies need to start "letting go of the illusion" that "implausibly large" amounts of carbon capture are the solution to the global climate crisis. That's not me. That's the International Energy Agency.

Governments—maybe they want to waste tens of billions of taxpayer dollars on carbon capture and storage. I would much rather spend that money on attracting Ontario's fair share of the \$2.2 trillion that's going to be invested this year alone in the green energy transition that's part of the \$8-trillion global green energy economy. Double the money is going into renewables that's going into the oil and gas sector. Ontario could be perfectly positioned to attract our fair share of that \$2.2 trillion this year, utilizing Ontario steel to build wind turbines, solar panels and battery storage.

You could look at Bloomberg; you could look at NEI; you could look at global investment monitors—all saying the reason so much money is going into the green energy transition is because it's now the lowest-cost source of energy in the world.

So I don't know why the Ontario government isn't saying, "We're open for business; we want to attract that capital investment; we want to create the good-paying jobs to make it happen," and would rather invest in something that has been a failure over and over and over again, especially when nature stores carbon free of charge. We don't even have to pay for it. It's free.

1510

As a matter of fact, Canada's boreal peatlands actually store 25% of the world's peatland carbon right here in Ontario. And by the way, wetlands across the globe store about 25% of the world's carbon at only 1% of land mass. It's one of the most efficient storage mechanisms for carbon in the world. Here in Ontario, the wetlands both in the north and the south store 29 billion tonnes of carbon. That's the carbon equivalent of taking every single one of the 24.1 million gas-powered vehicles in Canada off the road—guess for how long? The next thousand years. So why—why—are we not utilizing this free source of carbon storage instead of threatening it?

It's exactly why, even though I support critical mineral mining in the north, we have to do it in a way that protects those peatlands. Otherwise, it's actually going to release

more carbon than we save from the critical minerals that will go into the green energy transition.

Just here in southern Ontario, despite the fact that over the years we've paved over 75% of southern Ontario's wetlands, the wetlands that remain still store 1.3 billion tonnes of carbon. That's the equivalent of taking Canada's 24.1 million cars off the road for—guess how long? Forty years, free of charge. Yet we have a government—also through the fall economic statement budget implementation bill—that's going to decimate the ability of conservation authorities to protect us from flooding and to protect those wetlands.

I guess they want to build houses in places you shouldn't build houses, forgetting the fact that, in 1954, Hurricane Hazel hit the province of Ontario. Tragically, 81 people died, 4,000 families were made homeless, and the inflation-adjusted cost to the province was over a billion dollars.

That's why we strengthened conservation authorities: The threat, the frequency and severity of those unsafe weather events are only going to get worse. As a matter of fact, the floods that hit Toronto just two summers ago in the GTA—Toronto and Mississauga primarily—cost \$1.3 billion an hour in damage to property, infrastructure and communities. I don't know about you, but I think it makes economic sense to protect it. We can both protect wetlands to store carbon free of charge, and we can protect our property, our families and our communities.

As a matter of fact, I want to tell a story that happened just next door to my house just last month. A big rainstorm hit Guelph, and water rushed in and trapped my neighbour in her basement apartment—a single mom with a four-year-old. The fire department had to come out at 4 a.m. and bail her out of her apartment because the water was rising and she couldn't open the doors. Those are the kinds of threats we're facing.

We have solutions to it. We have solutions that will cost less money, that will create more and better-paying jobs, and that will help us do things in a more financially responsible way than carbon capture and storage will. So let's get smart. Let's invest where we have a return on investment and create the good-paying jobs that will help people save money at the same time by acting on climate, not denying it.

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

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Speaker, as I begin today, I would like to recognize the tremendous work of a wonderful, driven human, the founder of Type Diabeat-It, Mystery Furtado. Type Diabeat-It was founded to address systemic barriers to care and reduce type 2 diabetes, as it disproportionately affects African, Caribbean and Black communities.

Mystery is a collaborator. Along with the London Food Bank, she built London's first Black-led community garden, featuring Afro-heritage crops. This project has grown with support from the Lawson Foundation's Miggins Fund, the United Way and others to expand their reach with a greenhouse, a food box program, as well as diabetes support and diabetes prevention programs.

Food is the first and best medicine to promote health and culture connections while strengthening identity and family ties at the same time. The Chop, Eat, Learn program and breakfast and hot meal program illustrate how Mystery and Type Diabeat-It consider the entire person.

Knowledge is power, and Mystery helped the Thames Valley District School Board's Afrocentric food literacy program develop a diabetes curriculum framework. Her tireless work has sparked a movement that challenges the status quo, empowers individuals and brings hope where it's needed most. Like Mystery herself, Type Diabeat-It is thoughtful, dynamic and responsive, an organization that considers prevention, evidence-based data collection and meaningful program delivery as well as reporting.

It's deeply disappointing that many government programs merely ask how many people were served rather than asking about their results and rather than asking about their impact.

I want to thank Mystery for her leadership, her dedication to improving lives and her profound impact on the health and well-being of our community. Her legacy is already shaping the future, and I am proud to stand with her in this vital work.

Speaker, as I begin to discuss Bill 27 today, it seems to me that this government has never met a tragedy that they didn't want to exploit. They've never seen a public system that they didn't want to strangle, didn't want to destroy and didn't want to replace with a profit-making motive.

With Bill 27, we saw that there was no consultation. We're now discussing this bill under time allocation. I have to wonder, when I see this bill, how many brown paper bags have gone from insiders to this government.

I want to turn to my colleague from Mushkegowuk—James Bay, who very rightly pointed out that it would be important and it would be integral for this government to properly support and finance wildland firefighting services. In 2025 there were 131 wildfires. In 2024 there were only 87, but the 10-year average is around 124, so we see that this is going up quite a bit. As well, the member from Mushkegowuk—James Bay really pointed out how these wildfires deeply threaten First Nations communities.

We have seasons that are hotter, seasons that are drier. We have weather events such as lightning, storms and flooding. There's so much impact that is happening, and yet I strongly doubt that this bill is about making sure that people are safe and making sure that resources are being managed. It's looking at a way of commodifying our province.

In 2024-25, emergency firefighter funding was cut. It was at \$216 million, and it was cut down to \$135 million. That's a cut from this government of \$81 million. In 2019, they also cut funding by \$142 million, so it seems rather strange that this bill is purporting to be about protecting Ontario and protecting us against wildfires, and yet the funding has gone down.

Additionally, I want to thank the member from Toronto—Danforth, who quite rightly pointed out the example of what happened in Wheatley. Now, south-

western Ontario has a long history of oil when you look at the town of Petrolia, which is also known as Canada's Victorian oil town. Many actually would say that along with Oil Springs, Petrolia started the oil industry in North America. It's actually a place where Dale Hunter, Dave Hunter and Mark Hunter, two of whom are now the coaches of the London Knights and former NHL players themselves, were born, where they hail from.

Across the province of Ontario, there are 27,000 abandoned oil and gas wells.

The tragedy in Wheatley that happened in August 2021: Consider that that explosion occurred in 2021, and only just last year, November 1, 2024, did Chatham and Kent officially end Wheatley's emergency order.

On July 19, 2021, an emergency was declared in Wheatley because there was hydrogen sulfide gas, and it was August 26, 2021, when the explosion on Erie Street North injured 20 people. There was an emergency evacuation, and what was found was that a legacy gas well had actually used an undocumented water well as a conduit. It allowed gases to accumulate in a basement on Erie Street, which ended up leading to the explosion.

1520

It was also found that there are so many undocumented water wells across Ontario. One of the asks from Wheatley has been that there be enhanced monitoring and enhanced response protocols. The problem is that we have aging and undocumented infrastructure. With Bill 27, what this will actually do is it will kick a ticking time bomb down the road.

Where have been the public consultations? Why has this government chosen to shut people out from this discussion? This government does not have a definition of "hazard to the public or the environment." It's a deep question which needs to be answered by this government.

It's curious and strange that this government, while refusing to outright admit that we are in the midst of a climate crisis, seems to tacitly admit that there is a climate crisis by extending the fire season year-round.

It also raises the question: How does the government expect to fight these wildfires in November or March with an unemployed workforce when they've been hemorrhaging staff because the government refuses to classify wildland firefighters as firefighters?

Speaker, at this time, this government seems to be tinkering around the edges. There's so much more that it needs to do to make sure that we are climate resilient. It needs to make sure to call upon the federal government to reinstate their investigation into flooding, making sure that people are not only building in the right places but that there should be funding for adaptation. And we have to be making sure that we're helping Ontarians protect themselves.

This bill is really about commodifying a certain resource. It's about who is in the back room. It's about who is discussing these things with the government. I have to suggest that this bill is yet another example of an ironic title. This certainly is about managing resources, but just for a few.

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

Pursuant to the order of the House dated November 24, 2025, I am now required to put the question. Mr. Harris has moved third reading of Bill 27, An Act to enact the Geologic Carbon Storage Act, 2025 and to amend various Acts with respect to wildfires, resource safety and surveyors.

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

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

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

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

A recorded vote being required, it will be deferred until the next instance of deferred votes.

Third reading vote deferred.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos):
I recognize the member of Ottawa–Vanier on a point of order.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: I seek the unanimous consent of the House that ballot item number 21, standing in the name of the member for Hastings–Lennox and Addington, be debated on Thursday, December 4, 2025, and that ballot item number 23, standing in the name of the member for Scarborough–Guildwood, be debated on Tuesday, December 2, 2025.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos):
Madame Collard is seeking the unanimous consent of the House that ballot item number 21, standing in the name of the member for Hastings–Lennox and Addington, be debated on Thursday, December 4, 2025, and that ballot item number 23, standing in the name of the member for Scarborough–Guildwood, be debated on Tuesday, December 2, 2025. Agreed? Agreed.

Motion agreed to.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT MODERNIZATION ACT, 2025

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

Ms. Dunlop moved third reading of the following bill:

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

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

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Seeing as it's December 1, as we're moving into the holiday season and all the things that we're thankful for, I'm thankful for all the staff that support me from my constit office to my ministry staff. I have some of my constit office members who are joining me today: Leslie Stroud, Hannah Jones and Ciya Mehra. Thank you, ladies, for being here with us today, and also, all the operations staff at our Provincial Emergency Operations Centre and our field officers who are on the ground in communities ensuring that we keep Ontario safe, practised and prepared.

Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise in the House today to discuss a piece of proposed legislation that is of critical importance to every Ontario resident, business and community. The Emergency Management Modernization Act, referred to as EMMA, was introduced on May 26, 2025. It is a long overdue update of the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act, which has not been updated in over 15 years.

The act needed modernization so it can be the most effective mechanism to build a stronger, more resilient province, especially during these challenging times. Since the last time this act was updated, the emergency management landscape has fundamentally changed. There have been major shifts in technological advances, cultural attitudes and an increasing understanding of new and emerging threats. Our government cannot stand still; it must take action.

Therefore, Madam Speaker, we have proposed to update this legislation to make it more future-forward and to do so now, before the busy winter hazards season goes into full force. We've already started to see the first hints of what this winter season can bring—and I can tell you up in my riding, we had quite a bit of snow this weekend. We cannot afford another delay; the time to move this bill forward is now.

Communities and municipalities are planning for this season now. They need to know our government will be there for them when the next ice storm hits. They cannot afford any delays in getting the right tools and resources to them if an ice storm or a winter storm hits them and they're without power for days. This proposed legislation, if passed, will enable the right systems and processes to make sure that all Ontarians are protected when an emergency strikes, like the ice storms last winter or the wildfires this summer.

