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Lundi
2 décembre 2024

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 2 December 2024

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 2 décembre 2024

The House met at 1015.

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

Prayers.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

PUBLIC SKATING EVENTS

Mr. Brian Riddell: Good morning, Speaker. What is more Canadian than skating? Winter in Canada is synonymous with skating, a tradition that brings us together as families and communities. I'm excited to host three free community skates this winter, offering families a chance to enjoy the season and perhaps discover a passion for skating. For kids, it's a chance to try out something new, and for parents, a chance to share in the joy of the season.

Cambridge has a rich sporting history, particularly in skating. Our sports hall of fame has inducted 82 athletes excelling in hockey, figure skating and speed skating, contributing both to local and national sports culture. One such athlete is Kirk Maltby, a three-time Stanley Cup champion who brought great pride to Cambridge.

I encourage everyone to join us at these free skates, whether you're a seasoned skater or a first timer. Let's celebrate the Canadian spirit and support the next generation of athletes.

FOOD BANKS

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Speaker, more Londoners than ever are struggling this holiday season, and today I want to recognize just a few of the many London West faith communities whose caring volunteers are making spirits just a little bit brighter.

I recently visited St. Michael and All Angels community cupboard, a year-round emergency food bank that is stocked, in part, with food from their own gardens. The cupboard is located outside the church doors and available 24/7 to anyone who needs it.

St. John the Divine parish also operates a 24/7 community fridge and offers weekly community meals as part of the Springbank Catholic Family of Parishes. This season, they're also supporting hundreds of families with Christmas hampers.

St. George's parish is also providing Christmas hampers of food and gifts to families in need and partners with Byron Community Church, Byron United and St. Anne's Anglican to operate the Byron Cares food bank.

Gateway Church in Hyde Park will open its doors on Christmas Day for a free community meal, welcoming everyone to enjoy music, games and the spirit of togetherness.

Finally, a much-needed Halal food bank will launch this weekend in London, and it's already serving hundreds of families with support from the Islamic Centre of Southwest Ontario, local businesses and the London Food Bank.

On behalf of our community, I want to express my heartfelt thanks for the generous gifts of time and donations that make these programs possible.

To everyone in London West, may you have a merry Christmas and a safe and joyful holiday.

1020

PERSONNEL DES BUREAUX DE CIRCONSCRIPTION DE GLENGARRY-PRESCOTT-RUSSELL

M. Stéphane Sarrazin: C'est une chance pour moi aujourd'hui de pouvoir prendre la parole en Chambre. C'est une journée spéciale, car j'ai la chance d'accueillir plusieurs membres de mon équipe qui sont ici en formation à Queen's Park. J'aimerais vous présenter mon équipe, les gens qui servent les résidents de la circonscription de Glengarry-Prescott-Russell. Je vous présente Noémie Prevost, Emilie Sabourin et Vanessa Trottier, qui servent les bureaux de Hawkesbury, Alexandria, Casselman et Rockland, ainsi qu'Isaure Vorstman, qui travaille à mon bureau ici à Toronto. J'aimerais faire mention que nous avons aussi Claudie Menard qui n'a pas pu être ici à Queen's Park aujourd'hui.

Nous avons récemment participé à une exposition commerciale dans la ville de Hawkesbury. Ça a été vraiment une belle opportunité de rencontrer plusieurs résidents et je dois dire que beaucoup de ces gens nous ont félicité et étaient reconnaissants pour les services offerts à nos bureaux de circonscription. Même si c'est moi qui a eu la chance de recevoir les compliments, je comprends très bien que c'est grâce à l'excellent travail de mon équipe.

Pour les gens qui ne savent pas, Glengarry-Prescott-Russell s'étend sur une superficie de 3 000 kilomètres carrés, juste un petit peu moins que la moitié de la superficie de toute la région du grand Toronto, la GTA, qui comprend 42 circonscriptions. Je veux profiter de cette occasion aujourd'hui pour remercier les membres de mon équipe pour leur travail incroyable; sûrement une des meilleures équipes, ou la meilleure équipe. Merci pour

tout ce que vous faites pour les résidents de Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, et bienvenue à Queen’s Park.

NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: What does it mean to be a New Democrat? To be a New Democrat is to believe in a Canada where progress is built on courage and compassion, where leadership means standing up for fairness and leaving no one behind. Tommy Douglas, the first social democratic leader of a government on this continent showed us what leadership looks like.

The first thing he did as Premier of Saskatchewan was to balance the budget to save the province from bankruptcy. Then, he electrified rural Saskatchewan, knowing that these communities needed modern infrastructure to thrive. And after that, he introduced medicare, a gift that has shaped our identity as Canadians. But Douglas didn’t stop there. He brought in public auto insurance, ensured collective bargaining rights, removed taxes from essentials and so much more. His approach embodied fiscal responsibility, paired with social justice—the belief that government can and should lift people up. These are the bold, people-first policies that define New Democrats.

Being a New Democrat today means carrying forward that legacy of courage and care. It means standing up for universal health care, tackling affordability and taking on the climate crisis, all while being fiscally responsible and keeping people at the heart of every decision. Tommy Douglas once said, “Courage, my friends; ’tis not too late to build a better world.” To be a New Democrat is to believe in that better world and work for it every single day.

HOCKEY

Mr. Brian Saunderson: It’s hockey season across Ontario and in my riding of Simcoe–Grey that means something. We have a long history—a proud history—in hockey and we have active and vibrant programs that run throughout the towns and villages in my riding. As we approach Christmas, and as I left Collingwood last night, we were getting our first big snowstorm so it’s beginning to look a lot like Christmas up there, and farther north they had over 100 centimetres of snow this weekend.

It’s the midpoint of the hockey season, and the old rivalries are heating up in junior hockey in my riding of Simcoe–Grey. In the provincial junior league, which is considered Junior C, the Alliston Hornets have yet to lose a game. They are a perfect 19-0 this season. And further north, in the town of Stayner, the Siskins, who play in the same division, are 16-4. These two teams have a long and proud history of exciting games in the league final, and it looks like they’re setting it up for this year as well.

In Collingwood, the junior Blues are the 2024 Centennial Cup winners—national champions, number one in the country out of 67 teams. They’re also two-time Buckland Cup champions, as provincial champions in 2023 and 2024. This year, with more than half the team turnover, the

Blues are currently second in their division and ranked 10th in Canada. Most recently, we have learned that the coaching staff—Andrew Campoli as assistant coach, and Richard Judges as equipment manager—have been named to the Canada East team for the World Junior A Challenge, which will take place December 9 to 15. They have named to the team seven of the Collingwood Blues players. It’s a testament to the vibrant, active hockey and junior programs that we have in Simcoe–Grey.

INDIGENOUS RELATIONS AND RECONCILIATION

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Meegwetch, Speaker. When Phyllis Webstad was sent to an Indian residential school in 1973, her grandma brought her a new orange shirt. When she arrived at the school, she was stripped of her clothes and her orange shirt was taken away. She says that, “The colour orange has always reminded me of that and how my feelings didn’t matter, how no one cared and how I felt I was worth nothing. All of us little children were crying and no one cared.”

Phyllis created Orange Shirt Day on September 30 to create meaningful reflection on the impacts and legacy of Indian residential schools and to affirm that every child matters.

Last Thursday, Florence Morrison and Pauline Cheena arrived at Queen’s Park, after travelling 24 hours from one of the most northern parts of the province to attend the debate of my private member’s bill. Both Florence and Pauline are survivors of the Indian residential school system and this was their first time at Queen’s Park. They were wearing orange shirts that said, “Every Child Matters.”

After they’d been here for a few hours, security informed us that they had to remove their shirts if they wanted to watch the debate in the chamber. Asking two survivors to remove their orange shirts is a form of colonialism, a form of denialism. We cannot deny the place of Indian residential schools in our country’s history. We cannot reinforce the patterns of colonialism and cultural genocide or systemic inhumanity against Indigenous people on this land. It is for this reason that we must have a day for Ontarians to reflect on the impacts of Indian residential schools so we do not forget.

CHRISTMAS TREE LIGHTING

Mr. Ric Bresee: I’m thrilled to share some festive news that brings great pride to my entire community in Hastings–Lennox and Addington. There is a tradition for Toronto’s official Christmas tree which was lit this last weekend—that tradition began in 1983. But this year, like most years since 2013, this beautiful, 55-foot, giant balsam fir comes straight from our own little town of Bancroft. It was the main highlight for the Cavalcade of Lights at Nathan Phillips Square, where the city’s official holiday celebrations begin. This event, held every year since 1967,

marks the lighting of the tree and kicks off the holiday season here in Toronto.

I understand that getting this tree to Toronto was no small feat. The tree was carefully selected to make the three and a half hour journey through the twisting roads and steep hills, safely bringing a piece of Bancroft right here to this city. Hastings–Lennox and Addington has a proud history of forestry, having played a significant role in the local economy for generations. From the early days of logging to today's commitment to sustainable forest management, our region has long been a steward of the land and I'm truly proud to see a piece of our riding prominently displayed in Nathan Phillips Square.

Congratulations to all involved in making this possible, for sharing a piece of Bancroft with the city of Toronto and happy holidays to everyone.

HOLIDAY MESSAGE

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: It's been a tough few years. Everyone is feeling stressed and stretched and worried. There's lots of negativity out there, designed to provoke fear, anger, resentment, even rage. But negativity has never solved a single problem or brought us any relief from our challenges.

I have an idea. This holiday season let's say no to negativity. If someone starts to express a negative idea, say, "Time out." If you're on social media and you're assaulted with negative ads or comments: "Time out." Let's make room for all of the love and joy and hope and kindness that you can share and share it widely; heal and re-energize our spirits, our relationships and our connections to each other.

1030

My mother's favourite saying was, "It's not happiness that makes you grateful. It's gratefulness that makes you happy." And we have so much to be grateful for.

I wish everyone a very merry Christmas and the happiest of holidays, and may love, joy and peace be the gifts we give each other. Take care, everyone.

WORLD JUNIOR HOCKEY CHAMPIONSHIP

Mr. John Jordan: Speaker, we are just days away from the holiday season gatherings with family and friends, food, gift exchanges and carols. And on Boxing Day, many Ontarians will pull on their red and white jerseys and find their lucky spot on the couch for one of the most anticipated tournaments of the year: the 2024-25 IIHF World Junior Championship.

Speaker, this year's world juniors will celebrate hockey in Ottawa for the first time since 2009, with a tournament taking place from December 26 to January 5, along with exhibition games in neighbouring communities including Kingston, Brockville, Cornwall, Belleville, Arnprior and Hawkesbury.

In December of last year, the province of Ontario and the Minister of Sport announced a \$4-million investment

for the 2025 world juniors to benefit the planning and delivery of this event, giving fans of all ages the opportunity to enjoy watching the stars of tomorrow close to home.

Congratulations to the town of Carleton Place in my riding of Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston. They'll be hosting Team Kazakhstan for pre-tournament camps ahead of the holiday hockey tradition. A big shout-out to Mayor Toby Randell, our new warden in Lanark county, staff and many volunteers for making the team feel welcome over the coming days.

Of course, we'll be cheering on Team Canada. For the first time since 2017, Canada will play the US on New Year's Eve. Thank you, Speaker, and good luck to Team Canada.

JASWINDER SINGH KHOSA

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: It's great to rise this morning and give a member's statement. Speaker, as we approach the holiday season, we're reminded of the true spirit of Christmas, a time of joy, generosity and compassion for one another. It's a season that inspires us to reflect on the values that bind us together as Canadians: kindness, community and the shared responsibility of support for those in need.

Today, I'd like to recognize Mr. Jaswinder Singh Khosa from Brampton East, whose tireless efforts embody the spirit of giving. Every Sunday, Mr. Khosa organizes soup kitchens at Allan Gardens in Toronto, providing warm meals for those facing hunger and homelessness. His unwavering commitment is a shining example of what it means to give back.

Speaker, Mr. Jaswinder Singh's work goes beyond simply serving meals. It's about creating a sense of belonging and reminding others that they are seen, valued and cared for. His dedication has inspired countless others in our community to join him, showing that even small acts of kindness can ripple out to create meaningful change.

As we celebrate the holidays, let's all strive to follow Mr. Jaswinder Singh's example by finding ways to give back whether through volunteering, supporting local charities or simply lending a helping hand to a neighbour in need. Together, we can make this season brighter for everyone.

Thank you, Speaker, and a heartfelt thank you to Jaswinder Singh Khosa and his family, and others like him who continue to remind us what the holiday spirit truly means.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Before we move on to introduction of visitors, I would like to take the time to introduce, not only a former colleague of many of the members in the House today, but she's also my former colleague at CHCH Television, Jennifer Mossop, who rep-

resented the riding of Stoney Creek in the 38th Parliament. Welcome back, Jennifer.

Hon. Mike Harris: I know we're going to have a lot of introductions today as we have a lot of folks here from our constituency offices. I wanted to welcome two people from my constituency office here today, Kimberley Dullard and Natasha Kecskemeti, who are sitting up in the gallery up here. Also, I wanted to give a big shout-out to Luke Fuendling who is holding down the fort back home.

And, if you'll indulge me, today's page captain is William Banbury—I see him over there; we're going to embarrass him a little bit—and his mom Leslie Toews; his grandma Lorraine Toews; and Felicity Banbury, who some of us may remember from being a former page last year.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I want to welcome everyone here for hospice day: the hospice palliative care network of Ontario. I particularly would like to welcome, from my riding, Danielle Zucchet. Danielle is with the Kemp Care Network, and they are working very hard to build Keaton's House, which will be a children's hospice in my riding. They're doing fantastic work. We welcome you here and thank you once again for all the work you do on behalf of Ontarians.

Mr. John Yakabuski: In the Speaker's gallery today I have two important visitors for me: my sister Marlene Yakabuski—Marlene was a staff member for former MPP Margaret Marland some years ago and today is a constituent of MPP Cuzzetto; also joining Marlene is my brother Lawrie, who is a constituent of Minister Calandra, but also was a frequent visitor to Queen's Park when my father, Paul, was the MPP from 1963 to 1987. So welcome them to Queen's Park.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to introduce a group of very hard-working cardiology technologists from the Ontario Society of Cardiology Technologists, including their president, Blair Arnold. We have Kaila Kaldma, Karen Rondinelli, Katherine Spratt, John French, Rajinder Virk, Katie Cosentino, Kirsten Krose, as well as Ashley Oriet. Welcome to your House. Thank you for what you do.

Mr. John Fraser: I would like to welcome some members from Hospice Palliative Care Ontario, including Dipti Purbhoo, Rick Firth, Lisa Kronenberg, Jennifer Mossop, Margaret Paan, Janette Panhuis, Pam Blackwood and Melissa Horner. They have a reception at lunchtime today, and I hope everybody can stop by.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Introduction of visitors? I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you very much, Speaker, and great to see you in the chair this morning.

I would like to welcome my amazing staff from the Simcoe North constituency office: Jacqueline Bayley, Leslie Stroud, Hannah Jones and Eric Sterling and his fiancé, Allie. Thanks for being here this morning.

Miss Monique Taylor: I would like to welcome some guests who are here with us today from Hamilton: my executive assistant, Heather Lambert-Hillen, and my constituency assistants Joanne Stanojevich and Caydie

Maerz—and a very special happy birthday to Caydie on your first visit to Queen's Park. Enjoy your day.

Hon. Sam Oosterhoff: I have a few wonderful people from the constituency office here today: Marietta Linde, Samuel Van Geest, and joining us in a few minutes, Michael Zwiep. Thank you so much for all you do and welcome to Queen's Park.

MPP Jamie West: Up above in the west gallery, you will find my OLIP intern, James Liao, joining us at Queen's Park. Welcome to the House, James.

Mr. Ted Hsu: I would like to welcome today two members of my staff in my constituency office in Kingston and the Islands: Ivanna Kazantsev and Alastair Munro. It's great to have you working here with me this week.

Hon. David Piccini: I would like to welcome to Queen's Park Ben Williams, who's up in the gallery, down from my constituency office, and to Bonnie and Allie—on her first day—who are holding the fort down back in Port Hope.

Ms. Doly Begum: I'm delighted to introduce fierce women leaders, advocates in my community. We have here with us Sultana Jahangir, Jinnat Basher, Kishower Laila, Nusrat Jahan, Munir Jahan and Shanjana Rahman. Welcome to the Legislature.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Introduction of visitors? I recognize the government House leader.

Mr. Steve Clark: Thanks, Speaker. It's great to see you in the chair today.

I want to welcome members of my constituency office: Erin Merkley, Michael Jiggins, Jo-Anne Hanley and Alishia VanderMey. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I want to welcome some outstanding student leaders from across the province who are at Queen's Park today to support my motion on the reimplementation of the Student Voices on Sexual Violence survey. We have, from the Canadian Federation of Students-Ontario, Cyrielle Ngeleka, Rawan Habib and Kayla Weiler; from College Student Alliance, Olivia Villeneuve; from Ontario Student Voices: Lynn Courville, Olamipo Ogunnote and Alex Oestreicher; from Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance: Maya Hobbs and Malika Dhanani; and from Western University Student Council, Michelle Wodchis-Johnson and Emilie Kalaydjian. Welcome to Queen's Park.

1040

Mr. Steve Pinsonneault: I'd like to introduce Kara Carther from my Wallaceburg office constit staff; Jeanue Chung from my Toronto office; Michelle Dwyer and Tracey Everitt from my Strathroy office got delayed on the train and couldn't make it, but they're going to get here for lunch.

Hon. Michael Parsa: I'm very excited to announce and welcome Anna Nguyen, my incredible constituency office manager. Thank you so much, Anna, for everything you do and welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: When she's not mushing her dog sled or elbowing her way around the roller derby rink or taking care of Indiana and Beau and her husband Matt,

Keri Buttle works in our constituency office and takes care of everything there.

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: Good morning to all. I wish to welcome to the House today a leading member of our agricultural community in Port Perry, Ms. Kirsten Kirby, as well as Mr. Steven Dubrick, a director with the Holy Name of Mary College School from here in Toronto.

Hon. Kevin Holland: I'd like to welcome to the House today my constituency assistant and nearly lifelong friend Jennifer Pinder.

Hon. Vijay Thanigasalam: I would like to welcome my constituency staff to Queen's Park today: Vyssnavi Vaseekaran, Kevin Urbas, Tharscika Ramaneekaran and Maria Sherry Lacson Tan. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Will Bouma: I'd like to welcome, from my constituency office, Alexandra Novakovic. Alexandra, thank you for what you do, keeping me on time. And even more—thank you for putting up with your husband, Milan, in my office.

Hon. Rob Flack: First, I'd like to welcome Shawn Brenn, Alison Robertson and the rest of the board and staff from the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association—a friendly reminder: They're hosting a reception this afternoon at 4 p.m. in the legislative dining room.

As well, to the Elgin–Middlesex–London staff: We've got Barb Gonyou, Shirley Slaats and new to the team is Emily Gratton—welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: I'm delighted to welcome our office manager, Marlene, joined by Ruth and Daniel, who keep the constituents of York Centre well communicated with. Thank you for everything that you do.

Mr. Ross Romano: I'm very proud to be able to introduce, in the members' gallery, Oluchi Omabuike, from my constituency office to Queen's Park. Welcome to our House.

I'd also like to recognize a new staff member starting a new position in my office within the government whip's office, and that is Patricio González in the under-press.

Mr. John Jordan: It's my privilege to introduce my great constituency team, Donna Donaldson, Angie Pacey and Stephanie Morris—the A team. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: I'm very happy to welcome three very dedicated staff from my constituency office, Anita Persaud, Jamie Aw and Karina Munsterhjelm. Welcome.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I want to wish a sincere warm welcome, first, to Katharen Bortolin, the enigmatic executive director of the Hospice of Windsor Essex County. Welcome, Katharen.

As well, I've got two incredibly valued members of my constituency office here, Cole Gorham and Salam Esho. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Charmaine A. Williams: I just want to welcome some of my office staff: Karen Aguilar-Perez, Kadia Dabreo and Stacey Williams. They're here visiting Queen's Park.

Mr. Billy Pang: It is my pleasure to welcome our friends from York University: Dr. Rhonda Lenton, pres-

ident; Ijade Maxwell Rodrigues, chief of government relations and protocol; Shawna Teper, director, community and government relations. It was exciting to see them after the York University grand opening.

Later tonight, from 5 to 7, York U will have their reception at 228. All are welcome.

Mr. Brian Riddell: I would just like to welcome my wonderful const staff from Cambridge: Ana Maria Ruiz, Grace Camera, Melissa Young and our new addition, Miles Vaughan.

Mrs. Daisy Wai: I'm happy to welcome my husband, Albert Wai, to the chamber. Also with him are my amazing staff from Richmond Hill, including Nicole King, my EA; Madison Gordon, manager of the constituency office; Frederic Lai, administrative assistant to the office; Vinus Lee, outreach and community service manager; and Alice Chee, case manager. They are all here to celebrate Christmas and attend the training.

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: I'd like to acknowledge my team members from Newmarket–Aurora: Daniel Goutovets, Olga Zaidovskiy and Rayane Boumala. Thank you very much for all you do for Newmarket–Aurora.

Mr. Dave Smith: I'd like to introduce some of my constituency staff: Jinitha Ganesalingam, Mary Babcock and Andrea “the sniper” Dodsworth.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I'd like to welcome Hospice Palliative Care Ontario to Queen's Park today.

Also, from the riding of Essex, I'd like to welcome Ethan Wuerch from the town of Kingsville and Danielle Brindley from the town of Amherstburg.

Welcome to Queen's Park.

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: Sorry, Madam Speaker. I just realized another member of my team, my EA to my legislative and parliamentary role, Andy Kiani—welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Nolan Quinn: I'd like to welcome my constituency team from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry: José Séguin, Brittany St Pierre, Michael Lazaris and Connor MacDonald.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I want to acknowledge that we are meeting on lands traditionally inhabited by Indigenous peoples. We pay our respects to the many Indigenous nations who gathered here and continue to gather here, including the Mississaugas of the Credit.

This being the first sitting Monday of the month, I ask everyone to join in the singing of the Canadian national anthem, followed by the royal anthem. And this morning, it is my absolute pleasure to introduce, joining us in the public gallery, the Rehoboth Christian School choir from the absolutely fantastic riding of Flamborough–Glanbrook—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): That's right—to perform O Canada and God Save the King.

1050

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

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

QUESTION PERIOD

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Marit Stiles: This question is for the Premier. Global News is reporting that records of the government's business conducted by the Premier's chief of staff, Mr. Patrick Sackville, have been destroyed. We now know that at least seven months of records from early 2023 are gone. That was the time that multiple investigations into the greenbelt grab, including the OPP's initial investigation, were under way already.

Deleting records related to government policy, using personal phones or not, is against the law.

Did the Premier's chief of staff intentionally destroy the records of interest to the RCMP criminal investigation?

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member for Brantford–Brant.

Mr. Will Bouma: Thank you to the Leader of the Opposition for the question.

As the member knows, it is important to note that the records in question are reflected in identical and corresponding records. This is an inadvertent error.

Speaker, as you know, we take our obligations under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act very seriously, and all staff are expected to follow the rules.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Ms. Marit Stiles: Back to the Premier: An inadvertent deletion? Are you kidding me? There's an active criminal investigation going on, and they deleted the evidence.

We all know that when the previous Liberal government got caught in their gas plant scandals and staff deleted records to cover that up, the Premier's chief of staff went to jail. It looks like the Premier and his party took the wrong lesson from this. I'll tell you, it wasn't meant to be a "how to" tutorial; that's the truth.

It's clear that the Premier's chief of staff destroyed government records. There has to be a darn good reason for him to want to delete those texts.

Does the Premier acknowledge that his chief of staff broke the law when he got rid of his text messages?

Mr. Will Bouma: As we have said numerous times—the Integrity Commissioner has issued a report. The Auditor General has issued a report. Our government has even reversed policy that was not supported by the people in the province of Ontario. We have accepted every recommendation that we have been given.

