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Jeudi
23 octobre 2025

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 23 October 2025

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 23 octobre 2025

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Let us pray.
Prières / Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT MODERNIZATION ACT, 2025

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

Ms. Dunlop moved second reading of the following bill:

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

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

Hon. Jill Dunlop: I will be sharing my time with the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex and the member from Burlington.

Madam Speaker, on May 26, I introduced legislation that would modernize the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act to build a stronger, more resilient province. This act has not undergone a comprehensive update in more than 15 years—until now. I'm pleased to go into more detail about what's contained in the proposed Emergency Management Modernization Act, or EMMA, as we call it. EMMA sets the foundation for a safe, practised and prepared Ontario. It is the blueprint that sets out emergency management roles and responsibilities to protect Ontario—before, during and after emergencies.

We all know the world has changed a lot since 2009. And under the leadership of Premier Ford, our government is ensuring that Ontario's emergency management legislative framework reflects today's realities. The reality is that emergencies caused by flooding, wildland fires, natural disasters, pandemics and cyber attacks are on the rise. Ontario must be protected. In 2024, Ontario had 109 significant emergency events that required 67 Emergency Management Ontario staff deployments. To date in 2025, our province has already had 59 significant emergency

events with the Provincial Emergency Operations Centre being fully activated for 76 days.

I'd like to extend my deepest gratitude to all of our emergency responders, our Ontario Corps partners and volunteers who have risen to the challenge to protect the people of Ontario when disaster strikes. That's why we're taking this necessary step to ensure Ontario is safe—now and in the future.

This draft legislation represents a clear and modern framework, one that is aligned with the complex emergency management landscape and best practices, and incorporates important lessons learned from past emergencies. This legislation proposes a phased implementation approach. In the short term, it includes proposed amendments to enhance provincial emergency management leadership and coordination. And in the medium to long term, it would enhance roles and enable new partnerships for communities, the broader public and private sectors.

The development of this legislation was informed by extensive engagement with our partners. Madam Speaker, collaboration is integral to advancing emergency management. That is why last year the ministry engaged with more than 550 partners on how to modernize the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act. Fourteen in-person sessions and 33 virtual ones were held across Ontario. Simultaneously, my ministry created a discussion guide on the proposed modernization of the act, which was posted to the Ontario Regulatory Registry and the Environmental Registry, asking for feedback, which resulted in 91 written submissions received. Through these engagement efforts, we heard from municipalities, First Nations communities, emergency management organizations, critical infrastructure entities, professional associations and members of the public.

This May, Premier Ford and I held a round table where we heard from dedicated emergency management professionals including Ontario Corps partners, who agreed that this modernized legislation was long overdue. This August, I met with over 100 municipal leaders at AMO, where I received positive feedback on our legislative modernization efforts and a shared commitment to building a more coordinated and resilient emergency management system. These conversations are essential to ensuring that our policies are grounded in local realities and that our approach remains responsive, forward-looking and community-focused.

Our engagement is focused on five key areas:

- (1) The scope of an emergency and emergency management;
- (2) A one-window approach to provincial emergency management coordination;

- (3) Enhancing coordination between government, broader public sector and external partners;
- (4) Improving the consistency, quality and inclusivity of emergency management programs; and
- (5) Reflecting how Ontario works with First Nations in emergency management.

Two clear themes emerged about where our modernization efforts should be focused. The first was a need for enhanced provincial leadership and coordination in emergency management. The second was a need for communities to have strengthened and tailored capacities for all components of their emergency management responsibilities. Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to let you know that the proposed modernized EMCPA responds to what we heard.

On the first point, allow me to summarize how this proposed legislation would strengthen provincial leadership and coordination in emergency management through amendments to the current act. First, it would define emergency management as organized activities to: prevent, mitigate, prepare for, respond to and recover from emergencies. This amendment will ensure a consistent interpretation across the province about the scope of emergency management, provide clarity to partners and better alignment with best practices.

As well, Madam Speaker, it would set out the purposes of the act including:

- (1) Providing emergency management to Ontarians to safeguard their health, safety, welfare and property;
- (2) Facilitating coordination with municipalities, Indigenous communities, organizations in the public and private sectors, federal, provincial, territorial and international governments; and
- (3) Providing for emergency powers during a declaration of emergency.

This change reflects how emergency management relies on strong collaboration between the province, communities and organizations. It also ensures a consistent interpretation about the aim of emergency management in Ontario.

Next, if passed, this legislation would identify that the minister is responsible for providing leadership and coordination of emergency management across the province. To fulfill this role, the legislation sets out significant aspects of the minister's powers, duties and functions for the purposes of this act. Some of these include: monitoring and assessing hazards, risks, vulnerabilities, resources and facilities in Ontario; reviewing, assessing and advising on the development and implementation of emergency management programs and plans; coordinating and delivering training or emergency management exercises; and overseeing the coordination of the deployment and use of Ontario Corps.

Next, the act would continue to enable the Commissioner of Emergency Management to operate under the minister's direction. These amendments would provide clarity that the Commissioner of Emergency Management is responsible for directing the operations of the provincial emergency management organization—Emergency Man-

agement Ontario—which enshrines into law the one window for provincial emergency management coordination.

0910

Madam Speaker, let me tell you about the great work that Emergency Management Ontario does. This organization is responsible for:

- maintaining situational awareness across the province and assisting in deploying resources and or personnel where required;
- proactively collecting and monitoring data to inform emergency management planning and response activities, including hazards, risks and potential impacts on people;
- coordinating across provincial ministries and partners to inform government decision-making;
- enhancing partnerships and facilitating resource-sharing; and
- supporting our communities across Ontario through tailored training and public education programs.

In times of emergency, the province, through Emergency Management Ontario, maintains extensive emergency management capacity coordinated through the Provincial Emergency Operations Centre, or the PEOC. Staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year, the PEOC constantly monitors emerging and evolving situations across the entire province. The ministry's network of dedicated field officers stand at the ready, at a moment's notice, to provide support and guidance to communities. This year alone, our field officers have been deployed 204 times to 16 incidents, where they supported communities like my own community of Orillia, Sandy Lake First Nation and Peterborough, just to name a few.

But field officers are just one part of our response. In December last year, Premier Ford made history by creating Ontario Corps, mobilizing one of Canada's first volunteer corps for emergency preparedness and response—and I hope you have all signed up to be Ontario Corps members.

Ontario Corps is a network of ordinary citizens, skilled partners and supporters that can quickly mobilize to provide support and critical services such as clearing roadways, delivering food, offering shelter and ensuring the most vulnerable have the help they need during emergencies. They are the proud embodiment of Ontario's unshakable spirit: resilient, compassionate and always ready to rise to the challenge to protect Ontario when disaster strikes.

Through Ontario Corps, we are uniting Ontarians with one singular mission: to stand together as one team in times of crisis. Whether it's a severe storm, a flood, wildland fire or any other emergency, Ontario is ready. That's because our government believes in creating a culture of readiness, a culture that empowers people and communities to help each other during our greatest hours of need.

This proposed legislation would enshrine Ontario Corps into law as a key provincial resource and capability to be deployed during an emergency, including personnel, services, equipment, materials and facilities, coordinated by the Commissioner of Emergency Management.

And to ensure Ontario Corps and its partners have the necessary supports and capabilities they need to protect Ontario, our government has made a historic \$110-million investment, \$10 million of which is going directly to our 13 Ontario Corps partners. Because of this investment, we can now mobilize specialized equipment and personnel anywhere across the province within 24 hours. No matter how big or small, communities can access flood mitigation barriers, drones, water pumps, chainsaws, air purifiers and other supplies to help their recovery and relief efforts.

The recent ice storm in communities like mine, as well as in Gravenhurst and Peterborough, and the response to support communities impacted by wildland fires exemplifies the positive impact of Ontario Corps. I'll take a moment to share my personal experience on the ice storm a little later, but let me take a moment to talk about Ontario's fire season and how my ministry worked in coordination with my colleagues at the Ministry of Natural Resources. This summer, my ministry supported the safe evacuation of and provided wraparound supports for over 2,200 people affected by wildland fires in Manitoba and over 6,000 people from northern Ontario. Through Ontario Corps, we were able to provide 182 generators, 75 air scrubbers, 705 air purifiers, 440 N95 masks and close to 50,000 infant care supplies to northern communities affected by the wildland fires. Ontario Corps members were also able to provide first aid support to evacuated community members staying in Peterborough and hygiene kits at several host sites across southern Ontario.

I have a clear message to everyone here and to all Ontarians: No matter what political stripe you are, consider signing up to be part of Ontario Corps and encourage others to do the same. Now more than ever, we need to stand together and not divided, to protect Ontario and support the safety of the communities, our friends and family that we cherish so deeply. I know we all share a deep and profound love of our province, and in our hearts, we understand that when push comes to shove, the people of this province will do whatever they can to help their neighbours. This proposed legislation is a win for all of us and the people of Ontario, and it's just the right thing to do.

So how do we make it all happen? Well, also included in the proposed legislation is a key responsibility for the Commissioner of Emergency Management to coordinate a provincial emergency management planning framework that describes how the government coordinates all aspects of emergency management at the provincial level. This framework would be developed with provincial ministries, partners, and issued by the Lieutenant Governor in Council and reviewed every five years.

All provincial emergency management plans under the proposed bill must conform with this planning framework. This would enhance clarity, accountability and coordination in provincial emergency management programs. This will make sure that the planning framework is reflective of emerging best practices and is incorporating lessons learned from past emergencies.

This planning framework will also work alongside new requirements for provincial ministries to fulfill prescribed emergency management functions to be set out in future regulations. These changes will support a stronger and more coordinated provincial role before, during and after emergencies.

The proposed legislation would also strengthen provincial leadership by outlining the duties and functions of the Cabinet Advisory Committee on Emergency Management. This committee would perform any advisory duties that the executive council directs with a report into cabinet annually, at minimum.

Madam Speaker, we know the communities in Ontario are not the same, and one size does not fit all. Municipalities need to have stronger and tailored capacities for all components of their emergency management responsibilities, and that's why the legislation would enhance community capacity through robust and scalable emergency management programs.

Currently, all municipalities, regardless of size or capacity, have the same emergency management program requirements. Every municipality in Ontario is required to have an emergency management program, including emergency response plans, and to make those available to the public.

This can be a burden to our smaller municipalities. We recognize that in smaller municipalities, the same people may wear many, many hats. And we all know that some municipalities in the same geographical area with similar hazards and shared services are already working together to plan for emergencies. The proposed legislation would enable municipalities who want to work together to establish a joint emergency management program and plan. This would reduce duplication, help better manage resource constraints and provide flexibility for municipal emergency management programs based on need and capacity. It is a move away from the one-size-fits-all approach and ensures that we are meeting communities where they are at. Madam Speaker, if the legislation is passed, we will work with municipalities to develop the necessary regulations to implement these changes.

Another important area that the proposed legislation seeks to address is regarding municipal emergency declarations.

First, we propose to clarify that a municipality may request provincial assistance from the province to support preparing for and responding to an emergency without issuing an emergency declaration. This includes the deployment of Ontario Corps capabilities. To be clear, an emergency declaration would not be required to deploy Ontario Corps to help a community in need. This clarity would ensure municipalities are using the most efficient levers to support their emergency planning and response.

0920

Secondly, the proposal would ensure greater accountability from municipalities to establish preconditions for a municipal head of council in declaring an emergency. This includes a requirement that municipalities establish and approve an emergency management plan that describes the

actions the head of council is authorized to take in order to protect property and the health, safety and welfare of their community.

Prior to declaring an emergency, a head of council would be required to consult their approved emergency management plan and be satisfied that the actions outlined in the plan require an emergency declaration. Once declared, the head of council would then regularly report to the public about the emergency declaration until it has been terminated.

They would also be required to report to their municipal council every 30 days until declaration has terminated on why it is necessary for it to remain in effect. A written report must also be submitted to the minister on the emergency declaration.

Madam Speaker, a clear process is critical to our success when every second counts. These proposals would clarify the process for municipalities declaring an emergency while making it clear the declaration is not required to seek and receive provincial assistance.

Finally, I will speak about the proposed authority in the bill to establish regulations to designate and set requirements for provincially regulated entities that operate or provide critical infrastructure.

As Ontario grows through bold policy decisions that attract new investments and strengthen our economy, we must act swiftly to protect and modernize the critical infrastructure that underpins our province. It is the backbone of our province, and its resiliency demands our attention now.

Roads, energy systems, water systems and communications can all become vulnerable. Ontario's critical infrastructure operators face the same risks from natural disasters and cyber attacks as we all do. We must learn from past experiences like the 2003 blackout or the 2022 Rogers outage. That's why we need strong, thoughtful legislation to safeguard these vital assets.

This legislation, if passed, will allow for regulations to identify these provincially regulated operators and ensure they meet emergency management program and planning requirements and keep them current and updated. This could include, for example, having an emergency management plan, identifying critical services required for business continuity and conducting a risk assessment.

If the legislation is passed, we will work with critical infrastructure operators to identify designated entities and develop the necessary regulations to implement these changes. Let's ensure our government's investments are resilient, secure and ready to withstand future emergencies.

Finally, I want to take a moment to focus on my first-hand experiences on the ground. As the first Minister of Emergency Preparedness and Response, I have travelled throughout the province and witnessed first-hand how our government's modernization of the sector is creating a more practised, prepared and protected Ontario.

I was appointed in March 2025, and 10 days later the ice storm hit, not only in my area, but in that of many of my colleagues in the chamber. I awoke to cracking trees on my property and power outages. I personally ex-

perienced nine days without power. I know some of our areas were even longer. I want to thank all of the public utilities that came to help out all of our areas impacted by the ice storm. There were 31 utilities from Ontario that came to Muskoka, to Orillia, to the Kawarthas and to the Peterborough area to assess—and I know they were a sight for sore eyes at that time, to come to our area. We also welcomed utilities from New Brunswick, from Manitoba and from Saskatchewan coming in to help at times of need, which was really important.

What I saw first-hand in my own community was the partners that I regularly work with in this role, and had previously when I was at the college, really come together to support our community day in, day out. Our firefighters not only were dealing with the ice storm in the area, but we also had, on the second day, lightning hit our waste water plant. So you can imagine the turmoil that was happening in our own community—but everyone coming together to support one another.

At that time in the season, there were still snowplows on the roads, or plows on the trucks, and they were using snowplows to clean the debris off of the roads, it was that bad in the communities. But everyone came together. It was absolutely incredible.

I also toured some of the other areas. I remember, when we were leaving Orillia, we were coming through Beaverton and that was the first place that had power. We were like, "Great; let's stop for a Tim Hortons coffee." Then we realized it's cash only. I happened to have \$40 with me, and while we're getting coffee—there was a gas station right next to us—"You know what? We don't know what we're driving into. We better get gas while we're here." So, for \$40, we were able to get four coffees and put some gas in the car and make it to Peterborough.

It really shows the importance of having our 72-hour kits ready, that people are prepared. I think that is so important and something that I strive to ensure, that we're getting that message out to folks. It's really important. I hope that everybody here is prepared for that. I know that back during Emergency Preparedness Week I gave out educational materials to everyone in the House. I hope you took that back to your constit offices and are aware that you can download that information as well and use that when you're out in the communities at events. To share that information is so important.

I also saw, not only with my own community coming together but with Ontario Corps being deployed to my area, the important work that they were doing. We had Team Rubicon all over the devastated areas, helping to clean up debris. I was speaking with one household and I said, "What was it like when someone knocked on your door and said, 'I'm here to help you and I'm going to clear that tree off of your lawn because it is blocking your car in?'" And some people said, "The first question I asked was, 'How much it was.' They said, 'No, we're here to help you.' The second was, 'It was like an angel came to my door.' How amazing is that, that in a time of need there are people out there coming and helping us?"

We also had Georgian Bay search and rescue, another one of our Ontario Corps partners, doing door-to-door wellness checks. I was with those folks at one point. We were knocking on people's doors and letting them know that there were actually warming centres set up in town; that you could go, even if it was just to charge your devices, to grab a hot drink and to chat with other people, that these services were being supported to the community and were available. Getting that news out to people was important, and there were so many other Ontario Corps partners who were not only helping my area in Orillia but were also helping up in the Muskokas and the Kawarthas as well—credible people.

In total, Ontario Corps volunteers provided over 6,000 hours of support during the ice storm, directly helping thousand of Ontarians in a time of immense need.

As I mentioned earlier in my remarks, I have travelled across Ontario, meeting with First Nations partners and Ontario Corps volunteers, including the north, travelling from cities like Thunder Bay and Timmins to places like Oliver Paipoonge, Connmee, O'Connor and Neebing, and what I have seen makes me so proud. Because of our government's historic \$110-million investment, communities are receiving new and updated resources such as generators, chainsaws, fire pumps, fuel supplies, mobile shelters, woodchippers, sand-bagging machines, drones and so much more. I experienced new emergency training programs for residents, First Nations partners, young women and front-line emergency personnel, equipping people and the next generation with the skills they need in the event of emergencies like wildland fires or flooding.

Speaker, when you reflect on the work my ministry is doing, it directly supports the progress our government is making by creating pathways for many people, especially young people, to seek out employment in front-line and emergency services. Just yesterday, I had a chance to see first-hand how we're inspiring our youth at this year's Dreamer Day, which was truly inspiring.

If you've never been to Dreamer Day, there were 4,000 young women from across the province. I met specifically with a group from North Bay early in the morning and we met with the incredible women at our emergency preparedness and response booth. Some of our on-the-ground women were there talking about what their careers are now and what led them to this point. We met with Toronto paramedics and Toronto Fire, and they spoke to the young women too about careers in public and emergency management and all the different professions that you can have within those different careers—so incredible to see. I hope that some of those 4,000 girls yesterday had a chance to stop at our booth and are now thinking about a career in emergency management.

0930

One other thing I would like to tell you about is an opportunity that I had twice this summer. I was invited to Camp Molly. I don't know if anyone here has heard of Camp Molly. If you haven't, you need to check it out online and hopefully it's come to your communities. The first one I participated in was at Lac Seul First Nation. This

one was held through one of our Ontario Corps partners, the Independent First Nations Alliance, and it was specifically for Indigenous girls. They had women firefighters coming in to help with the girls, and they definitely put me through the ropes that day. I put on the gear and the tank, and I had to crawl through the maze, and with the girls as well, we did auto extrication.

But to see how the empowerment of these young women—the first day, they're checking in, they're getting all their gear and everyone's a little nervous because they don't know anybody there. Within the next day, they were up there dancing; they were having a great time together, really making great connections, but also empowering young women to get into emergency management, public safety and the different careers that you can have within those areas.

Camp Molly also came to my area in October, which was very fortunate. The Premier was also in the area too, so we had a stop-by to visit with the girls, and they were supported by our Orillia Fire Department, Oro-Medonte fire department, Ramara, Rama—all of the surrounding fire departments coming in to help out with that. It's an incredible opportunity for young women, 15 to 18, to look at careers in the firefighting profession. So if it's something that pops up in your community at any time—I know there was 10 camps this summer—I definitely encourage young women to get into that.

With that, I think I'm going to hand it over to my amazing PA, who—I did have the chance to visit your community this year, where we presented some of the community emergency preparedness grants and saw how that's really impacting your communities—not only yours, mine, but many of ours in this House.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I recognize the member from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex.

Mr. Steve Pinsonneault: It is my honour to speak today on this proposed legislation alongside Minister Dunlop. That was an amazing real-life experience which shows the importance of this ministry. Thank you for that, Minister Dunlop.

As Minister Dunlop highlighted, the government first announced this historic investment of \$110 million over three years to enhance emergency management in Ontario in the 2023 budget. We are committed to protecting Ontario by strengthening our emergency management capabilities. We want to have the right tools, partnerships and resources in place to hit the ground running when an emergency strikes.

Since we announced that historic \$110-million investment, the government has made incredible progress by:

- creating Ontario Corps;
- launching the provincial exercise program;
- working with First Nation partners to make emergency management training more culturally appropriate;
- implementing the Provincial Emergency Management Strategy and Action Plan and keeping our commitment to transparency by publishing two annual reports outlining progress against its goals and actions;

—preparing for a new Ontario emergency preparedness and response headquarters—and the list goes on.

One thing I'm particularly proud of is the targeted investments this government has made in local community emergency management through the Community Emergency Preparedness Grant. Like our proposed new legislation, the CEPG Program is part of our work to modernize emergency management and support community readiness across the province.

Madam Speaker, the first round of these grants, announced in 2023, provided \$5 million to 113 municipalities and organizations across Ontario to ensure they have the equipment, resources and training in place to help them prepare and respond to emergencies. The grant was open to communities with populations under 100,000 people; Indigenous communities and organizations, including tribal councils and other Indigenous service organizations; as well as non-governmental organizations with mandates or responsibilities in emergency management.

Grant recipients received between \$5,000 and \$50,000 for expenses or activities that promote emergency preparedness. For example, the funds could be put towards purchasing equipment such as sandbagging machines to keep flood waters from rising and damaging homes; generators to keep electricity running in communities impacted by prolonged power outages; thermal imaging drones to help contain wildland fires and assist in search and rescue efforts; and radio systems to communicate in areas without cell reception. Additionally, some recipients directed the funding towards emergency training to build up the local capacity and response.

I would like to take the time today to highlight some of the wonderful communities of Ontario and what they have used their funding for. Starting in the north, 26 recipients in northeastern Ontario received funding, including the city of Timmins, which received just over \$48,000 to purchase a sandbagging machine, a drone, a generator and to conduct training and address annual flooding along the Mattagami River.

The town of Blind River received more than \$46,000 to purchase a portable generator to power the communications tower and the public works facility and to develop emergency preparedness education material for their community.

Twenty recipients in northwestern Ontario received funding, including the Bimose Tribal Council, located in Kenora, which received over \$43,000 to establish an emergency operations centre to serve its 10 member communities, equipped with sleep centre kits, air purifiers and other supplies to help displaced residents during the emergencies.

The Vermilion Bay District Lions Club, located between Kenora and Dryden, received just over \$29,000 to purchase and install a backup generator to power the club's refrigerators, freezers, hot water tank and stoves. All of these items can be used by the residents in the event of an emergency.

Thirty-three recipients in southeastern Ontario received funding including the township of East Hawkesbury,

which received \$50,000 to install a generator at the community centre to ensure residents can access washrooms, warming centres and charging stations during emergencies. In the event of an emergency, the community will have one more area to welcome residents and to keep people safe. If your power goes out, your plumbing is shut off, you're unable to charge your cellphone and electronics—what would you do? Just think of how this space will boost the morale of the residents and give them hope during times of crisis.

Moving to the township of Oro-Medonte, which received just over \$37,000 to purchase two fully equipped cargo trailers to transport emergency equipment and act as a mobile emergency command and rehabilitation stations for emergency workers.

Thirty-four recipients in southwestern Ontario received funding, including the township of Adelaide Metcalfe, which received over \$15,000 to purchase a thermal imaging drone. This technology will make it easier, safer and more efficient to conduct search-and-rescue operations for missing or lost persons during low-light hours or adverse weather conditions.

The township of Middlesex Centre received just over \$47,000 to purchase a quickly deployable inflatable shelter that could be used during large-scale community emergencies. It can act as a cooling or warming station, a mobile vaccination centre, an emergency services centre and more.

As you can see, Madam Speaker, funding was tailored to the unique needs of the community and organization, of all shapes and sizes, with one common thread—to protect Ontario and its hard-working people and businesses. Like the legislative amendments we are proposing to the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act, these grants help empower communities to enhance their own emergency preparedness and response capabilities to keep people safe.

Of course, Ontario will always be there to support our local municipalities or First Nations. This government is stepping up to ensure that communities and organizations across the province have the resources to help augment their own local emergency management efforts so that we can respond more quickly and more efficiently to the emergencies of tomorrow.

Madam Speaker, this program was so successful that last fall, we invested another \$5 million for a second round of funding to 114 additional recipients across the province.

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The second round of investment means that even more recipients can buy critical equipment and deliver essential emergency management training. It is ensuring that communities and organizations across Ontario have the resources they need and are ready for anything that comes their way, from wildland fires to flooding and tornadoes.

Madam Speaker, please allow me to take a few moments to highlight some of the ways that communities are putting the second round of funding to good use.

Once again, I'll begin in the north. Northeastern Ontario communities received 45 grants. That includes the

township of Hilton, which is receiving just over \$47,000 to buy cots, blankets, emergency food kits and for its emergency warming centre to accommodate displaced residents during extreme cold events.

Northwestern Ontario communities received 24 grants. That includes the township of Ignace, which received \$50,000 to build its fire department's capacity to respond quickly and effectively to wildland fires. It is investing in training, as well as buying equipment such as generators, pumps and chainsaws.

Southeastern Ontario communities received 29 grants. That includes the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne, which received \$50,000 to purchase a sandbagging machine and solar signage to help redirect traffic away from hazard sites.

Southwestern Ontario communities received 16 grants. That includes the city of Niagara Falls, which received \$50,000 to buy a generator for one of their more rural fire stations so it can continue to provide service during power outages during storms.

So far, over the past two years we have provided \$10 million to 227 recipients to proactively invest in protecting their communities.

The return on investment for these targeted grants has been incredible. Many municipalities have told us personally that they have been transformative, especially those in rural and remote areas of our province. That's why we launched a third round in September. We are investing an additional \$5 million to help smaller communities invest in things like cargo trailers, drones, sandbags, skills training and other resources to shore up capabilities before an emergency strikes.

The ministry hosted information sessions to walk potential applicants through the process and answer questions about the program. The response was great. We had over 100 participants attend and learn more about the grant. Of course, we are making sure that every community is accounted for, nobody is left behind. That is why this round is open to communities and organizations that have not received funding from the previous rounds. For the first two rounds, we received 800 applicants, with 227 receiving funding. Applicants who were not successful in the previous rounds can also apply for round 3.

We recognize that each community has unique needs, so the range of eligible expenses includes: equipment such as generators, drones, flatbed trailers and air filters; supplies like sandbags, food kits, cots and public education material such as fridge magnets and brochures; training such as exercises, first aid, donation management and specialized equipment training; and services like emergency plan development, risk assessment and equipment installation.

To promote accountability and transparency, all recipients need to report back to us and demonstrate that the outcomes are being met as described in the application and the project has increased emergency preparedness capacity. Recipients must also provide an expense summary detailing the actual expenses against the proposed budget. Any unspent funds should be returned to the taxpayer. If a

recipient does not report back this information it may impact its ability to receive funding through any future iterations of this program, so it's quite an important step.

Applications for round 3 close on October 28, so just a few short days away. The ministry's evaluation team is ready to review so we can get approved grants out the door in a timely fashion.

Madam Speaker, if my fellow members would like to learn more about this important program or see details about which communities have already received funding, they can do so at ontario.ca/emergencygrant.

Emergencies and natural disasters disrupt economic activity, both during the acute emergency itself and in the years following. It doesn't matter what political stripe we are—we can all agree—emergency preparedness is crucial for ensuring safety, minimizing risk and losses, and facilitating an effective response during crisis. Our efforts to prepare ultimately save lives and aid recovery.

That's why the government has laid out a plan to protect Ontario, no matter what comes our way. By making targeted investments in local emergency capacity and response through the Community Emergency Preparedness Grant, Ontario Corps, proposed legislative changes to the EMCPA and through the many other ways this government is prioritizing effective emergency management approaches, we are ensuring that Ontario is ready for any emergency.

In conclusion: As we enter into the colder months, I would like to take a moment and remind everyone that safety starts with the individual. Before an emergency happens, it's important to make sure you have a plan in place for your household in the event of a power outage or if you need to evacuate due to flooding or any other disaster.

When an emergency strikes, it is possible that some members of your household may not be home. If the network is down, you may be unable to call or text your loved ones, you'll want to have an emergency communications plan in place. Talk to your household about backup ways to get a hold of each other if this scenario arises. You may agree on one or two out-of-town contacts who live far enough away that their networks will not be impacted by the emergency affecting your home. These out-of-town contacts could help you share information if you are unable to connect directly. It is a simple thing, but it's something you'll be so grateful you thought of in advance in the event of an actual emergency.

It is also a good idea to ensure that the household has an emergency kit with essentials to stay self-sufficient for up to three days. Whether that kit is for your home or your car, make sure it includes things like water to stay hydrated during heat waves, emergency blankets to stay warm during colder weather, non-perishable food items and activities for the kids.

Madam Speaker, it is important that we all do our part to ensure we're safe, practised and prepared, because at the end of the day, safety is our collective responsibility and the work that we do today will determine how ready the next generation of Ontarians will be.

Thank you for your time and attention on this critical work of our ministry. Thank you, Minister Dunlop, for bringing this legislation forward.

I would now like to turn it over to MPP Pierre.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I recognize the member from Burlington.

Ms. Natalie Pierre: Good morning, everyone. I'm happy to rise and join my colleagues in supporting second reading of the Emergency Management Modernization Act, 2025. I want to thank in particular my colleague the Minister of Emergency Preparedness and Response for all of her hard work.

If passed, this bill would modernize and improve our emergency management protocols, ensuring the safety and well-being of people and communities across Ontario. By amending both the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act and the Ministry of Community and Social Services Act, the minister's bill would help to keep Ontario safe and better prepared for any emergency. The proposed changes are informed by valuable feedback from stakeholders, best practices in emergency management and lessons learned from past emergencies.

The Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act and its regulations have not been comprehensively updated in more than 15 years. If we're going to be ready for the challenges of the future, we need modern regulations that reflect current realities. The government's emergency management partners, including municipalities, have called for modernization of the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act. They told us that we need to address gaps in the framework, including the need for enhanced clarity in roles and responsibilities, and comprehensive programs that address the full scope of emergency management in today's fast-changing world.

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There were two primary themes identified through these consultations. The first is the need for enhanced provincial leadership and coordination in emergency management, and the second is the need for communities to have enhanced capacities. Speaker, with the increasingly complex emergency management landscape caused by risks such as extreme weather events, wildland fires and cyber attacks, it's more important than ever for us to ensure that Ontario families are safe, protected and prepared.

Speaker, this legislation, if passed, would strengthen the province's ability to prevent, mitigate, prepare for, respond to and recover from emergencies. The legislative proposals, if passed, would do the following:

- strengthen provincial leadership and coordination of emergency management;
- establish the purpose of emergency management in Ontario and define emergency management;
- mandate executive oversight of the coordination of provincial emergency management;
- emphasize that the minister is responsible for providing leadership and coordination of emergency management across the province;
- enable the Commissioner of Emergency Management to direct Emergency Management Ontario and co-

ordinate the implementation of the provincial emergency management planning framework; and

—facilitate enhanced clarity, accountability and co-ordination in provincial emergency management programs.

Speaker, members of this House should know that the minister's bill, if passed, would also:

—support the enhancement of community capacity in emergency management;

—enable flexibility regarding requirements for municipal emergency management programs and plans based on needs and capacity;

—allow two or more municipalities to voluntarily establish a joint emergency management program;

—clarify the process to ensure accountability of municipal emergency declarations under the act;

—provide clarity on municipal requests for provincial assistance to support the preparation or response to an emergency;

—identify that Ontario recognizes and supports community-led emergency management; and

—allow regulations to designate and set requirements for any provincially regulated entity prescribed as critical infrastructure.

Speaker, the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services is proposing through this bill its own amendments to the Ministry of Community and Social Services Act. These amendments would, if passed, improve the government's ability to provide more uniform, timely and binding direction to our ministry-funded service providers during extraordinary situations.

With an estimated budget of more than \$20 billion this year alone, MCCSS is the third-largest provincial ministry by expenditure. The ministry provides critical supports for Ontarians who need it most. These supports range from accommodations for individuals with developmental disabilities to emergency shelters for women and their dependents who have experienced violence. That means we provide funding for vital services, which help to support millions of Ontarians in communities large and small across the province.

Speaker, we take our responsibilities to these support programs very seriously, and it's critically important that we keep them running even in emergencies and extraordinary circumstances.

In the past, the ministry has been limited in its ability to direct our service providers during and following emergency situations. We do have some existing authorities that enable us to provide specific types of direction to entities funded by the ministry, but there are some gaps and inconsistencies. This could lead to delays in issuing direction, which in turn could create confusion about requirements and compliance issues.

The disruption caused by a public emergency could put many people at risk, such as women who have experienced violence—and their children. Without these proposed amendments, the ministry would not have clear legislative authority to issue uniform and binding direction to all MCCSS-funded entities during and following urgent situ-

ations. This means that the ministry would have to issue non-binding guidance.

Our proposed legislative change would allow us to issue more timely direction to ministry-funded service providers in certain situations. Those situations would be spelled out in regulations, but they could include extraordinary events such as extreme weather, natural disasters or interruptions to essential services.

A practical example might be a flood that impacts a ministry-funded group home residence for adults with developmental disabilities or a ministry-funded residence for women and families fleeing violence. The residents in these facilities might need to be relocated to another location due to unsafe living conditions.

If the flooding was more widespread and affected multiple ministry-funded service providers, then the additional direction from the ministry could help support the safety of residents and the safety of staff by providing a faster and better coordinated response. This response would provide clear direction to funded service providers on the relocation of individuals. It could also identify and leverage potential resources in other communities, facilitate community partnerships and identify any broader provincial supports available to those affected by the flood.

A second practical example of how our proposed amendments, if passed, would help keep Ontarians safer would be in the event of a power outage at a ministry-funded, multi-service agency. A sustained power outage in an agency that delivers multiple services could require a coordinated response from the ministry.

I say that, Speaker, because some services may be covered by clear legislative requirements during extraordinary circumstances while others may not. In those cases, enabling the ministry to issue binding direction to ministry-funded service providers in extraordinary circumstances would allow us to take action in a timelier manner.