EMMA's purpose is to provide clarity during a crisis. It eliminates any grey areas or ambiguity and clearly enshrines roles and responsibilities to establish a chain of command in those critical moments. This government, under the leadership of Premier Ford, has made it a top priority to make sure that the province's emergency management legislative framework is modern, efficient and effective. This is something all provinces and territories are striving for.

Madam Speaker, two weeks ago I had the privilege of co-chairing the federal-provincial-territorial ministers of emergency management meetings. Each and every minister agreed that emergency situations like wildland fires,

pandemics, floods and other disasters are on the rise around the world. Ontario is not an exception to this, nor is it immune to the potentially dangerous consequences. One must only check the statistics from year to year to see that this is true.

In 2024, Ontario required 67 Emergency Management Ontario staff deployments to deal with 109 major emergency events. Already this year, the Provincial Emergency Operations Centre has been activated for 76 days because of 103 significant emergency events so far. Now more than ever, we must work together to ensure Ontarians are safe, practised and prepared for potential emergencies.

1530

Madam Speaker, at this time I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all the trained professionals who have dedicated their lives to making our province safe. This includes our Ontario Corps network, as well as all of our emergency responders who selflessly and tirelessly work under extreme circumstances to make sure that the people of Ontario are protected and secure when the unimaginable becomes a reality. We owe it to these people and to all Ontarians to make every effort to ensure that the best possible legislative framework is in place to optimize the province's emergency management system.

Our government understands that collaboration is essential to implementing policy. EMMA will pave the way for new relationships with communities and the broader public and private sectors; relationships that will be forged with the intent of safeguarding all Ontarians in emergency situations.

Let me be clear before they go down that road: This bill has had months of public consultation with multiple stakeholders. It has had expert input, discussions, debate, written submissions and round table input from all across Ontario, including Indigenous communities, municipalities, emergency experts, academics, NGOs, and the private and public sectors, just to name a few.

The ministry spent all last summer and fall promoting engagement and open communication with more than 550 partners. We hosted 14 in-person sessions across Ontario and 33 virtual sessions to solicit ideas about how to best modernize the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act. The occasion to update the act was an opportunity to collaborate with many partners to fashion the best possible piece of legislation, one that would greatly improve the safety and well-being of everyone in Ontario. This bill was crafted carefully, and this government has done its due diligence.

Let me elaborate further on the care we took on consultation in the interest of this time allocation. We have hosted numerous collaborative communication opportunities and listened to many different partners, including Indigenous communities. I want to take a moment to acknowledge First Nations and Indigenous partners, who play a critical role in emergency management. I want to thank them for their extensive engagement during our consultations for this legislation last year. Meeting with leaders of many First Nations and Indigenous groups has

provided me with first-hand knowledge and experiences of what their communities are dealing with, including when it comes to emergencies like wildland fires and flooding.

Since taking office, we have engaged in a strong collaborative relationship with First Nation partners by strengthening coordinated responses through funding grants and developing the Indigenous Internship Program to provide Indigenous youth the opportunity to intern at the Provincial Emergency Operations Centre. I want to reaffirm that we will continue to work together to ensure that in their communities, there will always be an Indigenous-led approach to emergency management.

I also want to reaffirm that our ministry will always be available to listen to and learn from our partners. In May, many of our partners joined Premier Ford and I at a special round table. During those discussions, emergency management professionals, including Ontario Corps partners, indicated in no uncertain terms that the act should be modernized and updated.

In August at AMO, I met with dozens of municipal leaders. These were incredibly valuable and constructive conversations; conversations which are essential to ensuring that our policies reflect what is happening on the ground; discussions that confirmed that the government's approach needs to be community-focused, forward-looking and responsive. By following these three directives, this proposed legislation will be able to meet our high standards of effectiveness.

To make the most efficient use of our time together, we focused the discussion around five key areas:

- the extent or limits of an emergency;
- the creation of a one-window approach to respond to emergencies;
- coordination between the broader public sector, external partners and government;
- enhancing the quality, inclusivity and consistency of emergency management programs; and
- First Nation collaboration in all areas of emergency management.

During the discussion, a couple of key themes emerged. The first was that the province should have a clearly defined role coordinating emergency management preparation and response. The provincial government must not step back into a secondary or tertiary role when it comes to coordination and fostering a cohesive approach during a crisis.

The second was that to achieve the highest quality of response, individual communities would have to bolster their capabilities in every aspect of their emergency management responsibilities. If communities do not have their own capacity and tools, it makes it extremely difficult to respond to a crisis. Our government has achieved both through this proposed legislation.

The purpose of this proposed legislation is to renew an act that has not been modernized for over a decade and it is to provide clarity and assurance in times of uncertainty. The parliamentary assistant will elaborate more during his time by speaking more about Ontario Corps and the

Community Emergency Preparedness Grant, which I believe provides just that.

Ontario Corps is a key function of our provincial emergency response that can be deployed to support communities across Ontario. Through this proposed legislation, Ontario Corps will be enshrined into law. This year alone, we have deployed Ontario Corps resources 10 times to support communities dealing with wildland fires, ice storms, downbursts, floods and snowstorms. Ontario Corps has augmented local capacity by providing debris cleaning equipment, wellness checks and hot meals, among many, many other supports.

The Community Emergency Preparedness Grant is a critical program that helps communities build capacity on a local level. To date, our government has invested \$10 million to build up emergency management capabilities across 227 different communities, with another \$5 million coming next year to even more communities.

In closing, I would like to thank you, Madam Speaker, and all members today for allowing me the opportunity to discuss emergency management, and specifically to highlight how, if passed, the Emergency Management Modernization Act would enhance disaster response measures and public safety. Madam Speaker, this government will continue to value the input and appreciate the strong and diverse voices of our numerous stakeholders and partners across our province as this vital piece of legislation advances.

I would like to extend my thanks for all the amazing work that everybody at the ministry has done to bring this proposed legislation this far. I assure you that they have undertaken all their duties with the one overarching goal in mind: to protect our local communities by building a safe, practised and prepared Ontario.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I rise today to speak strongly against both Bill 25, the Emergency Management Modernization Act, and the government's decision to force the bill forward under time allocation, cutting off debate, shutting out the public and denying the bipartisan committee process that exists for one purpose: to make legislation better.

This is a bill that desperately needs to be made better. Bill 25 is presented as an update to Ontario's emergency management system. But once you read it—really read it—it becomes clear that this government is using emergency legislation as a vehicle to expand ministerial powers, silence service providers and centralize authority in ways that are vague, unjustified and deeply dangerous.

Schedule 1 shows how poorly thought out this bill is. The government has now offered the definition of "Ontario Corps," but only after it was introduced in the Legislature and criticized.

These corps are intended as a rapid response unit for natural disasters and other emergencies. The undefined term "other emergencies" provides no practical limit to an emergency. When the government can declare an emergency for reasons not clearly spelled out and then activate

new powers, those powers must be clearly defined, clearly constrained and clearly justified. In Bill 25, there are none of those things, Speaker. Where in the bill does it explain how the corps will be governed, trained, overseen, funded, deployed and integrated? The government has effectively built a new brand of emergency force through press conferences and online portals rather than in the legislation where it belongs.

1540

The actual bill is left vague on fundamental provisions. The lack of precision in schedule 1 sets the stage for something far more threatening in schedule 2. Schedule 2 quietly grants the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services sweeping, unprecedented authority to issue binding directives to any organization or individual receiving ministry funds. The trigger for those directives is something called an “extraordinary matter”—a term that is not defined, not explained, not limited; a term that can be stretched to mean almost anything the minister wants it to mean.

Apparently, a memo from the ministry has circulated to service providers defining “extraordinary matters” as “extreme weather events, natural disasters, interruptions of essential services or other matters of public interest.” But what in the world does “public interest” mean? A disagreement? A protest? A media interview? A Facebook post? And why are these definitions that could go into law being shared in memos instead of clearly in the legislation itself?

If the legislation doesn’t define the term, the minister gets to define it. That is undemocratic and dangerous. This lack of clarity isn’t accidental; it’s a feature of the bill. Because under schedule 2, once the minister declares an “extraordinary matter,” every funded agency becomes obligated to comply with whatever directive the minister issues—no regulations, no checks and balances, no oversight; just directives with penalties attached. This could include Community Living organizations, children’s aid societies, social housing providers, development services, autism service providers, food banks and shelters. These are agencies that support the most vulnerable people in this province. And the penalties are serious. Individuals could face fines of up to \$5,000, and agencies already struggling to stay afloat could see fines up to \$25,000.

On top of that, the minister gains power to reduce or terminate funding if an organization doesn’t comply. Imagine running a shelter where funding could be yanked overnight because you disagreed with the minister’s directive or spoke publicly about the reality of homelessness. Imagine being a parent relying on autism services and your provider is afraid to criticize the government’s policies because they worry funding could be cut. Imagine working in a children’s aid society where you fear fines or sanctions simply for advocating for the children in your care.

The threat of this government retaliating against organizations isn’t theoretical. Two weeks ago, the Premier threatened audits against organizations who criticized his legislation. Agencies awaiting government grants are worried about retaliation if they speak out. Constituents on

ODSP have been calling my office concerned that their funding could be affected if their service provider butts heads with the ministry. That is how fear spreads. That is how democracy erodes.

And that brings us to today’s motion. Speaker, if there were ever a bill that needed committee hearings, it’s this one. The government has created a bill where the key concepts like Ontario Corps, “extraordinary matters,” “directives” and the scope of ministerial authority are either undefined or defined through press conferences and memos. This is exactly what committees exist to fix—to define terms, tighten language, prevent abuse and ensure the laws cannot be weaponized against the people it claims to protect. Instead, the government is ramming this bill through without giving anyone a chance to be heard.

If you’re confident in this legislation, you welcome scrutiny, you welcome stakeholders, you welcome amendments. But when your legislation won’t withstand scrutiny, you shut down debate.

Bill 25 centralizes power, punishes dissent, threatens service providers and creates undefined ministerial authorities that can be used however the government chooses. To force something this consequential through without committee hearings is reckless, undemocratic and utterly unjustifiable.

I want this government to stop hiding behind time allocations and start being accountable to the people of Ontario.

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

Mr. Jonathan Tsao: It’s always an honour to rise in the House as the MPP for Don Valley North to speak to any bill, and today speaking to Bill 25.

I want to begin my remarks by grounding us in a simple truth: Emergency response is not a side issue; it’s the backbone of public safety, public trust and public confidence. That’s why I do believe this bill is so important, why I believe this debate is important and why I also believe this should be extended to committees to hear more input from the greater community.

Whether it’s a fire in a high-rise, a sudden flood, a heat wave, a mass power outage or a catastrophic weather event, people expect and deserve a system that responds quickly, acts clearly and is well-coordinated. They expect a system where first responders have what they need, where emergency plans are up to date and where government can act decisively without trampling local expertise.

I do believe that is why this bill matters. Emergency management is no longer a future problem; it’s a now problem. In my riding of Don Valley North, this responsibility is personal. Our community is shaped by the East Don River, the West Don River and the Don Valley ravine system, which brings both beauty but also great vulnerability. When extreme rainfall hits—and we do see that it increasingly does—those systems become overwhelmed and swell very quickly. Ravine trails wash out, stormwater systems overflow, and flooding often begins upstream in our community before travelling across the breadth of our great city. Paired with the many high-rise buildings which

continue to proliferate in Don Valley North, these factors make strong emergency planning not just timely but essential. It's with this understanding, this urgency and importance for the people of Don Valley North, that it's essential that we acknowledge those who carry the weight of emergency response every single day.