Quite frankly, we are not focused on this. What we are focused on is what's important to the people of Ontario. We are building the province of Ontario. We are rebuilding the province of Ontario, which was destroyed after 15 years under the previous government. We are building the hospitals, we are building the schools and we are building the highways that the people of Ontario need.

I would ask the Leader of the Opposition to focus on what's important to the people of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Supplementary?

Ms. Marit Stiles: Well, here we go again, Speaker. Nothing to see here, right?

The government should have been more careful with these records. They knew they were under RCMP criminal investigation, so deleting those records was a choice. There is no way that the Premier's chief of staff didn't know that when he passed on his personal device all his messages were going to be gone. There is no way that he didn't know that this is not allowed. The Auditor General told them. The Information and Privacy Commissioner told them. The secretary of cabinet told them. He knew. They knew. It sure looks like an attempt to destroy evidence relating to a police investigation by a key member of this Premier's inner circle.

So I'd ask the Premier—get off his personal device, stand up and answer this question: Is this a cover-up?

Mr. Will Bouma: Speaker, the messages were not deleted. This was an inadvertent error, and again, as I've said previously, it is important to note that the records in question are reflected in identical corresponding records.

The opposition should focus on what's important to the people of Ontario: affordability, housing. That's what our government is doing; that's what we are going to accomplish for the people of Ontario.

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, that's a tough answer to take, I'll tell you—inadvertent deletion of emails in the midst of an RCMP criminal investigation.

I'm going to go back to the Premier. We'll see if he'll answer this question: While this government has been caught up in all of these schemes and scandals, things have gotten tougher for the people of Ontario. This morning CBC reported that 2024 has been the worst year in Ontario for emergency room and urgent care closures. One in five hospitals had to close their emergency room or urgent care this year. That means patients going to the hospital with a medical emergency only to find it closed. That should never happen.

Why has this Premier allowed this to become the reality for communities all across Ontario?

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Response? I recognize the member for Essex.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: Regarding the news report which the Leader of the Opposition just cited, Anthony Dale, the president of the Ontario Hospital Association, says he has serious concerns about whether those numbers are even accurate or not.

So while the Leader of the Opposition is citing inaccurate numbers, let me give you some real numbers: Since 2018, we've trained and registered approximately 100,000 nurses in the province of Ontario. And here are some more accurate numbers: We have 30,000 people studying—nurses—in our colleges and universities. Of course, that is important, because we need a pipeline of talent coming

through the pipeline so that we can staff our hospitals and other health care agencies.

Speaker, no government has invested more in the public health care system than this government, increasing the funding from \$60 billion in 2018 to \$85 billion in 2024.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Question?

Ms. Marit Stiles: Back to the Premier: A closure is a closure. Emergency rooms are meant to be available 24/7, not just on weekdays or in the daytime. They're not a nice-to-have; they are a basic health service that every Ontarian has a right to. The 10 ERs that closed for the most hours under this government are all in rural communities. Hospitals in southwestern Ontario are about the hardest hit, and they still haven't recovered, by the way, from all those Liberal hospital closures. Hospitals in Clinton, in Chesley, Kincardine and Walkerton, Durham: They have had repeated and sometimes simultaneous closures over the last few years. Not to mention hospitals like Minden, which this government has closed altogether. But no action—zero action—from this government.

Why does this government keep leaving rural Ontario behind?

Mr. Anthony Leardi: Speaker, the most challenging time of the year for emergency rooms is the summertime, and I'm pleased to say that this July and August, 99% of Ontario hospital emergency departments were open without any interruption whatsoever. That is in part because of the great dedication of our emergency room staff, doctors and nurses and other professionals in the health care system across the province of Ontario. It is also a success in part because of this government's investments, including \$44 million to reduce emergency room wait times and also bolstering the nursing workforce in Ontario with \$10 million of investments to train and upgrade approximately 1,000 nurses in emergency department skills and training. Those are the investments we are making for hospitals in Ontario.

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The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Final supplementary?

Ms. Marit Stiles: The number one cause of emergency room closures is a shortage of nurses. That accounts for more than 85%. That's because nurses and health care workers are burned out, they are overworked and they are underpaid. And you know what, when the emergency room closes early, you know who stays behind to take care of those patients? The nurses.

But this government cut nurses' wages and that drove them out of our health care system. This government is so distracted by deleting emails and schemes and scandals, that they don't care about delivering the solutions that Ontarians need.

So my question again to the Premier is: Is he finally going to take some responsibility for the damage he has done to our health care system, or are we just going to hear more excuses from some minister?

Mr. Anthony Leardi: Contrary to the assertion of the Leader of the Opposition, we are training more and more nurses in the province of Ontario. As I just stated, we have registered approximately 100,000 nurses in Ontario since

taking government in 2018. In addition to that, we have approximately 30,000 people in Ontario studying nursing in our colleges and universities. Part of that is because of the investments that this government has made in Learn and Stay grants and also waiving the tuition costs for people studying nursing in Ontario, so that we can have a guaranteed workforce not only now, but also in the future.

Nurses are doing a great job in Ontario and we want to thank them for their dedication.

CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is for the Premier. Chronic underfunding has left our children and youth caught in failing systems, neglecting their well-being in every direction. We cannot ignore the multiple crises impacting children, youth and their families anymore. Children and youth in care, former crown wards, service providers, advocacy groups, educators, experts and families have been calling for action loud and clear.

The fundamental needs of Ontario's children are not being met: housing, health care, education, justice, behavioural services and more. Child and youth welfare needs to be transformed into a child well-being system so kids and families get what they need when they need it.

Will the Premier do the right thing and support our motion today to strike an emergency committee on the crisis facing Ontario's children and youth?

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Response? I recognize the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services.

Hon. Michael Parsa: I thank my honourable colleague for the question. There's nothing more important than making sure the future generation is supported so that they continue to succeed and thrive wherever they are in the province. We backed that up with record investments in the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services. Across the board, we have increased investments in every area of this ministry so that no child or youth is ever left behind in our province.

My honourable colleague references the societies in this province. We increased investments to societies by \$76.3 million last year. We increased child protection services by \$14 million this year. We backed that up by an additional \$36.5 million ongoing base funding to make sure societies have what they need, that the resources are in place to look after the future generation.

When it comes to children and youth, we will never, ever give up on them. We'll continue to fight for them and I hope the—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Question?

Miss Monique Taylor: One hundred children die in care every year; 73,000 kids are waiting for autism services; kids are sleeping in motels, hotels and Airbnbs; they're in for-profit placements, being used as cash cows; children are being sent home from school because they have no supports or staff available. That is the reality for Ontario families, Minister.

British Columbia has recently released Don't Look Away, a report by the Representative for Children and Youth. It is a collective commitment to do a system-wide overhaul, an all-hands-on-deck approach that will ensure young people are safe, connected and thriving. We need this approach in Ontario. The government can no longer look away from their fundamental responsibility.

Speaker, through you, will the Premier commit today and support our motion to study the well-being of children and youth in Ontario? Our children deserve no less.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): The Associate Minister of Auto Theft and Bail Reform will come to order.

The Minister of Children, Community and Social Services.

Hon. Michael Parsa: Let me make it very clear to my honourable colleagues in opposition: When it comes to children and youth, we will no longer listen to any more studies and talks when it came to the previous government and the opposition.

This is a government of action, Madam Speaker. This is not a government that's going to sit around.

We're talking about, again, the future of our generation. Investment in the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services has increased by more than \$3 billion over the last three years to make sure all our community partners have access to the resources they need.

She talks about the children's aid societies in this province. The investments to—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Order.

Hon. Michael Parsa: —children's aid societies have increased by \$129 million—

Interjection.

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

Hon. Michael Parsa: —over the last 10 years. Why?

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): The member for Hamilton Mountain will come to order.

Hon. Michael Parsa: —the number of children and youth this year has gone down by 30%.

I would love for the opposition to stand up for children and youth in this province, to fight for children and youth as opposed to talking—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Questions?

JOB CREATION

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade. Good-paying jobs are being created by businesses right across this province. Our government has worked to create an environment that encourages businesses to invest, expand and grow their workforces.

We have reduced the annual cost of doing business by \$8 billion and we have cut over 550 pieces of red tape that the Liberals put up. As a result, we've seen companies across

a range of sectors make important investments throughout the province. They know that there is no better place to be than right here in Ontario.

Speaker, can the minister please share details of any investments that have landed in Ontario recently?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Recently, Goodyear has invested \$575 million to expand their plant in Napanee. This will allow them to significantly ramp up the production and meet the growing demand for EV and all-terrain tires.

Construction at Goodyear's expansion began earlier this year and is expected to be completed by 2027. The project will create 200 good-paying jobs and add to the 1,000 people already employed at Goodyear.

When we met them at their Luxembourg offices, they told us Ontario has everything they need to succeed and they know that Ontario will continue to be the global leader in auto and EV production for decades to come.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Question?

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: Good-paying jobs are being created right across our province. Businesses that are operating in Ontario are doubling down. They know our province has everything they need to be successful, and that's why we hear about investments and expansions on a daily basis. We have the best talent right here in the world, clean and reliable energy, low and competitive business costs and so much more.

This is not the same Ontario that businesses remember from the Liberal days. Our government has cleaned up the mess that they left by cutting taxes and lowering costs across the board.

Speaker, can the minister highlight any other investments they have landed in Ontario recently?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: In September, we welcomed a \$200-million manufacturing investment from Jungbunzlauer in Port Colborne. They are the only producer of xanthan gum in all of the country. JBL's investment will allow them to expand production and meet the rising demand in North America while creating 50 new good-paying jobs for hard-working families in and around Port Colborne.

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Speaker, when we met them in Switzerland, we knew that we succeeded in landing them here in Ontario, because goods across a range of sectors are once again being made in Ontario by Ontario workers.

RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Meegwetch, Speaker. This morning, CBC reported that the Ontario coroner confirmed 220 more deaths of children who attended Indian residential schools in Ontario. The number of known deaths at Indian residential schools in Ontario is now 656.

Indian residential school survivors across Ontario are still searching the school sites and adjacent crown lands. What is Ontario doing to remove barriers to their search efforts?

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Response? I recognize the Minister of Northern Development, In-

Indigenous Affairs and First Nations Economic Reconciliation.

Hon. Greg Rickford: We discussed this at debate last week.

Ontario had the hardihood to move forward with a bold plan—not just with resources, but additional state-of-the-art support—so that First Nations communities and site-specific Indigenous-led groups could engage in the activities of identification, investigation, protection, and at some point further down the road, when the scope of this is fully appreciated and understood as a result of this work, to move towards commemoration and investigation.

We will continue to provide not just financial supports but those of other ministries that could help the technological and administrative supports in an effort to reveal these difficult findings as they arise.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Question?

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: The independent special interlocutor for missing children and unmarked graves and burial sites, Kimberly Murray, released her final report in October 2024. She described the children lost to these Indian residential schools not as missing but as victims of the state. Her report says provinces need to establish a public record of their ongoing harms of genocide, colonization and human rights violations. What has Ontario done to date on that?

Hon. Greg Rickford: With respect to the question, of course, we have a number of ministries that are implicated in those specific activities, but we are also fully supportive, financially, administratively and technologically, in the efforts focused on identification, investigation, protection and then commemoration and memorialization.

Madam Speaker, there's no question that this was one of the darkest—if not, in my view, the darkest chapter in Canada's history.

The province of Ontario has led all other provinces and the federal government in its efforts to pursue these findings—the member opposite has actually never disputed that, and I appreciate that—and we remain committed to that path moving forward.

TAXATION

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: My question is for the Minister of Energy and Electrification. Both the Ontario and federal Liberals have a track record of making energy expensive as they imposed ideological energy decisions on the people of Ontario. And this isn't the end; in fact, it is the beginning—the beginning of making life more unaffordable for everyday families.

The Premier and the Minister of Energy have been standing up against this punitive Trudeau-Crombie carbon tax and have been warning about higher taxes to come for families. However, the so-called clean electricity regulations are just the newest tax that will cause significant hikes for Ontario families and businesses.

Can the minister outline what implications this new tax hike has on Ontario families and businesses, and what he intends to do to stand up against it?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I want to thank the member from Mississauga—Erin Mills for being a tax fighter in this Legislature and standing up for common sense in this country, because what we know about the proposed federal Liberal clean energy regulations is that it is effectively a second carbon tax that is five times more expensive than the original one that is already setting back families, impacting affordability of energy bills and, perhaps more problematically, killing jobs. We cannot allow a \$35-billion hit to our economy because of an ideological preoccupation when the province of Ontario's existing program will get us to near net-zero by 2050, officially getting us to the same objective without taking \$35 billion out of the pockets of families and our small businesses.

We are calling on the opposition to stand with this government as we stand up for Ontario jobs and families.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Question?

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: I want to thank the minister for standing up on behalf of Ontario families and businesses in opposing this new tax.

The Affordable Energy Act prioritizes affordability, while the Liberals are prioritizing ideology. The Affordable Energy Act is also prioritizing the importance of keeping energy bills low. The clean electricity regulations will essentially make energy bills in Ontario five times more expensive for everyday families, including families in my riding of Mississauga—Erin Mills.

Again, through you, Madam Speaker, can the minister outline his plan to oppose tax hikes and keep energy clean, affordable and reliable in Ontario?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: At a time when the incoming US administration is moving in the opposite direction, we need to be intentional in safeguarding our jobs and our economic interests. Our competitiveness depends on our ability to make sure energy is abundant, reliable and affordable. The carbon tax, today, adds a 25% premium to Ontario families' energy bills. This will make it worse; an additional up to \$168 for an average family, which they will pay even though the government has a plan to get to near net-zero without increasing taxes. This is going to add a 17% increase to the bills for small businesses, a 13% increase to families and seniors in our province. It adds a \$35-billion hit to our economy and it would require us to build out an additional 11,000 megawatts of power.

This can only be described as a dangerous scheme that needs to be abandoned by the federal government. They should work with the province of Ontario to ensure we have a competitive, affordable, reliable and, yes, clean energy future for the people of this province.

CHILD CARE

Ms. Doly Begum: My question is to the Premier. Last week, I joined a town hall in Scarborough Southwest with moms, advocates and members of the South Asian Women's Rights Organization, some of whom are here today with us in the gallery. We heard directly from families and experts that affordable child care remains out

of reach for many low-income families and that the current \$20,000 income limit for full child care subsidies is outdated and does not address the real cost-of-living challenges faced by families across this province.

Will the Premier raise the income limit to reflect the cost-of-living crisis that people are facing across this province and ensure a fair system so all families can access affordable child care in this province?

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Response? I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: As the member opposite knows, under the leadership of the former Minister of Education, who worked extremely hard to ensure that Ontario families received the best possible deal—I urge the member opposite to please stand with us as we work with the federal government to ensure the flexibility for parents so we can work with our for-profit and our not-for-profit providers to ensure that there are adequate spaces for families across Ontario.

I was in PEI last week with my federal, provincial and territorial colleagues talking about this exact issue, and the provinces stand together, calling for the federal government to stand up and ensure sustainable funding so we can have sustainable child care spaces for families across Ontario. It is ultimately important for our working moms, but also for families, to ensure that we have those spaces for families across the province.

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The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Ms. Doly Begum: Speaker, I know that the members in the gallery want to hear a response where we take responsibility and not dodge the question to another level of government.

Earlier this summer, the Premier cancelled over 50 planned child care spaces, removing more than 3,000 desperately needed spots.

Families are already stretched thin by skyrocketing costs, with many parents working multiple jobs just to make ends meet. The lack of after-hours, weekend or even affordable child care options is forcing parents to make extremely difficult decisions.

One mother in our community shared that after over a year on wait-lists for child care and subsidies, she was forced to rely on a neighbour for child care, at \$5 an hour, just to be able to go out and work.

Will the Premier stop withholding funds, reverse his cuts and invest in affordable child care to give families the support they so desperately need now?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Just to be clear, these child care spaces were not cancelled. Of the 28 Toronto District School Board child care spaces that were previously approved, 27 of those are from five years ago, and none of the projects had begun construction. Of the 20 TCDSB child care projects that were previously approved, 18 of those were from more than five years ago, and none of those projects had begun construction either. Our government committed to providing 25% additional funding on top of the existing, approved capital funding allocation to

these school boards to ensure that these additional child care spaces can be provided.

Madam Speaker, we are committed to ensuring that families across Ontario have adequate and sustainable child care spaces—for all families in the province.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. John Fraser: To the Premier: For years, Ontario's doctors have warned the Premier about the crisis in family medicine. And they have told us that 2.5 million Ontarians don't have a family doctor. We now know that thousands of family doctors are set to retire, which means that more than three million Ontarians are at risk of becoming orphaned patients. That's 5.6 million people in Ontario who either don't have a family doctor or are at risk of losing theirs; that's one in three people. That's a pretty scary number. You'd think this would light a fire under the Premier's chair.

How is it that finding everyone a family doctor doesn't have the same sense of urgency for the Premier as booze and bike lanes do?

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Response? I recognize the member for Essex.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: Speaker, we must always remember the quote from the former Liberal Minister of Health George Smitherman, who said that the Liberals starved the health care system in order to balance the budget. We are not going to make that mistake.

We are training more doctors in the province of Ontario. We are actually opening up two new medical schools—one in Brampton and one at York University—to train more doctors than ever before. In addition to that, we're training more doctors at the Ontario northern school of health.

And we are actually expanding the primary health care system by putting more nurse practitioners into the system, who are absolutely vital to delivering client-centred care, team-based care to people in Ontario. Over four million people benefit from that type of care in Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Question?

Mr. John Fraser: I think the member from Essex should focus on the 13,000 people who don't have a family doctor in his riding or the hundreds of doctors who are set to retire in his corner of the province.

Everyone deserves a family doctor—and we're committed to doing that.

Six years ago, the Premier promised to fix health care. Here's what it looks like: 2.5 million Ontarians don't have a family doctor, and three more million are at risk of losing theirs. More than 200 communities don't have anyone rostered to a family doctor. Hallway health care is twice as bad as it was in 2018. And 2024 is the worst year ever for emergency room closures—and we're not even at the end of the year. Wait times are so bad that 11,000 died on a wait-list last year. You'd think that this would—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I apologize.

The Associate Minister of Auto Theft and Bail Reform has been warned.

The member for Ottawa South can continue.

Mr. John Fraser: You would think that all of this would light a fire under the Premier's backside.

So, Speaker, why is it that the Premier is more obsessed with booze and bike lanes than he is finding Ontarians a family doctor?

Mr. Anthony Leardi: Unlike the Liberals, who actually reduced the number of doctors being trained in the province of Ontario, we are increasing the number of doctors being trained in the province of Ontario. In fact, we are not only increasing the number of doctors being trained, but we have trained and registered approximately 100,000 nurses in Ontario since 2018. In addition to that, we have 30,000 students studying nursing in our colleges and universities.

We have made a greater investment in the public health care system than the Liberals ever made. We know that the Liberals slashed health care funding in order to balance the budget. Contrary to what they did, we are actually investing in the public health care system, increasing the budget for health care from \$60 billion in 2018 to \$85 billion in 2024.

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Mr. John Jordan: My question is for the Minister of Colleges and Universities. Our province's institutions play a vital role in the creation and support of research and innovation that improve the life of Ontarians. It is critical we protect Ontario's publicly funded research so that residents can realize its benefits in the form of job creation, opportunity and economic growth, because our tax dollars should have a direct benefit to taxpayers.

Under the leadership of the Premier, significant investments have been made so that our institutions can remain world-class and serve the future of Ontario. But in recognizing the great work our province is doing, we know there are always more opportunities to advance Ontario's research capacities.

Speaker, can the minister inform the House about how his ministry is investing in made-in-Ontario research?

Hon. Nolan Quinn: Thank you to my colleague from Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston for the important question. This government has always prioritized supporting research in Ontario, because research is the cornerstone for both academic and societal advancement. It is what sets Ontario apart from other provinces and makes it distinguished on the global stage.

Surely the member may be aware of the significant investments we have made into homegrown research through the Ontario Research Fund and Early Researcher Awards. The Ministry of Colleges and Universities is proud to have contributed over \$278 million to 406 homegrown research projects between 2022 and March 2024.

Through investing in made-in-Ontario research, this government is showing its commitment to the people of Ontario by keeping their tax dollars in the province and

investing in their future. Our government's contributions to domestic research have cemented Ontario as a national leader in the key industries of life sciences, energy, manufacturing and more.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Question?

Mr. John Jordan: Thank you to the minister for providing this update on how the ministry is investing in homegrown research. It's clear that our government is following through on its commitment to building Ontario starting with research, one of the most fundamental components.

As the previous Liberal government was too focused on scoring political points with fiscally irresponsible policies, they failed to address long-term innovation strategies that grow the province. The minister's recent announcement is another example of how we are taking a responsible approach to supporting research in Ontario and driving our key sectors forward.

Speaker, can the minister please tell us how the recent expansion of the Ontario Research Fund will help fuel our province's economic growth?

Hon. Nolan Quinn: I'd like to thank the great member from Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston for the supplemental question.

I'm proud to report that on November 22, our government announced further support for made-in-Ontario research and innovation, with an investment of over \$92 million. The investment will aid more than 200 projects at universities, colleges and other institutions with research hospitals across the province.

Ontarians know that investment into domestic research is an investment into our province's future. We are actively working with our sector partners so that more groundbreaking discoveries can be made in our backyard and meet the future demands of our province. Through our significant investment of \$92 million, we are fuelling economic growth by creating more jobs, finding more research breakthroughs and attracting more investments right here in Ontario.

1130

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Jeff Burch: Speaker, through you to the Premier: In 2018, this Premier promised to end hallway health care, and it's only gotten worst. In my region, the Port Colborne and Fort Erie urgent care centres are set to close in 2028 and have already eliminated after-hours services. The Welland Hospital lost its after-hours emergency surgical care.

How can anyone trust this Premier to fix our broken health care system, when we are witnessing, under his watch, record closures of hospitals, emergency departments and urgent care centres across this province?

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Response? I recognize the member for Essex.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: No government has invested more in the public health care system than this government. We're training more doctors, we're training more

nurses and we're building a series of health care institutions right across the province of Ontario. We are launching the building of 50 hospitals across the province of Ontario, which includes not only new builds, but also improvements and renovations.

We are also expanding the surgical and diagnostic clinics which are available across the province of Ontario—which was a plan that was opposed by the NDP, but we know how important and valuable these surgical and diagnostic clinics are. They relieve the stress on our emergency departments. They make it more available for people to get the surgery and the diagnostics that they need closer to home, when and where they need it.

We believe in this program. We're investing in this program, because we are investing and we believe in the public health care system.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Question?

Mr. Jeff Burch: Answering real questions with meaningless statistics is a sure sign of incompetence.

Yesterday, I heard from Mary Remigio, who is deeply concerned about a young friend who's been waiting for two years on an urgent surgical list to have a fist-sized mass removed from her ovary. That's two years on the urgent list. As a retired health care worker, Ms. Remigio knows, from experience, the mass may have grown larger since the MRI and that the entire ovary may have to be removed by the time she gets onto an operating table. She is only 26 years old.

If this Premier can't even deliver on the basics, like timely surgical wait times, how can anyone trust this government to fix the rest of our broken health care system?

Mr. Anthony Leardi: As a matter of fact, Ontario has the shortest surgical wait times in the entire country. We have shorter surgical wait times than they do in British Columbia or Alberta or Saskatchewan. We have shorter surgical wait times than any other province in the country, and that is because of the remarkable investments in the public health care system made by this government. It is also because of the dedication of our nurses and doctors and other health care professionals in the province of Ontario. And most importantly, it is also because we are expanding the role of community surgical clinics, where people can get surgery, such as cataract surgery, without having to go to a hospital.

This is very important. We know the NDP support it, but we know people want it.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Stephen Blais: My question is to the Premier: Under this government, health care services in our province are at a breaking point. The number of emergency room closures is up. The wait-list for diagnostics is up. The wait times for surgeries is up. At 2.5 million people, the number of Ontarians without a family doctor is up, and as thousands of doctors look to retire, that number is set to go up by another three million people.