The proposal also sets out measures to deter and mitigate non-compliance with the minister's direction. That includes the power to issue a compliance order if an entity fails to comply with a directive, or even to reduce or terminate funding for failure to comply with a compliance order.

In recent years, other sectors in Ontario that support vulnerable populations, such as long-term-care and retirement homes, have developed more nimble, comprehensive and coordinated emergency management approaches. This has allowed these sectors to more effectively respond to emergencies or other extraordinary circumstances. The proposed amendments to the Ministry of Community and Social Services Act are along those lines.

Since the proposal will be set out in regulation, we will be using the regulatory registry posting to gather feedback on this in the future. Our community partners will be able to share feedback on the draft regulations when they are posted to the Ontario Regulatory Registry.

Speaker, our government is strongly committed to protecting Ontario and ensuring that our province is strong

and resilient. The minister's bill would strengthen Ontario by modernizing our emergency management protocols to ensure that families and communities are safe, practised and prepared. I therefore urge this House to give speedy and unanimous passage to the minister's bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Hsu: My question is kind of a very general question for the government. If we're planning ahead over the next years and decades for emergencies, it seems to me that you should at least mention some of the sources of the emergencies that are coming, and one of them which is not mentioned is climate change. The climate is changing. One of the things that's doing, for example, is slowing weather patterns. So the heat waves last longer; the rain lasts longer. So you're going to get more heat waves and more chances of flooding and more chances for wildland fires.

My question to the government is, why didn't they talk a little bit about the sources of emergencies in the coming decades?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you to the member for that question, which I think is a very important one, and which is why Premier Ford recognized the importance and made this a full standing ministry on its own: to ensure that we are protecting our communities—and why we are investing in our smaller communities to ensure that they are prepared for upcoming activities.

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As you mentioned, we've seen an increase in forest fires, in flooding, things like ice storms. I know my colleague from the Muskoka area, MPP Smith, saw a huge storm back in November or December of last year. A lot of chaos happened in that area then, and then again with the ice storm, so recognizing that these events are increasing—increasing in severity as well—is why the Premier ensured that we have this standing ministry to help support our communities and to also protect all of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions?

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: My question is to the minister. Thank you very much for your remarks, and I would like to thank you for your leadership during this past ice storm where it was happening in your own riding but also having to deal with what was going on across the province. Thank you.

My question is, looking at the legislation, why is it that the government seems to need legislation to codify Emergency Management Ontario as the one window of emergency coordination and response? Could you respond to that? Why are we doing that?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you to the member for your question and for your compliment on how we dealt with the ice storm across Ontario.

This act is important because it hasn't been modernized in 15 years, and a lot of things have changed in that time. We did consultations. We had over 550 respondents. We heard from municipalities, from stakeholders, the importance of, when an emergency happens in their area,

having that one-window approach so that they're not having to contact several different ministries, but their CMC can then coordinate with the Provincial Emergency Operations Centre, where we can then coordinate with those ministries through our ministry. Just helping with the ease—when you're dealing with an emergency time matters and having that one-window approach and that one contact will help ensure that we're helping much quicker.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions?

M. Guy Bourgouin: Je remercie la ministre pour ses commentaires. J'écoutes attentivement.

Moi, j'ai été élu en 2018. Puis depuis 2018, depuis que j'ai été élu—je sais qu'elle en a parlé avant parce qu'elle a été élue beaucoup plus longtemps que moi. C'est la députée de Nickel Belt qui a amené souvent à votre attention, au gouvernement, que le 911, qu'il y a beaucoup de régions dans le Nord—vous oubliez que dans le Nord, il y a beaucoup de places où on n'a pas de signal de 911.

Puis c'est bien beau de moderniser, mais je n'ai pas entendu dans vos allocutions de dire—allez-vous faire certain que, partout en Ontario, partout dans les régions du Nord, on a accès au 911? Parce que même au point où on parle, il y a bien des points morts où on ne peut même pas appeler s'il y a une urgence, accident, le « ice storm », des feux de forêt. Ça met du monde dans des situations très dangereuses. C'est quoi votre plan pour le 911 pour faire certain que, partout dans le nord de l'Ontario, on ait accès au 911 pour protéger nos êtres chers?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you to the member for that question—obviously, a very, very important one. I know you have talked to the Solicitor General about that and brought that concern to his attention.

Obviously, during ice storms, snowstorms or any power outages and having lack of communication in any area of the province, we see how difficult that is. And I hear that from our CMCs that I have visited in smaller communities.

So I encourage you to continue working with the Solicitor General. I will as well, expressing the concerns that I hear from municipalities to help ensure that we have communications across our province.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Questions?

Ms. Lee Fairclough: Thank you very much for your remarks this morning.

My question is really about some of the implementation around this and what specific funding will be provided to municipalities to meet the obligations under this new provincial emergency planning framework.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you to the member for that question, a very important one—and the work that we're doing with our municipalities, with my field officers who are on the ground working to ensure that we're helping with the training of the municipalities.

We have a \$110-million grant that we provide to municipalities. We've had two rounds of that grant. We're actually in the third round right now, and I would encourage municipalities of 100,000 or less who have not

received the grant yet to please apply for it. I've been with several of our members here to see the impact that that grant is making on municipalities, having things like backup generators for our warming centres, chainsaw equipment, things to clean up debris. We see some municipalities who have coordinated with their local police services as well to have drones, which are so important in many different ways.

But working directly with those municipalities to ensure—and we heard from them directly; this is going to make their lives much easier, when they're able to coordinate with other municipalities on their emergency management plans, and really looking at, rather than the one-size-fits-all for municipalities, but working for specific needs.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions?

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I appreciate this. This is well overdue and well needed. My concern is that we need to use the words “climate disasters.” I talked to the insurance companies today. They said 40 years ago, there were 17 climate disasters. Now there's 130 or 113 every year in this past decade, so we have to recognize that there is a difference. Tell me what you are doing to adapt and mitigate so we can prevent these emergencies and adapt to prepare so that the damage isn't as bad as it has been when it comes to flooding and fires etc.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you to the member for that question. Our slogan at the Ministry of Emergency Preparedness and Response is, “A Safe, Practised and Prepared Ontario.” That's what our officers are doing on the ground—ensuring and working with our municipalities on education and preparing them for any upcoming disasters. I know I've participated in some of those training exercises, which are so important. We know these things may happen. We're better to be prepared ahead of time so that we know how to work with those.

Something I did recognize, my take-away from the ice storm, being the new kid on the block in the ministry, was ensuring that our municipal leaders understand their role in this as well, which is why we went back to AMO in the spring and said that we think it's really important that we do a presentation to our municipal leaders so that they recognize that the PEOC—the Provincial Emergency Operations Centre—is able to provide these services and supports to a municipality in a time of crisis, being able to deploy Ontario Corps if needed, and also understanding that they don't need to declare an emergency to enable those supports to happen.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): There's time for one more quick question.

Mr. Deepak Anand: To the minister, my question is very simple. While drafting this bill, you spoke to the municipalities, First Nations and other management partners. What was their feedback for this bill? What they wanted in this bill, can you share with the House, please?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you to my colleague for that question. I've got 20 seconds left, so I would say the big take-away from those conversations and the feedback we had was on a one-window approach. When there is an

emergency and seconds matter, hours matter, we need to be able to coordinate everything, so having the one-window approach through my ministry for us to connect with all the other ministries that may be included, that might be something, if there's a disaster—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Thank you.

Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Good morning. I appreciate the opportunity to address this bill. As I can see from the clock, I won't have that much time to actually get into it. I'll say a few things, and I'll have an opportunity to actually address it in greater detail this afternoon.

Speaker, I don't endorse this bill. I don't think that the approach that's been taken by the ministry with regard to emergency services is one that actually serves Ontario well. And I think there are substantial problems around the treatment of social services that should give everyone pause.

I want to talk, before I go into the bill itself, about the context that we're going into. We are going into a world that's changing very rapidly and very profoundly. When it comes to the climate that we live in, it has become increasingly clear in the last few years that the rate of climate change is accelerating and that, by next year, we will probably hit the 1.5-degree limit that the Paris climate agreement was put together to try and keep us within. But it also looks like, within the next decade, we'll hit two degrees centigrade increase in our temperature.

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I know, for most people, these are very abstract numbers. They don't really mean a lot in our daily lives. But what they will mean in our daily lives is far more extreme weather events, far more costs in terms of insurance and simply maintaining our infrastructure. They will mean a substantial drop in our standard of living. Those considerations are going to mean that we have to have an emergency management system that is far more sophisticated, reactive and thoughtful than the one that we have in place right now.

And it is not because we lack skilled, capable, dedicated people. Firefighters on the ground, people who respond to floods, to wildfires, put their lives on the line, and they deserve credit and support from this government—from any party in this Legislature.

But I would say that many of my colleagues may not be thinking about what the new world will look like. I would say, in January of this year, with the fires that went through Los Angeles, we have a picture of the future, and that is that we will not just have wildfires in forests, but we will have wildfires in our cities.

Last November 2024, New York City Fire Department dealt with over 200 wildfires in city parks. They were overwhelmed. Thank God, no fatalities. They were able to control them. But the world has not yet hit the 1.5-degrees-centigrade increase. The hotter it gets, the drier things get, the more likely you have uncontrolled fire.

In Los Angeles, firefighters and emergency responders did everything they possibly could to contain that fire and

to protect human life. But frankly, they were not able to contain that fire. In part, it's because this society—American society, Canadian society—is not yet ready for the idea that we could have wildfires within our cities again as we had centuries ago. That is a reality that we're going to have to adjust to. I don't believe that the bill before us today actually takes account of that new reality.

The other new reality is around flooding. I would say my colleagues from northern Ontario can speak to this, where they see surging insurance rates because people are getting hit with floods more often than before. But I have to say, those in cities should be aware that there's a huge risk and threat to people living in basement apartments.

In New York City a few years ago, 11 people drowned in their basement apartments—11 people drowned in their basement apartments. That says something, because the reality is that it's very difficult to upgrade your water management, your waste water system fast enough to protect people in basement apartments. And so, I think it's something like 100,000 basement apartments are at risk in New York City. That's an awful lot of housing that's at risk.

You're looking severe, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Sorry.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Ah, okay. Just because you look severe doesn't mean that I'm going to be cut off. That's a comfort.

London, England has a similar problem with the flooding of basement apartments—a substantial part of their housing stock now at risk. London, as you all are well aware, is a city famous for rain. But historically, that has meant one or two inches of rain a day, not five, six, seven inches of rain. When you get that level of rain, you get water flowing across sidewalks, pooling in backyards, running down basement stairs and filling apartments. And so tens of thousands of units in London, England are at risk.

We here in Toronto have had flooding in basement apartments as well—not yet at the scale we've seen in New York City or London, England, but we will be—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I'm sorry but I must interrupt the member.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

REPORTS, FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICER

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I beg to inform the House that the following documents were tabled from the Office of the Financial Accountability Officer of Ontario:

—a report entitled Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services: 2025 Spending Plan Review;

—a report entitled Ministry of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security: 2025 Spending Plan Review;

—a report entitled Ministry of Education: 2025 Spending Plan Review; and

—a report entitled Ontario Health Sector: 2025 Spending Plan Review.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Jeff Burch: It's been 840 days since the Port Colborne and Fort Erie urgent care centres lost their after-hours services, and we have yet to hear a response from this government to the community's pleas for assistance.

Over the summer, the situation worsened, with rotating closures between the two sites during peak tourist season. A recent report from the Port Colborne Health Coalition emphasized the urgent need to restore these services in Port Colborne.

Co-chair of the coalition, Betty Konc, stated, "We here in the most southerly portion of the Niagara region are being left behind when it comes to access to health care—through no fault of our own, and due to a hospital improvement plan that is outdated and no longer serves the needs of Port Colborne and Fort Erie. We are being treated like a poor second cousin, and it's time that stopped. We need 24/7, 365-day care, the same as our counterparts in the northern part of the region."

As the report revealed, with 7,000 new housing units planned and an aging population, 96% of residents in a city-run survey support 24-hour urgent care. Residents are asking this government for help.

Speaker, in the coming weeks, I'll be tabling thousands more petition signatures from residents across Niagara demanding these services be restored, and I thank the Port Colborne Health Coalition for their hard work and advocacy. We will keep fighting until we have fair access to quality health care in Port Colborne and the entire region. We need to be putting health care services into the community, not taking them out.

HILL HOUSE HOSPICE

Mrs. Daisy Wai: This summer I have been very busy making announcements on behalf of our government and the Ontario Trillium Foundation for providing funding to various organizations in support for their service in Richmond Hill.

I was honoured to announce the Ministry of Health's operational funding for an additional three beds at the Hill House Hospice. I also joined the hospice in recognizing the impact of an Ontario Trillium grant to improve the access to end-of-life care resources.

For nearly three decades, Hill House Hospice has provided a space of comfort and compassion for families experiencing some of life's most difficult moments. The hospice is a true sanctuary for the families it supports each year.

Thank you to Hill House Hospice's board of directors, front-line staff and volunteers. I truly am touched by the

heartfelt dedication to our community's physical, emotional and spiritual care at every stage of their life.

TENANT PROTECTION

MPP Stephanie Smyth: In the past few months, I've had the privilege of meeting so many incredible residents, tenants' associations and community organizations in Toronto—St. Paul's who work tirelessly to make our neighbourhoods stronger and more connected.

But a troubling story has come to light. At 355 St. Clair Avenue West, many long-time residents, most over the age of 70, are living in conditions that are increasingly unsafe and inaccessible for seniors. They faced above-guideline rent increases for so-called capital repairs that have made things worse, not better.

Residents were charged an AGI for a new HVAC system—the second replacement in 15 years—that performs worse than the old one, and another for an elevator that continues to fail residents in a 25-storey building with no generator. When the power goes out, emergency lights last only two hours, leaving seniors trapped in their homes and first responders forced to climb floor after floor.

Nobody, including seniors, should have to live this way, and this government should be ashamed that people in Ontario are being left to live like this. We are letting them down. Speaker, tenants deserve accountability and not higher rents for broken promises.

SPORTS AND RECREATION FUNDING

Mr. Brian Riddell: It's always an honour and privilege to speak in the House. I rise today with excitement to highlight some of the investments in my riding.

1020

Thanks to our government's continued commitment to build stronger, healthier communities, Cambridge is receiving over \$21 million in new provincial funding to enhance recreation infrastructure that will benefit residents of all ages.

First, I am thrilled to see the investment towards a new Cambridge Recreation Complex. This multi-use facility will be one of the largest in the region, featuring an aquatic centre, triple gymnasiums, indoor walking track, fitness spaces, community rooms and even a new public library branch. It's a game-changer for families, youth and seniors in Cambridge.

Madam Speaker, that's not all. As part of this investment, the historical Preston Memorial Arena is receiving \$1 million for much-needed renovations. This includes improved accessibility, expanded ice pad capacity and new community space. It's a vital upgrade to support both recreation and competitive play for years to come.

Next door, in North Dumfries, the Ayr Community Centre will also benefit from \$1 million to support important repairs and rehabilitation, ensuring this cherished space will remain safe and vibrant for the surrounding rural community.

These investments are a reflection of what happens when we listen to our local needs, plan for the future and care about our community for the well-being of our community members.

On behalf of the people of Cambridge and North Dumfries, I want to thank Minister Lumsden for his strong show of support.

On a side note, I'd just like to say: Go, Jays, go!

HALLOWEEN EVENTS IN SPADINA— FORT YORK

Mr. Chris Glover: I've got to say, I love every part of this province and all of the 124 members who are in this House are justifiably proud of the ridings that they serve. But I will say, there is no better place in Ontario to celebrate Halloween than Spadina—Fort York.

On Halloween evening, the Liberty Village Halloween parade wends its way through Liberty Village with hundreds of trick-or-treaters in tow, and I want to thank the Liberty Village BIA and the Liberty Village Residents' Association for this annual fun event. Not too far away in CityPlace, the Halloween Crawl runs through the evening with businesses and condo buildings giving treats to about 2,000 trick-or-treaters.

Leading up to the big day, Fort York hosts after-dark lantern tours where you can hear chilling and eerie tales of Fort York and its historic surroundings. Learn about a haunted lighthouse and the bloody battle of York. And if the Fort York tour doesn't chill you to the bone, you can take a ghost walk at Exhibition Place to explore the exhibition's haunted past and learn a few well-kept secrets that are currently only known by staff who work the late shift.

Even the dogs in Spadina—Fort York get into the spirit of the season. On October 25, the Bentway hosts Howl'oween, an iconic canine costume contest. So come on out. There is no better place to spend the spooky season than Spadina—Fort York.

COMMUNAL WATER TREATMENT SYSTEMS

Mme Dawn Gallagher Murphy: This past Monday, I tabled my private member's motion. Critical infrastructure is required to build homes faster. It can influence the affordability of homes, especially in small and rural municipalities, including those found in York region.

I've been listening to constituents' concerns regarding the lack of affordable and attainable housing, especially for the younger generation who are looking for their first home or even the ability to move out of their parents' home and rent, or even constituents who are looking to downsize but lack accessible housing options. This is what compelled me to table this motion, as it will, if passed, help deliver on innovative building solutions, namely, communal waste management systems that allow for environmental stewardship.

By adopting measures to streamline the development of communal water/waste water treatment systems, we could unleash the potential of the construction of hamlets of homes, condominiums, rental units and businesses in small and rural municipalities where a waste water system is not available to a municipality. And if the municipality wants to expand, a communal system could provide the answer for their growth.

RIDING OF WINDSOR WEST

MPP Lisa Gretzky: Windsor is in crisis. We have the highest unemployment rate in the country at nearly 11%; youth unemployment, almost 18%. Thousands of people in my community are out of work and struggling to put food on the table, all while watching opportunities slip away. Workers at Titan Tool and Die have been locked out for over two months. They're fighting to protect their jobs as the company guts the plant, shipping equipment and their jobs across the border to the US. I've been on that line many times, talking to and standing with those workers, raising their concerns in Windsor and here in the Legislature.

But what about the Premier? He was in Windsor and so was the Minister of Labour. They didn't meet with those workers, walk the line or listen to them. They've shown no interest in fighting for them and that tells you everything that you need to know about this government's priorities. The Premier loves to say he stands with workers, that he has got their backs, but the truth is good-paying jobs are disappearing, public services are being cut and food bank use is at a record high, all while the Premier points fingers at others and takes no real action.

Across Ontario, 800,000 people are out of work and Windsor is being hit the hardest. My constituents aren't asking for special treatment; they're asking for respect, fairness, for a government that shows up when it matters and fights like hell for every job and every person. It's time for real action from the Premier, not slogans, photo ops and empty promises. Windsor needs a Premier who doesn't just talk about protecting jobs, but actually does it.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I will caution the member on profanity in the Legislature.

LUSO CANADIAN CHARITABLE SOCIETY

MPP Mohamed Firin: I am honoured to rise in the Legislature today to recognize the incredible work of Luso Canadian Charitable Society, dedicated to serving individuals with disabilities. Over two decades ago, a group of Portuguese Canadian community leaders identified a critical community need: Individuals with disabilities were often housebound, faced significant limitations and lacked physical channels to integrate with society. Recognizing this, they established Luso to empower, nurture and promote the social integration of adults with physical and developmental disabilities.

Today, Luso operates three modern support centres in Toronto, Hamilton and Peel, supporting more than 300 families each year by delivering 5,600 hours of annual programming. Through life skill workshops, creative arts, technology training and social initiatives, Luso empowers their participants to learn, connect and thrive in a safe and supportive environment. I had the privilege of visiting the Luso centre in York South-Weston for an OTF grant recognition event. It was inspiring to see first-hand how their programs are changing lives in our community and beyond.

Supported by the government of Ontario through the 2025 budget, Luso's newest chapter is now under way, which will offer accessible housing to 45 individuals and 24/7 care to adults with complex disabilities. Luso has been recognized by both the Portuguese government and the Azorean regional government for its outstanding service.

Madam Speaker, the story of Luso is a story of community, care and commitment. I invite all members in this House to join me in congratulating the Luso Canadian Charitable Society on more than two decades of outstanding service.

MELLY'S WORKPLACE

Mr. Lorne Coe: Recently, the Honourable David Piccini, the Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development, and I announced that Melly's Workplace and café in Whitby would receive \$872,000 through the Skills Development Fund to support their Raise the Bar project. This project helps young men and women with intellectual and developmental disabilities build the skills they need to secure jobs in office administration, customer service and the manufacturing and processing sector. Aimee Ruttle and Ellen McRae, the co-founders of Melly's, said that the ministry funding will expand their person-centered coaching model, delivering hands-on training and work experience that breaks down barriers and creates clear employment pathways for over 75 eager youth and adults.

Every day, we witness the skill, dedication and passion that people with varying abilities bring to the workplace. Melly's is a place where challenges don't matter—they don't matter. They continue to push the limit and ensure that every person has the opportunity to thrive and pursue their passion, whatever that may be.

1030

Our government is committed to supporting the important work of organizations like Melly's as we build an Ontario where individuals with varying abilities can fully engage in their communities and live the lives they choose.

HOUSE SITTINGS

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 9(h), 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. Therefore, the House shall commence at 9 a.m. on Monday, October 27, 2025, for the proceeding orders of the day.

I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 9(g), the Clerk has received 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, October 29, 2025, shall commence at 1 p.m.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I would like to take a moment to mention that in our Speaker's gallery today we have the consul general of the Republic of Türkiye in Toronto, Mr. Can Yoldaş. Please join me in warmly welcoming our guest to the Legislature.

Hon. Stephen Crawford: It's great to be here today. In the Speaker's gallery, I have the honour of introducing a prominent Canadian entrepreneur and technology visionary, Sir Terence Matthews. Sir Terry is an officer of the Order of the British Empire and has been appointed an officer of the Order of Canada. He's joined today by Veronica Farmer, Scott Phelan and Nadirah Nazeer. Welcome to Queen's Park.

MPP Jamie West: In the members' gallery, we're joined by Kirsten Marcellin Sandiford, who is advocating on behalf of her son Régis, as well as all those under the Ontario Autism Coalition.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I'd like to welcome my husband, Ryan Fobel, and his parents, my in-laws, Maribeth and Richard Fobel, here to celebrate my son, James Fobel, who is page captain today.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: I am very pleased to welcome members from the Ontario Autism Coalition to the chamber today. President Alina Cameron and her incredible team have come to advocate for meaningful improvements within the Ontario Autism Program. They have released the 2025 OAC community survey report. It's a vital report that reflects the experience of autistic individuals. I recommend that each and every one of my colleagues read that.

I want to say welcome to Queen's Park. Thank you for your leadership, your dedication and your tireless advocacy.

Hon. Graham McGregor: Today, we have some guests from Canada Vendors and the Pan-African Arts, Culture and Trade Institute. Please join me in welcoming Maryam Muritala, Oluwatomilola Titilope Adenuga, David and Julia Bebiem, Napoleon Ogbola and Chiamaka Diana Okafor. Welcome to your House.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: It's a beautiful day, everyone. I would like to welcome to the House an amazing architect, a city builder, Ramsey Leung, who happens to have a birthday today—what better way than to celebrate than with us?

Ms. Marit Stiles: I want to welcome all of the CUPE and OPSEU public service workers who are joining us here today as part of their Worth Fighting For campaign,

including CUPE Ontario president, Fred Hahn; OPSEU president, JP Hornick; and first VP, Laurie Nancekivell.

Mr. Aris Babikian: In the galleries today are students from the University of Toronto, Scarborough campus, who are visiting as part of a course in which they are learning about the Ontario Legislative Assembly. In a couple of weeks, they will also be participating in a mock question period here. Welcome to all of you and enjoy your visit.

Mr. Jonathan Tsao: I'd like to welcome members of the Ontario Autism Coalition to Queen's Park today, including Adrianna, Martin, Alina, Jodie, Erin, Katharine, Ashley, Sandra, Leah, Jay, Kirsten, Bruce, Amy, Benjamin and Antonio. Welcome to Queen's Park and thank you for your advocacy.

Ms. Laura Smith: I would like to welcome Michael Coristine, family law and criminal lawyer from the great riding of Thornhill. Welcome, Michael.

Mr. John Jordan: I want to welcome members of the FASD. A special welcome to my friend Rob More and his wife Shelley.

Someone some of you may know is Bill King, from his time here at Queen's Park, the deputy reeve of Lanark Highlands. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. David Piccini: I want to welcome Melanie Winter from Support Ontario Youth here to the Legislature, along with Adam Bridgeman and Finn Johnson from the carpenters' union. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: I would like to welcome Jocelyn Cheechoo from Moose Factory for being here today. —

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: I would like to welcome the grade 5 students, teachers and parents from Maurice Cody public school who are here today on a school tour. Welcome.

SPEAKER'S BIRTHDAY

Mr. Dave Smith: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Is it a real point of order?

Mr. Dave Smith: It's a real point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Okay. I recognize the member for Peterborough—Kawartha.

Mr. Dave Smith: I just wanted to wish a happy birthday to my good friend, the Speaker of the House.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): You're out of order—

Singing of Happy Birthday.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): And you will never get called upon again.

QUESTION PERIOD

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Marit Stiles: Good morning and happy birthday, Speaker.

A church, a nightclub, a dentist's office: What do they all have in common? Well, they all got the friends-and-family special from the government: \$2.8 million to the church that hosted a PC minister's wedding; \$6.5 million to the Premier's favourite nightclub owner; \$2 million to a dentist's office represented by the former labour minister's wife. Just this morning, we heard about iSolutions Inc., connected to a PC Party vice-president, who received \$1.75 million.

Speaker, this is not a coincidence: This is by design, and the rot starts at the top.

My question to the Premier is, can the Premier explain how it is possible that so many of the recipients of the SDF funding have close, personal connections to the Premier and members of his government?

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

Hon. David Piccini: I'm proud to stand up to talk about investments made in personal support care workers—over 54,000 trained through the Skills Development Fund.

Let's mention another one: SEIU. They donated as an organization to that member's riding association, and we funded their WorkersFirst Technologies program, which is doing incredible work to reduce agency dependency for staffing, to bolster staffing in a health care sector that was beleaguered. And 600 long-term-care beds built by the former Liberal government, supported by the NDP—I've got more under construction in my riding today, Speaker, and we're going to need a next generation of personal support care workers to staff them. That's what we're focused on investing in.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Let's be clear, Speaker: This government has failed. They have failed to deliver real opportunities for workers all across this province. We see it every day.

Instead, the Minister of Labour admitted that he hand-picked winners and losers, prioritizing low-scoring applications over funding for higher-scoring applications. We need a plan that uplifts families and workers. Many of these workers are here in the gallery with us today, fighting on the front lines to help Ontarians get ahead. This half-baked, pay-to-play scheme is not a substitute for a real plan to get people working in the province of Ontario.

I'd like to ask the Premier, did he know that the minister was picking winners and losers based on his personal relationships and political donations?

Hon. David Piccini: Speaker, you know who else supports the Skills Development Fund: the former leader of that party, Mayor Andrea Horwath, when we've made investments into the Hamilton community.

1040

They are against blue-collar workers in the province of Ontario. That is why those workers and their unions abandoned that party in the last election: because we have a plan. We have a plan to unlock critical minerals, something they don't support. We have a plan to build highways, roads and bridges. They don't want a new road

or bridge built ever in the province of Ontario. They have no plan. They have no plan to build. They're anti-nuclear, Speaker. We're building new nuclear. We're building SMRs.

All of the workers who collect a paycheque and earning a salary in those rewarding careers know that when it comes to their careers, the NDP say no.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, let me be clear: The problem is not with the fund; it's with the politicians, right? It's with you, this government, this minister, who are taking advantage of a jobs disaster in this province that is of their own making, taking advantage of the brutal reality that workers are facing right now in Ontario, all across this province.

The problem is who didn't get the funding because they weren't connected enough to this minister and this government. The government has lost the trust of workers and the people of this province.

To the Premier: How many more embarrassing headlines before this minister resigns?

Hon. David Piccini: Speaker, since they're not interested in talking about the blue-collar workers I mentioned, let's talk about another "who." They've just introduced union leaders in this place who donated \$35,000 to their own party.

Speaker, come on. That's not what this is about. People are free to donate to whomever they want to donate. This is about workers and this is about a plan to unlock critical minerals, something they don't support. This is about a plan to build critical infrastructure and public transit, something they don't support. This is about a plan to build new nuclear plants and unlock energy, something they don't support.

They want us dependent on dirty dictators for oil, for gas, for natural resources. We want to unlock the might that is Ontario and the incredible working-class workers who are angry and abandoned their party in favour of a PC government with a plan for workers of this province.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, the problem is that the Premier and this meddling minister have once again muddied the waters, right? A giant cloud is hanging over this fund. It's hanging over this fund because of this minister, because he has decided that instead of actually handling this fund properly and separate from political and partisan influence, he is in there with his fingers and his staff, giving them, his friends, preferential treatment, just like they did with the greenbelt.

If you look around at what's happening in our province, what do you see? Look at the headlines, for goodness' sake. Workers need support, right? Instead, the Premier is once again looking the other way while his minister runs a friends-and-family special with taxpayer dollars.

Other provinces have funds like the SDF, Speaker, but they are administered by public servants, not by political

staff. Will the Premier take the Auditor General's recommendation and clean up this pay-to-play culture?

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

Hon. David Piccini: Speaker, other provinces don't have the Skills Development Fund, but what we have is a program—we've accepted the Auditor General's recommendations.

Let's talk about where I was yesterday, Speaker. I shook hands with an executive member of the union who donated \$25,000 to that party just yesterday. But I could care less, because what they're doing is offering pathways for Indigenous youth, for young women to enter the skilled trades.

That's what we care about, and they know they're going to enter rewarding careers because we're building homes. We're building public infrastructure.

Do you know what they were excited about? The electrification of public transit, a plan under this Minister of Transportation, a plan they voted against. They're excited about opportunities to work in the north in the critical minerals mining sector, something those members voted against. They're excited to build hospitals, schools and bridges, something they voted against when they were part of the previous Liberal government shutting down schools in rural Ontario.

These workers are supporting us. They've abandoned that party, and they're mad because they abandoned them.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Supplementary?

Ms. Marit Stiles: You know, Speaker, this minister wants to talk about workers. Let's talk about workers. Let's talk about what it's like when you show up at a plant gate in the morning for your shift and there's a post there saying, "Shift is cancelled." Now, you've got to go back to your family and tell everybody, "I've got no work. I've got no plan for the future. We don't know what's next."

You can create all the training positions you want, Minister, but you've got no jobs for those people to take. What I'm hearing from people who've received funding from the SDF, frankly, is that they're very concerned about the cloud that's hanging over this fund right now because of this minister and his preferential treatment of those applicants. It is casting a pall over the whole thing. If he wants to save the SDF, he should do the right thing, Speaker, and he should resign.

Will the Premier of this province take political interference off the table and force this minister to resign?

Hon. David Piccini: I challenge that member to name one recipient, Speaker, because I've been up here the last few days naming real people who are getting training.

Who else does she want us to say no to? Does she want us to say no to Finn Johnson and Adam Bridgman, who are here today with the carpenters' union? They're doing incredible work. They support us because they know we've got a plan that puts their members to work. They've done an amazing job. They're part of our plan that's resulting in real stats that have seen a doubling of the number of women registrations into apprenticeships and a

historic high in the number of youth registering into apprenticeships.

Who do they want us to say no to? Is it carpenters? Is it IBEW? Or are they just mad because all of those unions abandoned them because they know that the NDP are broke? They have no plan to grow this province, no plan to build, because they want to cater to special interests who say no to everything.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Show us the plan. Where's the plan? There is no plan.

People, let's talk about facts, shall we? By the way, I will point out to you, Minister, that you may not be hearing what people are really saying—

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

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Order.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, he may not be hearing from the real people and their concerns because people out there know how vindictive this government is, and they are afraid.

Yesterday, the government wanted to talk facts. Let's talk facts. Ontario has 200,000 fewer jobs today than when this government took office in 2018, with 705,000 people unemployed just last month. Record high youth unemployment has reached 18%. Almost 20% of young people in this province are unemployed.

Where's the plan? You're too busy with your pay-to-play schemes to hatch a plan to keep people employed, for goodness' sake.

So to the Premier: Are you proud of the jobs disaster that you have created?

Hon. David Piccini: Let's talk jobs disaster. When they were propping up the previous Liberal government, we saw manufacturing jobs flee the province of Ontario.

Just this month, 8,800 new jobs were added in the province of Ontario. Do you know who's part of our plan? Melanie Winter from Support Ontario. Look behind; say it to her face. She's part of our plan to train the next generation of folks, like Noah. Let's talk about a real person who's now a shipbuilder.

We know they're against defence because they want to defund cops. They don't want to support our first responders. They're sure as heck against our military, Speaker. They don't want us to have a strong military.

Well, on this side of the House, we want to build ships, we want to support our first responders, and our jobs plan is showing results. Without question, we're going to keep supporting those workers.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. John Fraser: My question is for the Minister of Labour. I want to pick up where I left off yesterday.

I remember as a young father—and I told you yesterday when I was looking for work, I was lucky. I had someone to bail me out. My dad was always there to bail me out. He understood. Truth of the matter is, he was out of work for

much longer—a year and a half. He had nobody to bail him out—nobody.

Right now, in Ontario, there are hundreds of thousands of families with nobody to bail them out, and they're looking to the government.

So my question to the minister is, how can this minister shovel money out the door to lobbyists like Kory Teneycke while these families are struggling?

Hon. David Piccini: Speaker, that's incorrect. Every dollar is going to training and since that member doesn't seem to understand training for blue-collar workers, let me speak to him about something he might better understand: Mitacs, who offer applied research for post-secondary doctoral students and post-doctoral fellows.