So, Speaker, before I jump into examining the legislation itself, I want to first recognize the people who translate emergency management in theory into actual real-world practice. Before discussing this bill, I want to recognize these extraordinary men and women in Don Valley North who help keep us safe: the Toronto Paramedic Services; the Toronto Fire Services, especially the halls responding to ravine fires and high-rise calls every single day; Toronto Police 33 Division, which plays a central role in emergency safety, evacuation, and crisis response; our emergency dispatchers; and of course, the dedicated team of medical professionals at North York General Hospital.

Toronto Paramedic Services responds to more than 350,000 calls annually, many in my own community. The 33 Division officers check on the vulnerable residents during storms and outages. Toronto Fire Services face growing threats from high-rise fires, electrical failures and extreme heat. These front-line workers show up for us every single day. They respond calmly. They respond courageously. Now it's time for our government to show up for them with real support, real investment and a real plan.

These front-line heroes anchor our emergency services, and it's with them in mind that we need to—and why we need to—modernize so urgently. But when I look at the legislation, one of the great shortfalls that I see is about root causes. To understand why modernization cannot wait, we need only to look at forces that are intensifying emergencies across Ontario, and that's due to our climate crisis. Emergencies are becoming more frequent, more damaging and more expensive. Flooding, extreme rainfall, heat waves, ice storms and wildfire smoke now define Ontario's emergency reality. And yet, Bill 25 doesn't mention climate change even once. That is a fundamental oversight, especially—especially—in 2025. This evolving climate reality sets the stage for Bill 25, and it's important to understand what the bill actually proposes.

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The need for a modernized emergency framework becomes even clearer when we look at the disasters that have shaped Ontario's past and its present:

- Hurricane Hazel in 1954, 81 deaths, communities destroyed;

- GTA floodings in 2024, nearly 100 millimetres of rain in a single morning, sewage overflow, unsafe beaches;

- wildfires from 2023 to 2025, widespread smoke and evacuations;

- the heat dome in BC in 2021, 600-plus deaths, mostly seniors;

- ice storms in 2013, 2023 and 2025 causing havoc, major power outages.

And just right now as we speak, a high-rise continues to burn in Thorncliffe Park; it started last Thursday and is

still ongoing. The event highlights the challenges that we face right here in this great city of Toronto. This isn't a far-out, distant hypothesis; this is a reality that Torontonians, that Ontarians are facing at this very minute.

Speaker, I did want to take a minute. I know that, the member for Don Valley West, her heart has been aching and with the people of Thorncliffe.

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: I was just there.

Mr. Jonathan Tsao: She was just there doing her best to provide them solace and support.

But I do think that it's really essential that we do take a minute when we're discussing emergency management to not just think of the statistics, to think of what the bill will look at and what the policy will look like, but the people—the people of Thorncliffe Park, who need our support.

High-rise emergencies are not hypothetical. They're happening. With these local examples in mind in my riding and in Don Valley West, we can better assess what aspects of Bill 25 will move us forward, but also where it falls short. As global events show us, these emergencies are not confined to our borders. They're part of a worldwide pattern of escalating risk.

I also want to take a minute now to touch on the tragic fires in Hong Kong. It's one that has captured global attention and deepened the world's understanding of urban emergency vulnerability. The catastrophic fires at Wang Fuk Court in the Tai Po district of Hong Kong are the deadliest in modern Hong Kong history, and I want to take a moment to share the magnitude of the loss, which is staggering. At least 151 people are now confirmed dead; more than 40 people are still missing. Hundreds have been displaced, losing their homes, their belongings and their entire support network.

In Ontario, and particularly in my riding of Don Valley North, we're home to people with deep ties to Hong Kong: parents, grandparents, friends and loved ones who still call the city home—including my own family. This tragedy hits close to the heart for many of us. As we follow the news and we reach out to check on loved ones, we need to make sure that we reassure one another that it will be okay.

In moments like these, we're reminded of how deeply connected our world is, Speaker. What happens in Hong Kong affects families right here in Don Valley North, and it's together that we mourn the lives lost, we pray for the safety of those still missing, and we send strength to the survivors and the first responders working tirelessly throughout this unimaginable loss.

Speaker, the human grief of the tragedy in Hong Kong is immense. The line of thousands of mourners extends more than a kilometre to pay their respects. This includes families, migrant domestic workers grieving for friends and co-workers, neighbours leaving offerings of candles and prayers. These vigils are not just in Hong Kong. Ceremonies are being held in Tokyo, London and Taipei, showing just how far these ripples extend.

These were not inevitable circumstances. They were preventable failures layered on top of an already dense, aging residential complex.

When 151 people die in their own homes, the world must learn from it. These towers are not unlike ones that

we have in my own riding of Don Valley North. They're aging buildings. They're undergoing renovations. They're housing seniors and newcomers. They're dependent on elevators. They're difficult to evacuate during emergencies.

The Hong Kong fire shows what happens when inadequate oversight prevails, when substandard materials are used, when aging infrastructure persists and emergency preparedness gaps collide at the wrong moment. It shows how quickly a high-rise emergency can shift from a building-level fire to a city-wide and worldwide tragedy. The ripple effect continues. Hospitals, transportation systems, emergency shelters, schools, local businesses and community mental health supports—they've all now become in crisis because they are overwhelmed by the scale of the tragedy.

Speaker, the Hong Kong fire is not just a distant tragedy; it's a warning—one that Bill 25 must meaningfully respond to. What happened in Tai Po illustrates with heartbreakingly clarity what is at stake when emergency management systems are outdated, fragmented or underregulated.

Bill 25 attempts to modernize Ontario's approach. But modernization cannot simply reorganize; it must fortify.

The Hong Kong tragedy shows us that centralized authority means little if inspections and oversight are weak. Emergency planning must contemplate high-rise realities. Evacuation routes must be accessible and well maintained. Building materials must meet stringent safety standards. Safety alarms and infrastructure must be functional. Vulnerable residents require proactive support. And it shows that when oversight is lax, when coordination breaks down, and when warning signs are ignored, the consequences are catastrophic.

Bill 25 provides us with an opportunity—a necessary one—to strengthen Ontario's emergency planning framework so that a tragedy of the scale that we've seen in Hong Kong never happens here. If we are truly to honour the lessons of what has happened in Hong Kong, then this legislation must be backed by clear standards, strong enforcement, transparent oversight, a climate-informed risk lens and real funding for the organizations that hold up the emergency response system every single day.

The residents of Don Valley North, of my riding, living in dense vertical communities, surrounded by aging towers, deserve the confidence that when the worst may happen, Ontario's system will respond fast, coordinated, and with the protections they need.

Bill 25 must be more than a structural update; it must be a commitment—a commitment to never allowing the vulnerabilities exposed in Hong Kong to be repeated here.

Speaker, with that context, let me outline what Bill 25, I believe, seeks to do.

Schedule 1 establishes a commissioner of emergency management, creates an advisory committee, sets a provincial emergency management framework, requires all plans to be submitted to the minister for potential modification and formalizes Ontario Corps.

Schedule 2 allows the minister to issue binding directives to community and social services agencies and

enables compliance orders and potential funding cuts for extraordinary matters.

Understanding the structure of this bill helps us to assess whether it reflects the true scale of today's emergency landscape.

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It's equally important, I think, that we also highlight where schedule 1 specifically raises serious concerns. For me, what I see in schedule 1 that raises these red flags is the over-centralization—which seems to be a common thing amongst this government—unfunded responsibilities for municipalities, lack of climate acknowledgement and no transparency measures for Ontario Corps. These concerns lead directly to the recommendations that could strengthen schedule 1 considerably.

Speaker, here are the concrete steps the government can take to make schedule 1 more effective and more accountable: Add climate-risk analysis, require municipal and Indigenous consultation, add transparency rules, fund ravine and stormwater infrastructure.

It is with these recommendations in mind that I now turn to schedule 2, which contains some of the most consequential changes to this bill. Schedule 2 begins with a promising premise, but the execution raises critical gaps. In theory, I support the intention behind schedule 2 to better coordinate with community and social service agencies, but the government gives itself new powers without giving new funding to the organizations expected to carry the weight in emergencies. This leads directly to real-world implications for the organizations in our communities.

When we look closely at our community, we see organizations already operating at emergency levels every single day. In Don Valley North, Willowdale Community Legal Services are serving an underrepresented population to make sure that they have access to the judicial system. Oriole Food Space is making sure that children do not go hungry at night. CCAC and Yee Hong are providing home care to seniors, and North York General Hospital's Seniors' Health Centre provides a home where seniors can live their golden age in dignity. These organizations are already providing emergency support every single day because it should not take an emergency for government to pay attention to what they're doing and support what they're doing.

As we sit here to debate an emergency management bill, we also need to realize and recognize the fundamental problems of an underfunded system—a system where the most vulnerable are being ignored as we speak. Speaker, this brings us to the heart of the challenge within schedule 2. Schedule 2 lets the minister issue directives, publish non-compliance and cut funding. It uses the term "extraordinary matter," yet in schedule 2, extraordinary matter is left undefined. This is over-centralization without guardrails. Underfunded agencies cannot suddenly meet new demands without support. These issues demand serious and practical solutions.

Speaker, modernization must extend beyond just legislation. It requires practical, accessible tools for Ontarians:

flood prevention communications, extreme heat awareness week, multilingual emergency resources, tower retrofit funding, greening and shade infrastructure—these measures form the bridge between theory and practice in emergency management.

I wish to conclude by bringing all of these themes together. I support this bill in theory because modernization is overdue and it's necessary. But true preparedness requires climate action, actual funding, respect for local voices, stronger everyday services, tower safety, infrastructure upgrades and actual community capacity. Don Valley North deserves an emergency system that recognizes our ravines, our towers, our seniors, newcomers and the incredible resilience of our residents.

I want to say thank you, Speaker, and I look forward to continued collaboration with the minister and with the government to strengthen Ontario's emergency preparedness for generations to come.

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

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I want to echo some of the calls from my colleague that I do feel there are some good parts of this bill. I am sad that we didn't go to committee. I think if we could have worked across party lines to change a couple of things in here, it could have been a great bill that would have done a lot. I do think there are some good things that can be achieved from this, and I hope the minister is honest when she says she's ready to listen and learn, because I'm ready to work across party lines to be ready and adapt and prepare and prevent the catastrophic impacts of these climate disasters.

I know this is what municipalities were asking for. They want the tools and resources to address when these disasters hit them. I do agree that we need to cut some of the red tape to help smaller municipalities be prepared. We know they don't have the resources they'll need in an emergency, so I'm grateful that we're looking across the province to make sure people have what they need to address concerned citizens when tragedy strikes.

I'm here today because I promised my kids that I would do everything I could to make sure they have a livable planet. That's it. I'm here for every kid in Ontario, and ourselves. That means having fresh air to breathe. I don't know about you all, but Toronto had the worst air quality in the world this summer—in the whole world—because of fires. That has a big impact on people having asthma and respiratory diseases. They end up in hospitals. I want my kids to have clean water. We have so much fresh water in Ontario. We're one of the best places in the world for fresh water, but we take that for granted. That's not going to last forever.

Kids need to know we have their backs. At my maiden speech, a member came across and said, "You know, just a little feedback: The way that you talk about climate change causes anxiety in our young people." I was a bit struck by that because, to me, what kids need to hear from us is that we're going to be honest with them and that we have their backs. We're going to be ready so that they don't have to deal with our mess and clean it up for

themselves. That's not protecting Ontario; that's abandoning a generation to clean up our mess that we've created by burning too much fossil gas.