But wait, Madam Speaker, that's not all. Government tax collection is up. No government in the history of Ontario has ever collected more income tax and more sales tax than this one. It truly makes the Premier the tax man. Meanwhile, he votes against every common-sense Liberal proposal to cut taxes in this Legislature.

If the Premier is collecting more taxes than any other in history, and there are so many health care failures on his watch, where is all the money going?

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): To the member for Essex.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: We must always remember the Liberal non-record on health care. They trained fewer doctors. They trained fewer nurses. They did not invest in the public health care system. In fact, according to George Smitherman, the former Liberal Minister of Health, they slashed spending to the health care system in Ontario.

By contrast, this government is training more doctors than ever before. We are training more nurses than ever before. We have launched a rebuild or new build of 50 new hospitals across the province of Ontario in every area of Ontario, and we are specifically investing in the Northern Ontario School of Medicine, making sure that we get more doctors in northern Ontario.

We believe in the public health care system, and that, Madam Speaker, is why we are investing in the public health care system.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Question?

Mr. Stephen Blais: We know that this Premier's high-spending, high-tax approach is nothing new. While he was on Toronto city council, taxes went up three straight years, Madam Speaker. His failure to deliver middle-class tax relief, his failure to keep emergency rooms open and his failure to get people a family doctor—all of these failures are outdone by the Premier's failure to get people in Ontario working; 130,000 more people are unemployed today than the day the Premier was elected. The unemployment rate has gone from 5.9% to 6.8%. Ontario has lost 28,000 construction jobs and lost 8,400 manufacturing jobs in the last 12 months, all while BC, Alberta and Quebec see job growth.

With high spending, high debt and high taxes, why is this government having such a hard time with the essentials like health care and getting people working?

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Response? I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: One of the things is that almost 200,000 new jobs have been created this year—he's taking a little bit of statistics and extrapolating.

There's 200,000 new jobs, an economy that's growing—when we took over, \$800 billion; now \$1.13 trillion. Economy and revenues are growing. And where is the money going? The money is going \$50 billion for new hospitals, because they built no hospitals; money to hire more nurses and doctors, because they cut nurses; to medical schools, three new medical schools—they cut funding for medical students, Madam Speaker.

We're growing the economy. We're investing in health care. We've got the job under wraps and we're going to continue doing it, and they have to stop ignoring the facts.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: My question is to the Associate Minister of Auto Theft and Bail Reform. Despite growing concerns across Ontario, auto theft and the federal government's inaction has left communities vulnerable to rising crime. In regions like Peel, auto thefts have more than doubled between 2021 and 2023, leaving law-abiding citizens in my riding of Brampton East and across the province fearful of their property and safety.

Speaker, Ontarians deserve decisive action and not just reassurances. With the opposition focused on deflection rather than solutions, it's imperative that this government leads by example.

Can the associate minister explain exactly what measures our government is implementing to hold auto thieves accountable and address the repeat offenders who exploit our justice system, and inform the House on the measures our government is taking to ensure all Ontarians feel safe?

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): The Associate Minister of Auto Theft and Bail Reform.

Hon. Graham McGregor: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Before I go into my response, Madam Speaker, you're doing a lovely job today as the Speaker.

As we talk about law and order, it also matters in this House. We need to have rules in this House as well.

I want to thank my colleague the member for Brampton East for raising this serious concern, as he is a Brampton member. I am a Brampton boy myself. I think he deserves a straight answer. I will endeavour to give him one.

Earlier this month, in Brampton East, four suspects were arrested following a violent carjacking where the victim was beaten, robbed and choked unconscious. Shockingly, Speaker, one of the accused was already out on bail. I want to dissuade some colleagues, particularly in the NDP and Liberals, who think that auto theft is a victimless crime. It is not a victimless crime, Madam Speaker. It impacts all Ontarians, leading to higher insurance premiums and increasingly violent attacks during carjackings.

This alarming trend has no place in our province, which is why our government is taking action. We're investing \$51 million over three years to support police services in targeting auto theft and raising public awareness. We've invested already over \$358 million to the Guns, Gangs and Violence Reduction Strategy to combat related crimes.

We're introducing legislation to suspend drivers' licences for those—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Question?
1140

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: Thank you to the associate minister for that response.

Speaker, I've gotten countless calls from concerned constituents in my riding of Brampton East, many of them who feel abandoned by the federal laws governing our

justice system. During my visits to these residents, I've heard first-hand the fear and frustration they experience knowing that auto thieves and violent offenders are repeatedly arrested only to be released on bail more times and commit more crimes.

Recent data from the Ontario carjacking task force is alarming: 124 arrests were made from September 2023 to March 2024, and yet nearly half of those arrested were already out on bail. Even more shocking, 61% of them were released on bail again after there was an arrest. This is unacceptable. Ontarians demand action; however, the federal government continues to offer excuses.

Speaker, can the associate minister outline the concrete steps our government is taking to hold repeat offenders accountable and ensure the safety of our communities is prioritized over the rights of criminals?

Hon. Graham McGregor: Our government is committed to breaking the cycle of repeat offenders and reducing auto thefts across Ontario. We are clear: Those who disregard the law should be locked up, not face bail time and time again.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): The opposition side will come to order.

Hon. Graham McGregor: That's why we've made significant investments in hiring additional judges and crown prosecutors to ensure that criminals are held accountable. Ontario will not be a safe haven for those who commit crimes. If you break the law, there's a place for you behind bars where you will await trial and justice.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): The member for Hamilton Mountain will come to order.

Hon. Graham McGregor: However, Speaker, our efforts are undermined by the federal government's soft-on-crime approach. The current Criminal Code is too weak to deliver the justice that Ontarians deserve. That's why I've called on the federal Liberal-NDP government to legislate mandatory minimum sentences, empower judges to impose stricter penalties and deny bail to those who commit serious crimes. If you commit a violent crime with a gun or a weapon, you shouldn't have the option for bail.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): The opposition side will come to order.

Hon. Graham McGregor: It's like we speak a little truth; the Liberals lose their minds about it. But we won't stop fighting for more accountability, a cornerstone for safer communities. Our government will not stop fighting to protect Ontarians. We'll continue to push for changes to hold bad actors accountable.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

MPP Jill Andrew: To the Premier: The multi-billion dollar Eglinton Crosstown began construction in 2011. It's a teenager now. And we're now being teased with the possibility of an opening hopefully sometime in 2025. Metrolinx's embattled CEO, Phil Verster, has now said

that they're pushing back to a possible 2025 opening date. The excuse this time? Software design flaws. We're in the 13th year of this project. It hasn't met its deadline. It's being plagued by massive delays and cost overruns, and my community in Toronto–St. Paul's has been disproportionately impacted. We will not believe this line until we're sitting on this line singing Kool and the Gang's Celebration.

My question to the government: Why has this government let Metrolinx's Phil Vester continue to drive this train, overrun and over-budget and over-delayed? Why is that happening? Let's get the basics done and give St. Paul's transit.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Response? I recognize the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: As that member knows, we are in the critical phase of testing and commissioning that and ensuring that it's a safe and reliable system. Substantial completion on construction has been completed on the line, and we will continue to make sure it's safe for people to ride on.

But, Madam Speaker, here are the facts: There's no government that invested more in public transit than that under Premier Doug Ford and our government. Here's the facts: The NDP have voted against every single one of our investments into public transit. The Ontario Line, which will move 400,000 people every single day, it will take 28,000 cars off the road: Guess what? The Liberals and NDP voted against it. After 15 years of the Liberals doing absolutely nothing, building no transit in this province, our government has shovels in the ground, and we are building for the future. And we will continue to do so for the next 10, 20, 50 years and ensure our people have the transportation they need.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

MPP Jill Andrew: Back to the Premier: We have demanded a full public inquiry for years now. In 2020, the Auditor General's report highlighted the very problems associated with P3s: delays, delays, delays; taxpayers pay more; government accountability—zero; and the project tends to literally go off the tracks. Metrolinx literally admitted in 2022 that they had no credible plan to complete this project.

Our local BIAs, small businesses, real, affordable housing and community advocates like Black Urbanism TO, we all want better for our residents. We need financial support to support midtown and Little Jamaica small businesses and even residents who have been let down by this project.

My question is back to the government: What is the Conservative government willing to offer midtown and Little Jamaica today to compensate our community for years of small business closures; flooding, for goodness' sakes; and residents living through road closures and ongoing construction? Again—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Response?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Look, our government is committed to building public transit, which we

know will attract the best jobs in this province and we know will create thousands of jobs. What the shame is, is the fact that the NDP and Liberals continue to vote against every plan and every transit project we put forward. Here's what's even more shocking: When this government brought forward a plan to help the people get to transit—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): The member for Ottawa Centre will come to order. The government side will come to order. The opposition side will come to order.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: —make it more accessible, make it more affordable with One Fare, the NDP and Liberals voted against that. Take that \$1,600 a year saved and put it back into the pockets of transit users, and the NDP—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): The member for Toronto–St. Paul's will come to order. The member for Ottawa South will come to order. The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing will come to order.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: —and Liberals voted against it. Not only are they against building public transit and investing in public transit, but they are against making it more accessible and more affordable. And that is a shame, Madam Speaker, because we need to keep building for the future, and that's exactly what this government will do and continue getting shovels in the ground.

ELECTRONIC SERVICE DELIVERY

Mr. Will Bouma: My question is for the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery and Procurement. With looming cyber threats everywhere, it is essential that Ontario municipalities have the tools that they need to prevent cyber attacks and safeguard critical public services. Earlier this year, the city of Hamilton faced a cyber attack that cost the city millions of dollars and affected services from city phone lines to transit services. But we know that this incident is only one example of how cyber threats have affected public sector entities in our province. That's why our government has taken decisive action in ensuring a safer digital future for all Ontarians through the Strengthening Cyber Security and Building Trust in the Public Sector Act.

Speaker, can the minister please tell us how this legislation will protect individuals and the broader public sector in Ontario?

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: I thank the excellent member for Brantford–Brant for that timely question. In fact, just one week ago today, the Strengthening Cyber Security and Building Trust in the Public Sector Act, 2024, was passed unanimously in this House and received royal assent.

When it comes to the city of Hamilton, I did have the pleasure of meeting with Mayor Horwath and members of her council at the AMO conference in August of this year. I assured her and thanked her for the fact that Hamilton

wishes to share its experience with respect to that devastating cyber attack on the city of Hamilton.

We will make sure that we work hand-in-glove with Hamilton and all municipalities and the entire broader public sector to strengthen and bring forth the fortifications necessary to detect and prevent cyber attacks of all types. This is the great challenge of the 21st century. We have the tools, we have the vision, and we have the Cyber Security Centre of Excellence and the Cyber Security Operations Centre to assist.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Question?

Mr. Will Bouma: Thank you, Minister, for that response.

Many of my constituents are enthusiastic about the transformative opportunities that artificial intelligence can bring to Ontario. AI holds the potential to drive significant advancements in automation, personalized services and decision-making, with applications spanning critical sectors such as health care, finance, education and manufacturing. These innovations promise to enhance efficiency and foster innovation across our entire province. However, alongside this excitement, there is also some apprehension regarding the responsible development and use of AI technologies.

Could the minister please provide details on how this new legislation will ensure that AI is developed and deployed responsibly to address these concerns?

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: Once again, that thoughtful member from Brantford–Brant raises an important feature of modern technology, and that also was addressed in our now-passed Bill 194. Artificial intelligence—an enterprise-wide definition is contained in the new legislation. This builds upon the principles embedded in the act and that we have moved forward on: No AI in secret. Transparency, accountability and trust are the hallmarks of our use of artificial intelligence and our deployment of it in the public sector and the broader public sector.

The legislation does prioritize transparency and the protection of our children and individual rights for all when it comes to the use and deployment of artificial intelligence. We understand the need for modern protections.

We also understand that artificial intelligence creates an incredible opportunity to make our lives better, to make us all better at what we do, and to unlock huge opportunities for jobs and job creation.

RETIREMENT HOMES

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Seniors in my riding of Ottawa West–Nepean are being charged thousands of dollars in additional fees by Alavida Lifestyles this year for their housing and care, and it's all perfectly legal. The only limit that currently exists for retirement home fees in Ontario is the requirement to provide 90 days' notice of any increase. So even though Alavida is jacking up the fees by more than \$30,000 for one of their residents, they are not breaking the law.

Since the government has failed to take any action at all this year, more than two dozen elderly residents of retirement homes in my riding have lost their home, their family and their community. Others feel they have no choice but to pay the higher fees even though they can't afford them, feeling like they've been coerced by high-pressure tactics to sign an agreement. This is a very easy problem to solve. Just regulate retirement home fees the way we regulate rent.

So my question is, what's stopping the government from implementing such a simple solution to protect vulnerable seniors against such predatory behaviour?

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Response? I recognize the Minister for Seniors and Accessibility.

Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: Madam Speaker, keeping costs down matters to our government, just like it matters to seniors.

That is why we passed the Residents' Bill of Rights in 2021. This allows every resident to know the true cost of care, and the right to be informed in advance when price changes occur.

As a super senior myself, I know that every penny saved is a penny earned.

That is why this Premier is dedicated to making sure this transparency and fairness continues for all residents of retirement homes.

JIM JESSOP

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I understand that we have a point of order. I recognize the member for Beaches–East York.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Toronto has a new fire chief. So I'd like to congratulate Jim Jessop on his new role. I look forward to working with him, as I think we all do.

VISITORS

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member for Scarborough Southwest on a point of order.

Ms. Doly Begum: I'd like to take the opportunity to welcome some special guests to the House: my friends Krystyna Long and Richard Long. Welcome to the House.

DEFERRED VOTES

SAFER STREETS, STRONGER
COMMUNITIES ACT, 2024

LOI DE 2024 VISANT À ACCROÎTRE
LA SÉCURITÉ DANS LES RUES
ET À RENFORCER LES COLLECTIVITÉS

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

Bill 223, An Act to enact two Acts and to amend various Acts with respect to public safety and the justice system / Projet de loi 223, Loi édictant deux lois et modifiant diverses lois relatives à la sécurité publique et au système judiciaire.

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

The division bells rang from 1153 to 1158.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Members will please take their seats.

On October 23, 2024, Mr. Kerzner moved second reading of Bill 223, An Act to enact two Acts and to amend various Acts with respect to public safety and the justice system.

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

Ayes

Allsopp, Tyler	Hardeman, Ernie	Pinsonneault, Steve
Babikian, Aris	Harris, Mike	Quinn, Nolan
Bailey, Robert	Hazell, Andrea	Rae, Matthew
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Holland, Kevin	Rickford, Greg
Blais, Stephen	Hsu, Ted	Riddell, Brian
Bouma, Will	Jones, Sylvia	Romano, Ross
Bresee, Ric	Jones, Trevor	Sabawy, Sheref
Byers, Rick	Jordan, John	Sandhu, Amarjot
Calandra, Paul	Kanapathi, Logan	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Ke, Vincent	Sarrazin, Stéphane
Cho, Stan	Kerzner, Michael S.	Saunderson, Brian
Clark, Steve	Kusendova-Bashta, Natalia	Scott, Laurie
Coe, Lorne	Leardi, Anthony	Smith, Dave
Cuzzetto, Rudy	Martin, Robin	Smith, David
Dowie, Andrew	McCarthy, Todd J.	Smith, Laura
Downey, Doug	McCrimmon, Karen	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Dunlop, Jill	McGregor, Graham	Thompson, Lisa M.
Fedeli, Victor	Mulroney, Caroline	Tibollo, Michael A.
Flack, Rob	Oosterhoff, Sam	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Fraser, John	Pang, Billy	Wai, Daisy
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn	Parsa, Michael	Williams, Charmaine A.
Grewal, Hardeep Singh	Pierre, Natalie	Yakubuski, John

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

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Harden, Joel	Stiles, Marit
Begum, Doly	Jama, Sarah	Tabuns, Peter
Bell, Jessica	Karpoche, Bhutila	Taylor, Monique
Bourgouin, Guy	Mamakwa, Sol	Vaugeois, Lise
Clancy, Aislinn	Pasma, Chandra	West, Jamie
French, Jennifer K.	Sattler, Peggy	Wong-Tam, Kristyn
Gélinas, France	Schreiner, Mike	
Glover, Chris	Shaw, Sandy	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day): The ayes are 66; the nays are 22.

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

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Pursuant to the order of the House dated November 28, 2024, the bill is ordered for third reading.

CUTTING RED TAPE, BUILDING ONTARIO ACT, 2024

LOI DE 2024 VISANT À RÉDUIRE LES FORMALITÉS ADMINISTRATIVES ET À FAVORISER L'ESSOR DE L'ONTARIO

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

Bill 227, An Act to amend various Acts / Projet de loi 227, Loi modifiant diverses lois.

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

The division bells rang from 1202 to 1207.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Mr. Harris has moved second reading of Bill 227, An Act to amend various Acts.

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

Ayes

Allsopp, Tyler	Hardeman, Ernie	Quinn, Nolan
Babikian, Aris	Harris, Mike	Rae, Matthew
Bailey, Robert	Hazell, Andrea	Rickford, Greg
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Holland, Kevin	Riddell, Brian
Blais, Stephen	Hsu, Ted	Romano, Ross
Bouma, Will	Jones, Sylvia	Sabawy, Sheref
Bresee, Ric	Jones, Trevor	Sandhu, Amarjot
Byers, Rick	Jordan, John	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Calandra, Paul	Kanapathi, Logan	Sarrazin, Stéphane
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Ke, Vincent	Saunderson, Brian
Cho, Stan	Kerzner, Michael S.	Schreiner, Mike
Clancy, Aislinn	Kusendova-Bashta, Natalia	Scott, Laurie
Clark, Steve	Leardi, Anthony	Shamji, Adil
Coe, Lorne	Martin, Robin	Smith, Dave
Cuzzetto, Rudy	McCarthy, Todd J.	Smith, David
Dowie, Andrew	McCrimmon, Karen	Smith, Laura
Downey, Doug	McGregor, Graham	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Dunlop, Jill	Mulroney, Caroline	Thompson, Lisa M.
Fedeli, Victor	Oosterhoff, Sam	Tibollo, Michael A.
Flack, Rob	Pang, Billy	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Fraser, John	Parsa, Michael	Wai, Daisy
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn	Pierre, Natalie	Williams, Charmaine A.
Grewal, Hardeep Singh	Pinsonneault, Steve	Yakubuski, John

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

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Harden, Joel	Shaw, Sandy
Begum, Doly	Jama, Sarah	Stiles, Marit
Bell, Jessica	Karpoche, Bhutila	Tabuns, Peter
Bourgouin, Guy	Mamakwa, Sol	Taylor, Monique
French, Jennifer K.	Pasma, Chandra	Vaugeois, Lise
Gélinas, France	Rakocevic, Tom	West, Jamie
Glover, Chris	Sattler, Peggy	Wong-Tam, Kristyn

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day): The ayes are 69; the nays are 21.

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

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Pursuant to the order of the House dated November 28, 2024, the bill is ordered for third reading.

DAY OF REFLECTION
FOR INDIAN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS
ACT, 2024

LOI DE 2024
SUR LA JOURNÉE DE RÉFLEXION
SUR LES PENSIONNATS INDIENS

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

Bill 221, An Act to proclaim the Day of Reflection for Indian Residential Schools and to amend various statutes to establish the Day of Reflection for Indian Residential Schools as a provincial holiday / Projet de loi 221, Loi proclamant la Journée de réflexion sur les pensionnats indiens et modifiant diverses lois afin d'instituer cette journée de réflexion comme jour férié provincial.

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

The division bells rang from 1211 to 1216.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Members will take their seats.

On November 28, 2024, Mr. Mamakwa moved second reading of Bill 221, An Act to proclaim the Day of Reflection for Indian Residential Schools and to amend various statutes to establish the Day of Reflection for Indian Residential Schools as a provincial holiday.

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

Ayes

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Glover, Chris	Sattler, Peggy
Begum, Doly	Harden, Joel	Schreiner, Mike
Bell, Jessica	Hazell, Andrea	Shamji, Adil
Blais, Stephen	Hsu, Ted	Shaw, Sandy
Bourgouin, Guy	Jama, Sarah	Stiles, Marit
Burch, Jeff	Karpoche, Bhutla	Tabuns, Peter
Clancy, Aislinn	Mamakwa, Sol	Taylor, Monique
Fraser, John	McCrimmon, Karen	Vaugeois, Lise
French, Jennifer K.	Pasma, Chandra	West, Jamie
Gélinas, France	Rakocevic, Tom	Wong-Tam, Kristyn

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

Nays

Allsopp, Tyler	Hardeman, Ernie	Rae, Matthew
Babikian, Aris	Harris, Mike	Rickford, Greg
Bailey, Robert	Holland, Kevin	Riddell, Brian
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Jones, Sylvia	Romano, Ross
Bouma, Will	Jones, Trevor	Sabawy, Sheref
Bresee, Ric	Jordan, John	Sandhu, Amarjot
Byers, Rick	Kanapathi, Logan	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Calandra, Paul	Kerzner, Michael S.	Sarrazin, Stéphane
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Kusendova-Bashta, Natalia	Saunderson, Brian
Cho, Stan	Leardi, Anthony	Scott, Laurie
Clark, Steve	Martin, Robin	Smith, Dave

Coe, Lorne	McCarthy, Todd J.	Smith, David
Cuzzetto, Rudy	McGregor, Graham	Smith, Laura
Dowie, Andrew	Mulroney, Caroline	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Downey, Doug	Oosterhoff, Sam	Thompson, Lisa M.
Dunlop, Jill	Pang, Billy	Tibollo, Michael A.
Fedeli, Victor	Parsa, Michael	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Flack, Rob	Pierre, Natalie	Wai, Daisy
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn	Pinsonneault, Steve	Williams, Charmaine A.
Grewal, Hardeep Singh	Quinn, Nolan	Yakabuski, John

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day): The ayes are 30; the nays are 60.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I declare the motion lost.

Second reading negatived.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): No further business. This House stands in recess until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1219 to 1300.

ESTIMATES

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): I recognize the President of the Treasury Board on a point of order.

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: Madam Speaker, I have messages from the Honourable J. Michal Fairburn, the Administrator of the province of Ontario, signed by her own hand.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): The Administrator of the province of Ontario transmits estimates of certain sums required for the services of the province for the year ending 31 March, 2025, and recommends them to the Legislative Assembly.

The Administrator of the province of Ontario transmits supplementary estimates of certain sums required for the services of the province for the year ending 31 March, 2025, and recommends them to the Legislative Assembly.

Dated Toronto, 28 November, 2024.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Ric Bresee: It is my great pleasure to introduce my constituency manager, Anita Ramski, and my newest member of the team, Zander Van Aspern, who has joined us just recently.

INTRODUCTION OF
GOVERNMENT BILLS

MORE CONVENIENT CARE
ACT, 2024

LOI DE 2024 POUR PLUS DE SOINS
COMMUNES

Ms. Jones moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 231, An Act to enact or amend various Acts related to health care / Projet de loi 231, Loi visant à édicter ou à

modifier diverses lois en ce qui concerne les soins de santé.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutila Karpoche): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutila Karpoche): Would the minister like to make a brief statement?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: The More Convenient Care Act, if passed, would take the next steps in the province's plan to provide more people with the right publicly funded care in the right place by making it easier to access your health care records, building healthier communities and bolstering the province's health care workforce today and in the future.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PROTECTING SENIORS' RIGHTS IN CARE HOMES ACT, 2024

LOI DE 2024 SUR LA PROTECTION DES DROITS DES PERSONNES ÂGÉES DANS LES MAISONS DE SOINS

Ms. Pasma moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 232, An Act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 and the Retirement Homes Act, 2010 respecting tenancies in care homes / Projet de loi 232, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2006 sur la location à usage d'habitation et la Loi de 2010 sur les maisons de retraite en ce qui concerne les locations dans les maisons de soins.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutila Karpoche): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutila Karpoche): Would the member like to make a brief statement?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: The bill amends part IX of the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006, in relation to care services and meals in care homes to ensure that charges for care services and meals must be consistent with information provided by landlords to new and existing tenants, and to require the landlord comply with other duties respecting information packages, such as requirements to ensure that information packages are revised as needed and that copies are made available to others.