1050

He doesn't care about blue-collar workers, so let's talk about white-collar workers, Speaker. I'll read a quote: "Mitacs welcomes today's announcement of the next round of funding under the Ontario government's innovative Skills Development Fund." These ongoing investments "in skills is a critical component of ensuring that Ontario has the talent it needs" for diverse "innovation and economic growth." You know who said that? A CEO, who didn't donate once, not twice, not three times, but four times to the Liberal Party, Speaker—to the Liberal Party.

And Speaker, in my supplementary, I can't wait to talk about the board members—board members like John Malloy, who was a former candidate for that party, who didn't donate once or twice but 21 times to the Liberal Party.

We could care less who they donated to, Speaker, because this is worthwhile applied research that matters in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Supplementary?

Mr. John Fraser: Well, I understand blue-collar work because I did it for 25 years before I got here, so I think the minister might want to correct his record on that.

He should understand that the minister's job is not to make rich people even richer. Putting food on the table and a roof over kids' heads is not the only thing that parents want to do. You want your kids to be able to participate in sports; you want to do things for them. You want them to have music lessons; you want them to have nice clothes. There are hundreds of thousands of families out there right now that are facing that every day—they're facing that struggle; they're facing that hurt. So when they see the minister shovelling money out the door to make rich people even richer—people like Kory Teneycke, Amin Massoudi, Nico Fidani-Diker; the list goes on and on and on—it hurts them. So why is the minister doing that?

Hon. David Piccini: Speaker, it's about impact and it's about impact for those young electrical workers who I met yesterday. They're on a pathway for jobs, Speaker, working as electrical workers. Perhaps he's upset because he can stand up here and claim all he wants, but he's lost touch with blue-collar workers. The same IBEW union that donated 22 times—22 times—to the Liberal Party to the sum of over \$40,000.

Or perhaps it's because operating engineers have lost faith in him; they donated over \$72,000 to the Liberal Party. Or maybe it's the \$350,000 they donated to the Working Families Coalition who supported the Liberal Party.

Speaker, what this is about is impact—impact for those next generation of operating engineers, electrical workers who recognize that this government has a plan to build in the province of Ontario. They just have a plan to tax people.

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

Mr. John Fraser: I'm glad the minister brought up impact, because the impact that this government is having on those families is they're losing more and more hope every single day.

So let's not talk about donations. Speaking of which people, we have the story of Tim Iqbal, the PC Party vice-president. That a new law of quid pro—no. He's your party vice-president, and you gave him \$1.7 million for what? Does anybody know? Does anybody want to answer? His software company. Wow.

Minister, we can't make this stuff up. It just keeps coming. We're having a hard time keeping track. Slow down—slow down.

Why are you shovelling so much money out the door to make already rich people even richer, like Kory Teneycke, Michael Diamond, Amin Massoudi and now—what's his name? He's a PC Party vice-president: Tim Iqbal. Why are you shovelling all this money—

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

Hon. David Piccini: Speaker, I'm not going to slow down, I'm never going to slow down for the workers of this province, like the 180 youth—

Mr. John Fraser: Keep shovelling.

Hon. David Piccini: Sorry, I got under his skin, Speaker—at Civiconnect who've received better training for better jobs. Do you know who works at Civiconnect? Joshua Bell, who is the former Liberal candidate for Flamborough-Glanbrook and VP of their own fundraising. But it doesn't matter, because I support Joshua and the work he's doing for the 180 youth at Civiconnect. We're going to support them for rewarding careers because we've got a plan to put those people to work.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Adil Shamji: Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Labour. This is a government that has proclaimed it will protect Ontario even as it fails to do so. Health care is faltering, housing is plummeting and it feels like everyone is losing their jobs—everyone except the Minister of Labour.

The Premier continues to protect the same minister who squandered hundreds of millions of dollars on low-ranking projects pushed by friends and lobbyists like Kory Teneycke, while racking up favours: glass seats at a Leafs

game, fancy Parisian weddings, over \$100,000 for his own riding association.

Madam Speaker, why does this Premier continue to defend a minister who has done nothing but trade in quick bucks and quiet favours?

Hon. David Piccini: We're focused on the 12,000 people in that member's own riding who have received support through the Skills Development Fund through 17 projects. But let's give another one for the good doctor: my taxes supporting post-doctoral fellows. Again, they receive support through the Skills Development Fund—their CEO, who supports this party, or their board member, who ran for that party, who donated over 22 times.

But that's not what this is about. This is about real, practical, rapid training to support people in levelling up, to support them in getting access to better jobs with bigger paycheques, to support hands-on learning. We're offering wage subsidies to help them get access to those better jobs, like the 12,000 in that member's own riding. We're not going to stop, because this is about having an impact for real people.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the member for Don Valley East.

Mr. Adil Shamji: You know, I listened intently to the minister's deflections and excuses about the Skills Development Fund for the last week, and he either doesn't care or he doesn't get it. Now, I know he's a smart guy, but let's make it obvious for him: The problem isn't with the Skills Development Fund; the problem is with his management.

Let's make it even more obvious—and please, help me out:

- giving money back to Ontario taxpayers: good;
- giving money to the minister's friends and scoring an invite to a fancy Parisian wedding: bad;
- launching a program to create well-paying jobs: good;
- giving high amounts of funding to low-ranked PC insiders: bad;
- supporting first responders: good;
- supporting Kory Teneycke: bad;
- training workers for in-demand sectors: good;
- shady back-room deals, bad—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Response—
Interjections.

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

Hon. David Piccini: I want to talk about a story about Jennifer, who, through common core training, got a job at Musselwhite mine, working in our mining sector. Colleagues, is that good or bad?

Interjections: Good.

Hon. David Piccini: Exactly.

Or let's talk about one closer to home that they might actually understand, since we've established people of all political stripes get support. Let's look at the Quinte Economic Development Commission. Their project supports manufacturing workers and aims to create a resilient manufacturing sector, something they decimated. They

got over 1,460 people into jobs. One of their board members, David O’Neil—let’s remind them why that name sounds familiar—ran for their party in the last provincial election. But is funding for manufacturing good or bad?

Interjections: Good.

Hon. David Piccini: Exactly, Speaker.

What’s bad is that party and what they did for manufacturing in the province of Ontario. They decimated it, Speaker.

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

Mr. Adil Shamji: My head is spinning from the mental gymnastics required to understand this government’s far-fetched excuses for facts, even as the facts are clear as night and day—another day, another donor, another deal.

Today we learn of a PC Party vice-president with a software company who got nearly \$2 million. Their past candidate in Niagara Falls got \$4 million. Yesterday, we learned of \$1 million to train PSWs in a long-term-care home that hasn’t even broken ground yet but is, coincidentally, linked to the Minister of Long-Term Care, and \$100 million awarded to firms represented by the Premier’s campaign director, Kory Teneycke. When it walks like a duck, when it talks like a duck, it’s probably a duck.

1100

And so, my question for the Minister of Labour is, simply, has he no shame?

Hon. David Piccini: Speaker, if this is hard in mental gymnastics, remembering the candidate who ran in the last provincial election, maybe it’s because he didn’t get out and work hard enough at the doors supporting his fellow candidate. But it didn’t matter, because David is a good man doing good work for the manufacturing sector in our community. We may disagree politically, but that doesn’t stop us from supporting that worthwhile project, because it’s about impact.

For the post-doctoral fellows, the board member of that company that donated 22 times very recently to that party, it doesn’t matter, because it’s supporting a health care sector, a priority sector for this government, who are building new hospitals, who are building new long-term-care homes.

Again, the interim leader, who was interim leader so many times for that party, who didn’t build any long-term-care beds when he was at the helm—we’re building them here. We’re creating those opportunities, and we’ve got a plan to support the people of Ontario. And we’re not going to stop.

AUTISM TREATMENT

MPP Alexa Gilmour: While the Premier’s wealthy friends command this government’s attention, Ontario’s autistic children are begging—begging—to be seen.

Today, the Ontario Autism Coalition released a damning report. It is irrefutable proof of this government’s failure that has pushed families to the breaking point: 64,000 children waiting five to six years for help when

early intervention is key; services that don’t match children’s needs or don’t exist in rural Ontario; families sinking into debt, losing their homes and their mental health trying to care for these kids. Every day another child is left behind, another family breaks under the strain.

To the Premier: When will this government start governing for Ontario’s children instead of well-connected friends?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services.

Hon. Michael Parsa: I also want to take this opportunity to thank the Ontario Autism Coalition, Alina Cameron and the entire team for being here and hosting us this morning, and for the advocacy work they do right across the community. We appreciate it.

Madam Speaker, let me make it very clear. We said this from day one: The status quo was not working. We listened to families. We listened to those with lived experience. We listened to clinicians. We put in a program that was built by the community. We doubled the funding of the Ontario Autism Program from \$300 million to \$600 million. In the recent budget, thanks to the Premier’s support, we have increased that investment by an additional \$175 million, bringing the total to \$779 million. Now, what has that done? It has allowed us to serve tens of thousands of families in the program that was built by the community.

I’m not taking any credit for it. Neither is the government. I thank the community that put this program together. We’ll continue to listen to them to expand the program and improve services and supports for the—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Question?

MPP Alexa Gilmour: I look forward to this minister reading the report by the community about this program and changing his talking points accordingly, because nearly one in five families of autistic children has called or has considered calling Ontario’s children’s aid society for help. Parents in Ontario are wondering if giving up their child is the only way to get help from this government. In fact, some heartbroken parents have already been forced to make that decision. This is the state of Ontario Autism Program.

Through the Speaker to the Premier: What will it take for the Premier to notice these children?

Hon. Michael Parsa: I thank the honourable member for the question again. I’ll just remind the honourable member, just when we formed government, there were a total of 8,000 families across the province receiving supports and services—8,000, that’s it. There were no other paths for them. Why? Because the previous government let down the families.

Remember, the NDP held the balance of power for three years. The NDP could have brought down their government on this issue. They chose not to do that.

What we said is we want to listen to families, work with families. Again, that’s why I thank the advocacy group because they’ve done so much in this space to help us improve services and supports for families. In expanded core clinical services today alone, nearly 23,000 families

are receiving supports as opposed to the 8,000 in total before—tens of thousands of families.

And we're not done. We're never going to stop working with families to support children and youth in this province so that they can continue to thrive in this province.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Ted Hsu: Speaker, I've been listening all week as this government has tried to claim that the opposition is against skills training. Nothing could be further from the truth. I know that several organizations in my riding are applying for the next round of SDF support. I know they are capable of providing excellent training, and I hope they succeed in getting funding.

But how will this minister ensure that they won't have to hire a PC lobbyist like Kory Teneycke? How will this minister ensure that they won't have to attend PC fund-raisers? How will this minister ensure that they won't have to endorse the PC Party? How will this minister ensure that they can complain about the result if they want without being put on a blacklist? And if he cannot ensure this, will the minister resign?

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

Hon. David Piccini: Speaker, all they need to ensure is they donate to his failed Liberal leadership contestant and then he'll write them a supportive letter for SDF. But at the end of the day, that's not what this is about, and it—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Order. The member from Ajax will come to order.

Hon. David Piccini: That's not what this is about.

They culled the fund. They don't support this fund. They made it very clear that they don't support this fund—this fund that's having impacts for very real people in priority sectors across Ontario.

We're going to continue making those investments—again, investments like just yesterday, with electrical workers, with A Women's Work, led by Natasha Ferguson: first lady of construction, doing incredible work for racialized women. She stands as a role model and an example for those young women.

It's no wonder they're so upset because we're creating meaningful opportunities for those next generation of women—women who didn't have—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Hsu: I don't ask for donations in return for favours. I get donations—and many smaller-sized donations—because people believe in me, not because I dangle the public purse in front of them. I do politics differently, and last election, I had the biggest margin of victory in the province. I believe that you can try to do politics in a way that is fair, transparent and accountable and still get elected by a healthy margin.

Why should you have to endorse the governing political party before getting help to train workers? Why should you have to attend a fundraiser or hire the right lobbyist

like Kory Teneycke before getting help to upskill workers and improve their lives?

Will the Conservatives change their ways? Will they remove this dark cloud over all efforts to improve our economy? Will the minister do the honourable thing? Will he resign?

Hon. David Piccini: Speaker, a coincidence that the only SDF letter I get from that member is from someone who donated the max to his failed leadership campaign and his riding association? That member is great. If you doubt it, just ask him.

The bottom line is the Skills Development Fund is having a real impact on workers. I talk about Jennifer. She's one of 100,000 stories, 100,000 people who found meaningful employment within 60 days of taking the Skills Development Fund—people in the manufacturing sector who were put out of work when they recklessly destroyed the manufacturing sector.

My first labour ministers meeting had a quote from Kathleen Wynne: "I want Ontario to be a service industry, a service sector." We know they wanted to decimate manufacturing, and we're going to make sure we support those workers in a sector we deeply care about.

HOUSING

MPP Mohamed Firin: Madam Speaker, through you, my question is for the Honourable Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

1110

Ontario families are working hard every day to build a better life, but across this province, people are feeling the strain of higher costs and ongoing economic uncertainty. Years of federal inaction, delays from previous Liberal governments and rising inflation have driven up the cost of everything, from food to fuel to housing.

Now, with the new economic threats from Donald Trump and instability in global markets, Ontario families are paying the price. It has never been more important to make it faster and cheaper to build the homes that they need. Our government is taking action and we're getting results for the people of Ontario.

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

Hon. Rob Flack: Thank you to the member from York South-Weston; a great question indeed.

As I think everybody knows, we are facing economic uncertainty like we never have in many, many years. It's not business as usual. People have hit the pause button, builders and buyers alike. Will the HST come down like the federal government promised? Will interest rates drop? They should. Will the cost of building come down? We've hit the pause button.

That's why we introduced Bill 17 in the last session. What did it do? What is it doing? It has deferred DCs until occupancy; it has eliminated DCs for long-term-care homes; it's standardizing the building code; and it's get-

ting rid of studies, red tape and costs. It takes too long and it costs too much to build homes in this province.

We're going to continue on this path, Speaker. I am convinced beyond a shadow of a doubt we're going to see a resurgence in housing in this next building season. And, most importantly—most importantly—this government, this Legislature, will pass meaningful legislation in the weeks ahead to get that job done.

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

MPP Mohamed Firin: Thank you to the minister for his response.

We know housing challenges facing Ontarians didn't start here. They were made worse by years of federal inaction, previous Liberal government delays and soaring inflation. Families are feeling it every day and they're counting on us to get it right.

For years, red tape and costly delays have driven up the cost of construction, and unnecessary studies have pushed home ownership out of reach for many families. Now, our government is taking action to fix that. We're working with municipalities, builders and communities to get shovels in the ground faster and lower the cost of building homes.

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

Hon. Rob Flack: As I said, it takes too long and it costs too much to get homes built in this province, and we're changing that. We're going to continue to look at ways to reduce unnecessary red tape—I talked to many builders this summer, many municipal leaders, and get these facts: It can be a third of a cost of a new home or more in certain parts of the province in the cost of a home. Where does the third come from? HST, land development charges, unneeded studies, the cost of interest. It is an expensive proposition to build a home—a third of the cost for a new home. This has been generations in the making—four to five decades. We have to unravel that layer by layer. We need to lower those costs.

That is why we're going to work hard to continue to bring forth meaningful legislation and get that job done. The dream of home ownership in this province needs to be kept alive, and it will be under this government.

SOCIAL SERVICES

MPP Lisa Gretzky: My question is to the Premier. Front-line workers in developmental services, child protection, children's treatment centres and social assistance services are here today because they've had enough of being ignored, underpaid and pushed beyond their limits. These largely women-led sectors were unfairly targeted by the unconstitutional Bill 124, which suppressed wages and devalued essential care work. As a result of chronic underfunding, vulnerable children are living in offices and hotels while those caring for them are turning to food banks and even living in shelters. Meanwhile, the Premier gives millions of taxpayer dollars to his donors and friends.

Why does this government continue to attack women-led sectors and starve vital public services instead of investing in them?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services.

Hon. Michael Parsa: I've said this before, and I'll say it again: Protecting Ontario's vulnerable is at the heart of every single decision we make at the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services. Together with our amazing partners on the ground, in every community across the province, we are working to improve outcomes for every individual that accesses service through our ministry.

I'll tell you this: Gone are the days, through previous government and opposition, where people and organizations were pitted against one another. Those days are over, Madam Speaker. I value the work of every single individual in this province, the people that they care—which is why, if you look at the record investments made through the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, we're investing \$3.7 billion in the developmental services sector. Put that in perspective: That's worth nearly \$1.4 billion more than when we formed government in 2018. We have improved investments in child welfare to nearly \$1.7 billion this year to make sure that every single child and youth—

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

MPP Lisa Gretzky: To the minister: These workers are going to food banks and vulnerable children are being housed in hotels. That's not protection. That's exploitation and abject failure on your part.

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

MPP Lisa Gretzky: Developmental services, child protection and social assistance—sectors all powered by women—are collapsing under this government's deliberate neglect. Years of underfunding and the unconstitutional Bill 124 have pushed front-line workers to the brink, burned them out, and they're underpaid and struggling to feed their own families while caring for Ontario's most vulnerable. Children are being housed in offices and hotels because there's nowhere for them to go. And the workers supporting them, again, are turning to food banks and living in shelters. Instead of repairing the damage that they caused, this government is starving public services and clearing a path for privatization.

So my question is, why is the Premier abandoning women-led sectors and the children that they protect and support?

Hon. Michael Parsa: I'll just say this: Investments in the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, every single year, we've seen an increase in support. What we've done is, in turn, we've supported all our amazing partners on the ground.

I'll just say this, Madam Speaker: In budget 2024, we invested \$310 million in all our partner organizations in the community. For the developmental services sector, that was an increase of \$90 million; for child welfare, \$41.7 million. We invested an additional \$5.5 million to

end gender-based violence in this province. Do you know what happened, Madam Speaker? The opposition voted against every single one of those increases.

But like I said, I'm beyond thankful to every organization, every partner in this community that is helping in supporting the most vulnerable. I will support them, and I thank them for the great work that they do.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Lee Fairclough: My question is for the Minister of Labour. One of my constituents is a long-time professor of hospitality at George Brown College. The program has a well-earned national reputation amongst employers for its excellence in developing skills and training the next generation of employees. At its peak, it had 350 students. They've scaled it back to 43 students, and the winter program is now cancelled.

We learned today from the FAO that the colleges in Ontario are the lowest publicly funded per capita in Canada—just like health care, actually, I'll add. Employers tell me they need these skilled workers, but colleges are starved while millions of dollars of Skills Development Funds have been shovelled out the door to those connected to Kory Teneycke and other lobbyist friends.

My question to the minister is, what is your message to employers that need these college grads?

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

Hon. Nolan Quinn: My message to employers is, speak to the federal government. Your member right beside you was completely wrong when he stated that it was all domestic students taking the culinary course. The majority of students taking the culinary course in Ontario were international students. I'm sorry you were wrong with that the other day.

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

Hon. Nolan Quinn: Our government will continue to support the post-secondary sector. The funding is the highest it has ever been. In the last year, we've invested over \$2 billion. We've now increased their seats by 100,000 seats.

Speaker, the FAO report is a snapshot in time. Over the next year, it's going to go up 8%, general funding, 12% over the next two years for the post-secondary sector.

We'll continue being there for our system, and we'll continue to ensure that the post-secondary sector is world class. That is why we're doing a funding formula review this summer.

But again, I will clarify, the majority of the students in the culinary course—you mentioned those numbers—were international. They're not post-graduate work-permit eligible. Speak to your federal cousins, and maybe they can change the rules.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore.

Ms. Lee Fairclough: Through the Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Labour. Lower-ranked proposals

received over half the funding, leaving higher-ranked proposals in the Skills Development Fund high and dry. You ignored the advice of officials through a fair process, and instead, hand-picked recipients received millions of dollars connected to your friends. This is your responsibility to manage, to manage taxpayer dollars fairly.

1120

To the minister: What is your message to employers and laid-off workers looking for college programs? Is it, as they once said in Paris, "Let them eat cake"?

Hon. David Piccini: My message to all of those colleges is to continue to work with us through the Skills Development Fund. Over \$300 million has gone to college-led partnerships through the Skills Development Fund—\$300 million, Speaker. We've seen some incredible partnerships: partnerships with Mohawk College, partnerships with Loyalist College, partnerships with colleges all over Ontario.

I've often spoken about Noah, through Support Ontario Youth—shipbuilding strategy in Ontario; we're supporting our defence sector, Speaker—or Jennifer at the mine up in the north, or Niagara College, an important partner in the Niagara region with a number of our Skills Development Fund programs.

We're going to continue making those investments, and I'm very grateful for the college partnerships who have supported us to the tune of over \$300 million in training for remarkable people all over Ontario who are getting training through that rapid training to enter a career with a better job and a bigger paycheque.

INDIGENOUS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

MPP Monica Ciriello: My question is for the Minister of Indigenous Affairs and First Nations Economic Reconciliation. For years, the Liberal government, supported by the NDP, ignored the north, even going so far as calling it "no man's land." That neglect has left northern and First Nation communities without the tools or support needed to build a strong local economy.

It is our government that is changing that. We're working in true partnership with First Nations to unlock opportunity, strengthen the mining sector and support Indigenous-led economic growth. At a time of true global uncertainty, with new trade threats from Donald Trump, it has never been more important to protect Ontario.

Speaker, can the minister share how these partnerships are driving reconciliation and helping to build a stronger and more self-reliant Ontario?

Hon. Greg Rickford: I want to thank the member for Hamilton Mountain for her incredible work. She was at 233 events this summer, just in her role in her community, not to mention her responsibilities as a parliamentary assistant.

We're excited about the opportunity to fall in line with First Nations business leaders in writing the next important chapter of reconciliation, and that's First Nations

economic reconciliation. It's why we've invested in three important programs, Madam Speaker, to that end:

—the Indigenous Community Capital Grants Program builds community infrastructure projects focused on expanding businesses and new starts;

—the Indigenous Economic Development Fund supports communities in their efforts to develop and plan for economic prosperity, as new relationships and partnerships with businesses grow in their community; and, finally

—the Ontario First Nations Economic Developers Association is doing important work for economic development officers in every First Nations community in this province.

We're proud of our support for First Nations economic reconciliation, and we're going to keep going, Madam Speaker.

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

MPP Monica Ciriello: Thank you to the minister for his continued leadership and partnership building with the north.

The Ring of Fire represents one of the most important economic opportunities in a generation, but it's not just about minerals, it's about people, jobs and a stronger future for northern and Indigenous communities.

While others talk, it is our government that is taking action to build roads, create jobs and deliver real results in the north. At a time of global uncertainty, these partnerships are protecting Ontario's economy and strengthening our position on the world stage. By standing with First Nations and investing in the north, we are protecting Ontario's future and building a stronger, more self-reliant province.

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

Hon. Greg Rickford: Thank you for the question. We're so excited about the activity in the Ring of Fire but more importantly, or as importantly, the First Nations' leadership that's taking place in that region. We've seen first-hand them lead the environmental assessment processes, and, as they near their completion, they're mobilizing now to be involved in building legacy infrastructure and involved in responsible resource development. It's why we got a project off and running in Geraldton, Madam Speaker. The precursor was an economic plaza supporting First Nations communities for economic enterprise in the area. Now we're starting to build the road that leaves the Trans-Canada and heads to the Ring of Fire.

We've introduced an Indigenous opportunities fund to the tune of \$3 billion to make sure that First Nations communities are actively involved in the ability to access capital, participate in business, participate in industry and participate in a new look for prosperity in First Nations communities. It's exciting, Madam Speaker.

SOCIAL SERVICES

MPP Catherine McKenney: In Ottawa, OPSEU and CUPE workers have been on the front line of the city's housing and homelessness crisis. They work long hours in underfunded programs for wages that don't reflect the critical nature of their work. Those workers are here today in the gallery.

Will the Premier commit today to ensuring that workers in the housing and homelessness sector across Ontario are paid fairly for the work that they do?

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

Hon. Rob Flack: Indeed, it's a good question. We all know that supportive housing is a priority of this government. It is why when I met with the federal, provincial and territorial ministers earlier this summer, we spent a good part of a day and a half talking exactly about that. That is why the federal government has introduced Build Canada Homes, and we're going to continue to work with the federal government to find meaningful solutions.

One, I might add, would be in the co-operative housing arena, which I think is a good transition and an important leg of the stool in terms of building supportive housing. But we also continue to invest heavily in this province: \$700 million in homelessness prevention, up 40% in the last few years. We continue to invest, and we will continue to look for innovative solutions to support this dire need.

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

MPP Catherine McKenney: Again, Speaker, these workers are not asking for special treatment. They're asking for fairness. They're asking for respect. Ontario's housing support workers serve some of the most marginalized people in our communities, and they are burning out.

Will the Premier finally recognize that the people delivering critical social services and supports to people who are experiencing homelessness are worth fighting for?

Hon. Rob Flack: COCHI: a combined investment of more than \$5.3 million for the construction of 14 housing units that support people experiencing homelessness in Sault Ste. Marie—there's a great example; a combined investment of over \$1.9 million for the Canada-Ontario Community Housing Initiative to help build 24 affordable homes in Hamilton. I could go on. COHB: a \$75.5-million investment for encampments and homelessness—seeing a \$5.5-million investment to COHB for emergency shelter spaces for those living in encampments. We continue to invest. We continue to take this problem seriously.

At the end of the day, when you look at supportive housing, we're up 40%—or I should say homelessness, 40% more by this government. And where do we get the money? Through a strong economy, Madam Speaker. We're going to continue to build on our economy. We're going to continue to invest in helping those get a leg up to get a roof over their head.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Mr. Jonathan Tsao: My question is for the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services. Minister, while this government continues to shovel out millions of taxpayer dollars through high-paid lobbyists like Kory Tenycke, over 61,000 remain trapped on the Ontario autism wait-list.

Minister, when will the 61,000 children on this wait-list finally get the help they need and they deserve?

Hon. Michael Parsa: I thank my honourable colleague for the important question. I'll just remind the honourable member when he talks about the service registry on which families register for programs and services, 75% of families never had access to any support under the previous Liberal government—8,000, that was the total count of families that had access to support. Today, tens of thousands of families are accessing supports like foundational family services, the caregiver-mediated program, entry to school, the urgent response program. We have nearly 23,000 people in an expanded core program that includes ABA, mental health support, speech-language pathology, occupational therapy. These supports did not exist before. As I've said, they've come as a result of us not only doubling the funding of the program but increasing it by an additional \$175 million, and there's still more work to be done. We want to make sure every child—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Question?

1130

Mr. Jonathan Tsao: Speaker, with all due respect to my honourable colleague, I just don't understand what alternate reality you're living in. Getting on a list is not getting help. Today, we have members of the Ontario Autism Coalition. If you speak to them today, you'll understand that families are exhausted; they're desperate for help. Minister, everything is not okay.

Today, the average wait time for core autism services is over five years. That's not a delay; that's negligence. We know that, with autism, early intervention is critical, but with every passing year when a child is stuck on a list, hope disappears, desperation sets in.

Minister, I'll put this question again, through you, Speaker: Are families going to be forced to have to hire high-priced Tory lobbyists like Kory Tenycke in order to see action, or will this government finally fix the system and support the children and families that need it?

Hon. Michael Parsa: The best way to do that is to listen to families and experts who actually wrote the program.

I can tell you, Madam Speaker, and the honourable colleague would know, I call families every single day and have conversations with them, including the members on the Ontario Autism Coalition. They've got my number. They reach out to me directly. I ask my honourable colleague to come with me as we go around the province and meet with our partners and they talk about the impact of entry to school on that child and the family, a program that didn't exist before, the caregiver mediator program that

didn't exist before, urgent response services that didn't exist before, foundational family services that didn't exist before, under the previous government. All of this was put in place because we listened to the families. We're going to continue to do that to improve outcomes for every child and every youth in this province.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION AND SKILLS TRAINING

Mr. Ric Bresee: I think everyone in this House would agree that Ontario students are the future of this province. They are the ones who will build our communities, power our economy and lead our industries into the future. That's why it's so very important to have the skills that they need to succeed after graduation. We know that the jobs of tomorrow are going to look very different than the jobs of today. We know that. We're planning for it. Our government understands that training must keep pace with change.

While the opposition members were on vacation, our government kept working. Our caucus and our ministers kept working—working to strengthen post-secondary education and protect Ontario's future. We're helping more students every day to learn in fields like health care, technology, teaching and the skilled trades.

Speaker, can I ask the minister to please explain how our government is supporting skills development and hands-on training in Ontario's post-secondary—

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

Hon. Nolan Quinn: Thank you to the member from Hastings–Lennox and Addington for that important question. Our government recognizes that today's students are tomorrow's leaders, driving our critical industries and strengthening Ontario's economy, which is why we will continue to take action to ensure post-secondary students across all of Ontario are equipped with the skills they need to thrive in our province's most in-demand careers. While this summer may have been a vacation to the NDP and the Liberals, our government has been working hard to fulfill our election promise to Ontario.

I hosted a dozen round tables across the province to bring together industry and post-secondary, aligning higher education with local labour market needs so students can hit the ground running upon graduation.

In the last six months alone, we've announced nearly \$1 billion to expand enrolment in post-secondary programs that produce highly skilled graduates for Ontario's key sectors like health care, STEM, teaching and the skilled trades.

By working in lockstep with our schools and our industries and making record-setting investments to train more students for in-demand careers, our government will build the highly skilled workforce of tomorrow that will protect Ontario today and for decades to come.

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

Mr. Ric Bresée: I really want to thank the minister for his strong leadership and all the work that he put into this over the summer.

We know that a skilled and growing construction workforce is essential to Ontario's success—our long-term success. We know that every road we build and every bridge we repair under the Minister of Transportation depends on these workers. Every hospital we build under the Ministry of Health depends on these workers. Every school that we build under the Ministry of Education—and we're doing lots of this—all of these depend every day on these workers and bringing the skills that they have to the future, to that investment from this province.

These are the people, these are the workers who will turn our plans into reality for the future. They build the homes that the families need, and we hear constantly about how many homes we need.

Hon. Nolan Quinn: Thank you to the member opposite for that question.

Under the leadership of our Premier, we've been making record investments to support our students' skills development, whether that be at a college, a university, an Indigenous institute or through the skilled trades.

Since day one, our government has understood that a strong construction workforce is essential to meet Ontario's ambitious development goals.

This past August, we were proud to announce a \$75-million investment to expand enrolment in construction-related programs at our world-class colleges, universities, as well as our Indigenous institutes. This investment will train up to 7,800 students for in-demand careers in construction-related programs. That is 7,800 students in jobs like urban and land use planning, engineering technicians and many other careers that will fulfill our \$200-billion infrastructure plan and keep our communities moving and growing.

Our government was elected to protect Ontario, and by investing in our future construction and skilled trades workforce, we're keeping people on the job and building stronger communities.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

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

Hon. Steve Clark: It's a point of order, Speaker, under standing order number 59.

I just want to say, this afternoon, it's the government's intention to table a bill in the name of the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. We'll have second reading debate of Bill 56 and second reading debate on Bill 25.

On Monday morning, we'll have second reading debate on Bill 57. In the afternoon, we'll have second reading debate on Bill 25, and we'll have second reading on the bill that, as I mentioned, it is the government's intention to table this afternoon.

On Tuesday, October 28, in the morning, we'll have second reading debate on Bill 33. In the afternoon, we'll have debate on a government motion.

On Wednesday, October 29, in the morning, we'll have second reading debate on Bill 33. We'll also have, before question period, debate with five minutes for each of the recognized parties and two minutes for the independents in recognition of the 50th anniversary of the office of Ontario's Ombudsman. In the afternoon, we'll have second reading debate on Bill 40.

And on Thursday, October 30, at this time, it will be to be determined.

DEFERRED VOTES

HOMELESSNESS ENDS WITH HOUSING ACT, 2025

LOI DE 2025 VISANT À METTRE FIN À L'ITINÉRANCE GRÂCE AU LOGEMENT

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

Bill 28, An Act establishing a homelessness elimination strategy / Projet de loi 28, Loi établissant une stratégie visant à mettre fin à l'itinérance.

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

The division bells rang from 1139 to 1144.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Members, take your seats. If you're not in your seats, you cannot vote.

On October 22, 2025, MPP Clancy moved second reading of Bill 28, An Act establishing a homelessness elimination strategy.

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

Ayes

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gates, Wayne	Shamji, Adil
Bell, Jessica	Gilmour, Alexa	Shaw, Sandy
Blais, Stephen	Glover, Chris	Smyth, Stephanie
Bourguin, Guy	Gretzky, Lisa	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Bowman, Stephanie	Hazell, Andrea	Stiles, Marit
Brady, Bobbi Ann	Hsu, Ted	Tabuns, Peter
Burch, Jeff	Lennox, Robin	Tsao, Jonathan
Cerjanec, Rob	Mamakwa, Sol	Vanthof, John
Clancy, Aislinn	McKenney, Catherine	Vaugeois, Lise
Collard, Lucille	McMahon, Mary-Margaret	Watt, Tyler
Fairclough, Lee	Pasma, Chandra	West, Jamie
Fife, Catherine	Rakocevic, Tom	Wong-Tam, Kristyn
Fraser, John	Sattler, Peggy	
French, Jennifer K.	Shreiner, Mike	

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

Nays

Allsopp, Tyler	Flack, Rob	Pirie, George
Anand, Deepak	Gallagher Murphy, Dawn	Quinn, Nolan
Babikian, Aris	Grewal, Hardeep Singh	Racinsky, Joseph
Bailey, Robert	Hamid, Zee	Rickford, Greg
Bouma, Will	Hardeman, Ernie	Riddell, Brian
Bresée, Ric	Harris, Mike	Rosenberg, Bill

Calandra, Paul	Holland, Kevin	Sabawy, Sherif
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Jones, Sylvia	Sandhu, Amarjot
Ciriello, Monica	Jones, Trevor	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Clark, Steve	Jordan, John	Sarrazin, Stéphane
Coe, Lorne	Kanapathi, Logan	Sauderson, Brian
Crawford, Stephen	Khanjin, Andrea	Smith, Dave
Cuzzetto, Rudy	Leardi, Anthony	Smith, David
Darouze, George	Lumsden, Neil	Smith, Graydon
Denault, Billy	McGregor, Graham	Smith, Laura
Dixon, Jess	Mulroney, Caroline	Tangri, Nina
Dowie, Andrew	Pang, Billy	Tibollo, Michael A.
Downey, Doug	Parsa, Michael	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Dunlop, Jill	Piccini, David	Vickers, Paul
Fedeli, Victor	Pierre, Natalie	Wai, Daisy
Firin, Mohamed	Pinsonneault, Steve	Williams, Charmaine A.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day): The ayes are 40; the nays are 63.