I'll keep talking about fossil gas. Do you know what? Fossil gas has peaked across the world. Listen to a Volts episode on "electrotech," honestly. The minister of multiculturalism over there, please, make me this pledge—all of you in this room: Listen to the electrotech podcast of Volts. Fossil fuel has peaked. Doubling down on fossil gas means stranded assets. Also, look that up, that term, "stranded assets," because if we keep building big infrastructure that we're not going to need in a couple of years because the economy has moved on, not because of emissions, not because I have a feel-good moment—because it's cheaper. Instead of buying a house, which is buying solar panels, where you buy it once and you're good, instead, we invest in pipelines and fossil gas expansion. That means we pay rent for decades to come. Who are we paying rent to? The Americans. We talk about young people wanting to buy a home. As a government, let's buy a home when it comes to energy, instead of renting these pipelines that we have to fill up with American gas. I don't want to pay rent to the Americans. I don't want to be on the hook for decades to come. I don't want my kids to be on the hook to pay for that infrastructure that is crazy expensive, that is burning our province down.

We need to adapt. We need to be ready. What happens in climate change? We've burned a bunch of carbon, and what that means is that the atmosphere is like a bigger sponge. It can suck up way more water than it ever could before, but that also means that all of a sudden, it all comes down. So instead of holding a little bit at a time where we can rain here and there, we're ending up with crazy droughts that cause these fires. If anyone says to you, "Oh, those people who burned all those campfires and didn't put them out"—no, let's be honest.

When we have a big drought in a big forest, it means we have big fires. We are having more fires, and they're more intense. That's real. That is so real. We've seen communities across Canada being wiped out. So all the efforts we do to improve emissions—we burn the whole forest. What are we here for?

And they're not the same, these fires. We can't just fight them on the ground. We can't just dump water from the sky. They are staying, burning underground all year long. That's a totally different thing. So we need to adapt; we need to educate young people.

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I'm a social worker. How do we get kids ready for a fire? We do a fire drill. We're honest with them: This is what you do when you have a fire, and you look to a caring adult, and they have your back. So when it comes to fires, I urge the minister: We need the staffing; we need the recruitment and retention. Let's be real and be prepared for real, and that has to come with budget dollars. We blow through our budget every year, so we need to be prepared with money that's consistent and reliable and pay people what they're due. But this is a product of fossil gas.

We need to look at our water. We had \$4 billion worth of damage in Toronto in three hours—that's an immense amount of money. In three hours, we had \$4 billion worth of damage. That's why we need the green roofs. People looked at me in Kitchener—and I live in a downtown setting. When I was a city councillor, they were like, "Why do we need trees downtown? Can't we just plant them somewhere else, and they can sequester carbon over there?" No. They keep people cool. They absorb water into the soil. I am in a community that relies on groundwater; we need that water in our soil. We need to capture it and not just wash it out to sea.

Do you know what one of the big things in my riding, the big climate issues, is? Slip and fall. Because our climate is changing, we get warm and cold—we saw it last week, right? Plus 10 to minus 10 in 24 hours. That means that old people end up in emergency rooms with broken hips, broken bones. That has changed their life forever. One of the biggest consequences of climate change in my riding is slip and fall, because we melt the ice, we freeze it, we melt it, we freeze it. Old people go—I was slipping last winter. Raise your hands if you had a slip and fall during last winter's campaign, right? That is a real product of climate change; that wasn't the same before.

My dad used to get a rink built for him by his mom in November, and that rink would be frozen until March. That is not the case anymore. So let's be honest about slips and falls because those seniors need alerts. If we're honest about climate change, if we're going to name it to tame it—that's what we say in social work: We name it to tame it. So let's say it. Everybody, say the words "climate change." Do it for me now. One, two, three: climate change. You can do it.

Hon. Graham McGregor: Climate change.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I knew you could do it, Graham.

But yes, we need to name it to tame it because fires, flooding, slips and falls, and extreme heat—that is the killer.

So we talked about Working for Workers 7. In Working for Workers 8, I want to see us call out extreme heat. This is how people are going to die. So if you have workers' backs, if you want to protect Ontario, let's be real about how people can stay cool. And what I mean by that is not just a cooling centre. People don't make it to a cooling centre; they need cooling in their homes. If you're a senior citizen or somebody with a disability, you need access to cooling in your home, and I'm talking about heat-pump air conditioners.

We need to train the whole province on how to implement heat-pump air conditioners. You can warm your place, you can cool your place—four times more effective. If seniors have cooling in their home, they will not die and they will not get sick and they will not overburden our health care system, because heat is the one that kills. Heat is the one that kills. All around the east coast of the US, all along Asia and Europe, everybody is putting in a heat pump because it's more effective and efficient. We need to be prepared, to make sure everybody in Ontario and in the workplace and manufacturing—women in trades—

they need to stay cool so that they can be healthy and happy. They've got to stay cool.

In my zero-carbon industrial building—please come; it's actually in the MPP for Cambridge's riding—it is so cool, literally, that it increases productivity during heat by 50%. So if you build sustainably, you get the added bonus of increased productivity, and you get healthy workers. Because our workplace health and safety stuff right now, it's for young men. Did the Minister of Emergency Preparedness know that how we determine workplace health and safety is based on healthy and fit young men? Our workers across the province are not all healthy young men. They are older people, correct? They are older people, so we need to adapt to be sure that we are prepared for emergencies and our workers that are older, who might have health conditions, are also kept safe.

Our not-for-profit organizations need help with cyber attacks. Just pay for it. Schools can't pay for it from bake sales, so let's pay for it.

I'm just going to say that the only part of this bill that I find very troubling is the MCCSS part. I know that maybe there's good intentions. I'd love to learn more about why we need directives, but people are already scared about their funding. They are on the hook for their workers' salaries. They're so scared to speak up because they're worried that if they say the wrong thing about the Ford government, they'll lose the funding and then their folks will be out of a job. I have people whispering in my ear all the time of things they're worried about, but they don't feel safe enough to come forward and speak up, because they're worried they'll be punished.

When I was a city councillor, I spoke to the record about why I got involved, and it was because of this government's lack of action on climate, to be honest. That's why I'm here today. Thank you, Doug Ford—

Interjections.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: Oh, sorry.

But after that, I went to media training and they said, "Don't talk ill of the Premier, because it could jeopardize the funding of the municipality." I was told that in a training session.

Are we going to be governing with fear? I hope not. We're better than that. We can take feedback. We can learn. I know that people say they have nothing to learn from the opposition, but learn from the people of Ontario and let them speak frankly without fear of retribution—because that fear is real.

So I'll finish with saying the planet has cancer right now. It's in the emergency room. Do we want to ignore the fact—if my parent came to me and said they had a cancer diagnosis, I would do everything in my power to make sure they got the care they needed. I would want all the straight goods. I want honesty from my doctor about what's really going on, what stage, what do I need to do to act on that.

But the planet has cancer right now. We can't continue by not calling cancer what it is and saying that there's nothing going wrong. We can't keep smoking cigarettes. We need to cut the emissions, this dirty air. We need to

treat the root cause of what's happening to our planet, because our planet is heading to the ICU.

So let's be honest about the sickness our planet has right now and take care of it so it doesn't have to get worse.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I will remind all members to not use the names of the members of this House.

Further debate?

Mr. Steve Pinsonneault: Thanks to the minister for bringing this important bill forward.

It is my pleasure to outline for the House and members exactly how the improved and modernized act would work. I will provide an overview of the minister's role in emergency management and further detail our emergency management programs Ontario Corps and the Community Emergency Preparedness Grant.

The proposed Emergency Management Modernization Act starts by giving a definition of emergency management. This proposed legislation defines emergency management as organized activities to mitigate, prevent, respond to, prepare for and recover from emergencies. The definition is simple and easy for anyone to understand. This plain language description will lock in a standard interpretation across Ontario that clearly defines the scope of emergency management. It will give clarity to our partners and improve alignment with the proposed act. By providing the best emergency management possible, our government will be able to keep the people of Ontario and their property safe during an emergency.

This proposed legislation dictates how all levels of government and partner organizations connect during an emergency. The act, if passed, clearly defines the correct process for an emergency powers declaration to be made during an emergency. This update will reflect that emergency management is built upon a strong foundation of co-operation between local communities, different organizations and the province.

Mr. Speaker, if passed, the act would also formally recognize that it is the Minister of Emergency Preparedness and Response's responsibility to provide emergency management coordination and leadership right across Ontario. It does this by clearly defining the minister's duties and powers before, during and after an emergency. The powers of the minister under the proposed legislation include assessing, monitoring risks, hazards, potential vulnerabilities, facilities and available resources in the province. The minister also reviews, advises and assesses the creation and execution of emergency management plans and programs. Additionally, the minister will oversee the coordination and delivery of training and emergency management exercises. The minister will also have a major role in overseeing the deployment of the coordination of the Ontario Corps.

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Finally, if this act passes, it would enable the Commissioner of Emergency Management to operate under the minister's direction. These amendments make it clear the commissioner is chiefly responsible for directing Emer-

gency Management Ontario, the province's emergency management organization.

This act, if passed, would also solidify in legal terms the much-desired and more efficient one-window approach to provincial emergency management coordination.

Mr. Speaker, let me just pause here on the importance of a one-window approach: As I've said many times in the chamber before, I've served on the front lines as an emergency responder. I can tell you without a shadow of a doubt that it is absolutely critical for this bill to move forward, and quickly, to support the front-line emergency responders before the busy winter hazards of this season go into full force.

Mr. Speaker, Emergency Management Ontario has already been fulfilling much of its role in our most recent emergencies, including wildland fires this summer and spring ice storms. It wouldn't be part of this updated legislation if it wasn't already important and effective for our emergency management system.

In addition to its coordinating role, EMO monitors for potential emergency situations across Ontario and informs decisions about personnel and resources. The organization already takes a comprehensive approach to data monitoring and collecting. This includes collecting information about risks, potential hazards, response activities and human impacts. It is the point of coordination for all non-governmental partners for information sharing with field officers located regionally across the province. To keep Ontarians prepared, its staff designs and delivers public education and general training programs for all local communities.

During a crisis, EMO steps up, supports management activities through the Provincial Emergency Operations Centre, or PEOC. With the help of amazing and dedicated staff, it is in operation 24 hours a day, seven days a week and 365 days a year. In other words, we don't sleep so you can.

Municipalities and their management teams are feeling stretched, and the people of Ontario cannot afford any delays in getting the help they need when the next winter storm hits, which could be as early as tomorrow. This bill must be passed without further delay.

Mr. Speaker, as previously mentioned, another aspect of the updates to the bill is Ontario Corps. Ontario Corps is a key provincial resource that the Premier announced exactly a year ago, last December. It is one of Canada's first corps of volunteers who can quickly mobilize to provide support in all times of crisis. It includes personnel, services, equipment, materials and facilities that can be deployed during an emergency. This support can come in different ways. Recently, Ontario Corps has delivered wellness checks to our most vulnerable populations during an emergency and supported emergency shelter services to make sure that affected people in emergency have a place to go for comfort and to get their basic needs met. Ontario Corps has assisted in debris cleanup after a storm. It has helped with sandbagging efforts during severe flood events. It has also provided mental wellness support: a shoulder to cry on, a friendly face and a smile.

Ontario Corps is a symbol of strength, resilience and how united Ontarians are for one another. Whether it's an ice storm, a flood or any other emergency, this province is ready to help.