New section 141.1 is added to the act to permit landlords and tenants of a care home to enter into agreements for the provision of additional care services or meals. A tenant may, in accordance with this section, require a landlord to reduce or stop the provision of any such care services or meals after the agreement has been entered into.

New section 149.1 is added to the act to place restrictions on increases to charges for providing care services and meals, both in terms of frequency and amount.

The bill also amends section 49 of the Retirement Homes Act, 2010, to require a licensee of a retirement home that is ceasing operation to communicate to resi-

dents that they continue to have the rights of a tenant under the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006, and that notice that the retirement home will cease to operate does not constitute a notice of termination under this act.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Mr. Steve Clark: I move that, pursuant to standing order 7(c), the House shall continue to meet past the ordinary hour of adjournment until midnight on the following dates: Monday, December 2; Tuesday, December 3; Wednesday, December 4; Thursday, December 5; Monday, December 9; Tuesday, December 10; Wednesday, December 11; and Thursday, December 12.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutila Karpoche): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

PETITIONS

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Joel Harden: I'm very thankful to Jenna Bartlett and others who have signed a considerable amount of petitions that I have in my hands here about funding public transit. This is an issue that I believe has legacy across this House, with former Premier Bill Davis, who believed in the principle of funding operational transit 50-50 between Queen's Park and the municipalities. That's a great tradition, and what the signatories of this petition are asking the province to do is to bring that back into being now, because we are way out of whack with that. The municipalities are struggling, certainly in my city in Ottawa, with a \$120-million hole in financing operational transit. They need more support from this House.

I want to thank all the signees of this petition for bringing operational transit funding to my attention. I will sign the petition and send it to the Clerks' table with page Macarius.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: I'm honoured to rise in this House to present this petition, which is entitled "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario." It has been submitted on behalf of Dr. Sally Palmer, who has collected a number of signatures.

The petition specifically is about increasing the social assistance rates in Ontario, recognizing that the current rates for the Ontario Works program, as well as the Ontario Disability Support Program, is well below the poverty line. It does not meet the rising rates of inflation. It also says that Ontarians are struggling to make ends meet.

It also mentions that the CERB program during the pandemic was earmarked that the basic income should be \$2,000 a month, and the social assistance programs, as noted, are well below that. So this petition is calling on this House to double the OW as well as the ODSP rates.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT

Ms. Peggy Sattler: We are one week into the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence, and I am very pleased to present this petition calling on the Ontario Legislature to pass the Safe Night Out Act.

1310

The petition notes the sexual violence epidemic that so many are experiencing in this province, especially women who are in the ages of 15 to 24. It also highlights that many women experience unwanted sexual advances when they are socializing in a bar, a restaurant or any kind of licensed establishment.

It therefore calls on the Legislative Assembly to pass the Safe Night Out Act, which would provide bystander intervention training to servers, bartenders, security and supervisors or managers of all licensed establishments in Ontario. The bill would also strengthen protections for servers from unwanted sexual harassment and violence and require establishments to develop and post policies on how they will respond to sexual violence and harassment in their establishment.

I am completely supportive of this bill. I'll affix my signature and will send it to the table with page Autumn.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

MPP Jamie West: I didn't have a chance to count them, but I have literally a banker's box full of petitions. I'll just grab a stack of them over here.

The petition is entitled "Enough is Enough: Decent Work for All." Basically, what they talk about is that during COVID-19, it really exposed all the ways that low wages, temporary jobs, unstable work, precarious work and unsafe working conditions become a health threat not just for the workers, but for our community in general. They also talk about how systemic racism in the labour market means that people of colour are overrepresented in low-wage work, precarious and dangerous employment, and they're more likely not to have paid sick days or benefits and are involuntarily working part-time—that adage of part-time full-time with none of the benefits of full-time.

They have several requests that they have, the undersigned, to the Legislative Assembly. The first one is, they're asking for a minimum of 10 permanent, employer-paid emergency leave days and an additional 14 days when there's a public health outbreak, a large-scale one like COVID. They would like the wage floor raised to \$20 per hour without exceptions. They want to promote full-time work, so instead of several part-time workers, you have full-time work.

Then they want to set minimum hours of work each week, so that two weeks in advance, they'll know when they're working and it frees up that precariousness. If it is precarious, you have the ability to understand what your schedule is going to be two weeks in advance.

They want to legislate equal pay and benefits for equal work, so that you know everyone in the workplace is making the same amount, and that means that someone working full-time makes the same wage as someone who is a temp worker.

They want to protect all workers from unjust firing, wrongful dismissal, and they want to ensure that migrant and undocumented workers can assert labour law rights. They want to make sure, as my colleague has brought forward, that gig workers aren't misclassified and that they have access to all employment laws without exemption.

They want to make companies responsible for working conditions and collective bargaining when they use temp agencies. Many unscrupulous companies will use a temp agency to take the fall for them when something isn't happening properly, and this gives the worker some strength so that you can't sidestep this.

Similarly, they want the companies to be made financially responsible under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act for deaths and injuries of temp agency workers, as the parent company is responsible for all workers, even if they're coming from temporary agencies. They want to make companies responsible for working conditions and collective bargaining when they use temp agencies. They would also be financially responsible under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act.

They want to end the practice of using temporary agency workers indefinitely. That means that if you hire from temp agencies, they're no longer considered temporary after three months of use; they become full-time workers. That makes the work more meaningful for those workers as well.

They want to make it easier for all workers to join unions. They want them to be able to sign cards. They want to allow them to form unions across franchises and subcontractors, and they want that broader-based sectorial bargaining that's very common in the States, actually.

And they want to enforce all laws proactively through adequate public staffing and meaningful penalties for employers who violate the laws, and that means funding our employment standard agency officers to be able to do their job to enforce the act that already exists.

I obviously support this petition and the many petitions that are right here. I will affix this signature, and I will help Madhaav get them to the table.

ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutila Karpoche): Petitions? The member from Toronto–Centre.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Thank you very much, Speaker. As you noted, we have just recently commemorated the International Trans Day of Remembrance, as of last week. This petition I will present to the House is

entitled “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.” Those who have signed this petition are calling on this government to recognize the significant challenges in accessing health care faced by those who are trans, transgender, two-spirited, non-binary and gender-diverse.

They recognize that everyone in Ontario deserves access to health care that’s friendly, competent and affirming. They also suggest that this House recognize that people shouldn’t have to fight for basic access to health care, that they should be able to receive it as needed and that they should be supported when trying to access it.

They want this House to recognize that gender-affirming health care is life-saving health care. They are calling on this government to support the reintroduction of a private member’s bill to create an inclusive and representative committee to advise the Minister of Health on how to realize accessible and equitable access to health care and to ensure that gender-affirming health care is paid under the OHIP program.

I would like to attach my signature to this petition and send this back to the table with page Elissa.

ADDICTION SERVICES

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I am proud to present this petition that was developed by the Registered Nurses’ Association of Ontario and has been signed by many residents of the city of Toronto and other communities across the province.

The petition calls for the continued operation of supervised consumption services and associated harm reduction programs. And the reason for the petition is to recognize that, every two and a half hours in this province, someone dies from the toxic drug supply, and the supervised consumption and treatment services have been critical in helping prevent thousands of deaths, certainly in my community. The petition recognizes that the closure of these sites will increase the number of preventable deaths in this province, emergency room visits and hospitalizations.

It also recognizes that the experts are calling for continued funding and operation of supervised consumption services as an evidence-based harm reduction treatment program. And it calls on the Legislative Assembly to reverse the decision to close the sites and ensure that publicly funded, evidence-based treatment is available for all who want to be treated for drug use in this province.

I fully support this petition, affix my signature and will give it to page Ekam to take to the table.

ADDICTION SERVICES

MPP Jamie West: I have a petition similar to my colleague’s. I didn’t count them, but there’s between 25 and 30 pages here. It is a petition for continued operation of supervised consumption services and associated harm reduction programs.

Basically, there are some sobering statistics here where a person in Ontario dies from the toxic drug supply every two and a half hours, and the supervised consumption

sites, also known as consumption and treatment service sites, have been instrumental in preventing thousands of deaths from the toxic drug supply.

They’re saying that the closure of supervised consumption sites will increase the number of preventable deaths, injuries and hospitalizations. And they know that these sites offer fellowship and trust, basically, that allow access to other health and social services, including addiction treatment, so keeping people alive so they’re able to get the treatment they need. Also, the provincial commission review of South Riverdale CHC found it desirable to maintain and enhance funding for the supervised consumption site.

They also say that the closure of the supervised consumption sites is a withdrawal of health services for people who use drugs. They declare it as a denial of the right to health care, and that closing these sites will lead to an increase in drug use in public spaces because it’s not within a statement, so when you talk about finding paraphernalia in the public, you’re more likely to find it when these sites are closed. And where health care should be emphasized, prevention as well as treatment—so both around preventing people from dying and the wraparound care they need for the continuum of care.

They’re petitioning the assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision to close all the sites and basically unfund them. They want to ensure they remain operational and adequately funded, as well as increasing funding for the sites, so they can provide more services, including inhalation and other harm reduction services, and to ensure access to voluntary, publicly funded, not-for-profit, evidence-based treatment.

1320

This petition was developed by the Registered Nurses’ Association of Ontario. I trust these professionals. I’ll affix my signature, and I will provide it to page Ryan for the table.

ADDICTION SERVICES

Mr. Joel Harden: Rather like my friends from London West and Sudbury, I also have a petition, thanks to the Registered Nurses’ Association of Ontario, that is talking about continuing supervised consumption sites and making sure that we look after our neighbours who are struggling. I just want to thank Zoe Bergeron, Melanie Martins and the folks who gave this petition to me.

Just to acknowledge that in my city too—I just recently had a meeting with residents in Centretown who are very upset at what they see every single day: people suffering. What I have said to the minister responsible, who I believe cares a great deal about people struggling with mental health and addictions, is that what we need are these HART hubs the minister has proposed, but also maintaining these safe places, as my friends have said, so people don’t die from the toxic drug supply. I’ve talked to too many parents who have lost their kids. I have talked to too many friends who have lost their friends. It’s unnecessary, Speaker.

While I salute the compassion the minister has proposed in this debate with this HART hub model, with the idea of counselling and employment services and housing and food support—that is all great, but we have to make sure people don't die from the poisoned supply that we have in our streets. It was confirmed to me recently by members of the Ottawa police force, who are seeing this every single day when they walk around our communities: people who are literally overdosing because of the criminal element in our city that is selling a substance to someone they know to be lethal.

So that's what I want to say, Speaker. I want to say, from the bottom of my heart, thank you to the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario. These folks are on the front line, many of whom work in our CTS site in Ottawa Centre. They know, as do our first responders. So it's a plea to the government, through this petition, that they listen to the signees of this petition, make sure we maintain our CTS treatment services and offer a full spectrum of care and support to people who we want to save. We don't want them to leave this Earth; we want them to wake up tomorrow and know they're loved, and get them to seek support and treatment.

Thank you. I'll send it to the Clerks' table with Maadhav.

HOUSE SITTINGS

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 9(g), the Clerk has received written notice from the government House leader indicating that a temporary change in the weekly meeting schedule of the House is required, and therefore the afternoon routine on Wednesday, December 4, 2024, shall commence at 1 p.m.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SAFER STREETS, STRONGER COMMUNITIES ACT, 2024

LOI DE 2024 VISANT À ACCROÎTRE LA SÉCURITÉ DANS LES RUES ET À RENFORCER LES COLLECTIVITÉS

Mr. Kerzner moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 223, An Act to enact two Acts and to amend various Acts with respect to public safety and the justice system / Projet de loi 223, Loi édictant deux lois et modifiant diverses lois relatives à la sécurité publique et au système judiciaire.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): I turn back to the minister to begin debate.

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: It's an honour to rise on third reading, and final reading, of Bill 223, the government's proposed Safer Streets, Stronger Communities Act, 2024.

I've said this many times: There is no greater inherent right that we all have across Ontario, regardless of where

we live, than that inherent right to live safely in our homes and communities: that right we all have to make sure that when we wake up our kids in the morning, they will go to school safely; that we will be able to go to work; that we will be able to come home at the end of the day, to shop and to play with our kids and check in on our seniors and loved ones, and have a place to pray safely.

It has been a privilege of a lifetime to stand alongside our Premier, Premier Doug Ford, prioritizing our public safety morning, noon and night. And our government will not stop. When others told us to give it up, find another priority, go in another direction, we said no. We said we will fight auto theft and we will fight it hard. We will fight to make sure that the federal government knows how serious—they need to change the bail laws. We don't want violent and repeat offenders on our streets. When they told us to stop and not invest more money at the Ontario Police College so that we could graduate more constables to keep us safe, we kept going. When they told us to sit down, we stood up. When they told us to be quiet, we made sure our voices were heard.

Ontarians trust our government, under Premier Ford, to keep them safe.

Madam Speaker, there are a number of important things in Bill 223 that are important—and I want to thank my colleagues and the other ministers, the member from Thornhill, the member from Haliburton, and others who contributed to this bill.

There's something that became very personal to me. It's when I got to meet the Stephenson family—the parents of the late Christopher Stephenson, who was taken on Father's Day a long time ago, in 1988, and was brutally murdered. It was Premier Mike Harris who came forward over 20 years ago with Christopher's Law (Sex Offender Registry). The bill was named in memory of Christopher Stephenson, an 11-year-old boy who was the victim of an unspeakable tragedy. We go through times in our lives when we can't actually believe they're happening. There's a surrealness when we are elected to this amazing House of democracy, but when we have moments that become personal and real—when I met the Stephensons, it was overwhelming.

This change that we're making in Bill 223, amongst other things, closes the loop on one's ability to change their name, to hide—to think it was okay with what they did, and they can re-create themselves under another identity. I'm so glad that under our changes, under Bill 223, we're closing that.

Bill 223, with regard to the changes in Christopher's Law, also goes back to the fact that police services need to have additional tools, because we've come of age—we have Internet. We have social media. Police services must have the sophistication they need at all times to keep Ontario safe.

Madam Speaker, I'll end my remarks where I started. It is a privilege to be the Solicitor General for Ontario and to stand with Premier Ford morning, noon and night, to do everything we can to be that trusted voice for Ontarians—that our government will not stop, we will not rest, we will

not be silent in our quest for public safety for everyone. This is our inherent right. Our government will do everything to make sure that right is fulfilled.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Further debate?

Mr. John Fraser: It's a pleasure to speak to Bill 223. Public safety is important to Ontarians, important to Ontario families, and there are measures in this bill that are going to help in that regard. I do agree with some of the things around bail reform. But one of the things I have the most concern about in this bill is that while the government is pointing the finger towards Ottawa, it's doing nothing about court delays—nothing. We know that court delays force judges to do things like worry about the constitutionality of whether someone gets a fair trial. We know it's a problem. So I would take what the government is doing more to heart—and I'm going to support the bill—if they actually were doing something on court delays. Everybody can shrug it off and say, "It's not our fault." Well, it is. It's that simple. Fix court delays.

1330

I know the government is planning to build more jails. The important thing is that jails are safe places for the people who are there, the people who work in there, the correctional officers, the nurses, the administrators. They need to be safe places, and when they're not safe places, then what happens is, we get somebody either getting a reduced sentence or not being sent there.

I know about jails because my dad used to work in the corrections system for a long time. The most important thing is calm and order. I know the Solicitor General knows that, and I'm sure that's what he's aspiring to achieve in each and every correctional institution. They have to be safe places. I want to reiterate that.

Now, the thing that I have the most concern about in this bill—and I voted for it—is what's happening with safe consumption sites. I agree: They shouldn't be that close to schools. I think we all agree on that. Safe consumption sites are there to save lives. You can't treat somebody if they're dead. It's that simple. So while I'm supporting this bill, it's incumbent upon the government to ensure that there is not a large gap in service.

I know the government has got RFPs out, and they're looking for people for the new program, which includes addictions treatment and counselling, but if there's a big gap, if people can't go to a place where it's safe for them, we're not going to be able to treat them, because they're not going to be alive. That's the biggest concern I have with the bill.

I know the members on the other side were a bit excited that I voted with them a couple of times this morning, but make no mistake about it: I know what the game at hand is here, but we've got to make sure that those people who are suffering from addictions, who are at risk of dying—they're people's sons and daughters and mothers and fathers. We've got to make sure that as of March 31 this year, we don't have a gigantic gap in service that's going to result in more people dying and not being able to get addictions treatment: those sons and daughters, those

mothers and fathers, those aunts and uncles, those friends and neighbours.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Further debate?

Ms. Laura Smith: It's an honour for me to be here and speak to this bill, the Safer Streets, Stronger Communities Act. This significant bill includes a multi-level approach in assisting our police to better track offenders, including measures and amendments that will seek to enhance Christopher's Law, which is the basis for Ontario's Sex Offender Registry. This is, quite simply, positive news for Ontarians, especially our most vulnerable: our children. It provides for better monitoring of those who have committed offences, giving our police partners stronger capabilities to track offenders, including those who have committed heinous crimes against our children.

For the purposes of my remarks today, I'm going to focus on the portion of the bill that falls under Christopher's Law. In my previous life, just a few short years ago, I dealt with matters under the child protection act. Sadly, I really saw the underbelly of a system that dealt with the most heinous of offenders. When I had the opportunity to bring real action as a representative of the community and support our most vulnerable, I worked alongside my colleague the member from Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock on a private member's bill, Bill 138, the Change of Name Amendment Act. This bill narrows in on those offenders who have committed crimes and then attempt to hide from their victims and the communities by making application to legally change their name.

Speaker, name changes are relatively common in Ontario and often include a positive transition in life. I used to deal with them quite commonly. It could be a new beginning for an adopted child or perhaps a way for an individual to capture a part of their family lineage. But sadly, there are so many bad actors who use this application to hide their identity for the wrong reasons. These convicted offenders could take advantage of this opportunity of a legal name change to distance themselves from crimes so very heinous, providing them with a new life and a fresh start. This is something that their victims will never have.

The right to change one's name should not be abused. As a community of people who sit within this House, I believe we have a moral obligation to put the rights of the victims first. I'm proud and honoured that my work around Christopher's Law is being absorbed into the Safer Streets, Stronger Communities Act, but let me give you a bit of background on this area of the bill.

In 1988, when Christopher Stephenson was just 11 years old, he was kidnapped at knifepoint at a Brampton mall. After hours of abuse, the abuser killed Christopher and left his body in a field. It was determined through investigation that the person responsible for the attack was a repeat sexual offender.

I want to thank the Stephenson family for their determination and courage. When I saw them last week—and I spoke to Mr. Stephenson just a few days ago—they

reminded me that Christopher would have been 48 years old on November 9. His father shared with me that Christopher loved hockey and baseball. He was extremely well liked, and he excelled at school. In the fifth grade, Christopher wrote a beautiful poem about The Fire. This seems fitting as it was from the ashes of this horrific experience that Christopher's parents rallied to create Christopher's Law, also known as the Ontario Sex Offender Registry, which came into effect in 2001.

The work is quite simple: to empower police and effectively track sex offenders that fall into this registry by banning them from making application for a legal name change. Speaker, let me be clear: Ontario currently has strong laws and Ontarians seeking a legal name change must undergo a criminal record check. But under most circumstances, those who change their name must register these details with the Ontario Gazette, where name changes are published. Yet truthfully, Speaker, most Ontarians do not read the Gazette, let alone know of its existence. While safeguards do exist, they still do not prevent convicted sex offenders from making application to change their names here in Ontario. I think of Kevin Daniel Hudec, who was charged with possessing and making child pornography in Saskatchewan, who legally changed his name to Gabriel Michael Fisher. And I, like most, certainly think of Karla Homolka, who is now living under the name of Leanne Teale in Quebec. My understanding is that Ms. Homolka—or should I say Ms. Teale—was at one point volunteering at a school.

As a mother, this is especially problematic. It hits home for me; it really does. We have to work to protect Ontario's children, our most vulnerable citizens, with robust legislation. Closing this loophole will strengthen our government's zero tolerance against sexual offenders. And our position with survivors and their families—putting them first and not the thousands of offenders who have committed the most heinous and reprehensible crimes against our most precious citizens. This bill, if passed, will stop the Karla Homolkas of the world from becoming Leanne Teale.

I want to extend my thanks to the Premier for his support, and I also want to thank the gracious Stephenson family for their steadfast dedication to this cause. I hope everyone will support the Safer Streets, Stronger Communities Act for the sake of our communities, our children and our children's children.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Further debate?

Mr. Joel Harden: I'm happy to rise in a debate about public safety. I want to begin the debate by acknowledging events that are currently happening right now outside this chamber with direct relevance, I think, to the Solicitor General's bill. The Solicitor General has taken an interest—and I'm thankful for it—in the safety of transit in our city and the new deal for Ottawa. This is a major issue and I'm happy to work with him and his government on this, but it's going to be a lot easier working for transit policy in the province of Ontario now that, as I understand

it from revelations online, Metrolinx CEO Phil Verster has resigned today—resigned.

What that shows is that the precious funds that the taxpayers of Ontario share with this House so we can distribute them to services are going to, we hope, go directly to services like safety on transit in downtown Ottawa, and for goodness' sake, Speaker, in this city of Toronto, the LRT systems that are constantly delayed, constantly over budget, the hundreds of small businesses that have had to close because of the incompetence of Mr. Verster and his army of—wait for it—82 executive vice-presidents, up from 27 under the Liberals in 2018.

I am so thankful, as the province's transit critic, today to talk about the fact that as the minister has talked about prioritizing security on transit, we have an opportunity to do that in the greater Toronto area now that Mr. Verster is gone. I hope the Premier encouraged that action. We certainly encouraged that action on this side of the House. This is something that is an opportunity for us now that I know the government has heard the opposition because we have been calling for Mr. Verster's ouster for the better part of a year.

1340

It's now time for us to take those precious taxpayer funds and not distribute them to a one-million-dollar-paid individual—which, as revelations lead me to believe today, Speaker, Mr. Verster was earning a \$12,000-a-year vehicle allowance and—wait for it—he didn't even own a vehicle.

Now we have an opportunity to turn the page, to put the precious funds of the province back where they belong, to make our communities safe.

I'm thankful to pass to other colleagues, like the member from Nickel Belt, for further comment on this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Further debate?

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to be here to speak to Bill 223, the Safer Streets, Stronger Communities Act, third reading.

More than two decades ago, with the support of victims' groups and law enforcement organizations, Ontario passed Christopher's Law, creating a provincial sex offender registry. Christopher's Law was sparked by the tragic murder of 11-year-old Christopher Stephenson by a convicted pedophile. After years of dedicated advocacy by Christopher's shattered parents, Jim and Anna, a victory for survivors of sexual predators was achieved in 2001 with the proclamation of Christopher's Law.

Ontario's provincial Sex Offender Registry was the first of its kind in Canada. Before its passage, there was no way of tracking the movements of sex offenders or ensuring they could not hide their past atrocities. It was an essential tool in protecting Ontario's most vulnerable, but also, it gives police services a critical tool to prevent, investigate and solve crimes of a sexual nature and to manage sex offenders within their local communities.

We know there is growing concern, however, especially among law enforcement, that the Ontario Sex

Offender Registry needs to be updated to respond to advancements in technology, including social media, which has become the recruitment tool of choice for human traffickers. We have heard these concerns from the Police Association of Ontario, the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police as well as numerous individuals in policing and victim support working to support victims and prevent sexual assaults.