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

Second reading negatived.

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

The House recessed from 1148 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

M. Anthony Leardi: Bon après-midi, madame la Présidente.

J'aimerais prendre cette occasion pour présenter à la législature une jeune dame qui vient de la ville de LaSalle et qui est directement devant vous. Elle s'appelle Simone Reaume. Elle est étudiante à l'école élémentaire Monseigneur-Augustin-Caron. Elle est page législative, et j'aimerais souhaiter la bienvenue à Simone ici dans la législature.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON HERITAGE, INFRASTRUCTURE AND CULTURAL POLICY

Mr. Aris Babikian: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy on the estimates selected and not selected by the standing committee for consideration.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Julia Douglas): Mr. Babikian from the Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy presents the committee's report as follows:

Pursuant to standing order 63, your committee has selected the 2025-26 estimates of the following ministries for consideration: Ministry of Infrastructure; Ministry of Transportation; Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism; Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing; Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming; Ministry of Sport.

Pursuant to standing order 64(a), the 2025-26 estimates of the following office not selected for consideration is deemed to be passed by the committee and is reported back to the House:

Office of the Lieutenant Governor: 1701, Office of the Lieutenant Governor, \$2,802,100.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Pursuant to standing order 64(b), the report of the Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy is deemed to be received, and the estimates of the office named therein as not being selected for consideration by the committee is deemed to be concurred in.

Report deemed received.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I beg to inform the House that today, the Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated October 23, 2025, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 110(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF GOVERNMENT BILLS

FIGHTING DELAYS, BUILDING FASTER ACT, 2025

LOI DE 2025 VISANT À LUTTER CONTRE LES RETARDS ET À CONSTRUIRE PLUS RAPIDEMENT

Mr. Flack moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 60, An Act to amend various Acts and to enact the Water and Wastewater Public Corporations Act, 2025 / Projet de loi 60, Loi modifiant diverses lois et édictant la Loi de 2025 sur les sociétés publiques de gestion de l'eau et des eaux usées.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Hon. Rob Flack: The Fighting Delays, Building Faster Act, 2025, introduces targeted updates among several statutes to accelerate transit construction, reduce costs of building and cut red tape holding back construction.

This legislation takes a comprehensive approach to streamline approvals, modernize essential processes and help communities deliver the infrastructure in housing that Ontario needs faster and more efficiently.

PETITIONS

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

MPP Lise Vaugeois: I would like to present a petition entitled "To Raise Social Assistance Rates." We know that

outside today there are people who are desperately looking for housing and can't afford a place to live. There are also people who are on social assistance—people with disabilities who are making so little money they cannot put food on the table. We know there are 80,000 people in Ontario without homes and over a million who are accessing food banks.

This petition wants double ODSP and OW rates. I thoroughly support this petition and will give it to Naomi.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

MPP Jamie West: Speaker, outside our doors are people advocating for increased rates for OW and ODSP. The petition here is called "Petition to Raise Social Assistance Rates." They talk about how OW is at \$733 for individuals and someone on ODSP has slightly more, at \$1,408.

The reality is, you just cannot not afford to even pay rent, let alone put food on your table or cover your bills. We need to increase those rates, and that's what they're advocating for here. We basically have a system put in place by the government of Ontario that leaves our citizens below the poverty line and unable to move forward in life.

What they're recommending is to double the social assistance rates for OW and ODSP. They also point out that the 2017 Ontario Basic Income Pilot, which was cancelled by the government, would have shown very specifically that adequate income leads to improved health and employment outcomes.

I do support this petition. I'll affix my signature, and I'll provide it to page Taylor for the table.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I have a petition here from individuals in my riding. I want to thank Erika Atkinson for sending in this important petition about tariffs.

This petition talks about tariffs that are being imposed by the Trump administration, and that they are causing chaos, not only on our side of the border but on the US side of the border, hurting workers in Michigan and Ohio, as well as elsewhere.

It also talks about the fact that the auto industry on both sides of the border is experiencing stress, not only on our side of the border but also particularly among the Michigan auto producers who are also losing billions of dollars as a result of these tariffs being imposed by President Trump.

This petition calls upon the Ontario government to continue working to remove US tariffs on the auto industry and to protect Ontario auto workers from the effects of these tariffs.

I fully support this petition. I will sign it and give it to this fine page standing here to bring to the Clerks' table.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and happy birthday to you.

I'm so pleased to be here on the floor of the Legislature to introduce the petition "To Raise Social Assistance Rates." Here in Ontario, we have legislated poverty. If you are disabled, if you get injured at work, you get \$1,408. None of us in this Legislature could find housing or buy food for \$1,408.

I would like to remind the government that social assistance rates need to be doubled because there's a cost to poverty and the health care system and the housing system and the economy. It's better to actually support the citizens that we're elected to serve, especially those who are vulnerable and who are disabled, to ensure that they can live their lives with integrity and dignity and actually be a part of the province of Ontario and our potential as the province of Ontario.

1310

So with that, I will gladly affix my signature and call on the government to double social assistance rates, lift people out of poverty and end the legislated poverty that continues to play itself out in Ontario.

MACULAR DEGENERATION

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Meegwetch, Speaker. Since 2017, an ophthalmologist based in Winnipeg has travelled to Kenora regularly to provide injections to prevent vision loss for people with macular degeneration, a condition that especially affects seniors and people living with diabetes. Patients from across northwestern Ontario travel to Kenora for these injections from places like Sioux Lookout and Red Lake. Last month, these visits stopped because of funding issues, leaving residents in northwestern Ontario with no choice but to travel to Winnipeg for these vital injections.

Today, I would like to present this petition calling on the government of Ontario and the Minister of Health to restore access to the sight-saving injections for the seniors and people with macular degeneration in northwestern Ontario. Over 100 people have signed this petition, just in a matter of days.

I fully support this petition. Now, I'll sign and ask page Taylor to bring it to the Clerk's table. Meegwetch.

INTERPROVINCIAL TRADE

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: It's my pleasure to rise today with a petition from a number of members of the public who are urging us to continue breaking down trade barriers within Canada, which costs the Canadian economy up to \$200 billion each year and lower gross domestic product by nearly 8%. These barriers also increase the costs of goods and services for Ontario families who rely on them

by up to 14.5% at a time when families are already struggling with increased costs due to tariffs.

They're asking that we continue to lead the charge in tearing down these barriers to unlock Canada's full economic potential and that we enable mutual recognition with reciprocating provinces and territories, so that goods, services and registered workers that are good enough for other parts of Canada are good enough for work, sale or use here in Ontario as well.

I fully support the petition. I will sign my name and give it to page Simone to bring down to the table.

FRONT-LINE WORKERS

MPP Jamie West: This petition is called "Make PSW a Career." One of the signatures is Jim Keyes. The reason I mention that is that Jim and I both were students at Cambrian College, taking child and youth work together. That is a career that you don't go into to get rich, but to help people.

The connection with PSWs is that PSWs aren't going into this to get rich. They want to help people. They lead with their hearts. We've talked about this very much in the past. There is a crisis right now in home care, in long-term care, with the lack of PSWs. I know the government is doing their best to attract people into that field with assistance, with free tuition and other avenues like that. The difficulty that we're having right now, though, is that the job itself is overwhelming, and people feel like they're set up to fail. Because of that, people come into the field and then exit the field.

What we need to do, if you think of it as a bathtub, is we're turning on both taps. The flood is coming, but they haven't noticed that the plug is not in the drain. We've got to put the plug in the drain, to make these careers that people want to stay in as PSWs. So they're petitioning us to make PSW jobs a career. They want that full-time employment, they want good wages. They need paid sick days. They need benefits. They need a pension plan and a manageable workload.

That part is probably the most important one. I support all of this because we can't just have PSWs as jobs; they have to be careers. But we really need that manageable workload where they don't feel like they're set up to fail when they're outnumbered by the number of people, where they can't provide the care to sit with someone and talk to somebody, let alone the care to get them adequately dressed and fed in time.

So I support this petition to make PSWs a career and not just a job. I want to thank my friend Jim again for signing this. I'll affix my signature and I'll provide it to page Lyla for the table.

HOSPITAL PARKING FEES

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I have a petition here entitled, "Eliminate Hospital Parking Fees." I want to begin by congratulating the MPP from Niagara Centre for his hard work on that, and all the members of the Niagara area who

have been working so hard to address this. They recognize this as a significant barrier to people seeking treatment. It is a financial barrier, no doubt, for patients, for families who want to visit their loved ones in hospital, for people who are seeking care and treatment, cancer patients. It's unthinkable that they have to pay \$40-plus a day just to seek treatment. It's also a huge barrier for our health care workers. It's an unfair tax for our health care workers.

The reason that these parking fees exist is because hospitals in Ontario are so underfunded by this government that this is an important source of revenue for them, but it shouldn't be that way.

This petition calls on the government to immediately adopt the recommendations of patients, families, health care professionals and staff, and organizations like the Canadian Cancer Society, by eliminating parking fees across the province, but also ensuring that hospitals are adequately funded as a concrete and immediate step to assist Ontarians. It shouldn't be that this financial strain should be a barrier to seeking health care.

Health care workers shouldn't have to pay to do their job. We don't have to pay; we get free parking. Why do health care workers have to pay?

I call on the government to immediately address this problem with hospital parking fees.

I will add my signature to this important petition and give it to page Naomi to take to the table.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

MPP Monica Ciriello: Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise in the House today with a very important petition. It's about something that we have heard about day in and day out: President Trump's tariffs and the impact they are having on our country and our province.

These tariffs are causing uncertainty right here in Ontario, and the chaos they're causing—specifically, in our auto sector—is atrocious. We've seen our Premier stand up and take on Donald Trump. We have seen plants temporarily shut down. Layoffs have been happening on both sides of the border.

This petition is calling on the government to continue to take the steps that our Premier has already been taking: continuing to get to work to get the US to lift these tariffs immediately, get people back to work, and protect Ontario businesses and workers that are being affected by these unjust tariffs.

I support the petition. I will add my signature and hand it off to Ziming to hand down to you.

RETIREMENT HOMES

MPP Jamie West: Speaker, this petition is entitled "Oversight, Regulations and Limits on Fees Charged by Retirement Homes."

I was surprised to learn, as an MPP, how little regulation there is around retirement homes when it comes to fees and costs.

I'll give you an example: During COVID, there was an increase of \$200 for retirement home residents who were there, because of COVID upgrades. The upgrades they were talking about is, they removed one of the toasters so that people would be specially separated, and so that allowed them to increase their fees by \$200. We were able to push back on that, basically by shaming them in the media, but there was no regulation, so they were able to do it.

I understand when the people who have signed this petition reach out and feel very strongly about the need for protecting seniors, especially those on fixed incomes, those struggling to get by, and those who have pensions that are not tied to the cost of living. It gets very difficult. Their families are doing their best to support them. You can't have a system where people think they have a set sort of rent for their retirement home and they can double it and do whatever they want to it at any time.

They're petitioning the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to protect retirement home residents from financial exploitation—that's absolutely what it is. They're asking the government to implement oversight, regulations and limits on the fees charged by retirement homes and all the services they provide to the residents. Absolutely, it's fair if there is a need for it. But we can't have our elderly people, our seniors and people in retirement homes being exploited just because someone wants to fatten their wallet.

I support this petition. I will provide my signature and give it to page Avery for the table.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

MPP Jamie West: Speaker, this petition is declaring intimate partner violence an epidemic in Ontario.

Earlier this morning, we were talking about emergency preparedness.

We might have to declare an emergency when it comes to intimate partner violence in Ontario. There is a staggering number of people who are being violated through this. I know that there was a study through the summer on this. I look forward to coming back to Queen's Park with a recommendation to declare this an epidemic. It is so beyond the point where we should not be debating this anymore.

1320

The province of Ontario needs to join the nearly 100 municipalities across the province that have already declared intimate partner violence as an epidemic. We know that survivors and municipalities across the province have been calling on the government. And I say "government," Speaker, but they've been calling all of us—opposition side, government side, independent members as well—about this. This is affecting members of each of our families—each of our communities, I'm sure our families as well. We need to stand together and protect people who are being abused in their community. That's very simple to follow.

What they're asking us, as the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and the government:

—respect experts in the field who have years of experience, knowledge and research, just understand that they know what they're talking about;

—accept the Renfrew county inquest's number one recommendation;

—they want us to immediately declare intimate partner violence as an epidemic as an important step to raise awareness and address gender-based violence;

—join with the nearly 100 Ontario municipalities that have declared intimate partner violence as an epidemic; and

—we need to pass Bill 173, which will now have to be re-tabled because of the election, the Intimate Partner Violence Epidemic Act, 2024, in the Legislature.

This is an important thing that will protect people, make their lives better. It's the least that we can do.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): And a reminder that when we do introduce petitions, that it is a brief explanation of the petition.

MPP Jamie West: It was brief compared to France.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): True.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUILDING A MORE COMPETITIVE ECONOMY ACT, 2025

LOI DE 2025 VISANT À BÂTIR UNE ÉCONOMIE PLUS CONCURRENTIELLE

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 22, 2025, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 56, An Act to amend various Acts / Projet de loi 56, Loi modifiant diverses lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member for Don Valley East.

Mr. Adil Shamji: I wanted to just pause and reflect on where we had stopped in my remarks yesterday afternoon before I continue with my further reflections.

When we stopped yesterday, I had finished describing how the government has professed to protect Ontario. At the same time, we've seen everything go downwards: health care, housing and affordability, for example—the state of affordability has gone down.

I had reflected on the fact that the Premier, our self-proclaimed saviour to protect Ontario, is also the same one that cheered President Trump on into office.

I had reflected on the fact that this government has a thinly-veiled contempt for our education system and that this—

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thinly?

Mr. Adil Shamji: Maybe not thinly-veiled, but certainly a contempt towards our education system, of which the most recent manifestation is in fact this legislation, which will make the space around our schools more dangerous, in particular for children.

I had reflected on some of the reasons that automated speed enforcement is, in fact, quite effective. I'd cited some of the evidence from SickKids and Toronto Metropolitan University. I had just finished quoting the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, who feel that it is a very important method that strengthens enforcement, that it is not a revenue-generating tool, and that it has won their strong support.

I was just about to quote the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, which says, "AMO is disappointed the Premier is taking steps to ban municipal ASE. There is strong evidence showing that ASE cameras work. People slow down, making our roads safer and protecting all of us—especially kids."

When I think about the amazing police officers in 33 Division that largely serve my riding, I think about how hard they work, how much work they have to protect my constituents, and the fact that on any given shift there are only 12 officers on the roads—not 12 cars, 12 officers—of which, at best, only one is available for traffic enforcement.

Removing automated speed enforcement as one of the tools in the arsenal to protect our children and to protect our roads only makes the entire community more dangerous by taking police officers away from the important work that they do of getting to 911 calls when there is a theft, a break-and-enter or a violent crime. And so moving forward with this does not achieve the government's stated goal of protecting Ontario, and I urge all members on the government side to reconsider.

But I wanted to touch on a second part of this legislation, which is oriented towards removing interprovincial barriers that will enable more health care workers from other provinces to come to Ontario. I listened very intently to the Minister of Health's remarks in her lead-off, in which she touted her so-called efforts to stop the crisis we face in health care, a crisis that is, of course, of her own creation. She said, in the plan that she has put forward, there are three pillars. One, the right care in the right place; two, faster access to care; and three, the hiring of more health care workers. And I want to take a moment to fact-check that.

Number one, she says that Ontario patients will get the right care in the right place. Yet, as we speak, nearly half of all municipalities in Ontario do not have a family doctor who is rostering patients. Now, I suspect if I were to ask her about that, she would say, "Well, we just cut the Health Care Connect wait-list for primary care in half." My answer to that is, "Yeah, right." I know how they did it. They called down the list and anyone who didn't pick up the phone or any patient that died because they didn't have a primary care physician got taken off the list. Now, sure, there are a couple of people there who may have actually got a family doctor. But we all know a large number of those individuals were not successfully attached to primary care; names were just taken off the list.

"Right care in the right place"? How do you say that with a straight face to the many seniors who were forcibly removed from their ALC beds in hospitals to distant, far-

away long-term-care homes where they were disconnected from their families and from the communities in which they grew up and in which they lived? So you'll forgive me for being incredibly skeptical and dubious about this government's intention to achieve right care in the right place.

The second pillar is, of course, faster access to care, which is one I find particularly perplexing. Under this Minister of Health's failed leadership, we've seen the worst health care system performance in our province's history: more people without a family doctor; more people on wait-lists; more people making longer drives out to hospitals or calling 911 and having no ambulances available to respond to them, or no emergency departments in their own community because under this government, we have seen a previously never-before-seen phenomenon of closed emergency departments throughout the province.

Simultaneously, she's trying to pull the wool over the eyes of our patients. She's trying to convince them that if they can see a pharmacist for something that they would normally see a doctor for, that's good enough, and it's not.

And finally, she told us that the government is trying to hire more health care workers, which is a statement that I find hard to read after eating lunch, because if you ask any health care worker they'll tell you that they feel disrespected, demoralized, driven out of their work and out of this province under this Premier and this Minister of Health.

This government says it works for workers. Well, what have they done for workplace safety for health care workers? What have they done for dignified working conditions for health care workers? What have they done for fair pay for health care workers, except implement Bill 124 and then get forced to retract that? Essentially what this government has done is created a leaky bucket where health care workers are pouring out the bottom even as the government claims to be trying to fill in the vacancies from the top.

And even where there have been some efforts to address health care worker shortages, those efforts have been pretty lacklustre and half-hearted to begin with. Take, for example, the Practice Ready Ontario Program, which purports to accelerate the credentialing of internationally trained medical graduates. In this program, in its first year, the government had this incredibly ambitious goal of getting—wait for it—30 IMGs credentialed through the Practice Ready Ontario Program. And as though that is not hilarious—well it's not hilarious; it's incredibly sad. But as though that is not enough of a failure, they couldn't even deliver those 30 first graduates in the first year, and we're still waiting for them to come through.

But it gets even worse. Consider the sudden, unilateral and discriminatory act to prevent internationally trained medical graduates from participating in the first round of the Canadian residency matching service. The Ontario Medical Association has warned that it will have unintended consequences and is urging the minister to reconsider. The Canadian Medical Association is urging the minister to reconsider. The Ontario College of Family Physicians

is concerned that this move may “undermine the vital need for a sustainable family medicine workforce.”

The Minister of Health knows that the only reason that the CaRMS match last year didn’t have a massive number of vacancies in family medicine is because there was a scramble to fill those vacant positions with international medical graduates that will now be forbidden from accessing those.

Under this government, family doctors are being asked to do more with less: take more patients, assume more liability, fill out more forms—19 hours on average of paperwork every week. This government is making family medicine unattractive, and until recently, the only way to fill those family medicine spots was with IMGs. Now this government is taking that away.

1330

But this government actually represents the pinnacle of hypocrisy. One hand literally does not talk to the other. At the same time that they are implementing a devastating, discriminatory and perhaps outright racist policy, they’re also trying to pass legislation that proclaims the opposite. Schedule 3 of Bill 33 says the following: Every college or university shall “(a) ensure that when assessing applicants for the purposes of admission into a program of study, assessment is based on the merit of the individual applicant.”

So you’ll forgive me for wishing that we could just put the Minister of Education and the Minister of Health in the same room, so they could realize how badly they are contradicting each other. But of course, they won’t. They haven’t been in the same room, because they’ve been putting up their feet for the past five months while the Legislature has been adjourned. And so, my call to all in this House is to end the discrimination, solve the primary care crisis and treat IMGs fairly, so they can continue to participate in the first round of the match.

Now, we have this half-hearted effort to claim that interprovincial barriers will be reduced and that will allow health care workers from other provinces to come to Ontario. How that’s going to happen, we have no idea. Those will be proclaimed in the regulations. What does that mean? Will we see the same lacklustre performance in the case of the Practice Ready Ontario program? There will be a promise for 30 people and we won’t even achieve that within the first year or two.

The way this government conducts business—whether it is in health care, education or, of course, the Skills Development Fund—is on the back of a napkin, usually favouring friends or donors, and is not oriented to achieve the care, the safety, the value that Ontario patients and Ontario taxpayers deserve.

In my final moments, I want to reflect on the fact that we must protect the spaces around our schools, make sure that all tools are available to our front-line heroes and police, make sure that we are protecting our health care system, ensure that we’re solving the crisis in primary care and end the discrimination against the people who are trying to help our health care system.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Questions and comments?

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: I listened very intently to the member for Don Valley East and your presentation. You mentioned that you had some skepticism about how we reduced the number of people on the Health Care Connect list. You said, “Maybe some of the people who were taken off the list were people who were deceased.” So I was wondering: Do you think that deceased people should have stayed on the list? And did you want them to stay on the list so they could vote in the upcoming Liberal leadership race?

Mr. Adil Shamji: It’s funny to be talking about deceased family members, because I’m led to understand that a deceased family member actually donated to the Minister of Labour, and it’s available on the Elections Ontario webpage.

All I will say is while I don’t think that deceased people should stay on the Health Care Connect wait-list, I also don’t think that you get to claim that as an accomplishment. The point here is that this is a government that is not serious about addressing the crisis in primary care and is willing to use smoke and mirrors, and whatever strategies are possible, to distract from their failures, rather than owning them.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Question?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: My question is to the member from Don Valley East. We know that family physicians are really the front line. In many respects, they are the most important health care workers because if we see our family doctor, then we’re not going to wind up in emerg, for example. But we also know it has been extremely difficult to fill those positions, to attract people into family medicine.

I’ve been very concerned to see that now where you went to high school somehow is a determinant as to your merit in terms of applying for that family medicine stream. I wonder, can you speak to your concerns about that limitation that’s now been imposed?

Mr. Adil Shamji: I thank you for the question. It is, indeed, concerning. When we think about the health of Ontario patients, and specifically about the need to ensure they get the best care possible, in a timely manner, from the most qualified individuals, then it makes sense that we should have merit-based processes to select our medical students, to select our residents and ultimately our family doctors and our specialists.

It’s alarming when we see policies implemented that actually seek to undermine that. I really have to wonder—because it seems as though there are some members in this government that get that. Bill 33, as I mentioned, actually has a provision that calls for merit-based admissions, and then, simultaneously, we have another part of government saying that merit doesn’t matter, geography should matter.

At the end of the day, we just want to make sure that we’ve got highly qualified family doctors in our system that look like and can serve and connect with all of us.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Questions?

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: Thank you to my colleague from Don Valley East for his thoughtful remarks on this bill. We know that this government has a habit of distracting and deflecting. Whether it's the Skills Development Fund, where they want to talk all about the good cases—which are amazing, that's great, but actually they're just trying to distract us from what's going on over here, where we've got millions going out to PC insiders and friends.

In the same way, we've got this bill that is removing speed cameras, which SickKids hospital research, which the Ontario police chiefs' association is saying are critical to actually saving lives, are more efficient for their officers in terms of enforcing speed limits, which we know saves lives.

My question to the member from Don Valley East is, what do you think it will take? How many children will have to be hurt, injured—that you may see in your ER in your role as an ER physician—until this government wakes up and realizes that speed cameras save lives?

Mr. Adil Shamji: I want to start by thanking my exceptional colleague from Don Valley West and say that while your question is very valid, I shudder, actually, to contemplate that. I had cited some of the statistics in my earlier remarks. For example, the increase in mortality that is sustained when someone drives just 10 kilometres an hour over a speed limit of 30—survival from an accident at that level drops to 60%. If they are 20 over the limit, survival drops to only 20% or 30%.

What we know from the experts is that automated speed enforcement reliably, predictably changes behaviour. Then when you take that away, the behaviour returns. I'll leave it at that.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions?

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: Ontario's health care system needs reinforcements. The government is expanding the as-of-right to 16 additional health professions. This will allow qualified workers to begin serving patients immediately. These changes will reduce delays, will maintain safety and will put patients first.

My question to the member from Don Valley East is, do you support this bold reform to strengthen our health care system? I know I've heard from constituents in my riding who believe in this, and they will be able to provide that service to patients. Or are you going to continue defending a broken process that really keeps care out of reach?

Mr. Adil Shamji: I've spent most of my career as a physician working in Ontario, but I have worked outside of Ontario as well. I spent some time working in the Northwest Territories. I will speak from personal experience about how onerous and difficult it is to have to repeat the credentialing process over and over and over again when you're going to help out a community in another province or territory.

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Something very obviously needs to be done about that, but it's hard for me to believe that this government is

actually serious about solving the problem when on the one hand they introduce something like this and on the other hand they move at such a snail's pace when it comes to accelerating credentialing internationally trained medical graduates who are already here in Ontario and want to practise and are unable to do so.

So, you'll forgive my skepticism. I want to see thoughtful, meaningful policy actually where we're going to move forward and get more doctors here in our province, but we've got a lot of them right here, and this government is not taking action on that.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Question?

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Some may view this government taking out speed cameras in areas as a distraction from many of the issues. This morning during question period, the Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development answered a question that insinuated that the opposition does not respect the military. This kind of distraction for an answer is entirely inappropriate. The minister suggested that the members of the opposition do not respect the military.

Saying this, I am a mother of a son in the military that serves this country and has served this country. Such comments are disrespectful, unfounded and diminish the service and sacrifices of those who have served our country.

I am asking at this time that the minister apologize. Does the member from Don Valley East agree that this is a distraction and he should apologize?

Mr. Adil Shamji: Number one, I'll begin by acknowledging and thanking your son for his service to our country.

There are a lot of things that we heard during question period that were quite difficult to listen to, one of which was that comment. I know, for example, that the member for Kanata-Carleton, the first female squadron commander in Canada, has devoted a lifetime of service to our country, and that was disrespectful to her as well.

Now, I would have to ask for a little bit of clarification on your question, whether you're asking for an apology to his comment on the military or for his misconduct with the Skills Development Fund.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I'm going to caution members on their language, especially because we've got all afternoon together. Thank you.

Seeing the time on the clock, it will be further debate. Further debate?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: It's an honour to rise on Bill 56, the government's latest omnibus red tape reduction bill.

I've got to say, Speaker, I'm all for reducing red tape. I would really appreciate it if the government would come forward with a bill to remove the thickest red tape creating a barrier to building housing in this province and pass the bills I've put forward to legalize multiplexes and mid-rises so we can actually start building homes that people can afford in the communities they know and love.

I wish the government would come forward with a red tape reduction bill that would take red tape off people with

Ontario disability supports, who have so many challenges and barriers to red tape accessing the benefits they deserve.

But the one thing I don't support addressing red tape on is protecting the quality of our drinking water. Reducing those protections, which is exactly what schedule 1 of Bill 56 does, is deeply concerning. Now, I know the minister came out and pre-emptively said we've learned from Walkerton, but I think the minister said that because the minister knew that he needed to do that because one of the primary recommendations that came out of the Walkerton report—and I want to remind people what happened tragically in Walkerton 25 years ago: When over 2,000 people became seriously ill and tragically seven died from contaminated drinking water, there was a commission, and one of the things the inquiry said was that an essential first step in protecting drinking water is a multi-barrier approach to avoid contaminating our drinking water. So I find it deeply concerning when the government says one of the purposes of this bill is to reduce redundancies. There are certain areas where we absolutely need to reduce redundancies; clean drinking water is not one of them. It's kind of like air traffic control. Air traffic control has multiple redundancies because nobody wants a problem to happen when they're up in the sky. Likewise, when it comes to protecting our drinking water, we need multiple redundancies to ensure that we don't contaminate that water, because lives are at risk.

One of the concerns I have with schedule 1 of this bill is that we're transferring the non-politicized, evidence- and science-based decision-making that comes from the source water protection committees into the minister's office in a couple of critical areas. One is in the area of redundancies, which is incredibly important to have in protecting drinking water, and the other is in the grandfathering in of those who already have permits. If the source water protection committee says, "Do you know what? Your activities are likely going to contaminate drinking water, and we're going to tell you that you can't do those activities until you prevent that from happening"—that's being taken away from the evidence-based committee that makes that decision and going to others. It's very unclear in the bill who those others are. Given the history of this government, it's likely the minister—but likely some sort of politicized entity, for something that is so critically important to make evidence- and science-based.

Secondly, I've got to talk a little bit about schedule 11. When the government brought Bill 5 forward, which eliminated the world-recognized Ontario Endangered Species Act, I didn't think it could get worse. I just thought, "Well, they clearly don't believe in protecting species. It can't get any worse." And then we see schedule 11, which allows the forestry industry to harm, kill, destroy habitats of species at risk—no longer restricted at all in forestry operations. I'm all for a successful forestry sector. I think one of the things that differentiates Ontario's forestry sector is how much of it is FSC-certified, which helps us open markets in places like the

EU that want to see sustainable forestry practices. We're undermining that by removing species protection. I think it's dangerous.

Finally, I've got to talk about speed cameras. I'm sorry; I don't understand how the Premier can get up and say that speed cameras, which save people's lives, are a cash grab. There is one simple way to avoid this fee: Obey the law. All you have to do is obey the law, and then you don't pay a fine. What has happened with speed cameras? We have seen studies showing that they reduce the number of people travelling over the speed limit by as high as 88%. In my riding of Guelph, when speed cameras were introduced, 40% of people were driving over 10 kilometres over the speed limit in safety zones, like around schools; that was reduced to less than 15% after the cameras were introduced. It's a financially responsible way to ensure that we have safe streets. The bottom line is, speed kills. At 30 kilometres an hour, 90% of those who are hit by a car survive; at 60 kilometres an hour, only 5% survive. Saving lives makes a difference.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Questions?

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: Thank you to my colleague from the other side, from Guelph. Thank you for your presentation. I always respect your views.

When you come to modernizing the Clean Water Act to empower the local source protection authority to approve the routine amendments, like adding the new well—so without compromising safety. That's what you are talking about.

So these changes reduce delays, support housing growth and maintain strong oversight.

So the member is—actually empowering these communities to act faster while maintaining the environmental protection. Do they believe in municipalities remaining stuck in red tape?

1350

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I appreciate the question from the member for Markham—Thornhill. We had a great time at the Diwali event downstairs earlier today, and I want to thank you for being there with me to enjoy that a bit together.

When it comes to speeding things up in housing construction, for example, I'm all for speeding it up. We desperately need to build more homes that people can afford in the communities they know and love. But when it comes to speeding things up that could put our drinking water at risk, I say slow down. I say we've got to get this right.

Ask the people in Grassy Narrows what happens when your water is contaminated. Since 1968, the community has been dealing with mercury poisoning in their water. Ask folks in Walkerton what happens when your water becomes contaminated. We have to get this right. People's lives are on the line. Let's not mess with a system that works. We as a province learned from Walkerton. We've done a great job since then. I don't understand why the government want to undermine those protections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Questions?

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Meegwetch to the member for talking about Bill 56, Building a More Competitive Economy Act. I want to focus on schedule 1. It talks about the Clean Water Act. When I think about clean water, I think about clean water in a sense of where I come from, in the riding of Kiiwetinoong. Today, as we speak, I know we have 12 long-term boil-water advisories. Anything long-term is over one year where you have to boil water.

For example, in the community of Neskantaga, they've been on boil-water advisory for more than 30 years. And this is Ontario. There is no change within this act to improve the water. I don't know how many times I've asked the government of Ontario to look at investment and infrastructure on-reserve, because we are Ontarians, but we are not treated as such.

How can we improve to be a more competitive economy if you do not give clean water to First Nations?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I appreciate the question from the member from Kiiwetinoong and appreciate your advocacy for clean water. When we talk about water and speeding things up, why don't we speed up clean water on First Nations reserves? I know you've brought members from your riding. I've met some of them who are in their twenties and have never lived a day with clean drinking water in their homes. Think about that.

If we want to talk about speeding things up for water, let's speed up clean drinking water. Let's end the boil-water advisories. I know members opposite will say that's a federal government responsibility, and yes, the federal government has to act on this. But when it comes to in Ontario, why don't we just do it and then send the bill into the federal government to pay for it, so we can proudly say we've ended boil-water advisories in this province?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Seeing the time on the clock, further debate?

Hon. Mike Harris: I hope everybody is ready for a riveting 10 minutes here on a Thursday afternoon. I don't know why they give me Thursday-afternoon House duty, because we're just going to put everybody to sleep.

With all that said, I am sharing my time with the Associate Minister of Forestry and Forest Products, the member from Thunder Bay-Atikokan, so we're going to focus a lot on forestry here today. I thank the member from Guelph for bringing that up, because it is obviously something that's very important to the associate minister and me.

But before we get into that, I do want to say a big thank you to the member from Barrie-Innisfil, the current Minister of Red Tape Reduction. As someone who has held that portfolio, I know how important it is—I know how important it is to this government and I know how important it is to the people of Ontario.