If passed, EMMA would enshrine Ontario Corps into law as a resource that can be activated during an emergency and coordinated by the Commissioner of Emergency Management. As the minister mentioned, we have invested \$10 million in our 13 Ontario Corps partners. This provides the equipment, training and capacity to our partners so that they are ready to respond to an emergency at a moment's notice.

Ontario Corps will make sure that no matter where a crisis in the province might occur, emergency coordinators will be able to mobilize personnel and specialized equipment. Essential equipment like water pumps, air purifiers, chainsaws and even drones can be quickly deployed to assist relief and recovery efforts.

This summer, the Ministry of Emergency Preparedness and Response was involved in the coordination of evacuating more than 2,200 people who were fleeing wildfires in Manitoba and an additional 6,000 people in the northern part of this province. Thanks to Ontario Corps, the province was able to provide 705 air purifiers, 440 N95 masks, 182 generators and 49,806 infant care supplies to affected communities.

The members of Ontario came together under the banner of Ontario Corps for the simple reason that they wanted to help neighbours when times get tough. I would like to urge all Ontarians to take a page from these brave volunteers' book and consider joining Ontario Corps.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take time to talk about the updates to the act that will enhance emergency management programs. If passed, the act would allow municipalities to collaborate on joint emergency plans and create programs that reflect the different needs of each individual community. The changes we are proposing would help small municipalities better allocate resources and build up local capacity quickly by sharing resources, ideas and people.

Helping communities at the local level is what drives this government's Community Emergency Preparedness Grant. To date, this program has awarded \$10 million to 227 different communities across the province. This program provides money to help communities and organizations that have emergency management level up their resources, equipment and training so that they are prepared and equipped to manage any potential emergency.

Of course, there were some stipulations for applying for these grants. The grant is available to communities with less than 100,000 people, including Indigenous communities and organizations. The application process is simple and easy, with each recipient evaluated according to relevant criteria. Successful recipients receive anywhere between \$5,000 and \$50,000 for activities that support emergency preparedness and related expenses.

I'd say one of the most popular uses of the grant are towards the purchase of generators that keep communities and crucial infrastructure powered in the event of short-

term and long-term power interruption. I have also seen the grant used to purchase thermal imaging drones. These drones help identify hot spots and wildland fires and play a crucial role in ongoing search and rescue efforts.

The most recent round of the Community Emergency Preparedness Grant was launched in September. Ontario expanded its investment to the local communities by another \$5 million, bringing the government's total investment to a historic \$15 million.

The Ministry of Emergency Preparedness and Response team hosted a very well-attended information session. More than 100 attendees came out to learn the ins and outs of the grant program. To me, that is an indication of the enthusiasm across the province for emergency management preparation, but also a crystal-clear reason why this proposed legislation must pass this House.

Communities and their leaders understand emergencies can and do happen. They know that the best way to face an emergency is when everyone is fully prepared, with resources at the ready and a clear chain of command in place.

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Our most recent round was open to organizations and communities who have not received funding in the past. In the first two rounds, the ministry approved 227 applications out of 800. The applicants who did not receive funding during the first two rounds can always try again.

The grant process is also not over once the money is supplied. The program is designed with an important feedback mechanism. It asks successful applicants to demonstrate achievement of the outcomes described in the original application, along with accounting for all expenses.

Mr. Speaker, it is important to note that unspent funds are returned to the taxpayer. This is an ongoing program simply because it addresses an ongoing issue: emergency management and preparation. In fact, applications for round three of the grant closed successfully just a few days ago, on October 28, with more than 200 applications received. The ministry team is currently in the process of evaluating all the submissions, and we look forward to announcing the successful recipients soon.

In closing, I would like to thank you, Mr. Speaker, and all the members today for the opportunity to discuss in more detail the programs that support the proposed Emergency Management Modernization Act.

Thank you for giving me the time to touch on some of the improvements that our government is making, including the detailed chain of command, Ontario Corps and the upgrade to the Community Emergency Preparedness Grant program. Let's get this bill passed for the people of Ontario. The people of Ontario deserve an efficient and effective emergency management system this winter.

I would now like to pass the rest of my time off to my colleague Minister Trevor Jones.

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

MPP Catherine McKenney: I do want to begin by acknowledging the importance of emergency prepared-

ness. Everybody here in this province does expect a government that can respond swiftly and effectively to emergencies, and they come in all different shapes and sizes: wildfires, floods, public health crises.

In Ottawa Centre, we know something about emergencies. We had a convoy of truckers from across the country that descended on us a few years ago. It turned into an occupation for over three weeks, where people in Ottawa Centre were harassed; they were assaulted. For the first time, almost—not overnight, but within an hour of the dissension on us, we saw things like swastikas and Confederate flags in our neighbourhoods, to the point where our federal government finally took some action.

I will say this: It was actually the Premier who took action first. I give some credit where it's due. No one else did—certainly not our federal counterparts. They did absolutely nothing as they watched from behind their bunker on Parliament Hill. And certainly, the mayor and police in Ottawa did very little. But I'll give the Premier some credit: After Ski-Dooing for two and a half weeks, he did emerge from the snow and came out and suggested to the police and to others that they should kick in their emergency services.

It was a time when seniors couldn't leave their home. They were unable to get out to do simple things like groceries. People weren't able to feed their animals. I knew people who had been assaulted just being on the street. It was an emergency unlike any other in our city. I actually had worked for the city previous to being in politics, so I know something of emergency management and what it takes to respond to any type of disaster.

My colleagues have pointed out some of the shortcomings, certainly, but I want to talk about the Ontario Corps that this bill creates. It's described in here as a volunteer rapid-response team comprised of skilled professionals and civic partners, such as Feed Ontario, Ontario search and rescue, Salvation Army, GlobalMedic. Yet, Speaker, the government really has provided virtually no concrete details about what this means. How will this corps be structured? We don't know how it will be trained, how it will be funded, who will deploy it, how it will be deployed and how it will integrate with municipal emergency services that are already stretched thin. We have a very difficult time in municipalities responding to emergency services, so this all remains unanswered.

But most troubling for me right now is how this bill handles municipalities' roles in emergency management. Currently, municipalities do have a legal obligation to develop plans, to identify hazards, assess risks and prepare, but this bill kind of sidelines municipalities by scoping these responsibilities to the ministries of the crown and other prescribed entities. So while we've got stretched-thin municipalities, we're also omitting them from the language in this bill.

It is really unfortunate that we're not going to take this out to committee. I think my colleague said it right: We really should be working across party lines, especially on something like this. It's not really partisan; we all want good emergency response. I just don't see where the

government has consulted with municipalities and service providers when coming up with this bill.

I will just say in conclusion that for myself, right now, it is a missed opportunity. Ontarians do deserve better. Next time we have an occupation, hopefully it's not in my riding, but if it's in yours, you'll want an emergency response that ensures that your residents, all of our residents—Ontarians—are considered, and that we respond in a way that doesn't take weeks and weeks of somebody out snowmobiling and then we call them in.

I'll leave it at that.

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

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: It's a pleasure to stand up today and talk about Bill 25. It's commendable, I think, that the government knows that emergency management procedures need to be updated, need to be improved, need to be modernized. It's never an easy thing. It's a lot of work, but it's a very important one.

I must also agree that I regret the fact that this isn't going to committee, because we could get the kind of expert witnesses we need at committee to actually advise us on how to make the bill stronger, how to make it work for everyone in the whole emergency management process.

A couple of shortcomings I would like to mention: The first one is there's nothing in the bill that specifically refers to disabilities. I've had a number of emergency management tragedies happening in my riding, and trying to look after and help those dealing with disabilities was something where we found that there wasn't a lot of help for us there. We were kind of on our own, and it was up to the local level that maybe knew who was hard of hearing, who maybe wasn't mobile and who was hard of sight, in order to get them the kind of help that they needed so they could actually make it through these emergencies.

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That's something I would like the government to act on and to take into account. That kind of disability language and how you help municipalities actually help those who are dealing with disabilities in an emergency situation, I think, is something that we could do better. That's something that does need to be improved, and it would be a good thing to see something like this in a bill like this.

Also, I must echo the comments of some of my colleagues who talked about the idea of issuing directives: "Directly to certain provincially funded organizations (which would include charities and not-for-profits) regarding specific 'extraordinary matters.'" How are we going to manage the relationship between the provincial government and the municipalities and these not-for-profits and charities? How do we make sure that those not-for-profits and charities will continue to do the things that are the best for their clients? Maybe it might not align with the ideology of the provincial government, so they're worried. They're worried: "What if we don't agree? What if our data and evidence and science and statistics prove that this is the best way to do something, best way to look after our population, and the government doesn't agree? Does that

mean we're going to get punished if we continue to do things that are in the best interests of our population that the government doesn't perhaps agree with?" So that's a worry.

Also, Indigenous people: First Nations are the fastest-growing demographic in the country, and we know that natural disasters have impacted them quite a bit in recent history. We know that long-term evacuations—and we've seen that cause future problems—can have an adverse effect on family dynamics. I don't see any of that mentioned in the bill.

How are we going to negotiate with the Indigenous communities to make sure that they're served in such a way that they can come out the other side of this emergency intact and not dealing with some of the physical health conditions and the mental health conditions that long-term evacuations are actually known to cause?

It's nice to have the words, but the actions have to match the words. I think that's what I see is probably missing at the current time.

Also, northern Ontario and rural communities: They have low populations and geographic isolation. They have unique challenges, whether it's access to health care or access to transportation or communications or the Internet or cell service. All of that matters, and it makes serving rural communities harder. I'm only an hour north of Ottawa, and yet cell service in my riding is notoriously unreliable.

I don't see anything in here that mentions, how are we going to do that? How are we going to serve rural communities to make sure that they receive the kind of communications so that they can stay in contact and coordinate the work that needs to be done at multiple levels during an emergency?

There is work about how we improve things for rural communities. We do need a solid framework. We do need more capacity. You actually need more capacity in widely dispersed rural communities than you might in the city where you have access to more neighbouring people who might be able to help, where a neighbour in a rural community could be hundreds and hundreds of miles away.

We need an understanding of what the additional challenges are that face rural communities when it comes to emergency management. For me, I think that part of this is missing.

I tell you, I went and read a few after-action reports of emergency management situations here in Ontario and, consistently, communications was in the top two or three—communications. So that's something we have to take seriously, not just for rural communities but actually in all of Ontario. We have to make sure we can coordinate our efforts so that we manage to serve people to the best of our ability. So those are a few of the shortcomings of the bill.

I do think that we need solutions. I think we need improvements. I see some changes in titles. I think the frameworks are rather vague. There's so much of this that says, "We'll tell you later." No, no, I think we need to know right now.

The idea that you have these top-down directives instead of listening from the bottom up—and as I said, in the emergency management situations in my riding, it was the local knowledge that actually saved lives.

Giving mandates to people—the mandates I see when I read this is that responsibilities are being pushed down to the municipal level. Think of some of these small, rural municipalities. They will have additional mandates, but there's no funding to go with them. There's no funding. So what's going to happen if something doesn't go right in an emergency management situation? The blame will end up going to the municipality, but it's not their fault because they didn't have the funding to go along with what they've been mandated to do.

In my opinion, when I look at this, I think this bill really is prioritizing centralized authority and standardization instead of building community-based capacity, community-based resilience, rather than a centrally controlled capacity.

When you have centrally controlled capacity, it can be manipulated. People can decide, "Well, maybe we're not going to send them there because we don't like them. They don't vote the right way. They don't look the right way. They don't agree with us on everything that we should agree on."