The Peel Regional Police chief, Nish Duraiappah, spoke about how strengthening Christopher's Law will tighten protections for children and families by implementing stricter conditions for sex offenders and enhancing police enforcement abilities. The Solicitor General and the member for Thornhill were there the day that we had a press conference about this very topic, and the police chief mentioned to me that he is the same age that Christopher would have been had he been alive.

That's why our government introduced the legislation we are debating today, to sharpen Christopher's law and ensure the Ontario Sex Offender Registry continues to be an effective tool at protecting Ontario's most vulnerable.

Predators go where children go, and today, that is predominantly online. It's very sad that social media and online media has exploded in prevalence since Christopher's Law was first implemented and has become a favourite tool of predators to lure vulnerable children and others into threatening and exploitive situations.

Requiring sex offenders to report when they are starting to use or make changes to email addresses, social media, usernames and other digital identifiers would make it easier for police to more efficiently investigate criminal activities and monitor offenders on the Sex Offender Registry. The legislation would also add new strict travel notification requirements.

Our government is also proposing to amend the Change of Name Act, which would prohibit sex offenders from changing their names while they have reporting obligations to the Ontario Sex Offender Registry. This proposed change would make it easier for police to monitor sex offenders and prevent them from using a new identity to commit crimes.

As mentioned by my colleague from Thornhill, she and I tabled a joint private member's bill, an act to amend the name change act, with the goal of stopping convicted offenders under Christopher's Law from legally changing their name in Ontario.

I thank my colleague for her work before she became a member of provincial Parliament in working with child protective services, and we believe this is one measure that sends a message that predators will be held accountable for their crimes that have devastated lives.

We are grateful for the proposal and the unanimous support it received here in the Legislature. We thank the Premier, the Solicitor General and the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery and Procurement for their responsive and decisive action. This is a sign of the zero-tolerance approach to sexual assault that our government has made.

Sexual offenders who have committed horrific crimes should not be allowed to change their names and hide their identities, and that's why we're closing the loophole already addressed in other provinces that provides sex offenders anonymity and an opportunity to escape accountability.

I just want to lend my voice to the support of this bill. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for the time.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutila Karpoche): Further debate? I recognize the member from Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you, Speaker—

Interjection.

M^{me} France Gélinas: And thank you, Jamie.

It's a pleasure to say a few words about this bill. I will go through the different schedules of the bill, starting with schedule 1. The first schedule of the bill is basically to limit advertising and promotion of cannabis that is sold unlawfully. I can tell you that, from this side of the House, you have 100% of our support. Most of the cannabis is smoked. Smoking, as we all know, produces dangers to your health. The less we promote, the less we advertise smoking of any products, the healthier the people of Ontario will be. So a step in the right direction with schedule 1—after I had already checked that it was not about cannabis on First Nations, which the minister reassured me that this was not what this was all about.

Second, schedule 2, the Change of Name Act: A lot has been said already, in the few minutes that we've taken to talk about third reading of this bill, about how wrong that is. We all remember Paul Bernardo. We all remember Karla Homolka. We all remember the awful crimes that they have committed, the young people that have died. Not being allowed to change their name, again, is a step in the right direction. They did awful crimes. They will pay for their crimes and live with the consequences of them. So, to change the Sex Offender Registry to make sure that they don't go under a different name is something that, on this side of the House, we fully support.

Same thing with schedule 3, Christopher's Law—I know that it was brought as a private member's bill. It is something that we have voted in favour of and that we supported in the past and that we continue to support.

I will skip schedule 4, but I just want to notice that, although quite a few members—including ministers and others—have talked about the bill, none of them have spoken about schedule 4. But I won't be one of them. I will speak about schedule 4; I'm just skipping it for now.

Schedule 5, the Community Safety and Crime Prevention Month Act: that in November of each year, the Community Safety and Crime Prevention Month—the more we can talk about safety, the more we can talk about prevention, to learn and share best practice, the better off our communities are going to be. Do we support schedule 5? Absolutely. We believe in health promotion, disease prevention. We believe in prevention. When people know the risk, when people know how things happen in our community that make us feel unsafe, that are unsafe, then as a community we can change things. I believe in the

power of people: The more of us know, then the better the chances that we will live in safe communities.

The next one, schedule 6, the Community Safety and Policing Act, the power to issue awards related to policing: I want to take a few minutes to talk about my good friend Sergeant Dan Lee. Sergeant Lee worked in and around Sudbury for the OPP for over three decades. He was involved in so, so many community groups in our community, helping everyone from women victims of violence to children living in poverty, to building what is called in our community the Bridge of Nations. It is just beautiful. It's a bridge right downtown that you can see from downtown everywhere, and it has the flags of all of the countries of origin of everybody who lives in Sudbury. There are 50, 60 flags? Maybe more—80.

1350

MPP Jamie West: Close to 80.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Yes. There are close to 80 flags on this, and it represents the diversity of Sudbury. People come from all over the world, and we live together and we live in harmony, and we like to learn from each other. I can tell you that I especially like some of the food I get to discover—because I'm a big foodie—from people coming from all over the world who come to Sudbury. And Dan Lee was instrumental—he was one of the people.

I had the privilege of attending his funeral last Friday. I can tell you, Speaker, the church was packed with community leaders from every organization in Sudbury and many, many people who Dan Lee, the OPP officer, helped through his career. Kids who were no longer kids, who he had taken under his wing—he started a sports club for children coming from poor neighbourhoods or at risk of getting in trouble with the law, and he would take them under his wing and make sure they made the right decisions. I'm really sorry that Dan is no longer with us. But I certainly like schedule 6. I know that there are other outstanding police officers who do so much. Sure, they respond to the call of duty when they're on duty, but they also do so much off duty to keep our communities safe, to keep our communities healthy—and creating links. He retired and was very involved with the OPP retirees who do all sorts of beautiful work in our community. So schedule 6, to issue awards related to policing—100%, you get our support for that. We have some really outstanding members of the different police services throughout our province. They certainly answer the call of duty; many of them go way beyond that, to make our communities safe, and I would love to be able to give those good men and women and LGBTQ an opportunity to be awarded.

Next is schedule 7. Schedule 7 is sort of technical in nature, giving former provincial judges who have retired the chance to work more than 50% full-time in a calendar year. There were many victims of crime who came to Queen's Park two weeks ago because they never had a chance to have their day in court. Many of them were women victims of violence who—the time had ticked, and they never got their day in court. Do we need to bolster our court system so that everybody has access to justice in a

timely way? Absolutely. Will schedule 7 fix all the problems? No. But it is certainly a small step that can be done in the short term so that former provincial judges who have retired, who choose to come and help, would have an opportunity to continue to work if they so choose.

Then there's schedule 8, the Highway Traffic Act. Again, the member from Oshawa has spoken at length about some steps that could be taken in the short term regarding the VIN numbers on vehicles—vehicle thefts continue to be rampant—and all of the problems that come with that. There are a few good steps in schedule 8. Had we had an opportunity to have hearings and have debates, I can guarantee you that a lot of people would have come to tell the government there is an easy step that you can take right here, right now, that other provinces in our country have taken to make sure that we do everything we can to decrease auto theft. Unfortunately, they are not in schedule 8, but a few other small steps are being taken.

In schedule 9, the Limitations Act—“not subject to a limitation period and to specify related transitional rules” for the Justice for Victims of Terrorism Act. This idea that the victim of a terrorist attack had a very small amount of time to bring their case to the justice system—I don't know too many victims of terrorist acts, but I can just imagine the post-traumatic stress disorder that comes with having lived through this. Giving them time for them to get the strength to be able to go through a court proceeding I think is something very humane to do. I think it's something that will help people who are victims of terrorist acts—which I hope there are as few of them as possible. I don't like crime, but we all know that it does happen.

So there's a lot of good steps in the bill. There's lots of steps that go into the right direction. We've made suggestions to go further in the same direction that you are pointing but never really had an opportunity.

I see people in the gallery. Usually, a bill goes through first and second reading. After second reading, we give everyone in Ontario an opportunity to be heard. If this bill is going to affect you, affect your community, your family, somebody you know, you have an opportunity to come to Queen's Park—or through Zoom if you, like me, live up north and don't like to travel through a snowstorm—and be heard and be questioned. After we listen to what people have to say, then we make changes to the bill. Often the changes that I have seen done are really, “This is what we wanted to do but we realized that, oh, we never realized it would have had an impact on people of the north. Oh, we never realized it would have a negative impact for another group. Let's make sure that the aim that we wanted, the objective that the bill was supposed to do, actually does that.” But the government negated, cancelled all of this.

We voted on this bill in second reading less than two hours ago—an hour and 50 minutes ago, to be specific—and here we are in third reading. We never gave the people of Ontario an opportunity to be heard. We never gave the people of Ontario an opportunity to make the bill even stronger by making sure that if you support the direction, maybe rather than taking one tiny step, maybe we will take

one big step in that direction and go even further with ideas that come from all over our great province. This did not happen.

I do want to speak about schedule 4. Schedule 4 has not been spoken about by any of the members of the Conservative Party, but we in the NDP have to talk about schedule 4. Schedule 4 talks about consumption and treatment sites. Consumption and treatment sites are sites that we consider harm reduction. For people that have a mental illness and addiction, the stigma that exists in our community often makes it really hard for them to seek help. They often get ostracized, they get discriminated against, they get isolated, and it becomes really hard for them to gain access to care. Through the consumption and treatment sites—basically it is a place where they feel like they belong. It's a place where they feel safe, and with the highly toxic drug supply circulating through our province right now, it's a place where people who use drugs can do this. It's never safe to use drugs, but they can do this under supervision.

1400

The nice thing about consumption and treatment sites is that it's a safe place for a person who deals with an addiction to establish a link with a health care provider. As I say, they go to the emergency department, it is really tough. The people in the waiting room will discriminate against them. Often, even the people who work in the ER will discriminate against people that deal with mental issues or addiction issues, but not in a consumption and treatment site. There, they will be treated with respect. They will be helped. They will be kept alive.

What happens is that once the health care providers who work at the consumption and treatment sites establish a trusting relationship, this is the first step towards the path to recovery. This is Ontario. This is 2024. We know how to treat mental illness. We know how to treat addiction. There is treatment out there that exists. You will be healthy again, but you have to get to those treatment sites, you have to gain access to those treatments.

I can speak for my community. I come from northeastern Ontario. For the families that I serve that have a child under the age of 18 that deal with mental health or an addiction issue, there is an 18-month wait-list in order for them to gain access to treatment. During those 18 months, lots of awful things can and do happen. We need to work at many, many levels to make access to mental health and addiction accessible to all, to make it so that it responds to people's need. Right now, we are not there, but the consumption and treatment sites establish this respectful relationship, put them on a path to recovery, make sure that if they continue to use drugs that they do it in a place where if they do overdose, they're not going to die from it.

In my community, it is a minimum of two people every single week that die of overdose. I was at the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association Christmas dinner this weekend, and on every shift, they say that it's eight, 10, 12 overdose calls that they get on every single shift in my community.

We had a consumption and treatment site in Sudbury for about a year. It was paid for by the municipal government because they knew that the need was there while they waited for funding from the provincial government. The funding from the provincial government never came and then people donated to keep the site open. Because it doesn't matter where you live in Sudbury, there's a good chance you know somebody who has died of an overdose.

Me, personally, my nephew and two of my close friends have died of a drug overdose. The poisoning of the drugs throughout Ontario is just a killer. The consumption and treatment sites test the drugs, they help people if they overdose, they establish that trusting relationship so that you keep them ready while they're on the wait-list, waiting and waiting and waiting for their turn to come to finally gain access to treatment. You keep them alive. You keep them on a good path. But all of this disappeared. The consumption and treatment site in Sudbury closed. We are now at four times the death rates compared to the other parts of the province.

The community next to us, in Sault Ste. Marie, is at six times the death rate from drug overdose from what it is throughout Ontario. It's the same thing for Timmins. In northern Ontario, we only have one consumption and treatment site. It's located in Thunder Bay, and it is scheduled to close like eight others. I want people to realize that we have the body of evidence that supports that consumption and treatment sites save lives.

I want to quote from *The Lancet*. *The Lancet* is a medical journal that has existed since 1923. It is peer-reviewed. They did a study of consumption and treatment sites right here in Toronto. They looked at the death rate in the neighbourhood before the site opened and after the site opened. I encourage all of you to read this.

The body of evidence is very strong that everywhere consumption and treatment sites existed, they saved dozens of lives every month. The statistics were there. They went from 70 deaths per 100,000 people to two deaths per 100,000 people from May 1 to July 31. They go area by area in seven sites in Toronto and show the positive effect they have had in keeping people alive until their name finally comes to gain access to treatment.

I know that the government has announced other treatment sites, hubs that will open. We know when the nine consumption and treatment sites will close; it is on March 31, 2025. We know exactly when they close. We know that the new services that the government has promised to put into place won't come into place till December 2025, a full nine months. You cannot take away a service that saves lives with a promise of something that will come nine months later. How many people will die during those nine months? I'm ready to guess it will be thousands of lives. If the statistics continue the way they are, 60% of them will be young men between the age of 20 and 35. This makes no sense. Let's keep them alive.

Had we had an opportunity to have clause-by-clause consideration of your bill, we would have asked to withdraw schedule 4. I've already talked about schedules 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9. They're all steps in the right

direction; they're all things that the NDP is pleased to support. But schedule 4, the closing of consumption and treatment sites: If you find that they're too close to a school, move them away. Don't close them. If you feel that there's a better neighbourhood, sure, do this. But don't just take away preventive health care services that keep people alive, because they will die. Rather than having one nephew and two of my friends dead, I will be standing here with many more deaths. That makes no sense.

Those are all preventable deaths. It is on our shoulders to do the right thing. Put the consumption and treatment sites in a safe place away from schools—yes, absolutely. But don't just close them before new services are available. You are giving a death sentence to people.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Further debate?

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I appreciate the opportunity to speak about this. I live a few blocks, actually, from a CTS site. I walk past it on my way to work every day. Before it came about—actually, when it first started—I walked along my street. I have young kids. I walked along my street and I did find a needle. I had a phone number, and I reported it and it was disposed of.

Since that time, our program has learned and grown to be a model across the province. They kept it quiet. If you walked past the clinic, you wouldn't even know that you were walking past a consumption and treatment site. It's kind of nestled into our community. It just looks like a regular office building.

A lot of the narratives I hear, I'm not sure where they're coming from. It's not the reality I've lived for the five years or six years that I've lived in my community, walking past our consumption and treatment site every day. People know they can go inside. They don't need to be out front using drugs, because they're welcome inside. Our consumption and treatment site—if you think of mental health, one of the number one ways we combat mental health concerns is by getting rid of the stigma. If you go to a consumption and treatment site—I've toured ours. You can see that it is the most stigma-free health care provider I've ever witnessed in my life.

1410

I am very grateful to this government. The investment in the HART hubs is a real, important step. It's a great investment, and my community is really celebrating the investment in addiction and mental health treatment. We know that the concerns young people face especially are off the charts. But like the member from Kitchener-Conestoga will know, the number of people experiencing homelessness in our community has doubled in the past two years.

There is a book out there where someone wanted to know how it was to be homeless, and so they decided to live as someone who is unsheltered. They found that after one week, only one week, their mental health had gone into the garbage. So people do need a way to cope. If you had to live in a tent right now, you would want to find a way to cope. Unfortunately, without alternatives, drugs are

a way to cope. They're not a healthy way to cope, but they are that.

So we have 2,300 people in our region—I know the member from Cambridge is in my region as well—double the amount of people living unsheltered this November. Every year in November, it gets cold, and every year, we don't have enough shelter beds in our region to support people living unsheltered. This is one of the refuges in that storm. Our consumption and treatment offered by Sanguen is a refuge in the storm.

This weekend, I was joined by a panel of experts. We had our child care centre that is down the street, across the street from the CTS. They support the continuation of this important health care provider. We had a woman who is not only a peer support worker but also has used the services herself. She said when her mom died, she went and got drugs again and used meth again because she was grieving. But she brought it in there, she checked that it was safe. She was supported by her neighbours and the health care providers. She said because she did face this day in dignity, with people who cared about her—she said, "It is because of that that I didn't continue to use and relapse." So she didn't relapse because she could go there and get support.

I talked to front-line workers. They're sobbing. During the pandemic, they saw too many dead bodies and they were breaking down in front of me, worried that they would experience this trauma again. I think it's a courtesy to our front-line workers to listen to them and not cause them undue stress.

Clean needles: We're seeing that clean needles will no longer be provided. This is the undoing of 40 years of good harm reduction treatment. So while we'll take a dirty needle, we won't give someone a clean needle? Well, people don't come in to just give you their dirty needle. They come in to give you the dirty needle because they can get a clean one. Just last summer in London, we saw an AIDS outbreak. Imagine that: an outbreak of AIDS in London, Ontario, this past year. Our public health is worried about that. That is a cost on our health care system that is unnecessary.

So not only do we need this to prevent added stress and strain and cost on our health care system; we need to keep these sites to prevent the trauma of our front-line workers and further burnout of underpaid health care providers. We need it to support the folks living unsheltered because we don't have enough beds or supportive housing, and because of that, they fall into addictions and mental health problems. So this government has given them a death sentence.

I hope none of us have to have a family member who receives a diagnosis saying you have—how many months is it now? December, January, February, March: four months—so we've just said to thousands of our neighbours in Ontario, "You have four months to live." That's not right. Your government shouldn't be giving you a diagnosis that means you will have an end of life.

And then I do applaud the barriers for sex offenders to change their names, but I call on the minister from York

Centre. In York Centre, four programs in Ontario—three of federal funding, one of provincial funding—were closed, and they are programs that prevent sexual offenders from offending again. Four programs that are supported in data to prevent sex offenders from offending again were closed in this province in a matter of a few months.

I appreciate that we want to make it harder for sexual perpetrators to hide themselves, but we should ensure the mental health care that they need to not reoffend exists. These are closed programs, they're good bang for your buck, and prevention is the way we should be going in this matter.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Further debate?

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: I proudly join third reading debate this afternoon on a matter of the utmost importance to the safety and the well-being of all of our communities. That is Bill 223, the Safer Streets, Stronger Communities Act. This legislation is a testament to our unwavering commitment to protect our most vulnerable citizens and to ensure that justice is served.

Two and a half decades ago, Ontario led the way with Canada's first sex offender registry, and today we are making it stronger. The proposed enhancements to Christopher's Law (Sex Offender Registry), 2000, will provide our police services with the necessary tools to better monitor and supervise registered sex offenders. These changes are not just administrative; they are essential steps to prevent, investigate and solve egregious sex crimes, particularly those that target our children.

The amendments we are introducing will require sex offenders to report to a police service within a prescribed period of time after being ordered to serve a conditional sentence or receiving a passport or driver's licence. They will also mandate offenders to report any changes to their digital identifiers, such as email addresses and social media usernames. Additionally, new, strict travel notification requirements will ensure that registered sex offenders provide advanced notice of their travel plans, enhancing our ability to monitor their movements and prevent potential harm.

Furthermore, our government is proposing critical changes to the Change of Name Act. These amendments will prohibit sex offenders with active reporting obligations from legally changing their names. This measure will close a loophole that has allowed offenders to evade detection and to avoid accountability, thereby enhancing public safety and ensuring that these individuals cannot hide their identities to commit new crime.

These legislative changes are not just about tightening regulations. They're about protecting our citizens and residents and supporting victims and their families. The tragic case of Christopher Stephenson, whose murder led to the creation of Ontario's Sex Offender Registry, reminds us all of the devastating impact that these crimes have on families in our province. We owe it to Christopher's memory and to countless other victims to ensure that our laws are strong and effective.

Our government's commitment to public safety is unwavering and the people of this province trust our government and our Premier, the Honourable Doug Ford, with safety and security measures such as contained in this bill. By strengthening Christopher's Law and the Change of Name Act, we are providing law enforcement with the tools they need to keep our community safe. These measures will help maintain Ontario's high compliance rate for registered sex offenders and ensure that those who pose a risk are closely monitored.

I want to take a moment to acknowledge the tireless advocacy of the Stephenson family, victims' groups and law enforcement organizations. Their efforts have been instrumental in shaping these legislative changes that we are proposing. We also recognize the support of the Police Association of Ontario and the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, who have wholeheartedly endorsed these enhancements as vital tools for preventing and solving crime.

In closing, I urge all members of this House to support Bill 223, the Safer Streets, Stronger Communities Act. It is a crucial step toward a safer Ontario where our children and communities are protected from those who seek to do harm. Let us stand together in support of these measures and reaffirm our commitment to justice and public safety.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Further debate?

Mr. Billy Pang: I'm pleased to join today's debate and speak in support of Bill 223. One of our most fundamental responsibilities as elected representatives is to uphold the safety of our communities. The Safer Streets, Stronger Communities Act, 2024, introduced by the Solicitor General, is a vital step in ensuring just that.

This bill will create a safer Ontario by addressing pressing concerns such as auto theft, fraud, illegal cannabis sales and sex offender monitoring, while providing stronger tools to law enforcement and, overall, protecting all Ontarians. As I've mentioned in my earlier motion to designate November as Community Safety Month, we must acknowledge the real and growing fear many Ontarians are experiencing right now as crime rates surge, concerns expressed by families, friends and neighbours all across Ontario.

In November, I had the privilege of participating in an important community meeting hosted by the Markham Community Alliance. Over 200 residents joined York Regional Police and community leaders to address the growing crime wave in Markham-Unionville. At that meeting, I heard first-hand from community members about their vehicles being stolen, homes that got broken into and people getting robbed. These stories reveal not just the statistics behind crime, but the fear and vulnerability people feel in their own homes, for their own lives.

The meeting also showcased our community's strong voice through a petition titled "Stop Crime, Safer Communities," which gathered over 5,300 signatures. This initiative highlights our community's urgent call for stronger action against crime and for measures that priori-

tize safety and justice, not just in Markham–Unionville but all across the province of Ontario.

The Safer Streets, Stronger Communities Act is a significant step in strengthening our commitment to community safety and addressing the urgent concerns of Ontarians. While this act aims to enhance the tools and the resources available to protect our communities, it also calls attention to the need for urgent reforms in the bail system. But the federal government's lenient bail policies continue to undermine the efforts to keep Ontarians safe.

Our government has invested in programs and initiatives to prevent youth from engaging in criminal activities. Our government has been fighting hard against auto theft, investing in new helicopters, expanding the joint air support unit and putting more boots on the ground. But the question we kept asking the federal government remains the same: How many more Ontarians have to suffer because of weak bail laws that allow violent and repeat offenders to return to our streets?

Every time a dangerous offender is granted bail, it puts our neighbours, families and communities at risk. This leniency is allowing criminals to target innocent people again and again, while those who break the law continue to roam free, causing harm to others.

Although we have yet to receive answers from the federal government about why they continue to allow weak bail laws that put Ontarians at risk, Bill 223 takes direct action against rising crime rates by providing law enforcement with the tools they need to effectively fight crime and protect our communities.

This bill strengthens laws such as Christopher's Law, enhancing the Ontario Sex Offender Registry, and proposes changes that will make it harder for offenders to hide their identities or continue their crimes undetected.

The efforts of the Solicitor General reflect our government's commitment to build a safer Ontario, addressing immediate safety concerns while laying the groundwork for long-term change.

In closing, the Safer Streets, Stronger Communities Act is more than just legislation; it's a promise to our communities, a promise to ensure every resident can live and thrive without fear. Let's work together to pass this bill to create a safer future for Ontarians.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutila Karpoche): The time for debate on Bill 223 is concluded.

I beg to inform the House that the Clerk has received a submission related to Bill Pr55, An Act respecting Mount Pleasant Group of Cemeteries. Pursuant to standing order 93(a), the submission stands referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

Mr. Kerzner has moved third reading of Bill 223, An Act to enact two Acts and to amend various Acts with respect to public safety and the justice system. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

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.

I declare the motion carried.

Interjection: On division.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutila Karpoche): On division.

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

Third reading agreed to.

Mr. Steve Clark: Point of order, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutila Karpoche): The government House leader on a point of order.