I just wanted to put a couple of numbers out here. Back when I held that portfolio, we used some KPI metrics. It's how we basically measured the success of what we were doing. At that point, we were saving businesses and people around the province roughly about a billion dollars a year

just through our red tape ministry and about a million and a half hours in time saved. That would be like filling out forms, paperwork—redundancies—different things like that. I'm proud to say that under our new minister, we've now bumped those numbers up. We've increased that savings to \$1.2 billion—so that's \$200 million more in savings—and the hours saved up to 1.8 million hours a year, which is adding another 300,000 hours saved. So these are great metrics. Thank you to the team over at red tape reduction for carrying this on. I know it's a lot of work putting these bills together, especially some of these omnibus bills where there are many, many pieces of legislation. Kudos to the team over there; I know they're doing a great job.

Let's talk a little bit about the Ministry of Natural Resources and how we're playing into this bill. One of the things that we have done, one of the things I've been very cognizant of since I've had the pleasure—and I do say that and I do mean that—to be the Minister of Natural Resources. I often start my speeches off whenever we're out and about saying, "Being the MNR minister is actually 13-year-old Mike's dream," if you can believe that, which sounds a little bit silly, but here we are a few years later—only a few, not too many, but a few years later. It's incredible to be able to be up here in this position to be able to do great things for the people of Ontario.

One of the things that I brought over to this ministry was that red tape reduction lens, and I'm very proud to say that our ministry since 2018 has reduced the cost to industry or stakeholders by \$3 million. That's a lot of money. It's a lot of money, Madam Speaker—putting that money back into the pockets of Ontarians just through the Ministry of Natural Resources.

We're taking that a few steps further with this particular bill. Let's focus, obviously, on the forestry sector. The forestry sector employs roughly 130,000 people here in the province of Ontario and generates \$22 billion in revenue. Those are pretty substantial numbers. We often have heard over the last little while that the industry had some slowdowns; there have been some troubles, obviously, related to the tariffs coming out of the United States. We're now seeing an over 45% duty and tariff that the US has put on softwood lumber, and we've heard of some unfortunate mill closures and idles over the last little while. I want to say to people out there listening to people of this House: This government is doing every single thing that it can to make sure we're keeping the forest industry thriving, sustainable and keeping communities in northern Ontario on track.

I just want to highlight a few of the investments that we've made over the last little while: \$72 million of investments into the Forest Sector Investment and Innovation Program, which boosts competitiveness; nearly \$50 million in investments under the forest biomass program to help increase wood harvest and find new markets and users with lower-grade wood. We just added an additional \$20 million to the forest access road program—which is actually a really big deal, because this is not just about forestry users; it's about folks getting to their hunt camp,

people using snowmobile trails, going hiking with their dogs, so being able to recreate. It's not just about the forest industry; there's so much more when it comes to that—and, of course, an additional \$10 million that we've put into forestry chip program that helps offset some of the cost for moving some of those wood chips or sawdust or by-products from the saw mills around the province as we do see a bit of a downturn in the pulp and paper industries.

So we're doing what I believe we need to do to be able to keep that industry thriving and sustainable, and that brings us to where we are today to talk about Bill 56.

We've got a few great pieces in this bill around the Crown Forest Sustainability Act. One of the pieces that we're looking to have implemented should this bill pass is to enable the forest industry to prepare one forest management plan for multiple management units. When we talk about hours saved, this is one of those things that it really does. A lot of these organizations, or just businesses in general around the province, don't necessarily have dedicated staff to be able to go out and fill out all this paperwork, do all the studies. So being able to reduce the time, reduce the burden in putting those management plans together is going to be a big-time savings and dollar savings.

1400

We're creating a new regulation-making authority for our forest manuals. Basically, every managed forest has to have a manual, and that feeds into those management plans. We're going to be able to streamline some of that.

Obviously, the biggest thing, I think, is streamlining harvesting approvals and saving time. One of the biggest costs when it comes to forestry is actually getting out in the bush, identifying which trees you want to select for harvest and ultimately harvesting those trees and getting them back into our sawmills for production—so being able to save time, being able to identify which forests are going to be harvested.

Just for the member from Guelph, who was talking a little bit about some of the endangered species, different pieces like that, and how he wants to see things more sustainably harvested or looking at ways that we can export to the European Union: We have one of the most sustainable forestry industries in the entire world. I want to put this into perspective. The actual total harvest, the allowable harvest, is less than half a per cent of the actual harvestable bush that we have in Ontario. We're talking about sustainability. I don't know anywhere else in the world, quite frankly, that has a more sustainable forestry industry than we do right here in Ontario.

I know that the Associate Minister of Forestry and Forest Products is going to elaborate a little bit more on some of the more granular pieces that we're going to see in this bill. But I think it's incredible—I just wanted to leave this one last little point off before I sit down.

Since 2018, this government led by Premier Ford—we are now saving businesses in this province over \$12 billion a year, and that's year over year, Madam Speaker. That's why we are now seeing record investment coming to this

province, because it truly is an incredible place to do business. We're seeing those manufacturing jobs returning.

We're seeing incredible investment in the tech sector. We're now outpacing Silicon Valley when it comes to growth and GDP. As someone who comes from Waterloo region, I'm proud to say that we have probably the most thriving tech sector in the world. So we want you to come and invest here in Ontario. We want to create good jobs.

With that, I'm now going to turn it over to my colleague to finish off debate for us here. Thank you very much for your time, everybody.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I recognize the Associate Minister of Forestry and Forest Products.

Hon. Kevin Holland: Thank you to the minister of MNR for his remarks. It is truly an honour today to rise as Associate Minister of Forestry and Forest Products to speak on the second reading of Bill 56, the Building a More Competitive Economy Act.

As someone who has served as a small-town mayor in a forestry-reliant community, I have seen first-hand how deeply this industry supports local families, small businesses and the very fabric of our northern towns and communities. It's not just a sector on paper. It's a part of our way of life.

Ensuring our forest management system remains world-class starts with the forest management plans that guide how Ontario's forests are renewed and sustained. A forest management plan must be prepared before forestry can take place on crown land in Ontario. These plans must be prepared by a registered professional forester with input from local citizens, Indigenous communities, stakeholders and the public.

In my experience as mayor, forest operators have consulted with community leaders regarding forestry operations within their municipalities. These consultations have ensured co-operation and addressed concerns beforehand, thereby mitigating any potential problems during forestry operations. I have also experienced the willingness of operators to give back to their communities in so many ways.

Each plan covers a 10-year period and must follow the ministry's Forest Management Planning Manual. These plans determine how much timber can be harvested and where this can occur. They set out where forest access roads may be built, along with requirements for forest renewal. A forest management plan must meet sustainability requirements, striking a balance among social, economic and environmental values.

My ministry is responsible for the long-term health of crown forests, and we share this responsibility with forestry companies and communities, guided by the forest management planning process. Through forest management planning, forest managers provide for healthy forests now and into the future, while also providing sustainable benefits such as timber and commercial products, wildlife habitat and recreational opportunities.

Preparing and implementing a forest management plan is a rigorous process requiring ongoing consultation, rec-

ognizing there are many uses and users of Ontario's public forests, and all must be considered in planning forest operations. For planning purposes, the ministry has divided Ontario's managed forests into about 40 management units. These units are geographic planning areas that range in size from 300,000 to 3.6 million hectares.

Under the act, as it stands, a forest management plan must be prepared for each of these management units. This adds up to a significant amount of work for a company with operations on more than one management unit. Given the rigors involved in preparing a forest management plan, plans must cover all forestry activities planned for a management unit, such as building roads and bridges to gain access to the resource, cutting and removing trees, maintaining the forest and replacing the forest after it's been harvested.

We have heard from the industry that preparing forest management plans for each forest management unit involves overlap and complexity. Industry is asking us to eliminate redundancy and simplify planning by enabling the industry to prepare a single forest management plan that spans multiple management units. This bill, if passed, would allow the industry to do so, supporting integrated and cost-effective forest management while upholding Ontario's global recognition as a leader in sustainable forest management.

Speaker, I spent much of this past summer visiting mills and communities in wood yards all across Ontario, from Red Lake to Renfrew, meeting with forestry leaders, municipal officials and workers on the ground. Their message was clear: Our policies must make it easier to do the right thing, to harvest sustainably, plan efficiently and keep good jobs in Ontario. This bill reflects exactly that feedback.

Under the Crown Forest Sustainability Act, my ministry is required to prepare four manuals: the Forest Management Planning Manual, the Forest Information Manual, the Forest Operations and Silviculture Manual and the Scaling Manual.

The Forest Management Planning Manual sets out the requirements to forest management plans, forest operations and work schedules. It requires public involvement in decision-making processes and includes measures to ensure operations meet sustainability goals and other forest management objectives.

The Forest Information Manual sets requirements for information systems, inventory surveys, tests and studies for Ontario's crown forests.

The Forest Operations and Silviculture Manual sets standards for forest operations and silvicultural practices, the minimum qualifications of those engaged in forest operations and the assessment procedures and standards that ministry must use to evaluate forest operations and management.

Finally, the Scaling Manual sets requirements for measuring, counting and weighing forest resources from crown forests to determine their volume and quality, the training and licensing of scalers and conducting scaling audits.

Under the act, as it stands, an amendment to a regulated forest manual must be approved by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. To enable us to quickly implement forest policy changes, this bill proposes to shift this approval authority to the minister. This is a practical change, not a political one, that cuts unnecessary red tape while maintaining strong oversight and transparency. It ensures we can adapt quickly when science, technology and industry best practices evolve.

My ministry processes more than 350 harvest manuals annually. These approvals are required by forestry licensees and must be in place before harvesting operations begin. We have heard from the industry that streamlining this process could lower the administrative burden this process imposes. In this bill, we are proposing to do just that.

This bill, if passed, would eliminate annual harvest approvals, replacing them with requirements and regulation related to licensing terms and conditions. In other words, using instead a "permit by rule" approach. At the same time, we would extend the ministry's stop-work-order powers to strengthen enforcement, enabling the ministry to address cases of non-compliance.

1410

This proposed amendment, if adopted, would reduce potential delays for the forestry industry. The industry would still be required to operate in accordance with an approved 10-year forest management plan and would continue to file reports the ministry requires to track wood and ensure compliance. This means we can maintain high standards without slowing down the people doing the work, a balanced approach that respects both the resource and those who rely on it.

Speaker, administrative monetary penalties are an efficient and effective tool to ensure compliance with the Crown Forest Sustainability Act. Under the act, a ministry has the authority to use this tool to enforce compliance with forest resources licences.

To improve compliance with our rules for tree removal, we are proposing in this bill to extend this authority to include the permit to remove trees. This will ensure consistency and fairness across all forest operations, reinforcing that those who play by the rules are never disadvantaged compared to those who cut corners.

Speaker, before I conclude, I want to take a moment to recognize the people who put their lives on the line to protect our forests from a different kind of threat: wildland fires. As a long-time volunteer firefighter myself, I have a deep respect for Ontario's fire rangers, pilots and all of the men and women who spend their summers battling blazes to protect our northern communities. Our government has nearly doubled Ontario's firefighting budget, expanded aircraft capacity and increased training and recruitment so our crews have what they need to stay safe on the front lines. These investments are about more than numbers; they are about ensuring our forests and our people are protected for generations to come. Forest management plans and responsible, sustainable harvesting operations are an important tool to reduce the risk and severity of forest fires in Ontario.

Pursuing continuous improvements implies a willingness to be open to ideas and input, to be ready to listen and learn, to improve the way things are today for a better way tomorrow while ensuring we continue to meet our forest management goals, smoothing the plan and straightening the course and making Ontario more competitive. Our government listens carefully to Ontario's job creators. If we can reach our policy goals and reduce unnecessary red tape in the best interests of all Ontarians, we are ready to do the work, helping our industries to compete, making our processes easy to follow so that more business time is spent on business matters instead of navigating through a maze of rules.

Our government is proposing to amend the Crown Forest Sustainability Act for this very reason. The forest industry has asked for changes that will help it to compete, and the changes to the Crown Forest Sustainability Act and this red tape reduction bill are responsive to requests from the Ontario Forest Industries Association. It is our government's position that these changes would meet the purposes of the act as well as our policy goals. Most importantly, these changes reflect a shared commitment between the province, the industry and our communities to keep northern Ontario and all of Ontario strong, competitive and proud.

We are building on a legacy of stewardship, responsibility and hard work that defines who we are as northerners and as Ontarians. These changes will build on the investments we have already made to support, sustain and grow the sector against the real impact of 45% in tariffs and duties from the United States. Investments through our FSIIP, our Forest Biomass Program, roads program and NEAP total over \$150 million. We are committed to protect the sector and the changes proposed in this bill will help us do that.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's shocking to hear the government include the forestry sector using Bill 56 as a solution. There won't be anything else to regulate if you don't respond to the request for tariff support.

This is what our critic put out this week, Madam Speaker: "We've seen Espanola, Terrace Bay, Kap Paper, Ear Falls and now Gogama all face closures or curtailment. How many more of these will it take for the government to put forth a" single "tangible, sustainable forestry plan to protect the workers, communities and the industry for the future? Why are we seeing a pattern of crises and closures and a government being reactive instead of putting in the work and being proactive with concrete solutions?"

This is not a solution to a 44% tariff on the forestry sector. I mean, you have to listen to these people. These are important jobs in small towns, and you're talking about regulating them for licences. They won't be seeking any licences because there's no work for them.

When are you going to wake up and respond to the calls from the forestry sector to respond to the tariff crisis?

Hon. Kevin Holland: I want to assure you that we are well awake.

Speaker, I find it remarkable that the opposition parties want to lecture anyone about supporting forestry. For 15 years, they strangled this sector with red tape, ignored northern communities and drove investment straight out of this province. When mills were closing, they were silent. When workers needed certainty, they offered studies and slogans.

Our government took a completely different approach, delivering over \$150 million to help mills modernize, lower costs and stay competitive.

Speaker, our government has taken the action that we need to take in fighting to mitigate these unfair trade practices, and keep fighting to support northern jobs and the long-term future of our forests sector.

It's too bad they don't recognize—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): All members will come to order. The member for Waterloo will settle down.

Questions?

MPP Billy Denault: I appreciate the comments from the minister and associate minister.

I know all too well about the importance of the sector. It supports many jobs in my riding.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Order.

MPP Billy Denault: My question for the minister is, could he elaborate on how our amendments to the Crown Forest Sustainability Act deliver red tape relief that the sector has demanded, while maintaining strong environmental and safety standards for the sector?

Hon. Mike Harris: You asked a very good question, but I have to use this opportunity to respond to the member for Waterloo, so I do apologize.

This is the first time, since I have been here in 2018, that I have ever heard that member stand up and talk about forestry.

As someone who was passionately born and raised in northern Ontario, I know what it means to have the forestry industry in a slump. I have seen layoffs. I have seen what it means to small communities.

That's why we are standing up, to put our money where our mouth is.

Kap Paper, for example—we have invested over \$52 million into Kap Paper to make sure that they stay open during tough times.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Member for Waterloo, come to order.

Hon. Mike Harris: But do you know what we truly need? We truly need the federal government to stand up and actually put their money where their mouth is. They announced that they've got \$1.2 billion. We want to see it.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The member for Waterloo is warned.

Question?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: If I had a lot of time, I would be challenging the conversation about wildland firefighters because it's different—the conversation needs to be challenged.

But what I really want to talk about is, the price of pulp is very, very high right now: over US\$1,800 per tonne.

After two long years of no communication with the workers in Terrace Bay, they want to know, what is your plan for modernizing and bringing the Terrace Bay pulp mill back into operation?

Hon. Kevin Holland: Speaker, we know how vital mills like AV Terrace Bay are, not only to northwestern Ontario communities, but to Ontario's entire forest economy.

Our government continues to stand shoulder to shoulder with workers, local leaders and the company to ensure AVTB's long-term success. Our government provided targeted support to keep the mill warm and maintained during the winter months, protecting critical infrastructure and preserving the option for a full restart. We continue to work closely with local officials, union representatives and community partners to ensure every option that secures the future of AVTB and supports the families who rely on it.

Ontario knows that decades of mismanagement—including 400,000 jobs leaving the province—have compounded the situation which we're experiencing right now.

My ministry remains focused on supporting AV Terrace Bay's workers, their families and the community, ensuring when opportunities return, this mill and the region are ready to thrive.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions?

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. He talked about manufacturing jobs, which I thought was kind of interesting because this government talked about it, actually, for a number of years. They talked about the number of jobs lost under the previous government and how they were going to bring back 300,000 manufacturing jobs.

1420

I'm curious if the minister actually knows the number. I'll tell him in case he doesn't. It's about 20,000, Speaker, not 300,000. Yes, absolutely, according to StatsCan, it's 20,000 jobs that this government has brought back.

So my question to the minister: Does he actually know how many people in this province are unemployed, and can he tell us what his government is doing to employ them instead of handing out millions to their friends through the Skills Development Fund?

Hon. Mike Harris: Here's one thing that I do know: Under the previous government—you want to use the number 20,000. There were 20,000 manufacturing jobs that we lost alone in Waterloo region under the previous Wynne Liberal government. And I'm going to remind that

member that they couldn't even get their leader elected into this Legislature, because of the track record that the Liberal government had for 15 years in this province.

So I'm very proud to stand on the record that Premier Ford has delivered. I'm very proud to say that we have added hundreds of thousands of manufacturing jobs back here to the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Next question?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The crosstalk can stop.

Mr. Billy Pang: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Before we took office in 2018, Ontario was known as Canada's red tape capital, thanks to the previous Liberal government. There were well over 386,000 regulatory requirements on Ontario's businesses and individuals, the highest in Canada. Their failed policies drove investment and jobs out of the province. We just talked about it.

However, this side of the House listened to the people of this province, and we have had significant progress in cutting through bureaucracy, and continue to make life easier and more affordable right here at home.

Having said that, when I have the opportunity to talk with different stakeholders, they are very interested to contribute to helping our government remove red tape. So this question is for the Minister of Natural Resources: Can you share some of your strategies to encourage stakeholders to join our efforts to reduce red tape?

Hon. Mike Harris: Absolutely. It's a great question, and I thank the member from Markham—Unionville for that. As red tape minister, I can tell you one of the things that we had done previously was to unveil an actual web portal where people could go online and submit their ideas. So you didn't have to be, necessarily, a stakeholder or someone along those lines; you could be an average Joe out in the public and have your say as to how you thought we could reduce red tape here in the province.

I know that the member from Barrie—Innisfil, the current Minister of Red Tape Reduction, spent a lot of time this summer around holding different round tables, and encouraging people to come out and have their say.

It's great to see—again, like I said—those numbers going from \$1 billion to \$1.2 billion in actual dollars saved, and 1.5 million to 1.8 million hours saved. Clearly, what we're doing is working. I thank you for the question.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Bill 56, the Building a More Competitive Economy Act—subtitled: “by setting aside safety in school zones, undermining the forestry sector and undermining our health care system.” This bill does not meet the moment of the crisis that Ontario is facing, with 800,000 unemployed.

If you are between the ages of 15 to 24, you are facing the highest unemployment in a decade. Workers have sent out hundreds of job applications and resumes. They are desperately applying. What does the Premier of Ontario

say to them? “Work harder. I can’t believe you can’t find a job.” How can you find a job that does not exist?

What is this government doing to ensure that one in four teenagers and workers between the ages of 15 and 24 actually can find work? Are they incentivizing employment opportunities? No, they are not. Are they increasing the funding towards the employment-to-work pathways? No, they are not. Have they invested in work-integrated learning opportunities, which have proven to actually have workers move past the employment and education sector into pathways of careers? No, they are not.

What are they doing? Well, they have a Skills Development Fund worth \$2.5 billion, and if you have a lobbyist or friend or family that is connected to this government, that has had some work with this government, you get fast-tracked past the pile of qualified applications and you get your money. That’s how the province is treating the employment and jobs crisis right now.

It is ineffective, obviously, because we now have 800,000 unemployed workers in Ontario. These are actually the people that we know are looking for work. So many other people have declared that they’re not even trying any more, Madam Speaker. They have lost hope.

I’m going to talk about the forestry sector. Actually, I have been talking about it for 13 years. Maybe that’s the correlation; the member from Kitchener-Conestoga said that his 13-year-old self was really happy to be the minister, but for 13 years, I’ve been talking about it. In fact, we put out three press releases just this month alone on the issue.

And I want to tell you, our critic on this, MPP Bourgouin, has said, “We’ve seen Espanola, Terrace Bay, Kap Paper, Ear Falls, and now Gogama all face closures or curtailment” of those jobs. “How many more of these” is it going to “take for the government to put forth a tangible, sustainable forestry plan to protect … workers?”

What this bill actually has in it is, in schedule 2, Crown Forest Sustainability Act, they’re saying that the regulatory conditions attached to approving forestry plans—the forestry companies won’t have to go through that application process.

The forestry sector right now is on the ropes. They need contracts. They need procurement contracts from the government, ideally on housing. The forestry sector is a major contributor to the housing sector. Has this government decided to actually build truly affordable, attainable homes? No, they have not.

Many of the mills that we have met with our tariff council have told us, “Listen, 60% of our wood was going down to the Home Depot, for instance, in Idaho or Michigan.” Those contracts are gone now because it’s a 45% tariff on forestry products.

So they need a new market. Ontario needs housing. Ontarians need jobs. Why will the government not help the forestry sector get through this very trying time and this crisis by ensuring that Ontarians have homes? I mean, it’s a win-win for everybody, including the government. But they are so stubborn and so ideologically opposed to

investing in housing. You have a hope and a prayer—fingers crossed. This is your strategy on housing.

You even voted against the member from Kitchener Centre and her co-sponsor yesterday to have a timeline for housing. They just wanted a damn timeline, for God’s sake. Having a timeline to achieve a goal actually makes a lot of sense in the grand scheme of things, but this government—no, you voted it down.

And you said you can’t do it in 10 years. Well, there’s a whole bunch of people in the public gallery today who would like to have affordable rent. You removed rent control. They would like to be able to find a pathway to actually own a house. The housing supply in Ontario has dried up because you have created the conditions where the supply chains that were doing work in development charges in the province of Ontario have been compromised.

You are actually undermining the confidence in our economy by interfering and having these shiny little baubles that the government likes to distract against, really, the mandate of public service.

I will say this about that: Contained in this bill is this ridiculous proposal to rip out speed cameras. Now, the flip-flopping of this government on speed cameras has happened at a speed that we’ve never seen before. SickKids hospital; chiefs of police in the province of Ontario; municipalities that have invested in speed cameras to keep school zones, for instance, safe—now the government has a piece of legislation that says, “We’re going to rip them out.” It was like the whole ripping out the charging stations before you guys decided that EVs might be actually worthwhile.

1430

At the end of the day, this is supposed to be a tough-on-crime government, right? “Law and order,” “Lots of cops, lots of police,” “Go to jail, no bail”—we hear these little catchphrases from this government. Quite honestly, it’s very embarrassing actually on a general sense of it. And when you drill down and you look at the evidence and you look at the research, speed kills. Speed kills pedestrians and cyclists. These cameras were reducing the incidence of negative interactions between cars and pedestrians, which are usually very negative for the pedestrians, by 88%.

What do we have now? The Premier who doesn’t say one word in public without having polled it. Polling is this government’s mandate, and it really contributes to the populism, which is not serving any country or any jurisdiction very well, especially the people that we’re elected to serve. So, here you have the Premier saying, “We’re going to rip them up. It’s a cash grab,” even though those municipalities put those cameras in those communities at your behest. You’ve decided now that there may be some votes to be had by vilifying municipalities for putting speed cameras in. It’s really dangerous politics to subject people that we’re elected to serve to this flip-flopping.

I wish we saw the same outrage from the Premier—when people get a ticket for speeding in a school zone, do you know why they get a ticket? Because they have broken

the law. They have said, “You know what? I am more important on this street in my car than the people that are walking around that community,” and they get a fine. They get a ticket for doing so, for hurting other people or for putting other people at risk. It actually makes sense on so many levels.

I wish we had the same outrage and sense of moral outrage that the Premier had when he ditched his OPP detail in the Home Depot parking lot and ran after a dude who allegedly had done some shoplifting and confronted that dude in the parking lot, having ditched his OPP detail, and then said to that dude, “If I ever catch you doing this again, I’m going to give you a beating like you’ve never seen before.” I mean, it’s so embarrassing. Come on, it’s so embarrassing. Had he done this vigilante justice that the Premier—it’s just like him and his little red shovel. These moments are iconic but not for good reason, no.

So, if he had confronted this guy, if he had actually laid his hands on him and given him the beating of a lifetime because in his little detective mind this guy had stolen something, I hope that he would go to jail and not get bail. I guess my full theme to this thing, is that this is—when I said yesterday it feels like a Monty Python skit, it’s really not in the best way. This is not how you should be governing during an aggressive tariff war where the very fabric of our province is being undermined on the health care file, on the education file. Our social infrastructure that we have had in this province—access to a doctor, access to a special education classroom, access to a specialist so that your mother can deal with her lung cancer—these are things that define us as a province, which your government is actively undermining.

If you read the Financial Accountability Officer’s report this morning, the cuts coming and the impact of the cuts that have already happened—because none of the funding has kept pace with inflation or a growing need on issues like mental health, for instance—if you followed that report, you see that the cuts are coming and people are going to hurt even more. Yet what do we have before us in a piece of legislation like this? Asking municipalities to potentially even increase their taxes to remove speed cameras. In what world does this make any sense?

I just want to pivot entirely to the social infrastructure argument, because this is what we’ve been hearing in our tariff council meetings, is that people are looking to Ontario for a stronger education system, to access to colleges and universities, access for their family to come into safe communities, where cars are not speeding through those communities, for instance. This has great appeal. In fact, there’s a huge number of workers in the United States who are looking to Canada. They want to bring their skills here, but they want to make sure that they’re not moving from a tense jurisdiction to an even worse one—and one of those issues is access to doctors and to mental health.

I want to get one of my constituent’s concerns on the record right now, particularly as it relates to psychologists in Ontario. Her name is Bev Walpole. She is a clinical psychologist at McMaster University. She also works with the Hamilton Health Sciences centre. She’s a front-line

health care worker who reached out—amongst many, I will say. This is what she had to say:

“Thank you for your service to our community and for your time in reading this message. I am writing to you not as a lobbyist, but as a front-line mental health professional who serves patients every day in Ontario’s health care system.

“I am a clinical and health psychologist at McMaster University, in Hamilton Health Sciences, and I work closely with physicians, psychiatrists and interdisciplinary hospital teams delivering acute and complex mental health care.

“I am deeply alarmed by the College of Psychologists and Behaviour Analysts of Ontario and its proposal to overhaul the regulation of psychology in Ontario, which this piece of legislation provides enabling legislation for. These changes, if passed, pose serious public safety risks and will lower the standard of mental health care in our province.”

The fact that this government has reduced interprovincial trade qualifications—and we raised this when it was first broached with Bill 2. It should not be a race to the bottom.

I use the example of my son, who’s an electrician. A workplace is less safe if you’re working alongside people who don’t have the same qualifications as you do, especially if you’re working with electricity.

In this instance, though, Walpole made the case that lowering the standards as a whole will compromise the ability to serve vulnerable Ontarians who are seeking counselling support, usually in a time of crisis, with—and having those counsellors as psychologists not have the same qualifications.

“Simply put,” she said, “drastically lowering standards does not solve challenges with access. Lowering standards means lowering quality of care.”

So this is ultimately not the answer to the problem that we have on this particular file.

I do want to say that if the government was really serious about addressing some of these health care barriers that you yourself have created, you certainly would not be increasing the barriers for doctors to practise in Ontario. And that’s also what Bill 56 does.

One of our caucus members is Dr. Lennox, and she posed this question earlier to the minister: “You spoke about the need for reducing red tape and barriers for growing our health care workforce, but just last week you announced that internationally trained doctors are only able to participate in the first round of the residency match if they spend two years of high school in Ontario. I’ve been practising as a physician in Ontario for 10 years and I can tell you that not a single patient has ever asked where I went to high school.” It’s ridiculous. It would be a joke if it wasn’t so serious. “They just don’t care. They want a skilled, compassionate physician.”

Almost two million Ontarians do not have a family doctor. This causes great turmoil and crisis and tension in our emergency rooms and in our acute medical care centres.

Dr. Lennox went on to say, “We know the international medical graduates already entered into the process. They paid money, they invested time and now they’re being left stranded. How do you respond to the Ontario Medical Association and residency program directors across Ontario who have said that this will destabilize family medicine programs and reduce our ability to actually grow our health care workforce?”

1440

What a good question from a doctor in the field who recognizes that this piece of legislation, Bill 56, is going to make it more difficult to become a doctor in Ontario, when we have two million Ontarians who do not have a doctor.

One has to question what is driving this. Who is writing this legislation? It is so sloppy, it’s so messy and it so misses the point of where we are. Not even the point—it misses the moment. You’ve lost the plot. I don’t know how many more statements I can add to this.

But even in the face of a crisis in our medical health services, now you want everybody to go to high school in Ontario for two years. Why? You would have a qualified individual who’s coming from, say, Norway go to Harbord Collegiate for a couple of years just so that they can get into the medical education stream? It defies logic. Once again, it’s a piece of legislation that—one has to wonder, who’s drafting this?

We have schedule 1, Clean Water Act: You have no credibility on source water protection in the province of Ontario, but now you’re creating some technical changes which is all now left to the minister. The last time I checked, the minister is not a specialist in source water protection. This is a dangerous trend that we’ve seen for years now—started under the Liberals; now under the Conservatives—where you move a lot of the legislation and requirements and framework to the regulation where it’s away from the eyes of the public. It certainly undermines our ability as legislators to question and to evaluate the efficacy of the legislation.

I’ve already made comment on the Crown Forestry Sustainability Act—quite honestly, again, a little bit embarrassing.

And then, of course, we have the title of the bill. The title of the bill is Building a More Competitive Economy. You will never achieve a truly competitive economy if women are not included in the evaluation of that.

The Auditor General has come out with a scathing report on this government on your rollout of the CWELCC program. Currently, 89,000 people just in Toronto are seeking early learning and care. Early learning and care are an investment in the well-being of children, the early learning of children, but also the economy. For every \$1 that you invest in child care, \$7 comes back to the economy. But now you’re in this fight with the federal government about who’s going to provide more money and who gets that money. You’re happy to fight while parents struggle, while women who absolutely want to be part of the workforce, or want to go to school to upskill, to improve their educational and employment outcomes—

they need a child care strategy that is affordable, that is quality and that is in community.

You have completely and utterly dropped the ball on child care. I think you think of it as a nice-to-have. We recognize that the social infrastructure of child care, of health, of education and, yes, of the forestry sector, is key to anchoring our economy and ensuring that we reach our potential as citizens. When we do that, the province reaches its potential. This legislation misses the moment entirely.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Questions?

Mme Dawn Gallagher Murphy: Thank you to the member from Waterloo for her comments. I do want to address the comments specifically around the forest industry because our province does support thousands of jobs in this industry, especially in northern communities.

In fact, this past weekend, I had the great honour of attending the Women in Wood conference. The member talks about women as well. I was happy that our government supported this specific event. It was the first time over 100 women in the forestry industry were able to get together, network, talk about what they are doing in the industry. They had an amazing time. I’ve been receiving many emails from them thanking our government for this opportunity.

Talking about that, does the opposition support reducing red tape for Ontario’s forest sector, or are you going to continue defending the status quo?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It’s great that the member went to a conference with women who are looking to move into the forestry sector; my point is that there isn’t going to be a forestry sector for you to attend a conference on—45% tariffs.

This is what the forestry sector has asked us: They want immediate tariff relief and a federal-provincial support package for Ontario forestry jobs. They want to implement a made-in-Ontario strategy to strengthen domestic processing. They want contracts. They don’t have time to go to a conference; they’re on the ropes. They want the province to protect the province’s housing supply, build houses, keep the forestry sector viable and also create good local jobs. They want to provide long-term modernization supports, including power-purchase agreements. What an opportunity to put power-purchase agreements in.

Do you know what? You’ve lost credibility on the file. I’m not going to waste my time.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The House will come to order.

Newmarket–Aurora, please come to order.

Next question?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Thank you to the member from Waterloo for your very insightful analysis. I’m concerned about the water section of this bill, and I’m concerned that the bill would block source protection policies to stop significant drinking water threats in a particular location if the threat relates to an activity that was occurring before the source protection plan took effect.

Imagine that you've got an aggregate operation—we have lots and lots of gravel pits in my riding. Let's say that something has happened and that the water is being affected, the drinking water for that community that is living—we've got lots and lots of lakes as well. Yet there's no ability to change, to actually address spoiled drinking water if the gravel pit was there, had their permit first.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Excellent question and comments on source water protection. You would think that we learned some important lessons after experiencing what happened in Walkerton. Even locally in Waterloo region, the Uniroyal plant compromised the aquifer. That water is still, 35 years later, contaminated. So, once it's contaminated, it's gone. So it makes so much more sense fiscally, ethically, environmentally to do the right thing, to do the due diligence to prevent water from being compromised, especially when it's source water protection. For Waterloo region, for instance, we get 80% of our water from an aquifer. If that became compromised, you think of the economic fallout, the health care fallout—it makes no sense to lower the standards on source water protection. It's like 1995 all over again.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Question?

MPP Billy Denault: I appreciate the opportunity to educate the member, because I think some of her comments on the forestry sector seem a bit misinformed. Our government has many supports for this vital sector: forest biomass, the forest sector innovation program. I mean, \$4.4 million in forest biomass program funding was announced in my riding with Associate Minister Holland this past summer.

The member commented about the lack of a forest sector strategy. Ontario has one; it was introduced by my predecessor, former Minister Yakabuski. So my question is a just simple yes or no: Has the member read it?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'm not taking any lessons from you on forestry in this place after 13 years; I'll tell you that much.