My approach would be to empower and build up that capacity and that resilience and train people to actually connect into the provincial system, rather than a top-down kind of thing where the local organizations, the people who are actually on the ground and know the situation, are not the ones who are in charge and someone else is going to come in from somewhere else and tell them exactly what they need to do. That's very worrisome.

That happened to me when I was working on one of the floods that hit my riding. I've had two once-in-a-century floods—a derecho and a tornado—in my riding in the space of five years. People came in from the outside and wanted to take over directing who was going to do what to whom, but they didn't know the area. They didn't know where the most treacherous water was. They didn't know where the areas were that would be affected by certain floods and certain wind directions and wind speeds. Where does the wind speed and wind direction have the greatest impact on who gets flooded and when? They didn't know any of that, and they didn't want to listen to the people who did.

I get that you want to be able to have someone to go in there, but as long as their job is to support the people on the ground, the people who really know the things that need to be done in order to make that community safe—I think that's where it has to go.

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So, when I look at this and I'm going, "I see this in numerous other kinds of bills; I see that centralization of power, I see that consolidation of power, I see concentration of power and authority and taking it away from the people who are actually doing the work on the ground"—but that's not the way it should be done. The need for flexibility and responsiveness actually demands a distributed local response.

If they're in charge and you're going to put in people to help them, that makes perfect sense to me, but that's not my reading of this bill as it currently stands. Could it be improved so that it does do that? Yes, it could. But in order to do that, it would have to go to committee.

Committee is the time when we get to call all the experts. We get to call the people who know what the data is and the science is, and the people who know how to communicate in rural communities and what our shortfalls are when it comes to rural communications. I think that's something—and even alert systems. We know that our alert systems don't work the same way right across the province. We have some holes and things that need to be done a little bit differently.

So, when I look at this, I know that we do need to update and improve our emergency management procedures, but I think Ralph Waldo Emerson said it best. He said, and mark this: Your actions "speak so loudly that I cannot hear what you say."

And the fact that the government rushes this bill through—doesn't allow it to go to committee, doesn't allow to call the experts who actually know the ins and outs of emergency management—that makes people nervous. That makes people think, "Well, the government seems to think that they know everything." But we all know no government knows everything.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this bill today, and I appreciate the fact that the desire is there to update, modernize and improve our emergency response. But at the present time, with this bill, there are lots of shortfalls. There are things missing that we should be doing that we're not doing at the present time.

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

Hon. Trevor Jones: I'm grateful to rise and join my colleagues in supporting third reading of the Emergency Management Modernization Act, 2025. I sincerely want to thank my colleague the Minister of Emergency Preparedness and Response and her team for all their hard work.

With this bill, the people of Ontario can be confident that our province will be safe, practised and prepared in any type of emergency. If passed, this bill will modernize, improve and standardize emergency management protocols in every municipality in every part of our beautiful province. There's no better time than now to act.

Speaker, the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act and its regulations have not been comprehensively updated in over 15 years. I think back around 15 years ago, a tornado touched down in my home community of Leamington, thankfully in the middle of the night and thankfully with no loss of life or serious injury. But I think of the hard work of first responders and the support networks that came together in a non-coordinated way. Everyone did great work to the best of their abilities, but it's a patchwork, and that exists across Ontario: good people doing the right things for the right reasons but with no coordination to do it in a way that's most effective.

For a small community like Leamington, there's a lot of work to do on their own. If we're going to be ready for

any emergency, we need modern systems that reflect current realities, an organized, coordinated response that begins with first responders and transitions to support organizations with the expertise to help communities once a situation is stabilized. Bill 25, if passed, would achieve exactly that.

The government's emergency management partners, including municipalities from all over Ontario, First Nations, have called for modernization of this important act. We're proud to have listened to this wide range of stakeholders across Ontario who shared their lived experience and expertise to assist our government in crafting a modern approach to keep Ontario safe in any eventuality. We listened to a diverse group of stakeholders and partners with the exact lived experience and expertise that we need to address the gaps in the framework, including enhanced clarity of roles, responsibilities, comprehensive programs to address the full scope of emergencies in today's ever-changing world.

A key theme that our partners identified was clear communication. I think my colleague addressed that. We've listened, and we're taking action. If passed, this bill will give these municipalities a united, clear, province-wide guideline to support their plans and to craft their own emergency response plans, custom-tailored to their unique geography, location and capability.

Prior to this, every municipality was left on its own to create a plan in isolation, without any formal direction or much support. Gaps existed, including inconsistencies between large urban centres with resources and expertise and smaller, more isolated communities with fewer staff and resources. But now, with clear guidelines in place, this legislation will allow municipalities to tailor response plans to local needs, ensuring a comprehensive, coordinated approach exists throughout the province, creating certainty, stability and consistency.

Speaker, with the increasingly complex threat landscape caused by risks such as extreme weather events, wildland fires and even cyber attacks, it's more important than ever to ensure that Ontario families are safe, practised, and prepared. If passed, Bill 25 would do just that:

- strengthen provincial leadership and coordination of oversight;
- establish the purpose and definition of emergency management;
- enable the Commissioner of Emergency Management to direct resources and coordinate the implementation of provincial strategies all around the province where and when it's needed;
- facilitate enhanced clarity, accountability and coordination in provincial programs.

And Speaker, members of this House should know that, if passed, Bill 25 would also allow two or more municipalities to come together and establish a joint management plan, better serving their needs. It would also clarify the process to ensure accountability of declarations that are made under the act and provide clarity on municipal requests for provincial assistance and the declaration of emergency. Municipalities and areas across the province

can ask for help and get the help they need without declaring an emergency.

This bill would also establish in law Ontario Corps, a network of skilled volunteers with the ability to provide specialized and dynamic support to municipalities and communities around Ontario in any sort of emergency.

Speaker, this proposed bill would also allow government to issue more timely direction to ministry-funded service providers faced with extraordinary situations. Take, for example, a flood in an area where there's perhaps a provincial long-term-care home or high-needs home, residents that need to be moved to a different location quickly. This legislation does just that. It gives the ministry the authority to direct those resources and have that relocation made seamlessly immediately, without delays or procedural gaps.

Most importantly, this bill is truly stakeholder-informed. It's perhaps the thing that we're most proud of. We listened to the very people from every part of Ontario who commit their professional lives to protecting others. We also worked with people with expertise in recovery, that stage that's crucial after the first responders come in and stabilize the situation.

1700

Together, this bill represents the culmination of efforts of people with lived experience, from municipal officials, professional first responders, Indigenous communities and recovery experts—communities from all parts of Ontario, from Red Lake to Cornwall, to downtown Toronto, to little Pelee Island in my riding; from rural, isolated communities that are remote to our largest urban centres.

These are the voices we have listened to. This is the experience that we're gaining. And these are the insights we listened to to craft this bill.

Speaker, I'm proud to stand by these voices and proud to support this bill for safe communities and a secure Ontario.

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

Ms. Chandra Pasma: It's always a pleasure to rise on behalf of the people of Ottawa West–Nepean in this House.

Today, I am speaking about Bill 25, which is the government's Emergency Management Modernization Act. This is another bill where the government has chosen to cut off debate and not allow the people of Ontario to come and share their perspectives and thoughts on the bill.

To recap what we've seen just this year, just in this Parliament alone we've had:

—Bill 6, which fines people \$10,000 for being homeless or allows the police to jail them for not having a place to live;

—Bill 10, which makes changes to the justice system, not the ones that stakeholders were asking for to make the system more fair, but it did give the Attorney General the power to specify criteria that the Judicial Appointments Advisory Committee has to consider when appointing judges;

—Bill 11, the More Convenient Care Act, which created a new reporting requirement for staffing agencies but didn't limit what those agencies could charge the public health care system for providing agency nurses;

—Bill 13, which sets out a primary care framework, which is a good thing, but it didn't crack down on the expansion of privatized, for-profit health care and public dollars going into private pockets;

—Bill 17, which eliminates green building standards, but it failed to implement measures from the Housing Affordability Task Force that would have actually made housing more affordable and built it faster;

—Bill 24, the government's spring budget, which among other things allowed the government to require municipalities to remove bike lanes;

—Bill 27, the Resource Management and Safety Act, which allows for underground carbon storage projects which experts said might not be safe given the number of abandoned oil and gas wells across the province, and it updates wildfire management rules but doesn't actually address the concerns that wildland firefighters themselves have raised;

—Bill 30, Working for Workers Seven Act, which updates some elements of labour law but ignores incredibly important challenges that workers have actually raised, like cracking down on wage theft and ensuring wages that are stolen are actually returned to workers;

—Bill 33, which takes away the rights of parents and communities to have a say in our local schools and attacks post-secondary student services like food banks and sexual assault centres;

—Bill 56, which is omnibus legislation that changes environmental protection rules, repealed speed cameras over the protests of municipalities and citizens, and changed health professional licensing processes;

—Bill 60, which made it easier for landlords to evict tenants and harder for municipalities to have bus lanes or bike lanes; and

—Bill 68, which is the government's fall fiscal plan.

So, if you're counting, Speaker, that's 12 bills that the government has refused to allow anybody to come and share their thoughts on—and now this bill as well, Bill 25.

The thing is that when you don't consult with people, you miss out on opportunities to make changes that will improve legislation to ensure that we are actually addressing the challenges that people are facing every single day, along with addressing measures that may actually be harmful or not have the impact that's intended.

This bill would be a much stronger bill and actually ensure that we are doing everything we can in an emergency situation, if we took the time to consult with people and listen to the challenges that they're facing.

I'm going to talk about a few examples, starting with my riding of Ottawa West–Nepean. Just in a five-year window, we had a tornado, a derecho and an ice storm, all of which knocked out the power for multiple days. Every time the power went down for multiple days, there were seniors, people living with disabilities, and young families who were trapped in their own homes, unable to get out,

or only able to get out with great difficulty, because the elevators in their buildings weren't working and the lights weren't functioning in the hallways or the stairwells. So people with limited mobility could not get out because they could not use the stairs or they could not use the stairs safely. I heard from many constituents that they went without food, or they depended on friends and family being able to bring food up a dark stairwell in order to get to them; that people went without medical care, because health care providers were not going to walk up the stairs in the dark. They could not make doctors' appointments because they couldn't make it down the stairs. It meant that they didn't have access to medication because they weren't able to go out and fill prescriptions. This created incredible trauma for these people who had to live through this scenario, in addition to putting them in great danger.

But it also meant that we were pulling first responders away from actually responding to the emergency situation so that they could come and do wellness checks, so that they could evacuate people floor by floor. In one case, a woman had just had heart surgery a few days prior to the lights going out because of the tornado. She lived on the 19th floor. The Ottawa firefighters came, and they evacuated her from the building by walking her down one flight of stairs at a time. They would go from the 19th to the 18th floor, sit down and rest, then the 18th to the 17th and rest. If there was simply a backup generator in that building that ran an elevator, the firefighters would not have needed to be there to evacuate that woman.

In Parkwood Hills, the firefighters had to come in on ladders and fill bathtubs with water because the water pumps stopped functioning without power. That means, in addition to the fact that you don't have running water to drink out of your tap, you can't flush the toilet, Speaker. You can imagine—the power was out for 10 days in Parkwood Hills—what your apartment starts to smell like after 10 days if you can't flush the toilet. But for some of these people, they also didn't have the option of leaving their apartment to find facilities. So instead of having Ottawa firefighters out responding to the emergency on the streets, we had them coming so that people could simply flush the toilet. Meanwhile, neighbours in other buildings were still able to do all of these things because they had emergency backup generators.

It's a really simple solution, one that this government voted against when I tabled the Protecting Human Rights in an Emergency Act.