Mr. Steve Clark: Thank you, Speaker. I just want to announce to the House that the night sitting scheduled for this evening has been cancelled.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutila Karpoche): Orders of the day?

CUTTING RED TAPE,
BUILDING ONTARIO ACT, 2024

LOI DE 2024 VISANT À RÉDUIRE
LES FORMALITÉS ADMINISTRATIVES
ET À FAVORISER L'ESSOR DE L'ONTARIO

Mr. Harris moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 227, An Act to amend various Acts / Projet de loi 227, Loi modifiant diverses lois.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutila Karpoche): I return to the minister.

Hon. Mike Harris: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Everybody buckle up; another riveting 25 minutes here in the Ontario Legislature.

I will say, I am very honoured to lead off third reading debate of the Cutting Red Tape, Building Ontario Act, 2024. This package is more than just a piece of legislation. It is a crucial part of our government's ongoing commitment to cutting red tape and is the next step forward in our ongoing action to make life easier and more affordable by reducing unnecessary red tape. It also continues to build on the foundation necessary to ensure Ontario remains a leader in innovation and economic growth. It builds on the significant progress we have made since we formed government in 2018. This bill represents our dedication to reducing needless regulations while safeguarding what matters most: public health, safety and the environment.

If passed, this bill would mark another major step in reducing red tape barriers, creating more opportunities for businesses, families and individuals. Because, Speaker, red tape is not just an inconvenience; it's a barrier. It raises costs, blocks productivity and limits opportunity. Red tape challenges innovation and slows down our economic growth. For businesses, excessive regulation discourages investment and reduces Ontario's competitive advantage. For families, it drives up costs and adds frustration. Unnecessary and overregulation are a roadblock to success.

Before we formed government in 2018, Ontario was known as the red tape capital of Canada. Under the previous Liberal government, our province was burdened with over 386,000 regulations—double that of any other province. These policies weighed heavily on businesses, with compliance costs averaging \$33,000 a year. That's year over year for businesses. But, Speaker, let's be clear:

The Liberals' overregulation didn't benefit Ontario; it stifled our growth and weakened our province's economic strength.

Let me paint a picture of what this overregulation meant: As a former small business owner, I know firsthand that for small businesses it meant countless hours spent on paperwork, antiquated processes and duplicative compliance requirements. These were resources that could have been invested into growing my business, not wasted on Liberal bureaucracy.

For manufacturers, it was a signal that Ontario was no longer open for business. The province had become an uncompetitive place to invest. The result? A devastating loss of 300,000 manufacturing jobs. Speaker, the people of Ontario deserved better. These were stable, well-paying jobs that supported families, drove local economies and helped build thriving communities. The overregulation meant higher cost for goods and services, delaying in housing and infrastructure projects and fewer opportunities for the people of Ontario to get ahead.

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Under the previous Liberal government, Ontario became a place where red tape outweighed opportunity. The Liberals failed. Patchwork policies, propped up by their friends the NDP, were quick to add regulations, but slow to actually understand their impact. Layers of red tape piled up without regard for the real world. Instead of streamlining processes to make life easier, they created a tangled web that trapped businesses, deterred investment, leading to endless frustration and wasted time. As a result, costs sky-rocketed and everyday life became harder.

This is the legacy the Liberals left. But you know what happened when we took office, Speaker? We said, "Enough is enough. It's time to knock down the barriers that are holding back Ontario." We knew that families shouldn't face higher costs and fewer opportunities. We knew businesses deserved an environment where they could thrive without being bogged down by excessive red tape, and we knew Ontario needed a government that focused on opening doors, not closing them. That's why we took bold action to turn things around. We have eliminated and continued to eliminate needless red tape to streamline processes and remove barriers that get in the way of growth and opportunity.

Speaker, we opened a new chapter for our province. Under the leadership of Premier Ford, we are making life easier and more affordable by creating a province where opportunity, modernization and innovation are at the centre of everything we do. Since 2018, Ontario has become a leader in regulatory efficiency, setting the standard for what a government committed to red tape reduction can achieve. And I am proud to share that our government has eliminated nearly 6% of Ontario's regulatory burden and have taken over 550 burden-reducing actions.

These actions did not just happen in isolation. They came from consultations with the very people who felt the weight of red tape every single day: businesses, families and communities all across this province. And Speaker,

we did not just listen; we acted, because that's what our government believes in. The result: over \$1 billion and 1.5 million hours saved annually for people and businesses across this province. These aren't just numbers; they translate to real, meaningful impacts. They mean small business owners have more time to invest in growth. They mean farmers can focus on feeding our province without the frustration of unnecessary regulations. They mean families have fewer barriers standing in the way of building better lives. Unlike the opposition, we don't believe in burdening people with excessive regulations that create more problems than they solve.

Speaker, we work alongside the people we serve. That is why we froze fees for drivers' knowledge and road tests, saving people across the province \$72 million—\$72 million, Madam Speaker—over the next 10 years. These are the kinds of actions that make a real difference in peoples' lives.

Ontario is no longer the red tape capital of Canada. We are now a leader in regulatory efficiency—a province where progress is unimpeded, opportunities are boundless, and everyone has the chance to succeed. Businesses are no longer looking to leave; they're choosing to invest right here in Ontario. Individuals are seeing more of their money staying in their pockets, and communities are seeing new jobs, fresh opportunities and renewed hope for the future. The difference couldn't be clearer: The Ontario our government is committed to building is a province defined by affordability, opportunity and optimism. We are determined to ensure a future where prosperity and progress go hand in hand.

Speaker, as we look to the future, the need for proactive, forward-thinking leadership has never been greater. The challenges facing Ontario require bold leadership, clear vision and decisive action. The Cutting Red Tape, Building Ontario Act does just that. It addresses today's challenges while paving the way for long-term growth, affordability and opportunity.

This bill builds on the progress we've already made and, if passed, it would save people and businesses an additional \$20 million annually, while reducing compliance time by 56,000 hours each year. That means more money and time back where it belongs: in the hands of Ontarians. The proposed changes represent real-world benefits by unlocking growth and prosperity across every sector of our province.

As stated by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business: "We commend Minister Harris and the Ontario government for remaining laser-focused on reducing regulatory burdens for businesses ... through the consistent introduction of two red tape reduction packages every year. Unnecessary, excessive, and duplicative paperwork costs businesses and people valuable time and money that could be better spent on job creation and families."

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business and countless stakeholders from across the province of Ontario recognize the importance of red tape reduction to streamline licensing, simplify approvals and modernize processes. Every initiative in this legislation shares a

single purpose: to make Ontario a place where businesses can prosper, families can succeed and communities can grow.

Now, Speaker, let me share a few examples of how this bill will deliver real benefits for the people of Ontario.

Our colleagues at the Ministry of the Attorney General have proposed several important changes as part of this package, each aimed at making Ontario's legal and housing systems more transparent, fair and efficient. Let me outline some of those key amendments designed to make life easier for my constituents in Kitchener–Conestoga and people across this province.

One key initiative within this package proposes legislative changes to the Residential Tenancies Act and the Statutory Powers Procedure Act. First, we are proposing to clarify that the Landlord and Tenant Board can accept minor errors in applications, such as incorrect unit numbers, a misspelled name or referencing time periods in months instead of specific dates, as long as there is no reasonable confusion or significant prejudice to any party.

This is a clear example of our commitment to reducing red tape, improving efficiencies and responding to the Ombudsman's recommendations to address the situation with the Landlord and Tenant Board, delivering real results for Ontarians. It's a common-sense change that could prevent unnecessary delays caused by refile applications over trivial mistakes, enabling cases to move forward more efficiently.

Second, we want to grant the executive chair or the chair authority to reassign cases to new adjudicators if the original adjudicator is unable to or fails to complete the hearing and issue a decision in a timely manner. This will help prevent prolonged delays due to avoidable administrative setbacks.

Finally, we are proposing to remove the four-week limit on extending adjudicator appointments to finalize decisions on cases already heard. By aligning this process with the broader provisions of the Statutory Powers Procedure Act, which has no time restrictions, we are striving for greater efficiency and fairness in decision-making.

Speaker, these changes go beyond cutting unnecessary red tape; they're about making Ontario work better for its people. For landlords and tenants in my riding and across the province, these amendments represent a more responsive, fair and transparent tribunal system. Our government remains focused on reducing barriers, simplifying processes and putting a system in place that puts the needs of people and businesses first. These amendments mark another step forward in creating an Ontario that is efficient, affordable and focusing on delivering for its people.

Speaker, don't just take my word for it. This is what the Toronto real estate board had to say: "As part of the province's fall 2024 red tape reduction package ... the government signalled its intention to act on two of TRREB's Breaking the Backlog's recommendations—allowing the LTB to overlook small mistakes in applications and streamlining the reassignment of cases to new adjudicators." This endorsement confirms that our govern-

ment is on the right track. It's a testament to our collaborative approach we've taken to engage with stakeholders and build a stronger, more efficient province.

Another key proposal from the Ministry of the Attorney General is a set of changes to the Family Law Act and related legislation to strengthen the enforcement of family arbitration awards for support. If passed, these changes will allow parties to file arbitration awards, such as those for child or spousal support, directly with the court system for enforcement. To support this, the family law rules will also be amended to align with these updates, ensuring a seamless transition.

This initiative goes beyond simplifying procedures; it's about ensuring that support obligations are met efficiently and effectively. By streamlining the enforcement process, we are eliminating unnecessary delays and barriers, making it easier for families to secure the support they are owed without added stress or complications.

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Speaker, when support payments are delayed or go unmet, it is often children and dependents who bear the heaviest burden. By granting arbitration awards the same enforceability as court orders, we are providing families with a direct and reliable pathway to receive the financial assistance they need without facing redundant processes. This approach creates a clear legal framework to compel compliance, hold parties accountable and promote financial stability for families navigating the difficulties of separation or divorce. It ensures that no family is left in limbo due to an outdated or inefficient process. Ultimately, this reflects our government's steadfast commitment to fairness, efficiency and compassion.

These changes are about more than just improving our legal system; they're about delivering real, meaningful support to the people it serves. By enhancing accessibility, streamlining processes and prioritizing the well-being of families, we are building a legal system that truly works for everyone.

Speaker, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing is proposing to streamline the qualifications process for building officials, making it easier for these skilled professionals to work across provincial boundaries. This initiative, specifically, will enable building officials from Manitoba to practise in Ontario, addressing the urgent shortage of municipal building officials in communities like Kenora and across northwestern Ontario. At first glance, this may appear to be more of a technical adjustment, but its impact is substantial. By removing unnecessary barriers and simplifying processes, we're ensuring building officials can apply their expertise where it is needed most, especially in the north.

This change matters for several key reasons. First, it allows professionals from Manitoba to seamlessly contribute to Ontario's infrastructure needs, ensuring critical projects, such as housing developments, can proceed without delays caused by staffing shortages. These are projects that directly shape the lives of all families throughout Ontario. Second, it fosters collaboration and the exchange of best practices between jurisdictions.

Manitoba building officials bring valuable experience and insight that can enhance safety and quality. Finally, this initiative supports economic growth by creating a more dynamic and responsive construction industry.

By removing barriers to workforce mobility, we are allowing the system to adapt to regional demands, delivering essential projects on time and to the highest standards. This flexibility attracts investment, drives job creation and accelerates housing and infrastructure development in northern Ontario communities.

This is about more than resolving a temporary staffing challenge. It's about laying the foundation for long-term growth, resilience and innovation. It's about connecting the industrial might of the north with the manufacturing resourcefulness of the south. By encouraging collaboration, empowering skilled professionals and addressing regional demands, we are ensuring Ontario delivers safe, high-quality infrastructure for all its residents. This proposal also underscores our government's commitment to northern Ontario as a critical area for development and economic opportunity. It reflects our understanding of the unique challenges these communities face and highlights the importance of removing barriers to growth.

Speaker, let me share with you what the Ontario Real Estate Association, or OREA, had to say about our efforts:

"The government of Ontario introduced the Cutting Red Tape, Building Ontario Act, 2024, within their fall 2024 red tape reduction package, which, if passed, will provide better services, keep costs down, and bolster the economy.

"OREA is pleased to see the Ford government continuing to address the housing affordability crisis by working to fix administrative backlogs, streamline approvals, and remove barriers to building more homes....

"We commend Premier Doug Ford and Minister of Red Tape Reduction Mike Harris for keeping their foot on the gas to streamline the building of much-needed homes and bring affordability back."

With solutions like this, we are not only addressing the challenges of today but positioning Ontario to seize the opportunities of tomorrow. This is how we are building a stronger, more adaptable and prosperous province for generations to come.

Our government is proud to support Ontario's farmers and farm equipment dealers and distributors with targeted changes that reflect our commitment to reducing barriers and fostering growth in rural communities. That is why we are proposing a practical, forward-thinking amendment to the Farm Implements Act that will deliver meaningful benefits for agriculture sectors across our province.

Let me highlight some of these key measures, Madam Speaker. First, we are eliminating the annual registration-renewal process and associated fees for rural Ontario farm product dealers. This change will save businesses time and money, allowing them to focus on supporting farmers, rather than navigating unnecessary administrative hurdles.

Second, the bill introduces significant updates to streamline dispute resolution and improve fairness. One critical provision ensures that dealership agreements can-

not override Ontario's legal framework or jurisdictions. This will protect dealers and distributors by guaranteeing that disputes are governed by Ontario law, providing clarity and transparency for all of the parties involved—

Interjection.

Hon. Mike Harris: —and I know the member for Essex is very excited about that.

To further simplify the process, we are proposing to make the Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs Appeal Tribunal the final decision-maker for disputes under the FIA. While judicial review will remain an option, this change will provide faster resolutions, reduce administrative pressure on the Divisional Court and enhance the efficiency of the appeals process. Importantly, we are also requiring that dealership agreements remain in effect during the appeals process. This protection ensures that dealers' businesses can continue operating without disruption while the disputes are resolved. It is a common-sense measure that offers stability for rural businesses and the communities they serve.

Another widely welcomed change is the move to a one-time registration process for dealers and distributors, eliminating annual renewals and their associated fees. By removing the current \$200 registration fee for dealers and the \$300 registration fee for distributors, we're easing financial pressure and administrative burdens, allowing these businesses to focus on their core work, and that's supporting Ontario's farmers.

Speaker, these amendments are not arbitrary. They are the result of extensive consultations with stakeholders, including the Canadian Equipment Dealers Association, which has been a strong advocate for many of these changes. These updates reflect the evolving needs of Ontario's agriculture sector and underscore our government's commitment to fostering a fair, efficient and competitive marketplace. By streamlining processes, enhancing protections and reducing costs, these updates to the Farm Implements Act will boost business operations, strengthen rural economies and ensure Ontario's farming sector remains competitive and sustainable for years to come. This is what real action to cut red tape looks like: delivering for the people and communities who feed and fuel our province.

The next initiative comes from the Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery and Procurement, with proposed amendments to the Ontario Underground Infrastructure Notification System Act, also known as the One Call act, which I'm sure we're all familiar with. These amendments are designed to provide much-needed flexibility, addressing significant challenges raised by stakeholders. Currently, the One Call act requires unanimous agreement for all effective underground infrastructure owners, operators and the project owner to select a dedicated locator. While this requirement was intended to ensure coordination, it has proven to be burdensome, often causing delays due to the difficulty of achieving a consensus.

The changes our government is proposing would allow certain underground infrastructure owners and operators

to conduct their own locates in specific circumstances. These include situations involving critical safety concerns, specialized infrastructure such as high-pressure gas pipelines, or instances where quality mapping is just unavailable. If passed, the amendments would ensure the One Call Act remains responsive and adaptable to emerging challenges across the province.

Stakeholders involved in broadband expansion have emphasized the need to streamline processes under the Building Broadband Faster Act, to help accelerate critical infrastructure projects. We are proposing amendments to encourage collaboration and enhance efficiency across these broadband projects. These changes introduced flexibility by allowing project owners to decide whether to use a dedicated locator—oh, this is interesting. We've actually got an extra page slipped in here. I was just kind of on an auto-pilot.

How about we just talk for the next couple of minutes. What do you say? Let's just do that. Listen, Speaker, I'll tell you what: It's been a good Monday, I think, here in the Ontario Legislature. I think we've all had a pretty good day so far. We've been able to vote on some bills, we've been able to hear some debate, but—

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Mr. Joel Harden: Fired Phil Verster.

Hon. Mike Harris: Well, you know, some may say—at least the member from Ottawa Centre. He's got a big smile on his face right now. But I will say, for a province that's delivered more in infrastructure than any other government in the history of this province, I'm pretty proud of our track record.

But I will say this: This bill is no laughing matter, and I think it's going to receive support from all parties here in the Legislature. When we can safely, efficiently and effectively save people in the businesses of this province \$20 million and save them 56,000 hours to be able to spend more time with their employees, more time reinvesting in their businesses and, more importantly, more time at home, I think it's a good day.

I'm going to end it there. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's been a pleasure to speak to my first bill that I've been able to introduce here in the Ontario Legislature, and I do look forward to hopefully everyone supporting it here later this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Further debate?

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: It's always an honour to rise in this House, and I do so with extreme pleasure today. We are here debating government Bill 227, the Cutting Red Tape, Building Ontario Act. As in many of the government bills, the title is really the window dressing.

Speaker, I want to just highlight a few of the schedules that are here. I've spoken on this bill during the first section of the debate. We have 27 schedules in this bill. Obviously, I won't have time to touch upon all 27 of them, but I do want to share some additional thoughts, especially since now we have had a chance to receive stakeholder reactions. I want to share that this particular bill at this particular reading is drawing out stakeholder reaction.

It's regrettable that the stakeholder reaction is being drawn out by electronic communication, written letters, written submissions. These important stakeholders that this bill would affect do not have the opportunity to speak to this bill at committee. That's because the government has time-allocated this bill, meaning that there's no committee hearing whatsoever. Of course, we should all be concerned when that happens, when something is moving through so quickly—a bill that has 27 schedules. We all recognize that when a bill is first tabled it's rarely perfect. That's why we want to ensure that we have the public scrutiny, we hear from the subject matter experts, we hear from the stakeholders that any such bill would directly affect. Unfortunately, and very deeply regrettably, this government has shut out those voices.

What I want to recognize, Speaker, is that the government bill goes in the direction as in previous bills where they leave a lot of it to be decided later on, the details to be sorted out after the bill passes through regulation. It's always very hard to speak to any bill when there is so much that is not before us. That process is opaque, it's obviously anti-democratic and, ultimately, it doesn't allow us to hold the government to full accountability. Yet we persevere as we always do here in the official opposition when we're not given enough time, not enough information and we don't have the public informing us.

At second reading, I wanted to speak to this bill, especially with respect to the fact that we have voices that are significant that have been shut out. I want to note that with respect to schedule 25, it touches upon a significant issue regarding Ontario's justice system, the backlog reduction. It needs to address what is challenging and plaguing our courts and tribunal system. After the bill was tabled, I heard from the Ontario Trial Lawyers Association about the shocking issues that they have observed at the Licence Appeal Tribunal.

The OTLA are calling for an immediate review of that tribunal. They have cited several disturbing trends. The call for the review is not to be taken lightly. This is a group of legal stakeholders and observers who practise day in and day out with respect to the law pertaining to auto insurance. They spend their time in court fighting on behalf of their clients to make sure that they have some pathway to justice. And I know that it takes a lot for this group, who I would say are mostly mild-mannered and risk-averse—because that's what they are; they're lawyers. For them to call for a review of the Licence Appeal Tribunal will tell you that they have grave concerns that need to be addressed.

Of course, the Licence Appeal Tribunal was created eight years ago with the aim of creating a more affordable and efficient system to adjudicate the claims of injured individuals. The tribunal was supposed to be a clear and simple system where individuals could self-represent and receive a fair decision on their case. An analysis by inHEALTH showed that the LAT, the Licence Appeal Tribunal, fell “drastically short” of their goals of reducing frustration, uncertainty and costs. The aim of empowering self-represented individuals is a sham. Out of the 4,500

cases heard in eight years, only 217 of them included self-represented individuals, and in those 217 cases, the LAT has ruled against those self-represented individuals four out of five times. Only 33 of those self-represented individuals have been successful in their cases over eight years, and this roughly translates to one every three months. So the question to be asked is, how is it that this government was able to encourage self-representation, create a system to enable self-representation, and then let it fail so badly?

The insurance system is incredibly complex, and individuals who are injured—and you have to remember that they are going up against expert lawyers, working on behalf of big insurance companies, who specialize in this subject of law and are able to bill their policyholders indefinitely.

Even putting the issue of self-representation aside for a moment, let us just take a look at the overall record that we are seeing out of LAT. What we know is that in 2017, there was a 33% success rate for insured applicants. In 2020, that number has fallen to a 16% success rate for insured applicants moving forward, seeking justice. In 2023, it is now a 10% success rate for insured applicants. Rulings are moving in favour of insurance companies—a 90% success rate for the insurance company. The success rate of individuals in the old system, when it was called the dispute resolution system at the Financial Services Commission of Ontario—certainly a mouthful, but it was significantly better than what it is now—an improved system under this government that was supposed to fix the problem. The problem has only deepened and worsened. The trial lawyers tell me that their experience with the old system was more fair, more equitable and, most importantly, the adjudicators were well-trained and they provided well-reasoned decisions—much more balanced is what they're saying.

Trial lawyers feel that the LAT process under this government is rigid, it's fraught with procedural unfairness and, oftentimes, it does not accommodate the requests of both parties, even when they're agreed upon. They have raised concerns about the training of the adjudicators—not the first time that we have heard legal observers complain about the adjudicator qualifications that this government has appointed to the tribunals. Even more than the lack of training, there is real concern cited about conflicts of interest on the part of adjudicators. And this part is most important. Egregiously, they have identified that adjudicator Therese Reilly was hired by Aviva insurance while she was still employed by the tribunal. This employment overlapped by six months, during which time she rendered 10 decisions, 100% of which she ruled in favour of insurance companies, including her employer, Aviva insurance. One adjudicator ruled 98%, Speaker—98% this adjudicator ruled in favour of the insurance company and never fully for the individual on matters of medical rehab and far more than any of his colleagues. If that's not a rigged system, I'm not sure what is.

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We also heard from other legal stakeholders, such as the Advocacy Centre for Tenants of Ontario, a legal clinic

that represents tenants in the province. They are concerned about the government's proposal to work directly with credit reporting agencies to provide access to Landlord and Tenant Board orders “where tenants have a history of missed payments.” This proposal is part of the red tape package, but it's not part of this bill. ACTO is concerned that this could create a flood of reports, affecting the credit ratings of thousands of tenants, which would not necessarily be accurate.

Under this administration, this government, the LTB has become notoriously dysfunctional: 53,000 cases in the backlog. They are currently facing even a human rights complaint for its use of digital eviction hearings. They have been accused of denying access to justice for vulnerable people, especially tenants who have language barriers, who are living with disabilities or who have a lack of access to technology, including stable WiFi to participate in those online hearings.

Meanwhile, we're seeing corporate landlords using price-collusion software—AI-facilitated dynamic pricing—that is gouging tenants. This government is failing to do anything about it, despite the fact that it has been raised at the various committees.

This government will do everything they can to ensure that people will be evicted into a path of homelessness as quickly as possible. This is evident because this government does not have a plan to end homelessness in Ontario. There is zero strategy and plan by this government to end encampments in Ontario, which now plague every single corner of our province. They've allowed the financialization of the housing market, especially the rental housing market. They have contributed to the homelessness and encampment crisis by not having a strategy. And they have allowed residents of Ontario to leave the province because there's no access to affordable housing, which is why we're now seeing 100,000 young people every single year leaving the province, going elsewhere; in this case, mostly to Alberta.

It is a shame on this government's record, this intelligent brain drain that we see leaving. The labour market conditions will not be adjusted or corrected. While we educate them here, we ensure that there's opportunities for them to have an education—albeit very expensive, but we have the universities, the post-secondary institutions here—and then they have to leave, because they can't afford to live here. They can't afford to build a career here. They can't afford to grow their families here.