We actually have an emergency meeting tomorrow with the forestry sector, our tariff response council, because everything that I've said in this House on this floor is accurate and it's the truth. There will not be a forestry sector in Ontario when you're facing 45% tariff wars. We know that Donald Trump wants our resources; he wants to compromise our economy. The little dribs and drabs that have been coming from this government while you beg the federal government to do your job—this is not good enough for the forestry sector. They want contracts. They don't want bailouts. They want the government of Ontario to come to the table, offer them a job to provide the wood, to provide the homes which we all need. I don't understand why you cannot do the simple math on this one solution. It needs to happen soon; it needs to happen now. It should be in this bill. It's another failure of this government.

1450

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Question?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question to the member—you talked at length about the forestry issue. You talked at length about the government's approach. Why do you think the government is not addressing the forestry issue in the way that we really need to have it addressed?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you very much for the question.

I don't know. It does defy logic. It's almost like the government of Ontario is waiting for the federal government to come in and save them from themselves.

Jacques Jean, president of United Steelworkers Local 1-2010, expressed frustration with the repeated instability facing the sector. He said, "How many mills need to curtail production before the government realizes the need for a real plan. Our members want to work, they want job security, and they deserve a government that has their back."

I'll send this over to the member so he can also read the words of the workers in the forestry sector. They want contracts. They want to work to build up Ontario. They want to keep those jobs in northern and rural communities.

The question remains, why can't you do your job?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Question?

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: I want to thank the member for Waterloo for her passionate remarks. I know she cares deeply about the economy in Ontario.

We know that this government doesn't do anything without a motive, whether it's the Skills Development Fund and helping their PC insider friends; whether it was Dresden and putting a special clause in the bill to make sure that someone gets some benefit for opening up a dump where there shouldn't be a dump. And then, of course, we've got them talking about jobs and how many hundreds of thousands—again, they just don't know how to do math, I think. They do need to look at the math curriculum that these members were schooled under.

I want to talk again about water. Why do you think this government—what is the motivation for why they are lowering the standards on protecting water, which is one of the most fundamental things that a government should be doing right?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It is honestly quite surprising, because protecting source water is a risky business, one could say. They have taken some risks over the years that have left them in court, for instance.

It seems to me, as I read this legislation, that you're happy to roll the dice on source water protection, in the name of economic prosperity. What you fail to understand is that without clean drinking water in many of these communities, you will undermine the economic potential of our communities and our economy. It's unethical, one would say; it's amoral, because without water—we always hear this, and my Indigenous colleague often says, "Water is life." So why would you mess around with it?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): A very quick question: The member from Algoma-Manitoulin.

MPP Bill Rosenberg: Unlike my MPP, I know I've only been here for a little while—but not 13 years, talking about forestry. I was in the bush; I actually was a logger for 30 years. So I'd be willing to gladly talk to you about forestry any time and—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Response?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'd be happy to talk about forestry, because we know that it has sustained so many communities.

This is what they want: They want long-term power and co-generation agreements. They want investments in modernization, green energy and innovation. They want to be part of the solution around training and supporting those workers. We should all be working towards that together.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

MPP Andrea Hazell: Madam Speaker, today I will be sharing my time with the member from Etobicoke—Lake-shore.

Today, I rise to speak to Bill 56, Building a More Competitive Economy Act, 2025, with a focus on schedule 5. I rise not just as the transportation critic but as a voice for all communities across Ontario, and especially my riding of Scarborough—Guildwood.

This piece of legislation threatens to undermine the safety of all communities across Ontario and the well-being of our most vulnerable citizens. I don't think the members across the floor think too much about the effect that this will have on schools and our vulnerable children.

First and foremost, let me be clear about the intent behind the speed cameras. It is not a simple issue of expenditure; it is fundamentally about safety. Speed cameras have repeatedly demonstrated their effectiveness in reducing speeding violations and, by extension, saving lives.

They're not simply a piece of technology, and I think that's how you're looking at it—it's a technology. But it's a crucial tool in our arsenal to protect families and children from the dangers posed by reckless driving, and I'm going to get to the part about reckless driving. It's not just the people on the road who are driving recklessly; we've got people that are connected to them right in this House.

Municipalities across Ontario, in good faith, invested in speed cameras as part of a provincial program designed to enhance community safety. Our constituents voted us in, and safety is a huge concern right now for all of our constituents who voted us in in the snap election. We have a duty to listen to the issues of our constituents, we have a duty to protect them and we have also a duty to keep them safe.

For the province to now consider banning these devices without proper compensation is not only unjust, but it also sends a troubling message. I want to ask this government, what about the investments made by municipalities trusting that these tools will be supported by our government?

Experts strongly support the use of speed cameras. Research conducted by reputable organizations—and my

colleagues in this House have already shared this information. They spoke about it, and we know it's falling on deaf ears. We know this government is going to vote on what they want to vote on because they clearly do not listen to their people. They do not listen to their constituents. They do not listen to SickKids hospital, which is such a reputable hospital for children in Ontario. It's disgusting, the decision this government is making to support their donors and voters.

This government continues to be in the news every day, and it's been months of being in the news, but I wish it was for positive causes.

I want to go through a letter that was sent on October 17 to Doug Ford, to Prabmeet Sarkaria and Michael Kerzner, and it says, "We are current and former executives of Ontario's policing community writing regarding the pending provincial decision to ban municipalities from deploying automated speed enforcement—ASE—technology, which was introduced by your government in 2019, along with other policing leaders. We are deeply concerned and opposed to a ban on automated speed enforcement. Police services are focused on implementing evidence-based practices to keep our communities safe. Evidence clearly shows speed cameras are highly effective at changing dangerous driving behaviours and reducing collisions and serious injuries at problem locations."

Guess what? CAA did research, and 73% of drivers say they slow down when they're nearing a camera. It is the behaviour of human beings. It's there to correct the behaviours.

1500

I can tell you that, in the last two months, I have received hundreds of letters and emails and phone calls from concerned parents, families across Ontario. I know I do not have enough time to name names, but there was something that keeps standing out in letter after letter after letter. And it says, "I'm writing to urge you and the provincial government to protect the lives of children and pedestrians, seniors." They get hit at crosswalks; they don't even survive. Kids get killed around their schools.

I'm just wondering which research this government did to get up one morning, wave the wand—because you've got the control, you've got the power—and say, "I don't care how many people got killed during speeding. I have the power, I'm the big bad guy, and I'm going to rip out all the speed cameras." Because that's the message you're sending to the people that voted you in, in the last snap election.

And the negative news continues:

—October 19, "Horrible Piece of Legislation": Ontario Parents to Rally Against Speed Camera Ban";

—October 8, "Ontario Government Won't Say Which Cabinet Minister Vehicles Were Speeding, Citing Safety";

—October 7, "Ford Government Vehicle Recorded at Stunt Driving Speeds on Ontario Highways";

—October 6, "Vehicles Registered to Ford Cabinet Ministers Caught by Speed Cameras More Than 20 Times."

When you stand up and talk about your defence against why you are taking out speed cameras, just remember,

when you sleep at night, your family can get killed, your grandkids can get killed by those same people who are speeding.

Madam Speaker, the safety of our schools should never be a negotiable. It should not be negotiable—non-negotiable. Under the leadership of Doug Ford, many parents already expressed concerns about the safety of their children while at school. Now we're being asked to further jeopardize their safety by banning speed cameras.

Perhaps one of the most compelling points against this legislation is the flexibility that speed cameras provide compared to other traffic-calming measures. You talk about speed bumps. Have you ever seen a fire truck or an ambulance driving to save lives and going over speed bumps? You've got to do better than this with your alternative solutions.

It is time we shift our approach to community safety—community safety above everything. Because who makes that community? It's the people who voted us into this chamber—we didn't just walk into this chamber. It's families, and in that "families" bracket: seniors, moms, brothers, sisters, daughters, sons. There is a high percentage of traffic accidents caused by speeding.

I'm asking you, because I know all of you are amazing members and you have a heart, please look at schedule 5. It's not too late to edit and amend schedule 5.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I recognize the member from Etobicoke—Lakeshore.

Ms. Lee Fairclough: Thank you, Speaker, for this opportunity to debate Bill 56, Building a More Competitive Economy Act. I just need to recognize my colleague's impassioned plea to look at changes to this bill, and I'll be echoing some of her comments as well.

This bill seems to be another classic bill by this government, a large omnibus bill covering disparate topics, all in one bill. Some relate to actually keeping our economy competitive, like the schedule on workers, but others, I really don't see the connection.

In my remarks, I'm going to comment on the following schedules: schedule 5, the Highway Traffic Act; and then I'm going to make some remarks for the connected schedules of schedule 7, the Ontario Labour Mobility Act; schedule 8, the Regulated Health Professions Act; schedule 10, amendments to the regulated health professions statutes; schedule 3, the Drug and Pharmacies Regulation Act; and schedule 4, the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act.

Let's start with schedule 5 of this bill, the Highway Traffic Act, which removes all enabling legislation for automated speed control and results in the reduction of cameras being installed in community safety zones. I just want to talk about a very good example of this actually in my own community. We have data that was from the installation of a camera just outside of St. Leo Catholic School on Stanley Avenue. That speed camera—in April 2025, there were 227 tickets issued.

Interjection.

Ms. Lee Fairclough: Yes, lots of speeders.

By June, it fell to 113. School was still in session, but it resulted in a reduction. By July, it was down to 73 tickets.

So people slowed down. They actually worked outside of the school. They actually go the speed limit. They're set the way they are to encourage safety, to keep our kids safe. That is the formula. Most would like to keep them.

I will say that, ultimately, I have heard from so many constituents since that were furious. A riding is a community of communities, and across the board, there's so many examples where people in those communities actually asked for the cameras. They advocated to make sure people would slow down, so you can believe I heard from them pretty quickly. And it's not lost on them either, by the way, that there were over 25 fines that have been issued—sorry, 20 fines that have been issued to government cars that were assigned to ministers.

Now, Dr. Andrew Howard, who's the head of orthopedic surgery and the senior scientist in child health evaluative programs at SickKids said, "Speed is the single most important factor in pedestrian injury risk." A 2025 study by SickKids shows that the speeding reduction cameras reduce the number of speeding vehicles by 45% in urban school zones. And my local data demonstrates it pretty clearly, doesn't it? It shows they're effective to reduce the risk, especially those that are most vulnerable.

We've also just heard that the police chiefs, the fire chiefs—people who know community safety better than anyone—they also believe that they should remain.

So I think we actually have the formula. I think it's pretty compelling. So it just leaves me puzzled how this even turned up in this bill, which is actually about strengthening our economic competitiveness. It seems a strange choice to put our children at risk, and I can't imagine it's only because it's a favourite issue of the Premier.

The other part of the bill that I want to speak to, though, is about all the other sections that relate to health care and the mobility of the health care professional groups. We heard earlier from a member opposite and the minister that the intent here is to provide the ability for more health care workers to come to Ontario more quickly and be able to register with the colleges and start practising and ensure that they're fully registered by that time.

I actually remember us talking about this when we all debated Bill 2, which was really designed to open things up across our provinces. What we talked about at that time was making sure that we had the same standards—standards for workers, standards for people to be able to practise in whatever profession they were coming to practise in.

So I hope that there will be further clarifications about what the college process for all of these professional disciplines will be as well and how it will work for people through this mechanism. If a patient has a complaint, how is that going to be addressed? There is a risk, as the use of professional title protections are being loosened, that public trust can be eroded if we're not clear about how the public will be able to do that.

1510

I also believe that the government is already running into some challenges. So there's a consultation under way on the level of education and scope of practice changes for

psychologists. It's one of the disciplines on this list. I think it's a good example, because what is being proposed and what they're consulting on is actually accepting a reduced level of education for psychologists, a master's versus a PhD and a residency placement for psychologists. It's currently required in Ontario.

Now, I've worked with many psychologists in my previous work at CAMH, and I know their diagnostics skills. I know the rigour of their training, and they're proud of it, in Ontario, as well. I also know the burden that we need to be meeting around addressing people's mental health concerns. So reducing this requirement to enable this interprovincial movement should be really closely examined. There's often a reason that we move to more extensive training in some of our professional groups.

At the same time, they're also suggesting expanding the scope of practice to include prescribing—it would require some additional training—but as the Ontario Psychological Association has pointed out, it seems odd to expand scope to include prescribing at the same time you're reducing the education requirements that will be accepted for the profession.

In their letter, and I encourage the government to read that closely, they do offer some other good solutions that would enable individuals with comparable training to be able to register and practise more quickly in Ontario.

But we also know safety is a big issue in health care. So as we're allowing others in, we've got to make sure that we can maintain that.

I originally trained as a radiation therapist to provide cancer treatment right here at Princess Margaret hospital down the street. My own profession is listed here in schedule 10. I can say, since my own training a few decades ago now, the field has changed dramatically. My father had radiation treatment not too long ago, and it was quite different than the way we would have been treating somebody at that time—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I'm sorry to interrupt the member.

Pursuant to standing order 50(c), I am now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there have been six and a half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader directs the debate to continue.

Hon. Steve Clark: Please adjourn the debate, Speaker. *Second reading debate deemed adjourned.*

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT
MODERNIZATION ACT, 2025
LOI DE 2025 SUR LA MODERNISATION
DE LA GESTION DES SITUATIONS
D'URGENCE

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

Bill 25, An Act to make statutory amendments respecting emergency management and authorizing enforce-

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

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The last time that Bill 25 was before the House, it was the member for Toronto—Danforth that had the floor. I return to the member for Toronto—Danforth.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Why, thank you, Speaker—
Interjections.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: As you can tell, Speaker, the relief and appreciation from my colleagues is quite impressive.

I have to say, the process of estimating the time at which one will speak is not always precise, because I had thought, many had told me—people I relied on—that 3:30 was the most likely time. In any event, here we are.

It looks like I have a different crowd this afternoon. Those who listened to my pearls of wisdom in the morning, many of them are missing now, so I will—

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Well, “pearls of wisdom” may be overstating it. The words that I used this morning, I think I'll use some of them again. There's a bit of recycling that may go on.

So this bill, emergency management: I guess I want to open with an overview, an introduction, that Ontario does, in fact, need a really strong, thought-through approach to emergencies. What's unfortunate is that the bill before us won't give it.

I want to speak to that, but to understand why this bill is not ready for the times, I think we have to talk for a moment, think for a moment, about the times that we're going into. This is a time of very massive change in our climate. We're looking at much hotter days becoming a far more common part of our daily lives, more wildfires in places that we hadn't thought of before, and flooding in places we hadn't expected before.

Assessing that riskier new world and putting in place the mechanisms, the policies, the investments to take it on is going to be really critical to avoiding and then surviving new emergencies. I don't see that approach in this bill, which is unfortunate because, in fact, it's absolutely necessary. It's a major failure to not have taken that on in preparation for this bill. We need an approach that will, in the years to come, as the world around us changes very sharply, protect our lives and property.

So, with those introductory words, I want to expand on what's coming at us. When you actually check out the way other jurisdictions deal with disasters, some deal with them well, some deal with them badly. But the ones that do the best are the ones that try to prevent emergencies in the first place. It's a really old saying: “a stitch in time saves nine.” But, in fact, having the preventative steps put in place so that you can avoid disruption of people's lives and destruction of property is really, extraordinarily important. A bill that, in fact, doesn't seem to actually

have in its DNA a proactive, thought-through response speaks to a fundamental weakness in the approach before us.

I had an opportunity this morning—and I'm going to expand a bit more on it now—to talk about the world that we're going into. Speaker, not that many people follow the details of what's going on with climate change. They just know they're getting more wild weather and the world's getting hotter. But you should know, in 2015, a decade ago, there was a global meeting in Paris, in France—an adoption of a target for constraining global heating to limit it to two degrees, with best efforts to get to 1.5. Those numbers were set because they are thresholds for substantial changes in the world around us.

The expectation, or the projections, for many years have been that we had a number of decades to go before we would hit those targets—the one and a half and two degrees. And what's recently become very obvious in the last few years is that, in fact, we don't have decades—that, increasingly, people who study climate and do projections have concluded that we will be hitting the 1.5 guardrail, as it's called, probably next year, whereas many of us thought that we would have until the 2030s to deal with that. Based on a number of those assessments, it is now felt that we will hit the two-degree mark sometime in the mid-2030s, whereas, previously, it was thought we will be talking about the 2040s or 2050s.

When you hit those marks, you start seeing qualitatively different climate impacts in our society. And we're already seeing very substantial changes with a temperature above what it was before the Industrial Revolution of about 1.2 degrees. So when you have those markers coming at you really fast, you know that substantial changes are going to happen. I want to talk about some of those changes, some of the documentation.

1520

In 2023, a report came out, prepared for the government of Ontario—a report commissioned by this Conservative government warning that climate change posed high risks to Ontario, with impacts on everything from food production to infrastructure to business. The report, called the Provincial Climate Change Impact Assessment, projected a soaring number of days with extreme heat across Ontario, as well as an increase in flooding and more frequent wildfires. That's not a bad summary.

In 2024, the *Globe and Mail* published an editorial headline: “Facing the New Reality of Urban Wildfires.” I know for us in the south, we hear about wildfires that force the evacuation of communities. First Nations communities in northwestern Ontario have faced repeated evacuation. Northern Manitoba this past summer faced evacuations in a way not seen in a long time, if ever.

But in southern Ontario, because of the different forest types and the different infrastructure, the general expectation was that we would not have that problem. But that is changing. The *Globe and Mail* recognized in their editorial in 2024 that southern urban Canada is going to have to start thinking about wildfires. That is a reality. They noted that, in 2011, in Slave Lake in Alberta, there was a wildfire

that came through and did massive destruction to the town. The fire department in that town learned a lot, and they tried to get their lesson out to others.

Five years later, Fort McMurray was hit with a similar fire, and the folks from Slave Lake realized that no one had learned anything from what they had gone through. If you get a chance, there's a book by a Canadian author, John Vaillant, called *Fire Weather*, which is a really gripping, very well-told story of what happened in Fort McMurray, and the kind of disruption to people's lives that they went through and the ferocity of the fire that people were dealing with.

In 2023, we had forest fires that hit the outskirts of Halifax. We were lucky, but the reality was—and it was recognized afterwards—that fire crews were not prepared to tackle a blaze in the city's outskirts.

Outside of Canada, in London, England, in August 2022, the fire brigades had the busiest days they had seen since the Blitz, since World War II. At one point, or a few points actually, every asset the greater London fire service had was deployed—every one. There was nothing in reserve. They were lucky. As one person said, if we'd had a very high wind, one of the fires on the outskirts of London that took 35 houses could have become very big.

In 2024, luck ran out in Los Angeles, where a fire took out big chunks of the centre of that city. So, we actually need to start thinking about that issue.

I have to tell you, in preparation for this speech, and in preparation for a private member's bill I'm working on, I poked around to see who is actually doing preparatory work for urban wildfires. I asked legislative research to look at the plans for Hamilton, for Ottawa and Toronto—fairly sophisticated cities, large population bases. I've dealt with the city of Toronto civil service; they're a pretty capable group. My guess is Ottawa and Hamilton are the same. No one actually had incorporated, as of this year, urban wildfires into their fire planning. It wasn't there. When legislative research reached out to the Ministry of Natural Resources, we couldn't get an answer back as to whether or not they had done planning for urban wildfires.

I note that the *Globe and Mail* editorial was a little while ago, in 2024. This discussion of urban wildfires is not brand new, and we are not prepared for it. The bill before us today doesn't contemplate requiring an assessment of that threat landscape.

Different place: New York City, in the fall of 2024, had to deal with brush fires in their parks, and they had—what was it now? The fire department in New York said it responded to more than 270 brush fires in the first two weeks of last November, the highest number ever in such a time. Obviously, not only were the fires a threat to the parks and the homes around the parks, but they generated a lot of smoke that caused health problems. The fire department chief was quoted as saying, “We've been fighting brush fires for a long time, but the nature and the extent of the fires last fall indicates a new level of threat. Whereas most fires in previous years were small and relatively easy to contain, some of the fires in 2024 grew quite large very quickly.”

So, we need to be preparing for a very different regime. It doesn't mean all our cities are going burn, but if you don't do the work in advance to reduce the threat, to have in place the infrastructure, to have in place the firefighters, then, yes, you do face a big threat.

In doing some research here, I looked back at the Great Fire of Toronto in 1904. It's instructive, because right before that fire broke out, if I'm remembering correctly, city council voted not to put money into more fire hydrants and more fire crews, and insurance companies, wisely trying to protect their future business, were quite insistent that if Torontonians wanted to get fire insurance, there needed to be an investment. We, here in Ontario, need to invest in our urban areas. We need to make sure that they are, to the extent possible, fireproof. This bill before us does not, as far as I can determine, actually put in place the framework necessary to ensure that we can deal with these threats.

The other issue that comes up, and it touches both on human health but also on housing, is the whole question of flooding. We've had flooding for a long time in urban areas, but in the city of New York—this was in 2021—they had flood events, rainfall coming down—not an overflowed river, just the fall of rain onto the surface—that led to 11 people drowning in their basement apartments. In one instance reported in the *Guardian*, a person talked about their experience in their apartment where they were asleep on their couch, and their cat woke them up. There was an inch or two of water on the floor. They scrambled out through their landlord's apartment above them, and within a few more minutes, the volume of water that broke down the door to the basement filled the basement to five feet.

So, the volume of water coming down is different. It's one that we need to actually incorporate into our planning, into our thinking.

London, England, is facing a similar problem. No reported drownings in basement apartments, but in 2025, it was calculated that more than 50,000 basement properties were at increased risk of floods due to climate change and many people—in fact, thousands—were driven out of basement apartments because of flooding. No one died, happily, but suddenly you had a city that was having to deal with a whole bunch of people whose homes were at that point no longer usable.

So, we're looking at fire in a way we haven't had to deal with before. We're looking at flooding in a way we haven't had to deal with before, and because of that flooding and the risk to people in basement apartments, you're looking at a contraction in the housing supply, or a risk of contraction in the housing supply. We all know we already have a housing crisis; the idea that we would lose even more units is really hard to stomach.

I have to say that what comes with those physical impacts are social impacts. It is generally projected that as we hit that two-degree increase, we're going to see a drop in the standard of living. It is just very hard to keep supply chains going, to keep trains running, to keep roads operative when things are being washed out on a regular

basis or when fire destroys infrastructure. So, we're looking at physical impact on people and we're looking at the impact on society, which causes substantial social problems.

1530

I want to note—and my colleague from Spadina—Fort York is probably the best-qualified to speak to this, so I will touch on it very briefly—that I'm not seeing anywhere in here a recognition that cyber security threats are ones that we have to look at. Costa Rica, in 2022, had a huge disruption of that country because of cyber attacks on their digital infrastructure. I'm not seeing, in this bill, an approach that says who is going to actually be doing an assessment of the new threats coming to us in a new world and how we are going to come to grips with them. That is a major weakness in the bill before us.

I've outlined the context of what's coming at us, but I have to note, as well, that the Auditor General has looked at how Ontario's emergency responses have measured up to the challenges in the world that exists today—not the more heavy-duty one coming at us, but the one that exists today. In 2020 and 2022, the Auditor General offered a very sobering assessment of Ontario's emergency management system. They looked at what the risk assessments were, how preparation had been carried out, the actual response that happened and what sort of follow-up there was to learn the lessons from those experiences.

First of all, the reports highlight outdated risk assessments. As of 2022, 16 of the 25 districts in Ontario that MNR has divided the province into had not updated their hazard risk assessments since 2018. That's a lot of Ontario where there was no, at that point, current assessment of the risk. That means, then, that emergency plans were based on obsolete data. They were ignoring the accelerating changes of climate change, and they were ignoring demographic shifts.

I guess that's the other thing that is really important: A city with 100,000 people that's vulnerable poses very different problems than a city with 500,000 or a million people. As our population grows and as vulnerabilities increase, more people are put at risk and that qualitatively changes the way you have to operate, and right now, we're not seeing that happen.

The Auditor General said that the province had failed to conduct after-action reviews. Between 2017 and 2021, Ontario experienced 53 significant flood emergencies, yet only three of those events were followed by proper reviews. If you don't do systematic evaluations, then mistakes get repeated; institutional learning is stunted.

I'll just say on a more personal note: In 2013, I was a member of this Legislature, and that winter, people will remember the ice storm and the wholesale disruption of people's lives. In my riding, I walked down streets that were simply empty. People had to move out. They didn't have any heat. Things were frozen.

I went to apartment buildings in my riding where there was no light, and it was very eerie going into an apartment building at 3 o'clock in the afternoon with people coming in and out with flashlights because the lobbies weren't

well-lit, and people who on the eighth floor, ninth floor and 10th floor were climbing up those stairwells with their flashlights trying to get home. And if you were disabled or if you were elderly, you were stuck. I think in some cases, the Toronto fire department actually intervened and helped get people down to the ground floor, but then they had to go somewhere to be inside. And I remember at the time the Premier saying, "This is terrible. We're going to make sure this doesn't happen again." Just a few years ago I asked, "Was a study done, as was promised, about what happened and what went wrong?" And legislative research could not find a report, a follow-up, to the 2013 ice storm. So what's happening currently with the failure to do after-action reports is, unfortunately, not something that's new.

The Auditor General found that wildfire response has been alarmingly slow. In 2021, five districts took more than four hours, on average, to dispatch fire crews. Dryden and Cochrane averaged over 11 hours. These aren't just inefficiencies. These aren't just bad management. These are life-threatening.

Interestingly—it's a shame my colleague isn't here—the province failed to provide culturally appropriate support during Indigenous evacuations. Mental health services were inadequate and host community planning was inconsistent. The province did not engage in Indigenous leadership meaningfully, despite repeated calls for inclusion.

That's a problem because if you're dealing with people who have been forced to leave their homes, whose lives are completely disrupted, who don't know when and if they can get back to their homes, they're obviously going to be under a lot of stress. You need to have the infrastructure in place so that they can be properly supported, properly treated.

Interestingly, the Auditor General noted as well that the COVID-19 pandemic exposed the fragility of Ontario's emergency planning. Emergency Management Ontario was sidelined and the province had to hire external consultants to build a new response structure mid-crisis. The plans that were on hand were outdated, staff were insufficient and coordination between ministries was poor.

These findings are not new. They've been documented. They've been debated. They've been largely ignored. Bill 25 does not address these failures directly, does not address the sort of structure you need to take on these failings. It doesn't mandate the implementation of the Auditor General's recommendations, something I will go into in more detail later. It doesn't require public reporting or enforceable timelines. Without these changes, the bill risks perpetuating the very problems it claims to solve.

Let's look at some case studies of emergency failures in Ontario, in Canada, because failures aren't theoretical; they're real. They've had real consequences. Here are a few case studies to illustrate the urgency of reform.

The 2022 derecho was one of the most destructive storms in Canadian history. I remember it happened during the provincial election. I was out canvassing and stopped into a restaurant and watched these incredibly dark clouds roll in over Queen Street. You know, when you hear the

word "ominous," you often just toss it around, but in one of the few times in my life, I thought, "This is ominous. These are not good indicators." And clearly, for once I was right. With winds reaching 190 kilometres per hour, it tore through southern Ontario, killing 16 people, knocked out power for over a million residents and caused \$1.2 billion in insured damages. Insured damages are always a small portion of total damages, as people will be well aware.

Ottawa's emergency response system was overwhelmed. Hydro Ottawa reported the damage exceeded even the infamous 1998 ice storm. Vulnerable populations were left without power, food or shelter for days. That speaks to the necessity of having an emergency planning operation that assesses oncoming hazards, prepares for those hazards and has the infrastructure and funding in place to actually respond when they hit.

I mentioned earlier the 2013 ice storm—over one million residents without power, some for up to 11 days. Emergency shelters were open, but coordination was slow. Vulnerable residents in high-rises were stranded without heat or elevators, as I mentioned earlier. In the city of Toronto, the tree canopy was devastated. The economic cost exceeded \$260 million. The lack of inter-agency coordination and the absence of real-time communication systems really made the crisis worse.

1540

In 2025, much more recently, wildfires in northern Ontario forced the evacuation of over 2,000 residents from Sandy Lake and Deer Lake First Nations. Red Lake fire 12 grew to 175,000 hectares. The response was hampered by aging firefighting equipment, staff shortages and delayed evacuations.

I have to say it right now: It's not the first time we've had a wildfire in the north. It's not the first time. This was not novel. This was not something that no one could have foreseen, and yet we had aging firefighting equipment, we were short-staffed and evacuations were delayed. Indigenous leaders, quite rightly, criticized the province for cutting \$42 million from emergency firefighting budgets. The mental health toll on evacuees, especially children and elders, was profound.

The COVID-19 pandemic, I referenced earlier. There's a common theme here: Failure to plan means that you're going to have failure. Bill 25 has to be judged not by its intentions or the intentions of the minister who stands up to speak to it, but by its capacity to prevent those outcomes.

Now, I want to go very quickly to the Auditor General's follow-up, because the Auditor General, as I've said, provided a pretty scathing report in 2020 and then another one in 2022, but in 2024 went back and said, "Okay. I've made a bunch of recommendations. What's been dealt with and what hasn't?" I'll say the summary was, "As of November 20, 2024, the Ministry of Mines and Emergency Management Ontario (EMO) and as of November 21, 2024, the Ministry of Natural Resources have collectively fully implemented 13% of the actions we recommended and have made progress in implementing an additional 26% of the recommended actions. However, for

50% of our recommended actions there has been little or no progress.... A further 8% of ... actions will not be implemented,” even though the Auditor General believes they should be.

I just want to note some of the recommendations that were ignored, where there was little to no progress. They were a bit shocking, a bit surprising.

Recommendation 2: “So that lessons learned from past flooding events are incorporated into emergency response plans to improve future emergency response efforts, we recommend the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry:

“—document after-action reviews related to flooding incidents in a formal and standardized report in a timely manner;

“—take timely action to address areas needing improvement and ensure that progress is tracked, followed up and reported on until fully implemented.

“Status: little or no progress.”

You would think that learning from your experience would be one of the most fundamental things you do. When I stub my toe, I watch out for those cruel baseboards in the future, the ones that leap up and hit your foot. Now, you never know; they’re mobile. So you learn, or you try to learn, or you should learn.

“So that forest fires are responded to under the maximum target times, we recommend that the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry:

“—track whether required response times are met based on alert levels”—seems reasonable;

“—where response times are not met, identify and fully document the reason for delays,” so that you can know what has to be addressed; and

“—take corrective actions to improve future response times.”

The Auditor General’s assessment: “Little or no progress.”

I mean, we’re talking forest fires. We’re talking about situations in which people have to be evacuated from their homes and where large areas of the province get burned up. For those who have expressed great concern about the forestry industry, burning up everything that you see as fundamental to your industry in the years to come makes no sense.

Next one:

“—conduct after-action reviews for ‘significant’ forest fires and formally document the findings in a standardized and timely manner;

“—conduct practice exercises with fire crews and emergency management staff on an annual basis, and complete an after-action review after each exercise;

“—take timely action to address areas needing improvement from past forest fires and practice exercises, and ensure that progress is tracked, followed up and reported on until fully implemented.

“Status: Little or no progress.”

Again, these are really basic, elementary steps that anyone would take to improve their operation. The Auditor General pointed them out, and they were not acted on.

Another recommendation:

“—engage communities, especially unorganized territories, in FireSmart programs such as the FireSmart neighbourhood recognition;

“—prioritize and target funding to communities and unorganized territories in districts that are assessed as having an extreme or high risk of fires.

“Status: little or no progress.”

I’ll just say quickly: FireSmart program is an educational program I believe funded by the federal government—could be the province kicks in as well—just to say to people, “What are the steps you need to take to protect your home and your community from fire?” A good thing, a thoughtful thing to have in place, and one you would think would be fairly easy to promote, but in fact, not being done.

Recommendation on firefighters: “So that firefighters are compliant with required training, we recommend that the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry:

“—track all required training courses taken by wildland firefighters within the personnel information management system;

“—have the IT system alert firefighters and their supervisors when a firefighter’s training is approaching expiry.

“Status: little or no progress.”

Why you would not have support for the professionals that you rely on to contain fires is beyond me. Why you wouldn’t make sure that they’re taking the courses that are required and given refreshers when that time is expired is also beyond me.

I have to say, Speaker, I could read the whole report, but I’m just picking out the highlights.

Another one comes up with regard to oil and gas wells. My guess is everyone in this chamber is familiar with the gas explosion that happened in Wheatley, Ontario; the event that need not have happened but did. The Auditor General writes, “To minimize the risk to public safety and the environment from leaking oil and gas wells,” of which there are many thousands in Ontario, “we recommend that the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry:

“—proactively identify high-risk wells, including previously plugged wells.”

Well, this is one of those: “little or no progress.”

You would think, given the experience in Wheatley, that this is something that would be jumped on, because you understand exactly what’s going to happen. You’re going to have an explosion. You’re going to have a fire. People who are totally innocent have their lives turned upside down and put at risk. You would think that the province would have jumped on this, but no.

Recommendation 21 was:

“—establish an up-to-date registry of high-risk wells.

“Status: little or no progress.”

I have to say, it strikes me that when it comes to health and safety issues for the general public—I’m not just talking about workers who obviously deserve health and safety on the job, but the general public, this government has not been paying attention, has not been taking action.

One other issue that hasn’t been big in my riding, but I imagine is of consequence in others is, “To reduce the

risks associated with sinkholes and other land-subsidence incidents, we recommend the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry...:

“—clarify the ministry’s responsibilities under the order-in-council (1039/2022) as it relates to sinkholes.”

When you see a car go into a sinkhole, you think, “Man, someone should’ve done something about that.” The fact that we haven’t sorted that out—or the government hasn’t sorted that out—is bad news.

1550

Recommendation 26:

“—collect the data needed to properly assess the risk for soil and bedrock instability, including sinkholes and other land subsidence incidents across all districts.”