We have an opportunity here with this bill to get it right, to have conversations with people who are in multi-storey buildings—whether they are tenants or whether they are condo owners—about measures that would protect them and ensure that they're safe, and allow that our first responders are available to be out doing emergency response, instead of needing to come and address scenarios that could have been addressed if we simply had backup generators.

Another measure that we could have that would also assist people who are in single-family homes is if we supported community sources of energy. It has been sheer

luck, Speaker, that all of those three weather-related emergencies that I mentioned happened when the weather was temperate. It wasn't too cold and it wasn't too hot, so people were able to be in their own homes without power because they weren't freezing and they weren't overheating. But it is only a matter of time until we have an emergency that happens in the dead of winter or in the middle of summer, and people will be at risk because of the temperatures. We can ensure that more people have access to power if we are ensuring that more communities have access to local sources of power.

The member for Toronto—Danforth and I tabled a bill, the Affordable Energy Act, that would have created a fund for investments in retrofits, which means, first of all, that your home requires less energy in order to power things like heat and light, but also, it would make it easier for communities to have renewable sources of energy, like a solar panel that is owned by multiple families. Currently, you can only have one owner for a solar panel that's connected to the grid. This would mean that the residents of a community or a street could co-own a solar panel that could, for instance, be over the parking lot of their park. In normal times, that solar panel would be connected into the grid, but during an emergency, that energy could instead be directed into those homes on that street. Those homes would then have power while they wait for the overall grid to get back up and running.

That's a really simple solution that, again, would ensure that people had access to power, that we're not diverting resources in other places, that these people aren't having to go to warming or cooling centres. But it's one that this government hasn't considered. They voted against it. If it went to committee, they could actually hear from people who would see a difference in their lives, who would be protected against emergencies that take out the power.

Another example, Speaker: Last week, the Retired Teachers of Ontario were here for their advocacy day. They were asking for the government to create a seniors' advocate in Ontario. And when I asked them for an example of what a seniors' advocate might actually do, they gave me the example of the Seniors' Advocate in Newfoundland and Labrador, who helped the government there to think through, what does emergency management look like for seniors?

1710

Because you have to consider different things when you're talking about, for instance, the evacuation of seniors. Seniors are going to require more time in order to be able to be evacuated, whether it's gathering the things that they need with them—which could include medical supplies and medications—or whether it's because they have limited mobility. And when you're thinking about where you're going to house people who have been displaced, you might need to consider different things for seniors. A senior, for instance, might not be able to sleep on a cot in a community centre.

And so, when we actually take the time to consult and listen to people and ensure that we are covering every angle, then we actually have emergency management

plans that respect the needs of every citizen and ensure that we are prepared for many different scenarios. That's the kind of thing that we're missing out on when the government doesn't allow bills to go to committee and when they don't want to hear from anyone about their legislation—they don't want to consult, they don't want to take ideas and they don't want to take any feedback.

I just want to talk really quickly about another aspect of this bill, Speaker, which is schedule 2. It grants the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services the power to issue directives to organizations that receive funding from his ministry about "extraordinary matters." And the concern here is that "extraordinary matters" seems to be a lot like Bill 33 and "public interest." In fact, in a memo that the minister sent to service organizations, the list of things that could be included in emergency measures include "other matters of public interest," which is exactly the language that we saw in Bill 33, which is whatever the minister defines it as.

So the minister can issue directives to organizations that receive funding from MCCSS, telling them that they have to do anything that he wants because he determined it to be a matter of public interest. And if the organization doesn't do it, the minister can fine an individual \$5,000 or an organization \$25,000. Well, the problem is, when you give a government like this—that's so vindictive—that power, we could see anything be named a matter of public interest, especially if an organization is trying to deal with chronic underfunding or scenarios where children are falling through the gaps created by the funding cuts.

It's incredibly concerning that any organization that spoke out against it, any organization that was struggling to meet the needs of children and families could, instead of receiving support from this government that would actually properly protect these children, instead be told that this is a matter of public interest and they can be fined if they fail to make the expenditure or cut the budget or whatever the minister wants.

That's not actually emergency protection, Speaker. It's not going to make things any safer for children and families in the province of Ontario. What we're seeing is, once again, that this government wants to be able to give itself the power to do whatever it wants by giving itself the power to call anything it wants a matter of public interest, and that opens the door to whatever actions they choose to take.

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

MPP Jamie West: I'm proud to come from Sudbury and raise the voices of Sudbury about Bill 25, Emergency Management Modernization Act.

I have to say, when I heard this bill was being tabled, I was interested in it because I actually worked in emergency preparedness—before being elected—at the smelter. And so, I was interested in what was going to happen because, for a lot of people, health and safety is "don't get hurt" and "be careful." And when it comes to emergency management, people tend to assume that things just fall into place. So I found this really interesting. But I

have to say, reading through it, there's a lot going on here that's important, so what's all the hullabaloo about?

Let me start off, for example, just talking in general, about emergencies, and emergencies that I think could have been declared in the past. I had asked, in 2018-19, for the government to declare an opioid overdose emergency in northern Ontario. Northern Ontario was ranking, per capita, with more opioid overdose deaths than anywhere else in Ontario. The government voted against that—instead decided to not fund any support programs, especially where I lived in Sudbury, where we were always neck and neck with Thunder Bay, until Timmins began to enter the race and have many of their citizens dying from overdoses as well. But in that scenario, there was underfunding. It meant she was paying for principal responsibilities like health care. And still, in this scenario, even though we're one of the cities that is going to have a HART house—well, no one really knows what the HART house looks like or where it's going to be in my city; although they stopped the previous program. So we have a lot of our citizens who are brothers, sisters, grandmothers or aunts and uncles of our citizens who are out there, struggling in the streets as winter gets colder and colder. Some are fortunate to be in tents. Imagine the situation you're in where you're considered fortunate if you own a tent in the winter in northern Ontario.

The thing about emergency preparedness is that it's very difficult to consider the things that you may not normally consider. When my colleague was speaking, for example, I was thinking about the ice storm that happened in Ottawa several years ago and the number of people who were injured or killed because they were barbecuing in their garages. In health and safety, there is an expression that you either learn by doing—so you hit yourself with a hammer—or someone tells you that they hurt themselves and you learn that way. So emergency preparedness—later on in the bill, it talks about the municipalities doing a sort of risk assessment. It's not as easy as you would assume, because you're trying to think of stuff that may have never happened to you.

I'm going to move on to some parts because I have very limited time, and there's a couple of things I wanted to talk about.

The municipalities are required to "identify and assess the various hazards and risks to public safety that can give rise to emergencies and identify the facilities," etc. The reason I want to talk about that part of it is that it is not easy to do a risk assessment. I lived through this, because the mining industry, in general, although we do have serious injuries—when things go bad, they go very bad, but they take health and safety very seriously. There is a very rigid protocol for having risk assessments. The reality is that most people who are elected to office have a variety of backgrounds, and not all of them have the training in it. So when you sit down in a municipality and you say, "Hey, let's do a risk assessment on the things that could happen in your city," there's a bunch of stuff you might not even consider because you just aren't aware of it.

So I'm curious about the support structure, the funding and the resources that will go into this to be effective,

because we are talking about protecting citizens. If you don't have the wherewithal, the background or any sort of training, you're going to do the best you can, but that training is very extensive. My friend, Nikki Lefebvre—her office was beside mine at the smelter. She was working in emergency preparedness and then began to work on—I forget the program, but it was several months and perhaps a couple of years of intense training programs with a ton of work and homework behind it, in order to get into this. So that idea that these people will do risk assessments and it will work out simply won't work out at all. Believing that is malarkey, frankly.

Schedule 2—with the limited time I have left—is the part that I think causes the most concern for people. This has to do with the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services. It gives them the ability to influence if there's extraordinary matters, but they don't define what "extraordinary matters" are. So it frightens people. It makes people concerned about what could happen if they opened their mouth. What could happen if they do something?

What popped into my head from MCCSS—and although I like the minister, I'm not happy with the multiple ministers since I have been serving here who have continued to do a very poor job when it comes to the autism program in Ontario. The Premier, as many people recall, in 2017 or 2018 when he was running for the 2018 election, promised the people of Ontario, "You would never have to protest on the front lawns of Queen's Park again." The people of Ontario thought he meant that because he was going to fix it. But ultimately, what we learned over the last eight years is that you don't have to protest on the front lawns because, no matter how much you protest, the Conservative government will continue to ignore your needs for proper funding.

We have a system now where the hashtag started at "#30KIsNotOk" and then it was 40 K, then 50 K, then 60 K, then 70 K, and I'm expecting it's going to be higher than that at any point.

So when families are frustrated because they don't have proper supports for their children, they could be in a situation where the Ontario Autism Coalition, for example, can't advocate, because they'll lose their funding; families can't advocate because they'll lose their funding, because this vague comment here, the "extraordinary matters," could be invoked.

This government has proven itself to be punitive to anyone who speaks up and very, very friendly to people who donate. What we want, on our side at least, is a government that respects all people equally and doesn't pick winners and losers based on who donates to their party and who criticizes their party.

I'm going to give the rest of my time to my colleague who also wants to speak to this.

1720

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

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to stand in the House, and today to speak on the Emergency

Management Modernization Act. You would think that modernization would be a good thing, and it is, but I'm not sure that what this bill is talking about is actually modernization.

Two years after I was elected, we had a forest fire threaten the municipality of Kirkland Lake. You could see the flames; you could smell the smoke. Emergency Management Ontario was there, and I have to give a shout-out. They were so professional. Every morning, we had a meeting, and it was drummed into us—the leaders—that nothing happens unless it was approved at this table, and the people who were managing that table were from Emergency Measures Ontario. It was incredible, I have to say.

And when the wind turned and the flames turned the other way, we all said to ourselves, "The people who actually ran that table and who ran"—none of us had the skill they had; none of us. It was incredible.

But now, it seems that modernization seems to be downloading, so municipalities are expected to make their own plans. Well, with what resources? I'm looking at what happened in Kirkland Lake. There's no way that the municipality of Kirkland Lake has the—and I'm not knocking the councillors or the staff. They're very professional. But I've been there, and there's no way that the local fire department could handle or could even foresee what really happens unless you've lived it.

For the government to say, "Well, you'll have the opportunity because you know better"—yes, local people know their conditions, but often they've never really experienced what truly seasoned professionals have. The people on that table didn't get flustered when people's lives were in danger, that, "We need to do this. We need to do this." It was just, "No, you can't do that." I've been there. How is a local municipality going to deal with something like that?

I'll give you another example; it happened last week. I know you're sick of us talking about Highway 11, but Highway 11 was closed for 70 hours. There are 2,000 trucks a day on Highway 11, so it was closed for three days. Try 6,000 trucks. Try 15 kilometres of trucks. You can't get a doctor to the hospital because they can't get through the trucks. That was an emergency.

Is that an emergency that the municipality—again, people in Cochrane are very professional and very capable. There's no one more capable than northerners because we have to deal with a lot of stuff. But are they now expected to plan for an emergency like that with no real funding? Because, often, this government is good at this: "Oh, yes, we're going to let you do things yourself. You're going to be so modern and so efficient. Oh, we'll give you a bit of a grant here or a bit of a grant there." But if you're going to be serious about this, you're going to have to fully, fully fund it.

Let's be serious: Municipalities, especially in rural Ontario, are struggling now with funding the things they're supposed to be funding, with bridges, culverts, roads. And now, "Oh, we're going to modernize emergency measures by giving you the responsibility." I'm not sure that's not just another case of downloading.