This government can do so much more to support tenants by bringing back and introducing full and real rent control; they can institute vacancy decontrol; and they can regulate real estate investment trusts so we don't see this type of predatory behaviour attack and undermine our housing sector.

The real red tape in Ontario is that so many people, including young people, are paying 50% or more of their income to rent. It's unsustainable and we see more and more homeowners feeling that crunch, as the cost-of-living crisis eats up their meagre wages.

Another component of this bill, Bill 227, as I am still speaking about the topic of housing, relates to the changes that are happening with the new home warranty program, Tarion. This is the province's new home insurer, and, to say the least, the proposed change from this government is alarming. Why would this government change Tarion's registration from being automatically registered by the seller of the new home to needing this new home owner to then notify Tarion and place their home registration?

Anybody who's ever purchased an appliance—a vacuum cleaner, a toaster—if you didn't fill out that warranty card, you're not covered. Now you are going to do the same thing to new homeowners. It's the biggest, most important purchase in anybody's life in Ontario, for most working people, most middle-class people.

And this exchange is certainly not reducing red tape. The government is adding red tape. They're adding red tape to consumers during one of the most stressful purchases of their lives. It guarantees that consumers will not be covered, because they will not have registered, perhaps, in a timely fashion. Right now, we have a mail strike, Speaker. This disruption in mail service alone could be a reason why someone doesn't register in a timely fashion.

Why would this government make things more difficult for consumers and add more red tape for consumers and taxpayers? Why are they going out of their way to reward Tarion, which has done a horrible job of representing new homebuyers in our province?

I would like to know who asked for this change. Oftentimes, the government puts forward legislation in multiple schedules, sometimes buried in omnibus bills, hoping that we don't ask the question, "Who asked for it?"

Why are you doing this to Ontario homebuyers? Why are you making it more difficult for them, adding more red tape for them, removing their protection as the consumer? Who are you actually protecting?

Speaker, this question I won't get to ask the minister, I won't be able to ask the stakeholders, because it's not going to committee.

Does this government understand that they are actually giving Tarion more regulatory powers, despite its horrible performance and record of consumer protection?

I'm going to move to schedule 27. It relates to Infrastructure Ontario. It's not the first time we've seen a move like this. The schedule centralizes real estate management under Infrastructure Ontario. It's not the first time we've seen this. It further centralizes and consolidates power under Infrastructure Ontario. But it's unclear what problem the government is trying to solve. Why is it centralizing more power, responsibility and control under IO?

The Auditor General released a report that talked extensively about Infrastructure Ontario's poor oversight of real estate services in Ontario. It cited a number of problems that did need to be addressed, including performance-wide standards that needed to be met that have not been met. The Auditor General went on at length about the need to improve oversight over IO, and the

Auditor General cited that IO was the problem. Yet this schedule will not solve any of the recommendations coming from the Auditor General.

The Auditor General also cited that inside Infrastructure Ontario are embedded a number of private contractors that are given more responsibility to manage more public assets. Sometimes those contractors are managing other contractors, not dissimilar to what we saw with Metrolinx: hundreds of millions of dollars being spent on hiring contractors—private contractors—to manage other private contractors. What a horrible waste of public dollars when we could be spending it on the investments that Ontarians deserve and families need.

This appears to be a short-sighted decision, Speaker—the government putting the cart before the horse. This government could clean up Infrastructure Ontario before they heap on more responsibility, make sure it performs well, meets the necessary standard and service expectation that Ontarians deserve, rather than giving it more when it hasn't been doing a great job.

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Speaker, I'm going to bounce to schedule 14, which speaks about the law society. This schedule sets out a deadline for the law foundation to file its annual report. That is absolutely reasonable. And we want public agencies, near-public agencies, any organization and stakeholder that works with the public to be accountable, with full, detailed transparency for all of us to review and then to improve upon.

The substantial amount of Legal Aid Ontario's funding administered by the law foundation comes from the interest that's collected by the law foundation's trust funds. Consequently, the amount of funding the foundation provides to Legal Aid Ontario is supposed to be dependent on interest rates.

If the government really wanted to fix Legal Aid Ontario, they could do so today. But what we know is that this government has not been adequately supporting Legal Aid Ontario. And there's a history of that, Speaker. This government came into power in 2018. One of the earliest acts was cutting legal aid by 30%: \$133 million in 2019. Further to that, the government has underspent \$103 million out of the \$389 million set aside for Legal Aid Ontario during this budget of 2022-23. That's an underspending of 26%—all the while in our newspapers and daily reports and, I'm sure, even the government's own briefings—that Ontarians are struggling to access justice because of the horrific backlogs, not just in the tribunal system, which is bad, but in the civil, criminal and family courts. It's bad everywhere. We have the worst wait time for court and trials in the country.

During committee hearings for previous bills, we heard the Attorney General state that "we can either push uphill and pretend that we're going to get rid of self-reps and only have people represented by lawyers, or we can face reality." What the Attorney General was suggesting is that it's okay for people to self-represent and that legal representation, albeit good to have, is not essential to have. And we have seen the evidence over and over again of

what happens when you have individuals self-representing through the tribunal and court process. Things take a lot longer. Therefore, this government is not freeing up court time. They're not using the time in the courts' administration efficiently by delaying trials longer and longer again.

While the government is calling on the law foundation to file an annual report, I have to point out that this government itself is quite behind in a review of legislation. The Lobbyists Registration Act was supposed to come up for review, and in 2021, the government cancelled that. And there in that act—the Lobbyists Registration Act—there is supposed to be a mandatory five-year review led by the Attorney General. This act has not been reviewed since 2016. And what we heard from the Integrity Commissioner was that this government was called upon to review the act and, specifically, to close the loopholes for insiders and lobbyists, moving from a minimum requirement of 50 hours of lobbying time to five hours, making sure that lobbyists are not rewarding politicians on campaigns with unpaid volunteers. The Integrity Commissioner called on the government to ensure that there would be stricter penalties, and the Premier himself, during the greenbelt and the MZO scandals, said that there should be jail time for those who breached the lobbyist registration. He called for that himself.

We're heading into 2025, we're getting ready to say goodbye because the holidays and Christmas are coming, and we have seen little to nothing from the Attorney General except for vague assurances to inquiring media outlets that "progress is being made" and "stay tuned." I invited the Attorney General to go speak at the justice policy committee and government members turned that down.

There is so much in this bill, and the government calls it the cutting red tape bill, but I don't see red tape being cut. I see consumer protection being eroded. I see language that talks about building efficiencies, but it's not in the bill.

Speaker, I want to end my remarks here and say that by bypassing the committee process, this bill is not strong, and because of that, I certainly can't support it.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Further debate? Further debate?

Mr. Harris has moved third reading of Bill 227, An Act to amend various Acts. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

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.

ESTIMATES

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 62(c), the 2024-25 estimates of the Office of the Assembly, the Office of the Auditor General, the Office of the Chief

Electoral Officer and the Ontario Ombudsman, having been approved by the Board of Internal Economy and tabled earlier today, are deemed to be concurred in.

Orders of the day.

AFFORDABLE ENERGY ACT, 2024

LOI DE 2024 SUR L'ÉNERGIE ABORDABLE

Mr. Lecce moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 214, An Act to amend various energy statutes respecting long term energy planning, changes to the Distribution System Code and the Transmission System Code and electric vehicle charging / *Projet de loi 214, Loi modifiant diverses lois sur l'énergie en ce qui a trait à la planification énergétique à long terme, aux modifications touchant les codes appelés Distribution System Code et Transmission System Code et à la recharge des véhicules électriques.*

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): I return to the minister.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Good afternoon, Speaker. It's good to see you, and good to see you all. We are on the precipice of an important vote as we move forward the Affordable Energy Act.

The genesis of the Affordable Energy Act was the clearest contrast to the former Liberal government's Green Energy Act, a bill that prioritized affordable energy based on ideological predispositions instead of on affordable energy prices for Ontario families. The contrast could not be clearer as we prioritize making energy and life more affordable for Ontario families.

You will know that Ontario has a clean energy advantage, which we are going to maintain. Part of the build-out of our renewables through the long-term procurement, the largest competitive procurement in Canadian history that's under way under our Progressive Conservative government, in addition to the largest continental nuclear expansion, is creating non-emitting energy that puts Ontario on track to hit near-net-zero emissions by 2050—without a carbon tax, without a proposed Liberal "clean" electricity regulation, without a mandate—by simply pursuing Canadian clean tech as our baseload solution. We are proud of the fact that we will get to near net zero in our province by leveraging our clean energy advantage—nuclear energy. I know the Speaker today is a strong proponent of that form of energy, in Durham region, no less, as we all are in this province.

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The Independent Electricity System Operator has forecasted a 75% demand in energy surge by 2050. This is perhaps the most consequential public policy challenge we as parliamentarians will face this session: How do we secure reliable, affordable, clean power? How do we ensure our children are set up for success? Because there are jurisdictions around us, as we speak, where they do not have ample supply, where they are literally knocking on Ontario's doors, among many others, seeking desperately

to purchase expensive power. They will pay at a premium because they are having to defer economic investment.

Look no further than the province of Quebec that is having to decline large-scale economic development. These businesses sometimes may want port access or they may have chosen Quebec for different reasons, but they end up coming back to Ontario and saying, “Look, they don’t have the power.” And we do.

We have the power, we have the plan and we have the conviction to build out our nuclear fleet and our clean energy advantage for the benefit of our kids. For the first time in a long time, colleagues, we have a government that is actually thinking about tomorrow. I know we will disagree on the tactics by which we achieve the big strategic goals we want as a province, but we’re talking about, through the Affordable Energy Act, a requirement for long-term, integrated 25-year planning where we force the systems to work together, with greater interoperability with our fuels, and our natural gas and electricity.

Currently, if this bill does not pass, we are allowing the status quo of Enbridge, working with one entity, our natural gas player; then you have the IESO involved with electricity; and you have private companies managing fuels, and yet there’s no overarching strategy, something that binds our province and our economic interests together. That’s the basis of the Affordable Energy Act: to think about tomorrow, to build out for the future, to safeguard affordability as the northern star of our investments and our economic program.

I will tell you: The lessons learned, even just from LT1, the long-term procurement my predecessor ministers announced, were really critical because we heard constructive criticism: How do we get more development in the north? How do we get more Indigenous equity participation? How do we create the conditions for all energy sources to compete on a level playing field? Because we believe in technology agnosticism. I do not believe—we do not believe, as Progressive Conservatives—in picking winners and losers based on what makes us feel good or an ideological perspective. It has got to be based on the market, on affordability, on keeping prices low for families, seniors and small businesses.

That’s what this bill codifies before us. It signals in the clearest terms that we will make affordability the cornerstone of our economic program, keeping in mind that today energy bills are up 25% because of an ideological preference of the federal Liberals, who have imposed the carbon tax—25% higher bills are being paid today than they could have been if we didn’t have the federal Liberal carbon tax.

What’s all related to this is the need for more energy—affordable energy, reliable energy, clean energy, yes. When you think about this public policy challenge, we’re talking about four and a half cities of Toronto. We’re talking about 16 Ottawas, 34 Londons, 126 Sudburys. The demand is massive, Speaker, and it can’t come as a surprise to anyone.

When we think about building, we think about a vision—a vision for Ontario’s economic needs; a vision

for a clean energy future where we are able to electrify industry, displace coal, and bring more people into the EV revolution and allow for clean electricity to displace other forms of energy. That is good for the economy, it is good for the environment and it is good for our families.

If we take a moment to reflect on the history, the leadership in Ontario when it comes to expanding that clean energy advantage, I think about over 100 years ago, it was Sir Adam Beck—yes, a Progressive Conservative, but more than that, a great Canadian—the founder of public power who founded the Hydro-Electric Power Commission of Ontario and pioneered the hydroelectric dams at Niagara Falls. It was the then Progressive Conservative Premier, John Robarts, who played an instrumental role in leading the nuclear expansion of our province’s grid. It was the then Premier, Ernie Eves, in 2003, another Progressive Conservative, who adopted the vision to phase out coal power from our province.

Speaker, I’m proud of that lineage. I’m proud of that history, that commitment to expanding affordable, reliable power. I will tell you: The benefit of that type of focus has allowed us to attract \$45 billion in job-creating investment in our auto sector that is so important to all of our families all over Ontario. That clean energy advantage is consequential to attracting investment to our province, and I assure members we will have—it’s not a talking point; do not take it from me. The Independent Electricity System Operator has confirmed it as recently as last week, when they did independent analysis of the federal Liberal clean electricity regulation, so-called CER, where they confirmed that our expansion and refurbishment of our nuclear fleet will bring us to literally near net zero by 2050. I’m proud of that achievement. I’m proud that the trajectory we are on is to get to net zero.

Net zero is not a virtue unless power is affordable, because we also had a former energy act, the Green Energy Act, that prioritized the environmental element while entirely dismissing the economic impact to families. We choose to be responsible, pragmatic planners of energy that keep it clean and abundant but, of course, maintain affordability throughout. That is responsible action that’s before the House today: a bill that, in its most clearest terms, confirms our focus. Because of that type of leadership and our economic program—attracting investment, lowering taxes, slashing red tape, creating the conditions for market certainty, building our infrastructure and logistical supply chain, investing in human capital with the largest Skills Development Fund—these types of initiatives all come together. That allowed us to create the conditions for the private sector to create 850,000-plus net new jobs.

Now, remember, Mr. Speaker: There was a time when the government in this place—when the former Liberals were here, they took the position that we should turn away from manufacturing and turn to a service economy. They literally discouraged government from ever focusing on the industrial base or on our manufacturing base, because they thought it was part of the economy of yesterday.

The Premier of Ontario, for whatever you may agree or disagree with in this House, has pursued a reindustrialization policy that has allowed us to create the conditions for manufacturing to flourish in the province. We've brought every single auto company that left, or those that have never invested in Ontario, to put their capital in this province, to believe in the promise of Ontario, because from Stellantis to Volkswagen and everything in between, from Windsor all the way to northern Ontario, we are seeing supply chain and auto expansion that is consequential, critical and is helping families deliver the biggest paycheques we want and we aspire to for all Canadians.

The Affordable Energy Act also makes clear that we will use competitive procurements to drive our decisions. Remember, the former Liberals were in the business of sole-sourcing. They weren't in the business of ensuring we chose based on affordability. This was a party, the former Liberals, who believed it was a virtue to purchase power at 80 cents a kilowatt hour when we had alternatives on the market at nine to 10 cents. In what world could any parliamentarian look you, Speaker, in the eye and say that was a good return on investment? That was a sham and a total abdication of leadership.

And who paid the price? Not big Fortune 500 companies, as the opposition would want us to believe. It was fixed-income pensioners, people who were driven into energy poverty in small towns and big cities. There is no virtue in pricing families out of the necessity—not luxury—of heating their homes this winter, but that is what they will want you to believe. I believe that is simply not in the interests of our economy, in the interests of our industry or the interests of our families.

Interjection.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: You threw me off for a second there, but I'm getting back on track, honourable member.

But look, we've seen other assaults on free-enterprise principles, other assaults on affordability, on pocketbooks and families. We are now dealing with this proposed clean energy regulation. This is all very relevant to the bill, and I'll explain why: because the CER imposes a price on carbon, thus making it literally impossible to use all forms of energy after 2035, and I want us to be serious about the choices before government. We choose to leverage all forms of energy. That includes hydroelectric. We're going to further optimize our fleet. We've invested \$1 billion in eastern Ontario. I will be going to the north to do the same. We will leverage as many megawatts as we can from those assets. We've extended another 30 years in our fleet.

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But that alone will not provide enough baseload power. We're expanding Pickering and Darlington through the refurbishments that are being done on time and on budget. We are doing four SMRs, small modular reactors, these miniaturized nuclear plants that produce about 300 megawatts of clean, non-emitting power. We're doing four of those, 1,200 megawatts. We're going to do the largest procurement in Canadian history, 5,000 megawatts, which is so important. And we are, of course, as well, participat-

ing in the leverage of new generation, which we announced just last week, Mr. Speaker, when we said there's three locations, three communities that already have OPG lands, three communities that already have the appropriate licensing to pursue electricity generation in those communities. And we also have local communities that have, at least so far, said, "We want to work with you on a potential plan forward"—a powerful program to secure our energy future, and even still, we need to produce more power.

So the concept of the federal Liberals introducing a scheme today that will handicap the province, that will literally undermine our ability to generate all forms of electricity, which can include natural gas as an interim measure, thus increasing further energy bills around \$168 per household, a \$35-billion hit to our economy, when we know, without a doubt, in absolute terms we're going to get to the same objective they cite of near net zero by 2050? You could only call that a radical policy, again, being imposed by the federal Liberals on the people of this province—

Interjection: Radical.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: It is radical. This is not a talking point. When the carbon tax raises, at maturity, \$170 per megatonne, and this is \$850—five times the current carbon tax—think about the impacts to your families, to gasoline, to home heating. This is the triumph of ideology over affordability, and I think it is negligence of those who believe this is a responsible way forward. Good luck explaining to investors, to families, to new Canadians, to young people that they could achieve the dream of Canada when they can't even afford to heat their home this winter. But frankly, Speaker, there are members in this House who would agree with that premise, who would support it, who have actually called on me to adopt the CER as soon as possible, as they have with the carbon tax.

But the clean energy act takes a very different position, because we know that clean, non-emitting nuclear power displaces 80 million megatonnes of GHGs—80 million megatonnes a year. That is the equivalent, colleagues, of taking off the road 15 million vehicles every single year. That is how we maintain a clean grid. That is how we have among the cleanest grids on earth. That is how we generate affordable, reliable power for our families: by invoking a policy or a resource that has been time-tested for generations in our province. Some 75,000 to 85,000 families directly depend on nuclear power, and we know that nuclear power is being delivered on time and on budget here in Ontario.

I recognize that there are headlines that my colleagues will read from the United Kingdom to Georgia to France of projects over budget or not on schedule. I understand that. That is their truth. That is not Ontario's truth.

OPG, likewise Bruce, they do something special, and they have all the credit. They deserve the credit. The workers deserve the credit. We put unit 1 at Darlington power—in your neck of the woods, Mr. Speaker—back on 140 days ahead of schedule, returned to the grid. The Darlington refurbishment will add a \$90-billion net gain

to our GDP. That is how we secure the prosperity for our children, how we deliver the affordable energy they deserve.

And I'm proud of that record. The member from Durham—I keep focusing on my esteemed colleague, but the member from Durham was with me at that announcement, and we thank the workers. This is their achievement, not any government's or any business's. This is the achievement of our skilled workforce. But they could do it again. They're doing it: Every single unit refurbishment is being delivered according to that adherence, and I am proud of their discipline and their work ethic.

I think about the largest nuclear expansion in continental history at Bruce Power, where the Minister of Rural Affairs, among many others, have been great champions of this project. This is the first large-scale nuclear reactor in 30 years that we're going to be pursuing building. It's enough power for 4.8 million homes. This is the responsible, forward-looking, aspirational clean energy program Canadians deserve.

But it will be put in peril by higher taxes, by needless regulation, and by federal or provincial small-l or big-l liberal parties who believe that making energy less abundant and more affordable is somehow a program to prosperity in our province. It is not, and we know that every family will pay the price for this type of rigid adherence to ideology. What we actually need is an element of pragmatism to reign.

We're going to get to net zero, Mr. Speaker. We're going to get there. The IESO said so. Don't take it from the politicians who will say, "We are," or "We're not" today. Listen to the Independent Electricity System Operator, who has said we will get to net zero by the expansion of nuclear energy and our renewable long-term procurement by 2050.

We do not need to make it more expensive for families to live in this province and country. We do not need to handicap our ability to attract foreign investment that creates jobs for our private sector workers. That's the difference between the choices among the parties today.

We're expanding Bruce B that secures 5,000 jobs and power for two million homes. That was a project that the former Liberals would not just have closed, but, colleagues, they would have closed it this year, in 2024, on the schedule they announced. Can you imagine? At a time of increasing energy, the former Liberals took the position in their wisdom that they should close Pickering power and the two million homes that depend on it. Thank goodness we do not have the former Liberals in power because we literally would have been without this brilliant—one of the best-performing nuclear plants in the world is Pickering, a Candu facility. Some 96% of that refurbishment supports not Canadian but Ontario small businesses. The supply chain is entirely indigenous to our province and country.

I'm often lost for words at what could keep a parliamentarian, hold them back, from being an unbridled champion of nuclear energy. It is clean, it produces Canadian jobs, it leverages Canadian technology. It has literally, for generations, safely and reliably produced our

power. We have the storage. We have one of the largest supplies of uranium next door in Saskatchewan. We process these fuels through Cameco in Ontario at Port Hope, among many other communities. We are the dream of the world, of a one-stop integrated supply chain of nuclear power.

I want us to be proud of that, and the Affordable Energy Act leverages that goodwill to the world. It allows us to sell that value proposition of on-time and on-budget to all communities of Ontario. This is not just about nuclear. I know it's my area of focus, but we're also the party—whereas the former government purchased expensive renewable power—again, I'm technology-agnostic; I have no opposition for or against any energy source. But they produced or purchased expensive renewable energy without the ability to store it—not a megawatt of storage.

In what world is this disjointed program something we want to replicate again today, that the former Liberals and Bonnie Crombie want to bring back to the people of Ontario? Absolutely not. No, no, no. That cannot be a policy we want to revert back to. Energy poverty, the most expensive hydro rates on the continent—absolutely not. That is not a program for success, it's a recipe for disaster. We cannot allow the families of this province to reap the economic hardship of ideologues instead of those who actually believe in affordability, the dream of living in this province with promise.

That's why we initiated the largest storage fleet expansion—really, the first storage fleet expansion in Canada: 3,000 megawatts, which is the third-largest storage fleet in North America. The third-largest storage infrastructure is being built in this province, the largest in Canada by far, on every metric. It's 3,000 megawatts of power. It allows us to store those renewable resources. When it is sunny, when it is windy, we could store the power and use it for peak purposes, thus keeping our bills low. Instead, before, we were spilling it, wasting it or selling it at a loss. Again, this could only be considered a failure of government.

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I've had the privilege of being in this ministry since June. I've been in cabinet for five and a half years. When I'm in the room, we respect our public servants—

MPP Wayne Gates: Five long years.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Five long years; that's the one thing I'll agree with the honourable member. They were long years.

But when you're in the room, the objective is not to go along to get along with our officials—I mean, we respect them, their independent advice—it is to challenge their assumptions.

On this issue, when it came to the desire of the province to build out our storage fleet, to build out our long-term procurement, everything we did was through the lens of driving down prices for our families. And the Auditor General has recommended to government to use competitive procurement, which has, to date, my friends, reduced costs by 30%. We're talking about billions of dollars. This is not an insignificant savings to the ratepayer or the

taxpayer. This is what we can get out of the Affordable Energy Act.

I was with the member from Mississauga–Lakeshore; we were proud to represent Canada and Ontario in Poland and in Estonia, where we're selling our clean energy advantage, our nuclear advantage, to the world. In Poland, we secured an export agreement, a \$40-million investment from the Polish government, that allows Ontario—essentially, it's the enabler for us to sell to them small modular reactors. They have coal energy, like we did 20-plus years ago. They want to get off coal. The European Union is requiring this, and they're turning to Canada's clean energy future. They're turning to our proven track record. It was a source of pride to be in a global market on the world stage advancing the cause of Ontarians, knowing that the deals we secure abroad are creating jobs and dignity for families back home. That is the ultimate form of satisfaction as a person in this space, to know that we can really help deliver energy security for our European partners, particularly eastern European partners, who want to rid their supply of Vladimir Putin's natural gas and petroleum and nuclear fuels. We can literally provide that.

The German chancellor came to Canada begging us for our resources. At what point does our country wake up and realize that the bounty of our natural resources can be exported to the world to support the energy transition? Yes, to reduce emissions—but to grow our economy, to create jobs.