Man, I know you’ll be shocked to hear that there was little to no progress on that.

And a follow-up:

“—develop prevention and mitigation measures to prioritize and address at-risk areas for sinkholes, in conjunction with foresters and other experts.”

The Auditor General was simply told, “That one we’re not going to do. Forget it.”

Here’s one that talks to hazard identification and risk assessments, which is what I opened with. We need to be looking at the context that you’re running an emergency plan within, and you need to be looking at what’s coming at you so that you can actually plan properly.

Recommendation 27: “So that risk assessments for assigned hazards are updated periodically and are consistently completed at all levels using a coordinated approach, we recommend the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry:

“—update district risk assessments at least every three years”—yes, that sounds good to me—“in consultation with hazard experts, First Nations communities, conservation authorities and local stakeholders. These assessments should consider impacts of climate change and population growth, and include documenting progress on mitigation strategies, developing new mitigation strategies, and revising ratings as appropriate.”

Speaker, there’s a lot in that Auditor General report that’s disturbing, and I’ve touched on the big ones. That is, I think, pretty clear evidence that simply having this bill before us—one that does not have critical elements about forward-looking risk assessment or talk about funding structures to make sure that things actually get delivered—the bill is deeply flawed.

Now, I’ve talked about these physical threats, but when you talk about the physical threats, you also have to talk about social services breakdowns. And for those who have gone through these crises, we find as well a breakdown of social services during emergencies that has been a recurring pattern.

During that 2022 derecho that I referenced earlier, food banks were overwhelmed; shelters lacked capacity; seniors in long-term-care homes were left without air conditioning or backup generators; community support agencies were struggling to reach isolated residents. The social safety net frayed under pressure. So, yes, you have

power being knocked out; yes, you have flooding going on in some places; you have fires happening and things being burnt up. But beyond that, the network to actually ensure that people are supported as they go through that upheaval is apparently not there.

The 2013 ice storm exposed similar vulnerabilities. Residents in subsidized housing faced freezing temperatures without heat. Public health units lacked the resources to conduct wellness checks. Mental health services were unavailable, and emergency shelters were ill-equipped to support people with disabilities.

The COVID-19 pandemic saw many of the same problems repeat themselves. Social service agencies were inundated with requests for food, for housing, for mental health support, yet many lacked the funding, the staffing and the infrastructure to respond. The province’s emergency plans did not adequately integrate social services, leaving front-line workers to improvise in the face of unprecedented demand. People should not have to improvise. I have to say, when unusual circumstances occur, there’s always going to be a bit of improvisation, but it should be minimal. To say that in a lot of instances improvisation on the part of social service workers was critical is very worrisome.

Indigenous communities faced even greater challenges. Evacuations due to wildfires and floods often led to displacement in unfamiliar urban centres. Mental health support was minimal; culturally appropriate services were rare. The province failed to consult Indigenous leadership in planning and response and perpetuated a cycle of marginalization.

Now, there are concerns with this bill around its impact on social services and the schedule—schedule 2 of this act—amends the Ministry of Community and Social Services Act. The changes in schedule 2 were not anticipated by the social services sector, and so there’s a great degree of dismay, I gather, in those circles. In fact, in a lot of places, people have been alarmed by what’s going on. Schedule 2 grants the minister the power to issue directives to entities prescribed under the Ministry of Community and Social Services Act with respect to extraordinary matters. But as the service providers have pointed out, extraordinary matters are not defined here. So I could get into trouble for what, exactly? What fill-in-the-blank activity is one that put me in a bad situation?

A memo has apparently circulated from the ministry to service providers who receive funding that defines extraordinary matters as extreme weather events, natural disasters, interruptions to essential services or other matters of public interest. The inclusion of public interest causes concern because it’s not defined. That memo was sent on December 10, the first time that service providers were informed that legislation was coming that had or could have a big impact on them.

Entities have to comply with directives that are issued by the ministry. And the ministry has been given new powers to compel compliance, including discretionary powers to reduce or terminate funding. Individuals who contravene a minister’s order can be liable for a \$5,000

fine, corporations or other entities up to \$25,000. This could conceivably mean that community living organizations or social housing providers or children's aid societies could be sanctioned and fined under these new powers.

This causes a great deal of concern amongst social service agencies that we depend on to deal with social problems, that the minister would be able to force compliance or reduce or end funding to groups where those groups have identified a crisis as varied as the Community Living network, who have identified chronic underfunding, or children's aid societies who are in deficit and placing children and youth in care in unsupervised settings because other placements aren't there.

The whole area around social services is one that I expect my colleagues with a deeper background in to address more completely. But I want to say that to bring forward what are seen as very substantial changes to legislation without actually sitting down with that sector and working it through and trying to understand what their concerns are and trying to address them as best as possible, making sure that legitimate changes that are required are explained thoroughly, strikes me as really bad practice. And again, I don't see an approach in this bill that looks to maintain the morale and functionality of those social service agencies that we depend on.

Looking back at the legislative shortcomings of Bill 25: The bill introduces structural changes, a Commissioner of Emergency Management, something called the Ontario Corps—which seems to be defined differently between the legislation and what the Premier was talking about in a press conference—and advisory committees, but it doesn't address a substantive failures documented by the Auditor General and experienced by communities across Ontario.

The bill lacks accountability mechanisms. It doesn't have a process for seeing that the legitimate concerns of the Auditor General are actually acted on. It doesn't require after-action reviews or public reporting. Without transparency, there can't be any trust. I have to say, if the minister of emergency services or whatever, the Commissioner of Emergency Management, is doing an analysis of the hazard landscape ahead of them, it would make sense to make that publicly available, not only to educate the public, but also because there may well have been errors in doing the analysis, giving the public an opportunity to point out where there were gaps or failings or holes.

Secondly, the bill doesn't have mechanisms for funding. The reality is that emergency preparedness requires investment in infrastructure, in training, equipment and social services. Bill 25 offers no assurances that municipalities, Indigenous communities or front-line agencies will receive the resources they need. And the bill does not integrate Indigenous leadership and doesn't mandate Indigenous-led emergency planning or culturally appropriate services. That omission perpetuates historical injustices and undermines the effectiveness of emergency response.

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The bill fails to address the coordination of social services. It doesn't require the inclusion of public health

units, housing agencies or food banks in emergency planning. It's a siloed approach that ignores the reality that emergencies are social crises as much as logistical and physical ones.

And the bill doesn't provide any real-time transparency. There's no public dashboard to track preparedness, to track response times or funding allocations. Ontarians deserve to know how ready their communities are and where the gaps are, because frankly, if you're going to hold a government to account, whether it's a municipal government or a provincial one, if you don't have the data on what's going on, it is very difficult to hold someone to account, some institution to account.

Bill 25, as written, is a missed opportunity. It doesn't address the big problems we have and the big problems that are coming at us around emergencies. It offers structure, but it doesn't offer the substance that's required. There isn't the accountability that we need.

Other jurisdictions actually do try to deal with emergency services, and we can look at examples from some of them. British Columbia's Emergency and Disaster Management Act mandates annual risk assessments, public reporting and integration with climate adaptation strategies. It emphasizes community-based planning and includes provisions for Indigenous engagement. All that just seems to be pretty much common sense.

The federal Emergency Management Strategy for Canada outlines principles of resilience, collaboration, and continuous improvement. It encourages provinces to align their plans with national standards and to conduct regular evaluations. I don't know a lot about that strategy, but those things make sense to me.

In the United States, there's something called the Stafford Act that governs federal disaster response. Now, we all know that everything is transitory in the States right now, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency has faced criticism, but the act mandates clear protocols for funding, for coordination and for accountability. It also includes provisions for vulnerable populations and public health integration.

We can do that. I mean, we have pretty smart legislative counsel. We can say, "Take a look at some of these other jurisdictions. Look at their best stuff. Bring it forward." The European Union has a civil protection mechanism that facilitates cross-border co-operation, resource sharing, and rapid response. It emphasizes transparency, training and community engagement. We could do the same. Ontario could learn from all those models, all those examples: mandatory reviews, public dashboards, funding guarantees and inclusive planning. We don't have to reinvent the wheel. Happily, the wheel is on display in a variety of jurisdictions. We just have to copy it.

So if you've talked, then, about key stakeholders—because although emergencies affect everyone, there are people who are on the line, as it were: the front-line responders and the governments that work with them. Municipal leaders have long called for clearer guidance and stable funding. They're responsible for local emer-

gency plans, yet often lack the resources to implement them. Bill 25 doesn't address that.

Indigenous communities demand self-determination in emergency planning. They seek culturally appropriate services, meaningful consultation and recognition of their unique vulnerabilities. Bill 25 doesn't mandate Indigenous-led planning or funding.

Health care providers face immense pressure during emergencies. Hospitals must manage surges, protect staff and maintain continuity of care. Yet emergency plans often overlook health care infrastructure. Bill 25 doesn't integrate health systems meaningfully.

Social service agencies—the backbone of community resilience—provide shelter, food, mental health support and elder care, yet they're rarely included in emergency planning. Bill 25 doesn't mandate their participation or funding. Emergency responders—firefighters, paramedics, police—need training, equipment and coordination. They're often first on the scene, yet their voices are absent from those policy discussions. Bill 25 doesn't guarantee investment in front-line capacity.

Now, these stakeholders I've listed, they're not obstacles to reform. They are interested in a system that is effective and that protects people, protects the population, protects those who are actually delivering the services. We need to take advantage of their expertise, and we need to address their needs. We need to bring them on board.

A few things that I think should be considered as we look at this bill going forward: The Auditor General recommendations need to be taken seriously, and they need to be implemented. We need to have annual risk assessments and updates to emergency plans that reflect the new world we're going into and the demographic shifts that change the number of people that are going to have to be protected. We should be requiring after-action reviews for all declared emergencies so that people can look at what happened, listen to the assessment or read the assessment and make their own assessment of what's actually happened. We need to be funding Indigenous-led emergency programs, including mental health services. I think it would make tons of sense to have a public emergency readiness dashboard showing preparedness levels, response times, funding allocations by region, so people would understand what's in place for them and, where it's deficient, take action. And we need to integrate social services into emergency planning with guaranteed funding and representation on advisory committees.

I'm not suggesting anything wild. What we need is in place in a number of jurisdictions. What we do need is an approach that, first of all, looks at the landscape and assesses where the hazards are, and then, understanding what the hazards are, puts in place the actions, the structures to prevent risk, to prevent any harm coming to people or loss of life. And then you need to have in place the people, the mechanisms, the infrastructure to ride through an emergency and recover afterwards. I wish this bill was doing that; it is not.

I, at this point, certainly can't support the bill. I look forward to your questions.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Questions?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you to the member from Toronto—Danforth, again, for pointing out some of the shortcomings of these bills.

I want to pick up where you talked about Wheatley, and really, that is, in a microcosm, the problem with this bill. We had an explosion in Wheatley. Mercifully, nobody died. People were hospitalized. But it showed the underground problem. There are 27,000 abandoned oil and gas wells and counting in Ontario. The incident showed first responders, who were dealing with an incident they were never trained for—there was a lack of clarity as to who was responsible for this, whether it was Chatham-Kent, the municipality, the local authorities. So why are we not getting in front of this looming time bomb, with a bill like this, before it becomes again another multi-million-dollar disaster?

I just want to say, HazMat magazine has said that in order to get ahead of this, we need to put the funding commitments in place that you talked about. Can you address the fact that we know there's a looming problem and we have not come anywhere close to putting into action the lessons that we should have learned from Wheatley?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My thanks to the member for the question.

It is a mystery to me why you wouldn't take action to prevent a ticking time bomb from going off. I mean, we know there are tens of thousands of abandoned oil and gas wells. We know that many of them are high risk. We've already had what happened at Wheatley. The expectation is that we will have other situations like that manifest again. This isn't mysterious. You need to have a system in which you are looking for those situations and, when identified, dealing with them. The only thing I can think is that a misplaced understanding of fiscal prudence says we'll save money by not acting, when, in the end, people have their lives and property put at risk, and we as a society get stuck with the bills, cleanings things up. It doesn't make sense to me.

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The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Questions?

MPP Robin Lennox: You spoke a lot about the lack of investment, particularly in wildfire containment and the fighters we need for those fires. We recently saw new evidence that wildfire smoke is likely going to be one of the greatest health impacts of climate change, particularly for Canadians.

What would you like to see in terms of our response to wildfire containment moving forward?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thank you for that—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Just a moment—response, the member from Toronto—Danforth. They won't turn your microphone on if I don't introduce you. Go ahead.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Oh, I see. My thanks to those who manage the sound system in this room, and my thanks to you, Speaker.

Interjections.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Yes.

Well, obviously the first thing to do is reduce greenhouse gas pollution, reduce carbon pollution. If you want to deal with this, you have to go to the source, and if you continue to make the world hotter, then many of the other steps you want to take are not going to actually be effective.

I understand that there is going to be greater investment in surveillance and pre-emptive action. That makes tons of sense to me. When it comes to cities, I think what we learned from the fire at Kawartha Lakes was that if you have a lot of ice storm damage or wind damage in a hardwood forest, you've got a lot of dry, burnable tinder and you need to be clearing that out. In major parks within cities, that's a far more manageable job.

Taking those proactive steps to reduce the amount of fuel just lying around makes sense, but, in the end, if you don't take on the carbon pollution, everything else will be overwhelmed.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Questions?

Mr. Dave Smith: To the member opposite, I listened to everything you were talking about. There were a lot of things in there that I'll take as good feedback from you on it, but one of the things that I don't really think you expanded on enough was the Ontario Corps itself and all the good things that that could do. What do you think of having some kind of a modernization approach to it so that we actually have an organization that is essentially deployed to deal with some of the challenges that we have?

We saw during COVID, where we didn't have that volunteer group that could come out and help with COVID—and then with the ice storm it was the beginnings of the Ontario Corps in that, and it was great to have that coordination with people. Can you see how this bill, with the Ontario Corps itself, would help modernize it and help us to have a system where we can deploy those volunteers who want to do the good work, who want to help, who want to give back to their community and do it in a meaningful way?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Response? The member for Toronto—Danforth.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: See, I was slower this time, Speaker.

I want to thank the member for the question. This is one of the things that I find confusing because the bill actually doesn't define the Ontario Corps as having anything to do with volunteers. As I read it, the Ontario Corps refers to the resources that the minister draws on in terms of planning and staff. Then we had the Premier talk about this volunteer body that he referred to as the Ontario Corps.

I know what is said in the bill. I'll say separately that I think doing work with volunteers is a great idea. I think it would be foolish to try and base a full response on

volunteers. That's more than you can reasonably expect a group of volunteers to do, but making use of those who have skills and time, yes, makes complete sense to me. Modernizing our approach to emergency management makes sense, but if you "modernize" and don't have hazard and risk assessment, transparency around that and investment, then you can modernize all you want—you're not going to have the response or the impact that you need.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Question?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Modernization of a bill that doesn't address the fact that in the north they do not have access to 911 makes no sense. How are you modernizing anything? I happened to be in the chamber this morning when I heard the member from Mushkegowuk—James Bay ask the Minister of Emergency Preparedness and Response directly why do they not include this concern that there's not 911 in the Far North in the bill, and her answer was wholly inadequate.

We hear, time and time again, from the members—from the member for Nickel Belt, from the member from Timiskaming—Cochrane—about their experiences where there's road closures constantly, accidents. People risk running out of gas on a road closed, freezing to death, and they don't know that they can't call 911 for help when they need it.

Why in heaven's name would you put forward a bill called Emergency Management Modernization and continue to turn away from people in the north who don't have access to the same kind of basic 911 emergency service that we all have here in the south?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Well, it's kind of hard to respond, because I think you pretty much laid out the case. That being said, it seems to be a fundamental to me that people should be able to, using their phones, contact the local emergency services and bring people's attention to a crisis, to a threat to health and safety. If you're talking about modernizing but you're not actually putting in place a 911 service through the north so that everyone in Ontario has equal access to these kinds of resources, then, frankly, you're just playing around.

I think the points you've made are quite strong, that people deserve to have that kind of resource at their fingertips, and if the government is serious about modernizing emergency management, this is a substantial piece that should be part of it.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Seeing the time on the clock, further debate?

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: It's great to be here with everyone this afternoon and speak about a topic I'm very passionate about, as was my colleague. It's always great to stand up in this House and represent beautiful Beaches—East York and the residents there but also the residents across all of Ontario.

I'm looking forward to a rich session full of spirited debate and, most importantly, collaboration—for a change—to make Ontario better, safer, greener and more affordable.

Today I'm honoured to debate Bill 25, the Emergency Management Modernization Act, 2025, from the new and

absolutely integral Ministry for Emergency Preparedness and Response.

Actually, it's good timing, because my team and I just went on a tour—and I would encourage all of you to do the same. You probably have in your ridings, but maybe you haven't toured the EMS headquarters in Toronto. We just went on a tour last week. In case you're not aware, the chief paramedic in Toronto, his name is Bikram Chawla. He's fantastic. He will give your team a great tour.

We learned that there are 1,657 paramedics in Toronto, 139 emergency medical dispatchers, and their latest graduating class speaks 13 languages, which is so vitally important in a city that's one of the most diverse cities in the world and prides itself on that. Also, more than 50% of Torontonians were born outside of the country, so we definitely need that, and that's very forward-thinking of them. Forty-five ambulance stations in Toronto, 11 co-located with Toronto fire, one with Toronto police, one multi-function station and 240—a bit over 240—ambulances, and the Toronto Paramedic Services operates the Toronto Central Ambulance Communications Centre on behalf of the Ministry of Health and there are emergency medical dispatchers, and call-takers provide, of course, we know, immediate preliminary care and life-supporting instructions for 911 callers.

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What we noticed—you maybe know from experience with paramedics—is how calm they are and how Zen they are. Of course, that is a good personality trait to have. I'm not sure I could ever be a paramedic for that reason alone. But their annual call volume is over 350,000 emergency requests for 2024, and it is increasing by 2% to 5% every year.

All that to say, you know, get out there, do a ride-around or tour the EMS stations in your area or in Toronto especially. It might be good to compare because Toronto is its own separate beast with such a high population. And we all know the pressures on our health care system that kind of compound paramedics' work. I guess we just need to be mindful—it is going to be my theme with this whole speech today—of putting our money where our mouth is, and if we actually want to do something and we're genuine about what we're doing, we need to add the necessary funding.

Interesting also is—you know I am a green girl, and I care about that immensely. The Toronto Paramedic Services has adopted new technologies to reduce the use of fossil fuels, greenhouse gas emissions and air pollutants. They've done a comprehensive retrofit of emergency services headquarters that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions by up to 75% and energy use by 60%. It's fantastic. They're leveraging federal grants so they can get electric vehicle chargers. The front-line vehicles have been outfitted with solar panels and anti-idle technology—it's huge. There's introduction of zero-emission support vehicles, and their new multi-function station 02 will feature a mass timber structure—which is fantastic, especially since Canada is known for its forests and forestry sector—geothermal heating and a photovoltaic roofscape

that is anticipated to completely offset the building's electricity demand. So, like, wow—what a role model. Other buildings and agencies should follow suit.

The bill—let's just do a little review of it. Schedule 1: The bill's first schedule amends various sections of the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act. Schedule 1 adds a purpose for the act as follows:

“(a) to provide for emergency management to safeguard the health, safety, welfare and property of the people of Ontario;

“(b) to facilitate co-ordination as part of emergency management, including amongst,

“(i) individuals,

“(ii) municipalities,

“(iii) Indigenous communities,

“(iv) organizations in the public and private sectors,

“(v) federal, provincial and territorial governments, and

“(vi) international organizations; and

“(c) to provide for emergency powers.”

The act then goes on to re-enact section 2, which permits the ministry to delegate powers, duties and functions to the Commissioner of Emergency Management. This is new. The minister will also be responsible for developing and maintaining a provincial emergency management strategy that outlines objectives for the whole province under section 2.0.1—very, very important.

Section 2.0.2 continues the office of the Commissioner of Emergency Management: “The commissioner is required to establish an advisory committee to” offer “advice on the co-ordination of emergency management.”

I would be very interested to know about the makeup of that: who is on it, who should be on it, who is at the table, who should be invited, and whether or not the voices are heard and something's actually done with that advice that's given.

“3. The office of the chief, Emergency Management Ontario is removed from the act.

“4. A provincial emergency management organization that forms part of the minister's ministry is mandated under the new section 2.0.3, to assist the minister in the coordination of emergency management in Ontario.

“5. Under the new section 2.0.4, an advisory committee of the executive council is established statutorily.

“6. Section 6.2 of the current act, which requires that emergency plans developed under the act be submitted to the chief, Emergency Management Ontario, is repealed. Instead, a new section 9.1 is added to the act. The new section requires every entity that must develop an emergency plan under the act to submit a copy of it to the minister. The minister may require information on emergency management programs and emergency plans to be submitted to the minister and, if the minister is satisfied that a program or plan does not meet the requirements of the act, the minister may issue a directive requiring the program or plan to be modified.

“7. A new section 9.2 permits the minister to issue guidelines respecting the development or implementation of emergency management programs and emergency

plans, or any other matter related to emergency management.

“Various other amendments are made to the act respecting emergency management under the act by municipalities, provincial entities and other specified entities. Emergency plans are also renamed ‘emergency management plans’.

“1. Section 2.1, which requires municipalities to develop and implement an emergency management program, is amended so that regulations made under the act can set out rules respecting their development and implementation. Subsection 2.1(1) specifies that a municipality’s emergency management program must contain an emergency management plan, in addition to anything else required under the act. The re-enacted section 3 addresses the requirements of the emergency management plan that forms part of a municipality’s emergency management program.

“2. Similarly, section 5.1, which requires ministers of the crown and designated government entities (as defined in section 1) to develop and implement an emergency management program, is amended so that regulations made under the act can set out rules respecting their development and implementation. And subsection 5.1(1) specifies that these programs must contain an emergency management plan. The re-enacted section 6 addresses requirements of the emergency management plan that forms part of a minister’s or designated government entity’s emergency management program.

“3. A re-enacted section 6.2 of the act provides authority for the Lieutenant Governor in Council to require specified entities that operate or provide critical infrastructure to develop and implement an emergency management program, an emergency management plan or both, in accordance with the regulations.

“4. The re-enacted section 6.0.1 requires the Lieutenant Governor in Council to develop and issue a provincial emergency management planning framework that contains the information listed in the section. All emergency management plans under the act must conform with this planning framework.

“5. The regulation-making authority necessary to support the amendments respecting emergency management are contained in the re-enacted section 14.

“Finally, section 4 of the act, respecting municipal emergency declarations, is re-enacted to specify conditions that must be met by the head of council of a municipality before declaring an emergency and the effect of a declaration. Sections 7 to 7.2 of the act, dealing with provincial emergency declarations, are unamended except consequentially and to make minor changes.”

Schedule 2: “The Ministry of Community and Social Services Act is amended to authorize the minister to issue directives to entities prescribed by the regulations made under the act that receive funding from the minister to provide community and social services with respect to any extraordinary matters prescribed by those regulations and the provision of those community and social services. In cases of non-compliance with a directive, the minister is

authorized to issue an order requiring entities to, for example, do anything to achieve compliance with the directive. An offence of knowingly contravening an order issued by the minister is established. In addition, amendments are made to the French versions of subsection 9(4) and clause 13(1)(g) of the act.”

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I will focus my current debate on schedule 1 of the bill, as emergency planning and management pertains to the climate emergency.

Bill 25 is a good start to our much-needed emergency management reform. It is absolutely integral that organizations and agencies understand who to go to and who is responsible for what. Defined structure is very important. In my following remarks, I hope to inspire ways to build on this existing first step by making it much stronger and much bolder and by encouraging you to actually put a lot more funding towards it.

Some of you have experienced emergencies or natural disasters—climate change-related disasters—in your areas; maybe some of you have not.

We know, from the Financial Accountability Officer in Ontario, the high cost of inaction—so better to pay now than pay more later, right?

While there is an abundance of changes to the coordination, the personnel, titles of relevant organizations, and the emergency management structure, the bill as it stands lacks a clear recognition and addressing of the events that have necessitated emergency management and preparedness to be such relevant and important features in our reality. More frequent and more severe ice storms, hurricanes, wildfires, floods, extreme heat—these are all symptoms of the climate emergency.

The Minister of Emergency Preparedness and Response championed this government’s \$110-million investment over three years to strengthen emergency preparedness in this province. This is a good start—there’s a compliment for you; don’t get used to it—but investment must go much, much further, and program development must continue.

The bill as it stands does not detail that more funding is needed, or clear action to not just deal with emergencies as they arise, but to prevent them from ever happening, or at least mitigate their severity. We all know that the best emergency management plan is prevention and the safest emergencies are the ones that never happen. What’s that old saying? “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.” Let’s do it.

To underscore the dire necessity of explicit and meaningful action and funding around emergency preparedness, I’m going to explore the catastrophic and increasingly frequent and severe weather events that are becoming part of our everyday reality as a result of climate change. I’m going to take you on a trip down memory lane that will not be joyful and that may give you nightmares, but at least that will, hopefully, fuel the fire for you to fund emergency management better than you’re doing right now. Climate emergency, climate crisis, wonky weather, bizarre weather—whatever you want to call it; maybe you don’t want to

use the words “climate emergency.” There is scientific evidence to explain these abnormal weather patterns. The warm October, the cold June, the summers of floods then fires—we are all experiencing climate change. Its existence is definitely something you cannot deny. But if you’re still dwelling in that denial stage, then I’m going to give you those examples. I’m going to take you on a trip through many disasters.

So we’ll start with—let’s see—1954. How many of you were born then? That’s a good question. I’m going to talk about Hurricane Hazel—and not Hazel McCallion; the real hurricane. It made its way through North America all the way to Toronto, where it became known as Canada’s worst hurricane and Toronto’s worst natural disaster. First spotted on October 5, 1954, on the isle of Grenada, Hurricane Hazel suddenly swerved northward from its track on the Venezuelan coast, where it claimed the lives of between 400 and 1,000 people and destroyed 40% of their coffee trees and 50 per cent of their cacao crops, which plagued the economy for years afterwards.

By October 14, 1954, Hurricane Hazel made its way to South Carolina, where it destroyed Garden City, with only two of 275 homes surviving its wrath. The hurricane went on to Washington, DC; Pennsylvania; and New York. It killed 100 people in the United States and caused \$1.5 billion in damages.

But Hazel was not done. The hurricane continued on its destructive path towards Ontario. While the Dominion Weather Office tracked its path and used the American weather service to inform its predictions, they lacked experience with hurricanes and were consequently unaware of how to prepare.

By 4:30 p.m. on October 15, 1954, heavy rain fell on Toronto. Later came powerful winds and intense flooding. Due to the deforestation of the Humber River drainage basin, there were no trees and roots that could act as a natural barrier to flooding. The rain flowed freely and quickly into the river, which overwhelmed the flood plains. As flooding progressed, 40 highways and main roads were submerged. Can you imagine? Forty highways and main roads in Toronto. Passenger trains were pushed off their tracks and 40 bridges were destroyed or sustained structural damage, and many were out of commission. Meanwhile, 30 people were killed on one single street—imagine that’s your street—Raymore Drive, when the river ripped up entire homes and carried them downstream. A total of 81 people died, including five firefighters from Kingsway-Lambton Fire Station who valiantly tried to rescue people stranded in a car.

Hurricane Hazel marked a tragic loss of life and livelihood for countless people all over the Americas. It is first and foremost a sobering reminder that the natural world is a powerful, overwhelming force, and sometimes there is nothing we can do to stop the devastation it brings. You don’t mess with Mother Nature. However, it is also a reminder that when we make decisions with the long-term benefits in mind, destruction can at the very least be mitigated and, at the best of times, outright avoided.

Part of the Humber River basin was deforested, and the other part was in a highly urbanized area. Both of these features allowed water to flow quickly and flood the river. While some interference with the natural world is necessary to accommodate our growing population, that does not mean it must be done unsustainably, without study of the existing natural environment, the role it plays and establishing mechanisms that can imitate these functions, as well as augmenting nature elsewhere to make up for its loss—which is why we always need to be thinking about nature-based solutions in everything we do, infrastructure projects and building homes especially. These considerations must be incorporated in every decision.

Emergency preparedness and the environment do not suddenly become relevant in the specific bills proposed by their respective ministries. These are concerns that pervade our everyday decisions.

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So, what was learned from Hurricane Hazel, in 1954? Well, Environment Canada meteorologist Dave Phillips said that “those 81 deaths changed how civic planners” from then on “approach development along waterways in urban areas.

“It was realized that we had transformed the fabric of the city the wrong way,” he said to CBC. “In many ways the legacy of Hazel was to inspire a revolution in flood plain management.” Because prior to that storm, many in Toronto had thought hurricanes could never happen this far north.

“In the city’s west end, Hazel created what Phillips calls a ‘freshwater tsunami,’ swelling the Humber River by six metres in an hour, creating waves more than five metres high and a current moving at almost 50 kilometres an hour.” Can you imagine waves over five metres high in the Humber River?

“Cars were washed into rivers and some people clung to the roofs of their houses. The lucky ones were rescued by helicopters. Others were washed away, their bodies never recovered....

“The storm prompted engineers to incorporate flood planning into their designs.”

Let’s think about that. We cannot be building on flood plains. We need to look at mitigation and adaptation as much as possible. When we adopt this attitude, it is then and only then that we can claim success in emergency preparedness.

All right, 2024 Ontario floods: There have been many, many, but here’s another one that’s top of mind for us, the southern Ontario floods from the summer of 2024. Maybe this happened in your ridings. On July 10, the remnants of Hurricane Beryl made its way to southern Ontario, where from the 10th to the 12th, we saw 50 millimetres of rain. On July 14, multiple rounds of torrential rain poured down, and on July 16, Toronto Pearson airport saw 97.8 millimetres of rain—a whole month’s worth in a single morning.

After record days of rainfall, water treatment plants were unable to accommodate the extra pressure. Conse-

quently, 13,000 megalitres, or 500 Olympic pools, of partially treated sewage and stormwater had to be deposited in Lake Ontario. Several beaches were marked unsafe for swimming due to dangerously high concentrations of E. coli in the water.

Again that same summer, on August 17 and 18, the GTA saw severe rainfall and thunderstorms, leading to significant flood damage. While Ayr, Ontario, experienced a tornado, Ontario saw \$1 billion in insured damage from floods that summer alone.

Well, this is a good time to remind you of my flooding awareness bill. It was number 56 last Parliament. You might recall it, because I worked so hard to get it passed. I talked to every single one of you around the chamber about it, and it was called Fewer Floods, Safer Ontario Act. Basically, it was an infographic developed by wise wizards at the climate change, mitigation and adaptation organization called Intact at the University of Waterloo. Their names are Kathryn Bakos and Blair Feltmate. You may have heard of them. They're in the news all the time, sounding the alarm to get prepared, to get plans to mitigate and even work on adaptation. Anyway, they created this infographic that would have gone out with property tax bills in all the municipalities across Ontario, with tips on how to mitigate a basement flood and save your residents headaches, preserve their mental health, and save their pocketbooks, because we know a basement flood can cost a homeowner \$43,000. Easy-peasy; you could have adopted that. And when I spoke to you, you agreed with me, actually—especially the Minister of the Environment at the time; we agreed. Collaboration at its finest. Why not prepare your residents and help prevent a disaster and hardship for them.

Anyway, I'm not giving up. I reintroduced it this Parliament. I'm sure you're chomping at the bit, especially given this bill, that you want to do great measures, proactive measures like that, so you're probably—I'm anticipating you're going to pass that this time around. I can hardly wait.

Insurance claims for extreme weather events have quadrupled over the last 15 years and will continue to increase as climate change worsens. Of course, the ultimate money, time and resource saver would be to implement systematic measures to address climate change and reduce the frequency and severity of these floods altogether.

My bill, which is now number 37, just to remind you—lucky number 37—is not a fix-all, but at the very least, it would ensure that when people experience these severe weather events, they are prepared, with all the tools to keep their families and their homes safe. The last thing someone needs after reeling from the emotional trauma that is losing your home, your irreplaceable family memories and the staples of your community, is to try to navigate insurmountable debt when attempting to rebuild what you lost.

You will recall, because I had a jazzy speech for my original private member's Bill 10, it was the top 10 reasons to support my private member's bill. Remember that? Johnny Carson style? Of course, we already talked about

saving your residents hardship, financially, mentally and physically. Ten per cent of homes in Canada are no longer insurable relative to flood risk. Flooding is the number one cause of public emergency in Ontario and is the most common natural disaster in Canada, costing Canadians more than any other climate issue. And the high cost of inaction, because you claim you are fiscally responsible: \$1.2 billion in total insured catastrophic losses in Ontario in 2022 alone.

Large flooding cost BC \$9 billion and Alberta \$5 billion.

The bill was inspired by your own flooding strategy from 2020, you guys. Come on. I can't make it any easier for you. I'm feeding it to you; also, the recommendations from reports from the Auditor General, the FAO and, as I said, the Intact Centre on Climate Adaptation.

We know the weather of the past is no longer a good predictor of the weather of the present and the weather of the future. Whenever it rains, it can flood. That is a very key thing. Wherever it rains, it can flood, and people don't realize that.

For every dollar invested in climate adaptation, there is a savings of \$3 to \$8 in cost avoidance. If you were truly fiscal Conservatives, you would love that, right? For every dollar invested in climate adaptation, there is a savings of \$3 to \$8 in cost avoidance.

Seventy per cent of people actioned two or more of the mitigation measures on that infographic within six months of reading it—highly adopted ideas. Anyway, you killed it, and I'm hoping you'll bring it back. Do the right thing. Care about your residents.