When it happens, when emergencies—they are going to happen. They are. If it ever happens again in Kirkland—and that's my example because that is seared in my mind, when the man from Emergency Measures Ontario said, "Yes, we're going to do this. We're going to do this. But no, that is a bad, bad plan; not going to touch it." You're expecting municipalities now to make those decisions? It's a mistake.

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

Pursuant to the order of the House dated October 29, 2025, I am now required to put the question. Ms. Dunlop has moved third reading of Bill 25, An Act to make statutory amendments respecting emergency management and authorizing enforceable directives to specified entities providing publicly-funded community and social services.

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

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

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

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

A recorded vote being required, it will be deferred until the next instance of deferred votes.

Third reading vote deferred.

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

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 27, 2025, on the motion for second 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 Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Further debate?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I am rising today to speak to the government's Bill 76, which annexes some lands to expand the boundaries for the city of Barrie, taking land from the neighbouring municipalities of Springwater and Oro-Medonte.

I want to share some of our experience from Ottawa, because forced amalgamation and annexation is something that we have a considerable amount of experience with, particularly for the experience of residents and citizens, and I think it's important to have that on the record, especially because what happened in Ottawa happened against the will of the people of Ottawa and the 10 other municipalities—the cities and townships and village—that existed before the city of Ottawa was created in 2001 by former Conservative Premier Mike Harris. It

was a move that happened without consultation, and there were a lot of promises that were made to the people of Ottawa that were not borne out over time.

What happened then was, in 2001, the Conservative government of Mike Harris said that it would be much more efficient if we streamlined government. So if we reduced the number of governments, they said it would reduce duplication and lower taxes and make government more efficient. That was their rationale. They took 11 municipalities—the cities of Ottawa, Kanata, Gloucester, Nepean, Cumberland; and then the townships of Rideau, West Carleton, Goulbourn and Osgoode; and the village of Rockcliffe Park, and they forced us all into one supercity of Ottawa.

But the thing about this, besides the fact that all of these cities had proud histories and clear identities, is that this made the city of Ottawa absolutely enormous. It often surprises people—and I'm sure it will surprise members of this government, who often forget that Ottawa is in Ontario—but you can fit the cities of Calgary, Edmonton, Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver within the geography of the city of Ottawa.

In fact, my daughter plays ringette, and so she is often headed out to Orléans and other places to play in arenas there. We're not even at the westernmost part of Ottawa—that would still be another 30 minutes from our house in Constance Bay—but even so, it's an hour for my husband and daughter to drive across Ottawa to Orléans to the arenas there. But they are still within the boundaries of the city of Ottawa; that's how enormous our municipality has become.

But it did not come with any of the promised benefits. In fact, the Fraser Institute—I will admit; this is the first time I'm ever citing them in any context, let alone the Legislature—concluded in 2015 that "the cost savings, smaller bureaucracy and lower taxes promised by consolidating of local governments have not materialized." That's certainly what we've seen in the city of Ottawa. The amalgamation was not efficient. In fact, the number of municipal employees increased by 39%—and that's after you account for the growth in population, because we're now up to a million people. So that's 39% growth after amalgamation on top of what just happened from growth in population. There were no cost savings to the residents. In fact, there were higher taxes and more debt. And if you ever really want to get the blood boiling of a resident of Nepean, Speaker, you should talk about taxes and debt, because even though this amalgamation happened 24 years ago, when I door-knock in the parts of my riding that were the old city of Nepean, people will still talk about the fact that they paid lower taxes than the city of Ottawa and that the city of Nepean had no debt.

1730

And so they were forced to take on the debt of the city of Ottawa. When Nepean was forcibly amalgamated into Ottawa, their taxes went up to provide the services that need to be now provided across a greater swath of territory, but also to service the debt. They hadn't contributed to that debt in any way, but now they had to pay higher

taxes in order to service the debt. It understandably makes people very angry and upset. And that's on top of the fact that it's incredibly expensive to provide services over this very large area.

And so Nepean is not the only part of the city where people are very upset. In the other suburban areas, in the rural areas, people are paying basically big-city taxes, which comes with an expectation that they're going to receive big-city services. But instead, given the size of Ottawa, given the fiscal challenges that Ottawa is facing, particularly given the downloading of this provincial government, what we're seeing actually is that citizens aren't receiving the services that they deserve, whether it's snow clearing, whether it's street repaving and pothole filling, whether it's public transit. So people had to pay more because of this forced amalgamation, but they're getting less.

The same consulting firm that did a report for the government on the amalgamation here of Barrie, Springwater and Oro-Medonte did a study on the cost of sprawl in Ottawa, and what they found was that it costs an additional \$465 per person over what the city is already collecting in property tax and water bills to serve new low-density homes on underdeveloped land.

So when we sprawl out into new neighbourhoods and none of that servicing infrastructure is there, the city has to come up with an additional \$465 per person living in that new sprawl in order to provide services. But when we infill in already denser areas where those services already exist, the city actually gets a net gain there of \$606 per person per year. And that's important because Ottawa has a very large infrastructure replacement cost. So because of the size of Ottawa, we have 9,600 kilometres of water, waste water and storm pipes, all of which of course have a life cycle, an end-of-life expectancy, and the replacement cost today for that water, waste water and storm pipe infrastructure is \$51.2 billion—and that's just to maintain, not to improve. It's incredibly costly to the city of Ottawa that we have this sprawl that's been forced on us by amalgamation.

So 24 years later, the residents of Ottawa are still living with the consequences of a decision that was forced on us by a Conservative provincial government that was imposed without consultation. And we were sold a bill of goods that this was going to be better, that it was going to be more efficient, more cost-effective and would save us money, and it hasn't done any of those things.

What I worry about with this Bill 76 is that when this is happening without proper consultation of the people who are going to be affected by it, when we're seeing this decision forced through despite protest—and, in fact, we saw one of the municipalities only supported this amalgamation because the mayor used strong-mayor powers, which is the opposite of democracy and it's the opposite of listening to people. A majority of people who were democratically elected to represent the residents of that township said no, but the mayor who has powers to override them all—which were given by this government despite the fact that nobody in Ontario was asking to have

king-like mayors—the mayor stepped in and said that it doesn't matter what those councillors representing their constituents say; this is going to go ahead anyway.

I have concerns about the long-term viability of a project where that's happening, because if a project is good for the residents, then, surely, there is no harm in taking the time to have those conversations with residents, to hear them out about their concerns, to ensure that those concerns are addressed and, ultimately, to bring everyone on board with that process. That's just not what we're seeing here.

I think there are also legitimate concerns from the smaller municipalities who are involved in this amalgamation, Speaker, that they are going to be put in a less financially sustainable position because Barrie is able to take part of their reserves to address servicing in the areas that Barrie is absorbing. So these communities are now going to lose part of their financial sustainability that they've saved for, but they're not going to receive anything in return.

And then for the residents of these areas that are being absorbed into Barrie, they are inevitably going to face higher taxes. Now, there is a phase-in, which is a good thing, but still, at the end of the day, at the end of that phase-in, these residents will be paying higher taxes. Given the experience that we had in Ottawa, Speaker, I'm not sure that these residents are actually going to receive better services, that they're going to receive more efficient, more cost-effective services. And I think that it's fair that people should be able to expect that when they pay higher taxes, particularly when they weren't consulted on the decision, they should receive more in return for that. But what these citizens might be facing is a scenario where they're paying more to receive less, Speaker, and I don't think that's something that we want to see.

We also know that many smaller municipalities in Ontario are facing financial challenges because of the downloading of services by this government to the municipalities without providing them with any financial support to take on services that used to be provided by the province. We're seeing costs go up for things, really, across the board, but no funding for the municipalities to cover those increased costs. And then that ends up also being a source of increased taxation for residents, as they have to pay higher property taxes to the municipalities to make up for the lack of provincial funding. So once again, it's these residents who are being taxed for a decision of the provincial government that they were never consulted on.

I think that's the danger in what we're seeing here today, Speaker. It's a bill that's being rushed through without adequate consultation, without the support of all of the residents who are being affected by it. I think when we see, as well, the cost of sprawl, that this has the potential to be even more costly for the residents of Barrie and the residents of the surrounding townships, compared to what they have been told the costs will be—I think in a scenario like this, Speaker, we should take the time to get it right, which means that we shouldn't be rushing

something through over the opposition of residents without adequate consultation with them.

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

Mr. Brian Saunderson: I want to thank the member opposite for her comments. I listened intently.

As she knows, this is not an amalgamation; it's a boundary expansion. And in fact, it's being motivated by infrastructure efficiencies. These are properties that are contiguous to current developed areas, access to services. This boundary expansion will enable housing, which, by the Hemson report—they need 500 hectares of housing and 300 hectares of employment lands.

This has been an 18-month negotiation involving the Ontario Provincial Land and Development Facilitator's office. There have been three public meetings, once a proposal was made by the city of Barrie that was passed. It was done to the individual councils of Oro-Medonte and Springwater. There were public meetings held.

So my question to the member opposite is, how do you see this truncating any public process at all? In fact, it was done and negotiated, and there will be compensation for each of the municipalities, so there has been a lengthy public process. In what way can you enhance that consultation process that would in any way change this legislation?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I think any time that a mayor has to exercise strong mayor powers, shutting down debate and overturning the voices of locally elected constituents, we are truncating debate and shutting down community consultation. And any time a provincial government has to override local communities and the voices of people, we are truncating public debate and shutting down public consultation, Speaker.

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

MPP Jamie West: Thank you to my colleague from Ottawa West—Nepean. She talked about the amalgamation of Ottawa and all of these small towns that were brought together, and Sudbury went through that. Sudbury is now known as the city of Greater Sudbury because our footprint, much like yours, is the size of the greater Toronto area, including Hamilton, including Peel, but we have a population—in Ottawa, I think you said it's two million people. We have a population of less than 200,000 people.

As a result, our property taxes keep going up, because in the past, those highways that interconnected our small towns were a provincial responsibility, but maintenance, snowplowing and repairs now are municipal responsibilities.

My colleague the member from Nickel Belt and I are actually working on a bill to restore those fees back to the province, where they belong. I know it's not directly connected to the bill, but is that something that would make sense for Ottawa as well?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Absolutely. Thank you to my colleague from Sudbury for such a great question.

We've seen service after service and cost after cost be downloaded to the municipalities. When you're talking about a municipality that covers the size of Calgary, Edmonton, Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver, or the greater Toronto area plus Hamilton, we're talking about absolutely enormous geographical regions in which you might have to bring an ambulance from one side to the other, for instance, or in which you are trying to cover miles and miles of snow removal. It's simply not feasible for people from one small municipality to cover the cost of providing these services at the level that citizens in each part of that enormous region deserve.

The province has fiscal capacity that municipalities don't have, especially because the province is able to limit the fiscal tools that municipalities have access to. So it's important that we, instead of downloading costs to the province, start uploading costs back to the province so that people can expect that they're going to get good paramedic—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Pursuant to standing order 50(c), I am now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there have been six and a half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader directs the debate to continue.

Hon. Steve Clark: Speaker, please adjourn the debate. *Second reading debate deemed adjourned.*

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Orders of the day?

Hon. Steve Clark: No further business, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): There being no further business, this House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1742.

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Lumsden, Hon. / L'hon. Neil (PC)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Minister of Sport / Ministre du Sport
Mamakwa, Sol (NDP)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	
McCarthy, Hon. / L'hon. Todd J. (PC)	Kiiwetinoong	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs
McCrimmon, Karen (LIB)	Durham	
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	