While they may not do so at their level, at the provincial level, we are exporting our clean tech and nuclear fleets to the world. Our expertise, our ingenuity, our technology and our proven track record demonstrates to you and to every Ontarian that we can build large and small nuclear fleets on time and on budget.

This is the same message we delivered in Estonia, the exact same message—a Baltic states country literally on the front lines of Russian aggression. They are so grateful that Ontario and Canada take an interest in this part of the world. We see massive export opportunities for our small modular reactors. We signed an agreement with a private company, in partnership with the government of Estonia, to build out their first SMR, as we're doing in Poland.

I'm proud that this is not the first. Within my first days, I was off to Romania to announce the refurbishment of a Candu reactor at the Cernavoda nuclear station in Romania where we're going to be refurbishing one of their Candu reactors—\$370 million to the people of Ontario. Overwhelmingly, our domestic supply chain benefits. That is leadership.

So, Speaker, if we want to deliver the reliable, clean, affordable energy future Ontarians deserve, then I implore our colleagues today, vote for the Affordable Energy Act.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lorne Coe): Further debate?

MPP Jamie West: I'm very pleased to stand and speak on Bill 214. This is the Affordable Energy Act.

Before we start, I just want a quick mention, a local shout-out. It's related to energy. In Sudbury, there's an individual named Derek Durkac. I used to work with Derek's brother Steve. Steve actually trained me to be a

furnace operator. Derek works at the Vale smelter, where I worked before coming here. Derek is known as the Clark Griswold of Sudbury and this will be his last year of decorating his house. Every year, he decorates his house to raise money, raise awareness and raise donations of food for the Edgar Burton Christmas Food Drive. It costs him about \$700 a year on his energy bill to power about 50,000 lights. He takes vacation days to decorate the area.

Last year, he raised 11,000 food items and about \$10,000 for the food bank. The food bank, with their buying power, it gives them about \$60,000 worth of the ability to buy food, so that's great. I'm going to have to double-check that because I think that may be how much he's raised to date, because that seems pretty high for one year. Anyway, 11,000 food items and \$10,000 for the food bank is amazing.

Last year, he dedicated it to his mom, Emily Durkac; his dad, Joe Durkac; and his sister, Andrea Yuriy Durkac. I just want to get that on the record. His mom had passed away last year, and it was meaningful to Derek and Steve as well. So if you're going to where you normally went in east Sudbury, he has moved. He's now at 48 Severn Street, for people in Sudbury, between 6 p.m. and 10 p.m. I'm going to go on to the bill, but I just wanted to get that on the record in time for people to go there, and you could make donations to the food bank as well.

In this bill, basically, what I'm going to be doing is speaking about the society of engineers' concerns that they had with the bill. I'll be reading parts of what they presented to us in committee and the amendments we tried to move forward to have this addressed for the bill. None of the amendments that we had made on behalf of the society were accepted.

The first one is to maintain IESO technical reporting. This is the society of energy professionals. Basically, they represent the nuclear workers at the nuclear reactor.

"While the society supports the prioritization of electrification and nuclear power contained within Bill 214, it cannot support the bill as written." We "have significant concerns with amendments made to the Electricity Act, 1998, in schedule 1 of Bill 214. Of particular concern is the repeal of sections 25.29 to 29.31, and the text proposed as substitution.

"In repealing section 25.29 of the Electricity Act, the proposed legislation appears to remove the requirement of consulting the technical expertise of the IESO in preparing the long-term energy plan (or integrated energy plan, as Bill 214 calls it). The repeal of section 25.29 would include in its removal section 25.29(3), which reads:

“Technical reports by IESO

“(3) The minister shall, before issuing a long-term energy plan under subsection (1), require the IESO to submit a technical report on the adequacy and reliability of electricity resources with respect to anticipated electricity supply, capacity, storage, reliability and demand and on any other related matters the minister may specify, and the minister shall

“(a) consider the report in developing the long-term energy plan; and

“(b) post the report on a publicly accessible government of Ontario website or publish it in another manner, before undertaking any consultations under subsection (4).”

“The society’s members at the IESO are experts in their field and are the most qualified voices to discuss long-term energy planning in the province. The society is proud of the work our members do and cannot support any legislation that removes IESO consultation from the province’s energy planning process. The society is deeply concerned that Bill 214 signifies a shift from energy planning by technical experts to energy planning by lobbyists.

“The society urges the committee to amend the proposed legislation to reintroduce the language from 25.29(3) of the Electricity Act that is repealed in the proposed Bill 214.”

It’s a little long-winded but it spells it out very effectively. Basically, the society is saying, “Look, IESO is independent. They don’t care if the Conservatives are in power, the New Democrats are in power, the Liberals are in power, the Greens are in power. If there’s another party that comes along, they don’t care. They just make decisions that are best for all the people in Ontario.” One of the changes the bill is going to do is remove that third-party, non-political decision-making power, and it allows lobbyists to make more decisions.

As New Democrats, we brought forward two amendments to address this. Motion number 4 was one of our amendments. I actually read this motion:

“I move that section 3 of schedule 1 to the bill be amended by adding the following clause in subsection 25.29(2) of the Electricity Act, 1998:

“(d.1) air emissions from the energy sector, taking into account any projections respecting the emission of greenhouse gases, developed with the assistance of the IESO.”

Basically, we wanted to have air emissions from the energy sector as part of this plan, and we wanted the projections that were provided by this non-partisan, very professional group at IESO to move forward. During debate, we talked about how this was a recommendation that was made by the Society of United Professionals, and it really made sense to have in the bill because these people are experts. They really are. Jokingly, when you meet with their members and the leadership of this union, they will talk about how they’re the energy nerds. They’re incredibly bright individuals. They know what they’re talking about, and you have to, right? You can’t operate a nuclear reactor without really knowing the ins and outs of this.

We moved this forward, and the Conservative government in committee held no debate on this. The opposition side carried the entire debate. They didn’t say a word. They didn’t do anything. They basically tapped their pen until we exhausted the reasons why this was an important ask for the society that represents nuclear workers, and then they voted unanimously against it. It was a very quick vote.

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We also moved motion number 11: “I move that section 3 of schedule 1 to the bill be amended by adding the

following subsection to section 25.29 of the Electricity Act, 1998:

“Technical reports by IESO

“(2.2) Before issuing an integrated energy resource plan under subsection (1), the minister shall require the IESO....” etc.

So, discussion notes that we had, and then when we talked about this—and I pulled this out of Hansard—we reminded again the Conservative government that this was proposed by the Society of United Professionals. It isn’t the NDP sitting in the corner thinking of stuff we wanted to do. We listened to experts in the field, people who do this and have done this for decades, and we really said, “Let’s bring this forward.” We think that before the government says, “Here’s what we’re going to do,” they should listen to non-partisan experts in the field from the IESO. They should have them prepare and publish the technical reports that form the basis of the energy plan, because what could happen—and there have been numerous scandals going around. So what could happen is, maybe someone attends a wedding and then magically we’re interested in coal again—coincidentally, not magically. So we wanted to have that addressed, and we pointed out as well that this bill, Bill 214, removed the requirement to do this.

Basically, what happens is that the public would not know why we’re making decisions. It’s very easy, when the IESO comes forward and says, “Here’s what we recommend,” the government can choose not to follow it. They’re not forced to follow it straightforward—sorry, my phone is ringing in my pocket.

When you remove this requirement, the public doesn’t get to see it. Like I was saying earlier, the government could choose not to follow the recommendations by IESO, but the public would know the facts and they would be able to be held to account. Reporters would be able to say, “Well, look, the IESO said this over here. Why are you choosing over here?” There may be many valid reasons for them to do that, the government of the day, but I’m going to say the people of Ontario, after six years with this government, are having some trust issues and maybe don’t trust them.

The Conservatives, I know, as the government of the day, they will—“not me, not me.” Think back to before you were elected, to the trust issues that the people of Ontario were developing under the Liberal government and feeling like, “I don’t really know if I trust this government anymore, and so I want someone non-partisan to tell me what they think is best to be able to be held accountable.”

We really think this is an important thing to move forward. This amendment, like all of our amendments, we explained very thoroughly, very logically and spelled out the reasons why, spoke about how the society had moved this, how they talked about it in deputations for committee and how this was a reasonable amendment to make the changes out of. The Conservative government, unfortunately, chose not to speak at all to this amendment, to explain why they wouldn’t accept it or to talk about the

purpose of what they were trying to do. In fact, they said nothing. They just waited and waited and waited, and once my friends from the New Democrats and the independents were done explaining our support for this, they voted against it, every single one of them.

The second concern the society had, they titled, “Restore the Focus on Emissions.” I have four amendments that were related to this.

I’m just going to read their submission so I don’t say it improperly. This section is called, “Restore the Focus on Emissions.”

“In addition to the concerns raised in the repeal of 25.29(3) of the Electricity Act, the society is deeply troubled by what appears to be a removal of limiting greenhouse gas emissions as one of the stated objectives of the energy plan, as described in section 25.29.

“The existing language in the Electricity Act, that would be repealed under Bill 214, specifically lists greenhouse gas emissions as a consideration in electricity planning.

“25.29(2)(e) air emissions from the energy sector, taking into account any projections respecting the emission of greenhouse gases developed with the assistance of the IESO;”

“The proposed substitute language in Bill 214 makes no reference to limiting greenhouse gases, air emissions, or carbon emissions as one of the goals and objectives which may be included in the energy plan.

“Any long-term energy plan needs to acknowledge the catastrophic impact of climate change, and the carbon emissions that causes it. The society strongly believes in the need to decarbonize Ontario’s economy through electrification through ultra-low carbon electricity. Any energy plan that does not acknowledge the need to mitigate carbon emissions is not based on current scientific consensus, and cannot be supported by the society.

“The society urges the committee to amend the proposed legislation to reintroduce the repealed language identifying carbon emission levels as an included goal and objective of long-term energy planning.”

I said there were four amendments, so I’ll get into those. The first one was moved by the independent Liberal Party. They moved that “section 2 of schedule 1 to the bill be amended by striking out ‘reduce overall emissions in Ontario’ at the end of” the clause “and substituting ‘reduce overall emissions in Ontario and protect people from climate change.’”

So, it’s a small phrase—one, two, three, four, five words. “Protect people from climate change” is a small thing that was in here. We spoke to this as New Democrats and we said, “Look, you have young people in Ontario taking the Conservative government to court over the lack of climate action.” One of them is Sophia Mathur from Sudbury. Not only is the government fighting them, the government just recently lost an appeal to this.

Many people in Ontario are concerned about climate change, and I would say the majority of them are younger than me, but there are many people of all different gener-

ations very concerned about what kind of planet we are leaving for future generations and what’s going on.

In a reference to what’s happening in Sudbury: Last year, when Derek Durkac had his lights up—on Christmas Day, it was raining in Sudbury. Never in my life has it ever rained it on Christmas Day. We had a very mild winter until mid-January, and typically—my birthday is on the 25th of November—there is usually snow on the ground way before my birthday, and I remember once growing up, it snowed on my birthday, and we couldn’t believe how long it took. So climate is changing, the world is getting warmer. It’s really important for us to acknowledge this. Adding these four little words, “protect people from climate change,” feels like a little coin in the bank of the Conservatives in terms of, “We recognize this is an issue and we want to do something about it.”

The next amendment we had was—I had moved that “section 3 of schedule 1 to the bill be amended by adding the following clause to subsection 25.29 of the Electricity Act....”

It was, “air emissions from the energy sector, taking into account any projections respecting the emission of greenhouse gases developed with the assistance of the IESO.”

We literally took what the society wrote, which is what we do when we go to committee and people bring their ideas to us: We take their ideas and bring them forward, because we believe in listening to the people of Ontario. So we brought those forward, and we said, “Look, IESO, as we argued earlier—non-partisan professionals. We want their projections of what’s happening, and we want to include air emissions.” This resonates with me in Sudbury because we were known for the longest time for having the world’s largest smokestack. I know about air emissions and what they do to the pollution of the city, the blackening of our rocks. Not the exact same thing, but I know the carbon effect and what it takes to clean it up afterwards. We thought this was reasonable.

Again, the Conservative government said nothing through the entire thing, waited until we exhausted our debate and then, unanimously, everybody on the committee voted against it. They have more members on committee than we do, because they have more members in the House, and so they’re able to defeat all of our amendments.

The next one I had moved was:

“I move that section 3 of schedule 1 to the bill be amended by adding the following clause to subsection 25.29(2) of the Electricity Act....

“(h.3) the resilience of energy infrastructure and the management of risks related to the impacts of climate change.”

The bill had some language about reducing emissions, but it was a little squishy. What we were saying, and what the society was saying as well, is that it needs to talk about climate change, it needs to talk about emissions. So we wanted to have that in there and the importance of making infrastructure resilient to the impacts of climate change.

In my first term—I can’t remember if it was the second year or third year—there was a huge flood in downtown

Toronto that basically paralyzed the city; traffic couldn't move because of the water. It rained so hard in a short amount of time and paralyzed the city. We're seeing in the summertime, with high temperatures, workers unable to continue to work. So we want to make sure, when flooding events happen or climate-related hazards—when the Parry Sound fire happened that was paralyzing a lot of the campgrounds around that area and people weren't coming to camp—we think that if you're not going to be addressing climate change, then you have to have a plan to ensure that business is successful and ensure that people can get to work and school and to have a goal. It's a little bit, I think, of carrot and stick, right? If you're not willing to pay as government upfront, it might cost you in the future, and we think the government should start a plan for adaptation.

Again, not surprisingly with the theme I'm going with here, Speaker, the Conservative government said nothing through the entire time, basically clicked their pens, scrolled on their phones, waited till the voting time, and all of them as a majority voted against the motion.

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MPP Wayne Gates: Every committee is like that.

MPP Jamie West: Every committee is like that, surprisingly.

Interjection.

MPP Jamie West: Yes, that's right. The last one, they skipped committee entirely.

The next amendment, the fourth one, that I had moved forward, was developed with our team: "The minister shall ensure an integrated energy resource plan issued under subsection (1) is consistent with the government of Ontario's targets for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions."

We basically spelled out what the society has said: that the bill, as it's written, has no requirement that the energy plan be consistent with the government's greenhouse gas emission targets. Well, we've heard members opposite and the minister talk about how important it is that we adopt cleaner energy, lower our carbon footprint, and how do we ensure this happens. But if you're not going to be consistent with the greenhouse gas emissions targets, it doesn't really make sense.

And this isn't a handcuff thing either, Speaker. This is something where if they're not able to hit their targets, maybe, like how they did with housing—they just reduced the targets or redefined the targets—it would be a way to hold the government of the day accountable. I know very often when I say things like this, the Conservative government thinks I'm criticizing them, but I'm also criticizing the Liberal government of the past.

Government of the day needs to be accountable to the people of Ontario. It doesn't matter if you have a majority. It doesn't matter if you're able to push things through. We are all here working on behalf of the people who elected us and the people of Ontario, and we have to be accountable to them. They have to be able to hold us to account and be able to say, "This is the commitment you have made going forward."

Honestly, leadership is making difficult decisions. I think there's the opportunity for the government in a leadership role to say, "We disagree with the recommendations. We disagree with what's supposed to happen, because our plan is this," and they can live with the consequences. But when you change the rules and say we don't need a plan anymore, it allows you to sidestep the consequences of it or to try to sidestep.

I think people are catching on. As my mom would say when I was young, you could fool some people sometimes, but you can't fool all people all the time. I think more and more people, as they go into grocery stores and figure out they can't buy as much food and when they're finding a place to live and they're hearing about their friends and neighbours and very often their parents being evicted, they're starting to think, more than a half a decade later, it's gotten worse than it was under the Liberals, unbelievably. How could it have gotten worse? But it has gotten worse.

Those are the recommendations the society had. The number three society concern is titled, "Support, Don't Privatize, Local Distribution Companies."

"Finally, the society notes that while Bill 214 takes important steps in acknowledging the need to expand our low-carbon electricity generation capacity to meet the demands of electrification, significant support needs to be provided to local distribution companies across the province. Ontario's LDCs"—local distribution companies—"face significant infrastructure challenges preparing for the shift towards electrification. Addressing the needed infrastructure upgrades will require significant capital investment, which may prove difficult for some of the province's smaller LDCs.

"The society believes the provincial government should be supporting LDCs through capital investment in infrastructure upgrades to prepare them for electrification. However, a section in the fall economic statement instead raises concern that the solution to LDC infrastructure needs is to encourage privatization of LDC assets.

"Annex 1 of the fall economic statement provides for a tax reduction in the transfer tax on the fair market value of LDC assets for LDCs with more than 30,000 customers from 22% to 0%"—wow. "This change is clearly meant to encourage the privatization and consolidation of local LDCs."

It's no secret that as New Democrats, we don't think the best way to spend public money is to privatize industry and to make sure that the basic costs that the public covers—that we throw in a layer of profit for the private companies. The most glaring example of this, I think, would be long-term care. There is not a person in Ontario excited to be in long-term care, and very few people who come forward to say, "Oh, my goodness, you would not believe how wonderful long-term care has been for myself, for my family member."

We know that one of the reasons here is because, instead of the focus being on care, which happens under public long-term care, the focus becomes on making the profit happen. So if you have fewer PSWs showing up or

if they have less time to spend, there's more profit in the pockets of the person who is the CEO or executive of this company, and that's why these privatized long-term-care companies get to post millions and millions of dollars, while family members, taking care of family who are in long-term care, have to show up every single day to help brush the hair of their parents or to help them get dressed or to feed them or to change them—all things that they were hopefully paying for. God bless these people, because I have gone to long-term care to help take care of my wife's grandparents. God bless family members for showing up because they want to show they care for the family who've taken care of them when they were young. But it shouldn't be a requirement every single day.

I well remember—this is almost eight years ago, seven years ago, before I was elected—I was in North Bay hearing from people in long-term care, and there was a mom who started on the verge of tears but couldn't stop crying, because she had to go every single day in order to ensure that her mom had something to eat in the morning. Her kids would wait for Christmas. She would go there, make sure her mom had food and then afterwards go home so her kids could open her presents. That's not Christmas memories for anybody, and it's difficult already.

I'm very clearly not in favour of this. Especially changing the taxes from 22% to 0% for a private company seems like a gift of just a bag of money handed over there. We didn't have any amendments specifically to this because it had to do with the fall economic statement, but we did speak about how it's important. We do think, as government, they could have brought things forward or made some changes. Very clearly this wasn't about making sure that energy is more affordable. It's a weird thing. There has been a theme since we returned on this, where it's almost like every terrible idea the Liberals had, the Conservatives are like "Hold my beer. We're going to do it worse than that." When you talk about the advertising, and the fortune they're spending on advertising—to taxpayer dollars—to say, "Imagine an Ontario, where this and that happens." People are not imagining that, because they're living a horrible experience right now.

The Liberals had that loophole, and the Conservatives said, "We're going to tie up that loophole. It won't happen again," and then just kept doing it and spent a fortune on it. That's why you see those ads at the Super Bowl and the Oscars and every podcast you listen to—they flood them all. Like my colleague from Niagara Falls had said before—fine, you guys are fundraising all the time. I mean, it's weird that ministers are fundraising. It would be a conflict of interest, which they also agree they don't want to be accountable for. If you're using fundraising money, for sure, do what you want, but you're not. You're using taxpayer dollars. People who are struggling in life—the taxes you're paying are paying for ads to tell you how great your life is, which is absolutely shameful in this.

Similar to this, I'm here because the energy minister from the Liberal Party was in the role when they sold off Hydro One. The public was very strongly against the privatization of Hydro One. They sold off a little more,

and the public was even more outraged. In here, when you have this opportunity to privatize the local distribution companies, it sounds like an echo of what the Liberals had, and they're like, "Oh, that's a good idea." In the same way that when the Liberals passed Bill 115, that only attacked education workers, the Conservative government thought, "Well, we should pass Bill 124 and get all the public sector workers. We'll lose, just like the Liberals did, when it comes to challenges in court, but we'll still do it anyway. And then we'll talk for the next three years about how much we love nurses and can't understand why they're all exiting the market."

It was really, really embarrassing on this. Part of the problem, I think—and there is a theme with this, I mentioned earlier—is that the government very often is rushing through legislation. It feels like they're not listening to the society of professional engineers. These guys are literally professional engineers in the nuclear field with valid concerns brought forward, basically saying, "We cannot support the way it's written." The Conservative government—just like the amendments where they just clicked their pens and stared at the ceiling until everyone was done talking—said, "We don't care, because we have the numbers, and we'll push it through." On this side of the House, we respect the society of professional engineers. Unfortunately, the government side doesn't, Speaker, and that's very unfortunate. Because of that, we can't support this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Further debate?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I rise for a third reading debate on Bill 214. I have got to say, the more I dig into the details of this bill, the more I'm concerned about why the government is fast-tracking passage of this bill. Basically, it centralizes more decision-making power in the minister's office and in cabinet. It reduces the role of technical experts, particularly those at the Independent Electricity System Operator. It undermines the independence of the Ontario Energy Board.

Speaker, you may just say, "Hey, this is an opposition member blowing, you know, opposition to the government here." But I want to quote what Blakes legal firm, a business firm that specializes in energy issues, says: "The proposed changes effectively give the ministry unilateral authority to overturn long-standing system codes, rules and requirements established by the OEB often following broader public stakeholder consultation and/or adjudication."

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So, Speaker, why does this matter? Well, about a year ago at this time, the OEB made a decision to protect gas consumers in the province of Ontario from Enbridge. Basically, they said, "You know what? We don't want gas consumers in the present to be locked into an energy source that's going to be 13% more expensive for them to heat their homes, and we don't want them locked in long-term because they will be holding stranded assets and paying higher prices both in the short-term and the long-term." So what did the government do? They took the unprecedented step for the first time in Ontario history to

overturn an OEB decision, meaning gas prices are going to go up for consumers because they're being forced to subsidize the expansion of fossil gas infrastructure in the province of Ontario.

I don't always agree with the OEB decisions over the years, but I will say the OEB is there to protect consumers, and the government undermined the OEB because they were more interested in protecting the profits of a multi-billion-dollar corporation with a \$19-million CEO than protecting the people of Ontario. As a matter of fact, due to an FOI request, we learned from government's own emails that they were more concerned with protecting the profits of Enbridge than they were keeping costs lower for the people of Ontario.

If they hadn't done that, we would be seeing what's happening in the United States and the EU, where the installation of heat pumps is outpacing gas furnaces because they save people money. I thought this was supposed to be the Affordable Energy Act. Why are they undermining an agency that is there to protect consumers and make energy affordable for them?

We also have the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers raising concerns that the government isn't going to be required to actually consult the technical experts at the IESO in this bill. So when the government says, "We want to have a competitive bid process"—and I agree we should have a competitive bid process; the previous government made some serious mistakes not doing that. If that's the case, then why even in their own bill are they saying they're going to prioritize nuclear power, and in the government's own announcement saying they're going to prioritize nuclear power before having a competitive bidding process? Why are they ramping up gas plants, which are more expensive than wind, solar, nuclear and water power, making our grid 10% dirtier since they were elected in 2018? And because of their plans to ramp up gas

plants, you're going to see an increase in climate pollution of 400% by 2030 and 800% by 2040 in our electricity sector.

So I say to the government: Why not engage in a competitive bid process? Right now, global investors are set to invest \$2 trillion this year alone in the green energy transition. Over half of that investment is in wind and solar because they are now the lowest-cost sources of electricity generation, along with storage. Why aren't we attracting that investment to Ontario?

I want to say that I'm not opposed to nuclear power, I'm not opposed to water power, I'm not opposed to wind and solar, but let's actually have a competitive bid process and let's look at where global capital is making their investments. It's in wind, solar and storage because they're the lowest cost.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): The time for debate has concluded.

Mr. Lecce has moved third reading of Bill 214, An Act to amend various energy statutes respecting long term energy planning, changes to the Distribution System Code and Transition System Code and electric vehicle charging. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

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.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Orders of the day?

Mr. Steve Clark: No further business.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): There being no further business, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1615.

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