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Moving right along, we are now going to talk about the May 2022 derecho, which is, I think, a new word for a lot of people. It's another extreme type of weather event. The derecho was the result of unseasonal temperature highs, with Toronto's temperature reaching over 29 degrees Celsius, and Ottawa-Gatineau exceeding 30 degrees, with high humidity in May. The abnormal heat was followed by a sharp cold front which brought thunderstorms and a frost.

The event's first storm began in Chicago. The storm swiftly reached Sarnia, then London, Ottawa, and then Toronto, Montreal, Quebec City and more. The storm brought wind speeds of far more than 100 kmph, as well as tornadoes in Uxbridge, London and the Lake Scugog area.

The derecho brought down more than 1,900 hydro poles, five metal transmissions and many trees. Eleven people were killed by trees and branches that were picked up by the wind in eastern Ontario. Some of you represent that area, so you know it better than I do. Homes were destroyed, church steeples toppled and planes flipped. Ontarians and Quebecers experienced power outages that affected over 1.1 million customers. With some outages lasting for days after. Uxbridge, Clarence-Rockland and Peterborough declared a state of emergency in the days that followed. Unsurprisingly, the historic storm was the sixth most expensive weather event in Canada.

Forecasters monitored the storm closely and issued weather warnings for communities that were forecasted to experience the brunt of the storm. Despite previous knowledge, chaos still ensued, and I don't even think the area is fully cleaned up yet.

Wildfires in Ontario: This past summer, like many others, we saw fires plague communities around Ontario and Canada. Every week, you could be sure that a new or worsened wildfire would be in the news. Unfortunately, this is a familiar pattern. Red Lake had 12 forest fires in northwestern Ontario and became our province's largest wildfire on record. It burned more than 194,000 hectares or about 2,000 square kilometres. Additionally, two First Nation communities near Thunder Bay were under evacuation order. The fire demanded 28 firefighting crews to contain it. This was in addition to the more than 470 fires classified as out of control across the province.

Unfortunately, the 2025 fire season is not over yet. The year 2024 marked approximately 480 wildfires. In 2023, Ontario saw more than 700 wildfires. While the year-to-year fluctuates, long-term trends show that wildfires are occurring more frequently, more hectares are burnt and fires burn longer than historical averages.

This is not a coincidence. This is climate change. This is the result of warmer temperatures; more frequent storms and lightning with fire-starting potential; and dry, dead vegetation that act as ready kindling when fire season arrives.

Notably, wildfires do not just destroy forests, habitats and property; they pollute the water and the air. If left unaddressed, this pollution can become its own crisis. Wildfires may contaminate water sources through raising the pH; total organic carbon; concentration of metals such as manganese, iron and aluminum; nutrients like nitrates and phosphorus; and particles like silt and sand. Additionally, water may become polluted when chemicals associated with fire suppression, like fire retardant, leak into a water source.

Importantly, these fires do not just plague Ontario. They also plague Manitoba. They declared a state of emergency due to severe wildfires. There were over 100 wildfires that consumed 4,000 square kilometres of forests in the area, almost 10 times that of Winnipeg. Tens of thousands of people had to be evacuated; many displaced and will never see their homes again.

Saskatchewan similarly declared a provincial state of emergency.

We know the horrors of the fires in BC. The wildfire service reported 981 fires in 2025 and 128 fires still burning as of September, if you can believe it.

BC is no stranger to devastating fires. Probably no one can forget the 2021 fire in Lytton, BC. We know the temperatures there, in June of 2021, reached upwards of 49.6 degrees. On the same day that Environment Canada sent out a notice on the extreme heat, a 74-year-old Lytton resident's home burst into flames within literal seconds. The RCMP station in Lytton exploded in flames. Homes, barns, observatories, workshops and animals were ravaged

by the flames, and soon enough, the entire village was engulfed in flames.

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

Can you imagine that terror? That could be your town. Everything as you know it, gone in a flash.

But there are lessons learned. This is the thing: Disaster happens, and then lessons are learned. We need to heed the advice that has been given.

This is from FireSmart BC. I won't read it all, although I know you're hanging on every single word of mine. Let's just get to the point: "Creating a FireSmart home"—you're going to "start from your home and work your way out.

"Assess your roof for areas in which debris and embers may collect ... clean it regularly....

"Install a spark arrestor on your chimney to reduce the chance of sparks escaping and starting fires....

"Assess your eaves and vents ... consider screening your vents with three-millimetre non-combustible wire mesh....

"Use fire-resistant siding....

"Install fire-resistant windows....

"Ensure exterior doors are fire-rated and have a proper seal....

"Clean under your deck....

"Separate fencing from your home....

"Maintain the exterior of your home....

"Don't forget about outbuildings"—sheds.

"Plant low-growing, well-spaced, fire-resistant plants and shrubs," etc., etc.

You can read the report FireSmart BC put out. We need to really pay attention and learn from that. Firefighters—oh, my gosh, I'm running out of time already.

Let's talk about our amazing front-line workers. When we fail to proactively invest in meaningful funding for fire prevention, including addressing climate change to ensure that we reduce the amount of out-of-control fires, we place a massive and unfair burden on wildland firefighters. This burden is worsened by the fact that wildland firefighters have told us again and again that they do not have enough resources. They log around 300 hours of overtime every summer and are paid only a little bit more than minimum wage. Are you kidding me? How risky is that job? And that's how we value them? Come on, guys.

They're contracted out on time frames that often do not reflect the changing wildfire season. These wildland firefighters must seek other work to fill the gap. Can you imagine? The horrific work they're doing to save lives, and then they've got to look for more work? Because of that, we've seen frequent turnover from season to season. Come on. Let's value them. Let's pay them what they're worth.

As a result, veteran wildland firefighters must devote their limited resources to train rookies, season after

season. We don't have time for that. And rookies must fill the roles that require more experience and expert judgment that, through no fault of their own, they cannot bring, right? We're putting these young guys and girls into these roles that they're not ready for because of the turnover, because we don't pay them properly.

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Moreover, due to the timing of the contracts and the lack of personnel and resources, these wildland firefighters are unable to lend aid internationally and across provinces, despite expressing a strong duty to serve. I mean, if they're going into that business anyway, they care, and they're not just focused on borders; they'll go anywhere. So let's respect our front-line workers.

In fact, amongst us, we have an MPP from Spadina-Fort York who was a firefighter. Oh, he just left.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The member can't say that.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Oh, sorry. Well, I think he's coming back.

So we'll talk about my second-oldest brother, Stephen, who is the deputy fire chief in Collingwood. It's not the same as a wildland firefighter, but still front-line workers. We say we value them. Let's put our money where our mouth is and pay them accordingly and treat them with respect.

Okay, extreme heat, heat deaths—we're still in BC. We're talking about June 2021, an unprecedented heat dome. A heat dome or heat wave occurs when a high-pressure system remains in the same area for days or weeks, which traps warm air underneath. The June 2021 extreme heat in British Columbia resulted in record temperatures of up to 40 degrees Celsius, with relief in the nights. More than 600 deaths occurred as a result of this extreme heat—600 deaths. Come on. Of those 619 heat-related deaths, 98% occurred indoors, more than 60% had sought medical care within a month prior to their death, 67% were 70 years of age or more, 56% lived alone and many lived in equity-deserving neighbourhoods, in homes without adequate cooling systems.

Unfortunately, inadequate cooling systems are a reality everywhere, even here in Ontario. Following a memorable hot summer with stretches of days exceeding 30 degrees Celsius, cities all around Ontario heard similar cries for help. Many people, renters specifically, are not equipped with a proper air conditioning unit, and landlords are not mandated to provide one. When you couple missing air conditioning with a severe lack of trees providing cool relief in the shade, community cooling centres and public water stations, people are left with little options to stay safe in extreme weather.

Personally, I don't have air conditioning in my house, but I do have a 250-year-old white oak tree in my backyard, which cools the back bedroom especially, but cools the house off a lot. My son actually used to live in the back bedroom and his room felt, like, 10 degrees cooler than the rest of the house. But the trees helped, for sure. And we have ceiling fans, and I jump in Lake Ontario all the time. But not everyone can do that; not everyone

has trees. And actually, because of the extreme heat, I am now looking at a heat pump with the cooling attached to it. But we need to think about people, living alone—renters, especially—who rely on their landlords to do the right thing.

Also, in my constituency office this past summer—you know that I had a flood in my first one, my second one burnt down and my third one, well, it's going to be a development, so it's going to get demolished—we didn't have AC. Also, we had community members coming in off the streets, hoping that we could offer a cool space, a moment to rest or a glass of water—which we did, but it wasn't cool in there—while others avoided coming in for appointments altogether because of the extreme heat. That means that constituents had to delay help regarding their concerns, or we did it over the phone.

Back in BC, the study on those hundreds of heat-related deaths done by the Chief Coroner's office of British Columbia revealed that there was a delay between Environment and Climate Change Canada's heat alerts and public agencies' response. They also found that 911 calls doubled and that there was an increase in the median time of medical service to the scene of the call during the heat wave. The report offered three recommendations to work towards, ensuring that an astonishing death toll like that never happens again—again, more advice on what to do that you guys could use.

Recommendation 1: Implement a coordinated provincial heat alert system. Strategies to align with this recommendation include restructuring agencies, developing a pilot program for the new alert system that involves wellness checks, stationary and mobile cooling centres, water distribution, greening areas—come on; there we go with the nature-based solutions—and cooling parks, and evaluating the pilot program. We should be planting trees like nobody's business.

Recommendation 2: Identify and support the population most at risk of dying during extreme heat emergencies. Some priority actions under this recommendation include:

- provincial health authorities develop a dataset of people who are most at risk of death or illness during a heat wave to target for home visits and contact during an extreme heat emergency in the future; for example, people with epilepsy, depression, asthma and people who live alone or have limited mobility or cognitive impairment;

- collaboratively develop culturally appropriate messaging with the Ministry of Health, health authorities and the First Nations health authorities on self-care and caring for vulnerable persons during extreme heat;

- conduct a publicly available review into distributing cooling devices as medical equipment to people most at risk of dying during a heat event; and

- consult with vulnerable populations and local government emergency planners regarding the new alert system.

Recommendation 3: Implement extreme heat prevention and long-term risk mitigation strategies. The report

recommends that the Ministry of Health, provincial health authorities and the First Nations Health Authority:

—distribute a heat preparation guide to British Columbians and provide a public service announcement on extreme heat preparedness in many languages;

—ensure renovation rebate programs that make cooling measures eligible for rebates focused on equity-deserving communities;

—mandate that the 2024 release of the BC building code—which, by the way, the best building code in the country. We need to emulate that, the step code. That's just a little food for thought for you for future plans, bills—that it includes passive and active cooling requirements in new housing construction, along with providing these cooling options for existing home renovations under the alterations code for energy-efficient and resilient buildings.

The people who died were sons, daughters, siblings, spouses and friends. We can never bring them back and that gap in their loved ones' lives will never be filled. We cannot wait for a massive death count to occur to spring us into action. We must launch proactive investment backed by evidence-based climate and emergency preparedness policy. The time is now.

Look at all these lessons to learn. This brings me to my second private member's bill, which you killed, but I brought it back again—second time, so it's on the table and you can adopt it: the Turn Down the Heat Act. Do you remember that? I proposed it in the 43rd Parliament and again in the 44th Parliament. Now it's Bill 29, just for the record—you can jot that down because I know you're listening intently—the Turn Down the Heat Act (Extreme Heat Awareness), 2025.

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This bill would mandate that materials be mailed to individual homes and published on the government of Ontario website to provide:

(1) information on what Ontarians can do to prepare for the possibility of extreme heat weather events;

(2) information on preventive measures that can be taken to help prevent or mitigate heat-related health concerns;

(3) a guide to publicly available resources with regard to extreme heat risks in Ontario, including health risks; and

(4) answers to frequently asked questions about extreme heat in Ontario.

Definitely consider that strongly. As I always say, the safest emergency is the one that never happens. While climate action is certainly needed now to bring down the heat, heat waves and wildland fires still occur. When they do, we need to ensure that there are enough adequately prepared emergency management personnel to engage with extreme weather safely, and that homes and buildings are equipped with adequate heat and fire prevention features to ensure people do not unnecessarily lose their livelihoods and their loved ones. Please pass my two bills and help Ontarians.

Next up, we're going into ice storms, which my neighboring colleague from Toronto—Danforth went into

great lengths about. He reminded me about 2013, which I think I blocked out of my head. I was a city councillor at the time, and that ice storm in Toronto was quite traumatic. I remember chasing those green Toronto Hydro trucks around my neighborhood and all the people without power freezing.

But you know what was the good thing about that? What I remember is how many neighbors supported each other. I had one street in my neighborhood, Beck Avenue, where half of it was out of power and the other half was not. The people who were not helped out the people who were without power. One guy had a generator. It's just amazing how times of struggle bring people together.

That's great for the communities, but we have our part to do as government leaders. In 2023, all seasons have their own set of extreme weather events that are growing in severity and frequency. At the beginning of April 2023, a major ice storm hit Ontario and Quebec—you'll remember that. The storm caused freezing rain in eastern Ontario and southern Quebec. The freezing rain eventually turned to snow, and the ice storm toppled power lines and obstructed roadways. This event brought on one of the worst power outages in Quebec, with Quebec reporting about 1.1 million customers without power, while Ontario reported over 100,000 customers without power and the death of four people.

Then there was the ice storm in 2025, again. The storm damaged trees, power lines, flooded basements and wrecked vehicles in its wake, along with over one million homes and businesses in Ontario and 70,000 in Quebec left without power. The ice storm racked up a whopping insurance bill of \$342 million. I think that's enough of a trip down memory lane for all of the disasters. Hopefully, you'll remember them tonight in your dreams.

Let's talk about the interaction of this bill with other bills. Let's talk about it with Bill 17. Bill 25's absence of mention of the climate crisis, climate change or climate emergency becomes even more concerning when analyzed in conjunction with the multitude of other bills that have been proposed or passed this session that further weaken the province's and municipalities' ability to address climate change and implement solutions, no matter how small.

Notably, Bill 17 completely undercuts municipal autonomy to aspire to greener and more sustainable building. Despite the government's emphasis that green standards are not eliminated, this is only a reality on paper. In practice, the bill effectively kills green development standards. Why would you do that? You just heard me talk about the need for nature-based solutions for climate-resilient infrastructure and buildings.

The Environmental Registry of Ontario details that municipalities would be prohibited from requiring developers to complete requirements beyond what is standard in the official plans without approval from the ministry.

Green development standards, specifically the Toronto green development standards—which, might I remind you, the Premier voted for when he was a city councillor

with me. He wholeheartedly voted for the Toronto Green Standard when the Premier was a Toronto city councillor. They promote considerations of air and water quality, waste reduction and circular economy measures to enhance the urban forest, energy efficiency and climate resilience. Many of these considerations protect both the health of humans and the environment that they live in. Also, they save money in the long run, and they add to comfort for your communities. Come on.

And the municipalities that have their own—you tell me if this is one of your municipalities, because these guys have green development standards because they're smart and they're forward-thinking: Halton Hills—who's got Halton Hills in their riding?—Hamilton, Oakville, Caledon, Brampton, Mississauga, King, Vaughan, Richmond Hill, Toronto, Aurora, Markham, Stouffville, Newmarket, East Gwillimbury, Pickering, Ajax, Whitby, Clarington. I'm sure there are more or more would like to do it.

In 2024, when the “summer of catastrophe” occurred, the Insurance Bureau of Canada reported over \$8 billion in insured losses from about 250,000 homes. The volume of claims represented a 443% increase from the 20-year average.

Believe it or not, I'm running out of time. I guess I could have used two hours.

Insurance premiums in Canada increased by 5.7% in 2025. So, you have the Insurance Bureau of Canada who's keen on building climate-resilient buildings.

We won't talk about Bill 5, because I don't want to have a coronary.

In conclusion—well, I would just say, put the money in, get innovative. In Germany, they have meeting spot signs in a park for people, because when the power goes out, how will people know where to get together in a disaster? Something to think about. Maybe engage the universities, get some ideas, be bolder and put your money where your mouth is and help us really address emergency preparedness.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Questions?

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: Thank you to the member opposite for her passionate, diverse and very detail-oriented speech on a multitude of topics. It was hard keeping track of the amount of things that you've talked about, but thank you for sharing that with the House and thank you for your passion for saving wildlife.

But that's what our government stands for. We want to make sure that we stand with our firefighters, with our police and our fire and our emergency services across this province, because without them we won't be able to function or do our daily lives. So I really want to thank all of our emergency responders, our first responders, for everything that they do in this province.

But I also want to get back to that and say our firefighters do an amazing job. Over 176 of them went out to Alberta with two helicopters to help the wildfires, and then across BC and across the country they've been helping out, and with other jurisdictions helping us out when we need it as well.

This legislation has been outdated. Over 15 years ago is the last time we updated this legislation. Does the member agree that it's time that we update this legislation?

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Absolutely, I agree that it's time to update it, for sure. But let's be bold about it. I just went through all these natural disasters, some in your community, maybe, some maybe affecting your own residents or yourself. And why not be bolder? Right?

We don't have time to waste. You're hearing, from the Auditor General, the Intact Centre on Climate Adaptation and mitigation, the Financial Accountability Officer, the high cost of inaction. It is peanuts to invest now compared to what you are going to pay later, right?

And also, pay your wildland firefighters accordingly. Pay them better and make them year-round employment versus seasonal.

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The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Questions?

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you to the member for Beaches—East York for your hour-long presentation about the government's bill on modernizing emergency management. When I think about emergencies, the first thought that comes to my mind is the climate crisis and whether our province is ready for the increased risk to us from floods, from fire, from extreme heat events.

Do you think this bill is going to prepare us for what's to come?

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: I would say that this bill is a baby step forward, so I'll take it but it's not enough. I just went through not even all of the wildfires that happened this summer and in the past few years—all the floods, the ice storms, extreme heat. I don't know, how did you enjoy this summer, guys?

Interjection.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Do you know what? My best friend, who is living in Alabama, comes up back home to Canada every summer. In Alabama, it's so hot they go from air-conditioned house to air-conditioned car to air-conditioned mall to air-conditioned school, and she couldn't believe how hot it was in Toronto.

We've got to do something. We've got to be bolder.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Questions?

M^{me} Lucille Collard: I really want to congratulate my colleague on her first time doing an hour leadoff. Obviously, it's a subject that you're very passionate about, and you filled out the time very nicely talking about actually very relevant things and how the government could do better.

You've talked about natural disasters. In Ottawa, I've actually had that close experience and lived through the horrendous consequences of the derecho, which was in May 2022, I vividly recall. If you had a magic wand just like the government seems to have, what are the three things that you would like them to do to prevent these things from happening in the first place?

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thank you very much. When I told my husband that I had an hour-long

speech today and how worried I was about doing an hour, he said, “Oh, you’ll be able to do that quite easily.”

The first thing to do is to pass my private member’s bills. When you killed the first one, I was so shocked because I actually came here as a newbie and I worked so hard, and you know it. I was over there so much sitting with you, talking to you about my flooding awareness bill that some people thought I walked across the floor because that’s how much I was there. And then, guess what, you killed it, and I wanted to quit my job. But I got back on my horse, I got up and dusted myself off and got back in the game and I keep fighting for the climate emergency.

And so, fund these programs accordingly. Get the innovation in there and be bold.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Question?

Mr. Steve Pinsonneault: I’m not sure why the member does not support the bill, which will enhance clarity and accountability in emergency management for the people of Ontario by requiring the municipalities to report to the public and council during the declared emergencies. Does the member think municipalities should not communicate with their residents during and after the events?

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Did you hear me say I don’t support this bill? I didn’t see that anywhere in my speech and I didn’t say anything. I said it’s a small baby step, and you need to go further. So please don’t put words in my mouth.

With regard to listening to municipalities—I don’t know, if I lived where you did, I think I would listen to my residents about the Dresden landfill site. I hear they don’t want it and I’m very much about the circular economy. We need to do more on waste diversion, ramp up the recycling. We have extended producer responsibility coming down the pipe January 1, and your government is trying to delay it by five years. We can’t be doing that. Your residents don’t want the Dresden landfill.

I’m listening to municipalities; I’m listening to Ontarians. They want strong climate action, and they want it now.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I want to applaud the member on her first-ever one-hour lead, and on a topic that she’s very knowledgeable about and that she cares passionately about. She’s so passionately knowledgeable about this that I believe the first, as she mentioned, private member’s bill she ever did was on this very same issue—on the issue of flooding. True to her own political experiences of being a non-partisan, she went to each and every one of us and took the time to talk about her bill. She did that with government members, and she did so very passionately, on something she cared deeply about.

If I remember correctly, they gave her assurances that this was a good idea—“let’s move forward”—but lo and behold, they did not support this bill that would have brought in emergency management. Why did they not support you when they said they were going to do so?

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thank you very much to the member from Humber River–Black Creek, whom I worked with well at city hall. When he speaks, I always learn something because he is very knowledgeable.

Thank you very much for talking about my original bill, a private member’s bill, Bill 56—flooding awareness and emergency preparedness. When I spoke to everyone, by and large, everyone was supportive, especially over there on the other side. The Minister of the Environment, at the time, invited me to his office at 777 Bay. He wanted to pass it, and he told me he would pass it with an amendment that just—instead of it going out with the property tax bills, it would go out with MPAC statements. So I came in here all tickety-boo, ready to go that night—

Ms. Sandy Shaw: We remember.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: A rookie. All of a sudden, when the Conservative member was speaking, I couldn’t figure out where he was going. And in my two-minute rebuttal, that was it—no more Mr. Nice Guy. I ripped off the gloves and let ‘er rip. So I don’t know what happened. You promised you would pass it, and then you didn’t—and that was the Minister of the Environment.

But you have another chance, so I’m giving you that chance. Fingers crossed.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I recognize the member from Essex on a point of order.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I seek unanimous consent that, notwithstanding standing order 100(b), the member for Peterborough–Kawartha may act on behalf of the member for Perth–Wellington for all purposes related to consideration of ballot item number 9 during private members’ public business today.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The member from Essex is seeking unanimous consent that, notwithstanding order 100(b), the member for Peterborough–Kawartha may act on behalf of the member for Perth–Wellington for all purposes related to consideration of ballot item number 9 during private members’ public business today. Agreed? Agreed.

Further debate?

MPP Bill Rosenberg: Under the leadership of Premier Ford, our government is ensuring that Ontario’s emergency management legislative framework reflects today’s realities.

With the increasing number of significant emergency events, we must thank all of the partners and volunteers who are there when we need them most.

That is why we are here taking this necessary step to ensure Ontario is safe now and in the future.

This summer, Minister Dunlop and her team met with over 100 municipal leaders at AMO, where she received positive feedback on our legislative modernization efforts. These conversations are essential in ensuring that our policies are grounded in local realities and that our approach remains responsive, forward-thinking and community-focused.

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The Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act is Ontario’s legislative framework for emergency manage-

ment. The act and its regulations have not been comprehensively updated in more than 15 years. With the increasingly complex emergency management landscape caused by risks such as severe weather events, wildfires and cyber attacks, it is now more important than ever to ensure that Ontario is safe, practised and prepared. That is why the government introduced legislation to modernize the act that, if passed, would enable a more effective, coordinated and comprehensive approach to provincial and community emergency management, to ensure Ontario is ready for the challenges of today and the future.

Through these proposed amendments, our government is taking concrete steps to build a stronger and more resilient province, with the necessary tools in place to ensure the safety and well-being of people across the province:

—establish Emergency Management Ontario as the central body for coordinated provincial emergency management efforts under the Minister of Emergency Preparedness and Response;

—maintain the principle that emergency management starts locally, with EMO stepping in to provide oversight, leadership and support when broader coordination is needed;

—enhance provincial response through Ontario Corps;

—ensure that EMO continues to lead collaboration among the province, communities and emergency partners to improve preparedness, practice and safety across Ontario.

That is why our government is taking concrete steps to build a stronger, more resilient province, with necessary tools in place to ensure the safety and well-being of people across the province.

Modernization of the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act would formally recognize Ontario Corps as a key partner in emergency management. Ontario Corps is a partner-based model involving specialized personnel and volunteers to support communities during emergencies, with services like sheltering, debris management, food provision and flood protection. It operates in collaboration with NGOs and First Nation partners and was recently deployed during the April ice storms in Orillia and Peterborough. Ontario Corps also aids in emergency preparedness through public education and volunteer training.

The amendments would give the minister authority to form agreements with individuals, organizations and other governments to enhance partnerships and ensure ongoing emergency readiness and response from across Ontario. Our government is protecting Ontario by tailoring emergency plans to local needs and establish Ontario Corps as a key partner in emergency response.

The proposed changes aim to strengthen provincial leadership in emergency management by clearly defining roles, including the minister's leadership and the commissioner's operational oversight; setting out the EMCPA's purpose; and improving clarity, accountability and coordination across provincial programs.

The bill will also improve community emergency management by allowing flexible, collaborative municipal planning; clarifying the emergency declarations and requests for provincial help; enabling coordination with Indigenous communities; regulating critical infrastructure; and allowing data collection and partnerships to support the emergency efforts.

This summer, I had the privilege of visiting several of my communities with Minister Dunlop, seeing the impact that funding had had on their communities. We visited eight that day in total.

The first one was Tehkummah, who used their emergency preparedness funds to buy a communication tower that would get them over a mountain so that they could have a better signal to support their fire services and warming stations. In Espanola, they purchased multiple generators to support warming stations, fire services, hospitals, and they worked with neighbouring communities to support each other with their equipment when a major emergency was about to happen. In NEMI, the minister and I got to put some logs and stuff through their brand new wood chipper. They bought that chipper so they could clear and remove debris and trees off highways during emergencies. We also visited North Shore search and rescue who bought a new drone that enhances their searches with modern technology.

From my past experience as a mayor, our small communities really appreciate the efforts of the province making sure our municipalities are working together and have up-to-date emergency plans. As a volunteer firefighter for 15 years, I know how important a unified emergency response plan is to our communities.

As we heard from the minister, what a way to be introduced to her new role as the Minister of Emergency Preparedness, with the 2025 ice storm. Her hands-on experience is invaluable as she moves forward in her role. And we have seen from the response to this emergency why and how this bill is so important.

As Ontario grows through bold policy decisions that attract new investments and strengthen our economy, we must act swiftly to protect and modernize the critical infrastructure that is the most important to our province. It is the backbone of our province, and its resiliency demands our attention now. Roads, energy, water systems and communications can all become vulnerable. Ontario's critical infrastructure operators face the same risk with natural disasters and cyber attacks as we do. That is why we need strong, thoughtful legislation to safeguard these vital assets. Let's ensure our government's investments are resilient, secure and ready to withstand future emergencies. We will continue to work with all of our many partners and stakeholders as this proposed legislation moves forward.

Madam Speaker, Ontario is a unique patchwork of communities that should be celebrated and protected. This proposed legislation is designed to acknowledge this uniqueness.

Meeting with the leaders of many First Nations and Indigenous groups, they have provided me with the first-

hand knowledge and experience of what their communities are dealing with when it comes to emergencies like wildland fires and flooding. Their insights and leadership continue to play a valuable role in informing and supporting emergency response efforts across remote communities.

Since taking office, we have engaged in a strong collaborative relationship with First Nation partners by strengthening coordinated responses through funding grants and developing the first Indigenous Internship Program to provide Indigenous youth with the opportunity to intern at the Provincial Emergency Operations Centre.

The ministry, with funding from Indigenous Services Canada, works to strengthen Indigenous emergency management capacity by hosting an annual flood and wildland fire symposium. This year's event will take place October 27 to 29 in Thunder Bay, just a few short days from now.

I want to take a moment to acknowledge our First Nations and Indigenous partners who play a critical role in emergency management and thank them for their extensive engagement during our consultations for this legislation last year. I also want to reaffirm that we will continue working together to ensure that in their communities, there is always an Indigenous-led approach to emergency management.

Field officers are just one part of our response. In December last year, Premier Ford made history, creating Ontario Corps—mobilizing one of Canada's first volunteer corps for emergency preparedness and response.

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Ontario Corps is a network of ordinary citizens, skilled partners and supporters that can quickly mobilize to provide support and critical services such as clearing roadways, delivering food, offering shelter and ensuring the most vulnerable have the help they need during emergencies. They are a proud embodiment of Ontario's unshakeable spirit, resilient compassion, and are always ready to rise to the challenge to protect Ontario when disaster strikes.

Through Ontario Corps, we are uniting Ontarians with one singular mission: to stand together, as one team, in times of crisis. Whether it's a severe storm, a flood, a wildland fire or any other emergency, Ontario is ready. That is because our government believes in creating a culture of readiness, a culture that empowers people and communities to help each other during our greatest hours of need. This proposed legislation would enshrine Ontario Corps into law as a key provincial resource and capability to be deployed during an emergency, including personnel, services, equipment, materials and facilities, coordinated by the Commissioner of Emergency Management.

To ensure Ontario Corps and its partners have the necessary supports and capabilities they need to protect Ontario, our government has made a historic \$110-million investment, \$10 million of which goes directly to our 13 Ontario Corps partners. Madam Speaker, because of this investment, we can now mobilize specialized equipment and personnel anywhere across the province within 24 hours. No matter how big or how small, communities can

access flood mitigation barriers, drones, water pumps, chainsaws, air purifiers and other supplies to help their recovery and relief efforts.

The recent storm in communities like mine, as well as Gravenhurst and Peterborough, and the response to support communities impacted by wildland fires exemplifies the positive impacts of Ontario Corps. I will take a moment to share the experience of the ice storm a little later, but let me talk about Ontario's fire season and how the ministry worked in coordination with my colleague at MNR.

This summer, the ministry supported the safe evacuation of and provided wraparound supports for over 2,200 people affected by wildland fires in Manitoba and over 6,000 people in northern Ontario. Through Ontario Corps, we were able to provide 182 generators, 75 air scrubbers, 705 air purifiers, 440 N95 masks and almost 50,000 infant care supplies to our northern communities affected by wildland fires.

On the first point, allow me to summarize how this proposed legislation would strengthen provincial leadership and coordination in emergency management through amendments to the current act. First, it would define emergency management as organized activities to (1) prevent, (2) mitigate, (3) prepare for, (4) respond to and (5) recover from emergencies. This amendment would ensure a consistent interpretation across the province about the scope of emergency management, provide clarity to partners and better align it with best practices.

As well, Madam Speaker, it would set out the purposes of the act, including:

—providing emergency management to Ontarians to safeguard their health, safety, welfare and property;

—facilitating coordination with municipalities, Indigenous communities, organizations in the public and private sectors, federal, provincial, territorial and international governments; and

—providing emergency powers during a declaration of emergency.

This change reflects how emergency management relies on strong collaboration between the province, communities and organizations. It also ensures a consistent interpretation about the aim of emergency management in Ontario.

Next, if passed, this legislation would identify the minister responsible for providing leadership and coordination of emergency management across the province. To fulfill this role, this legislation sets out significant aspects of the minister's powers, duties and functions for the purposes of the act. Some of these include monitoring and assessing hazards, risks, vulnerabilities, resources and facilities in Ontario; reviewing, assessing and advising on the development and implementation of emergency management programs and plans; coordinating and delivering training and emergency management exercises; and overseeing the coordination of the deployment and use of Ontario Corps.

I would like to express my gratitude for the feedback we've received to date and the continued interest in building a safe, practised and prepared Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Questions?

Mr. John Vanthof: I listened intently to the member from Algoma-Manitoulin—a fellow person from northern Ontario; I respect his views. I was wondering if he would comment on—in Timiskaming-Cochrane, often when Highways 11/17 are closed, people are stuck along the highway for hours and hours and hours, and there is no plan to bring them aid. Would the member think that the government should work towards making some kind of plan to help the people who are stuck often on the Trans-Canada Highway?

MPP Bill Rosenberg: I know that travelling the northern highways, it's a pretty special place, during the winter especially. I guess one of the first things we have to do is make sure we get broadband so we can have some access, and we are working on that for sure. I think that's a first step.

How we get that in the winter when the highways are closed, I guess it's all part of the same program. We need better snowplows. We need more snow removal, and we are working towards that. But how do we get the product there on time? I think it all starts with having better communications through the broadband system.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Questions?

Mme Dawn Gallagher Murphy: I'd like to thank the member for his comments this evening on the emergency act.

There are always different aspects of emergencies, from how we work with our critical infrastructure partners to, what about the social emergencies? What happens then?

My question to the member is, how is the government incorporating mental health issues into this proposed legislation?

MPP Bill Rosenberg: Thank you for that question. Ontario is committed to enhancing coordination and preparedness through social emergencies, events that impact public health, mental wellness or community well-being. If passed, the Modernized Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act would support this by assigning clear functional roles to ministries based off their areas of responsibility to ensure no gaps in emergency response, especially for vulnerable populations, clarifying municipal emergency declarations, improving accountability and planning, allowing municipalities to request provincial assistance without declaring an emergency and making support more accessible and efficient.

The province also pledges ongoing collaboration with First Nations and Indigenous partners to build capacity through co-led working groups and multilateral emergency management agreements with Indigenous Services Canada.

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The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Question?

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you very much for your presentation. A similar question that I asked the member for

Beaches-East York: When I think about emergency management, what comes to mind for me are the issues that we're facing with the climate crisis—the increase in wildfires, in extreme weather, in flooding, in extreme heat events. And, quite frankly, I don't think the government is prepared to have people's backs in times of crisis when it comes to extreme weather events.

Can you explain how this bill is going to help us deal with an extreme weather event? How is it going to help?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Response? Did they share—I'm sorry, the member who gave the speech will be the member who responds, should he so choose.

I recognize the member from Algoma-Manitoulin.

MPP Bill Rosenberg: Our government is proud to lead the country when it comes to protecting our environment. Ontario alone has achieved more greenhouse gas reductions than all other provinces combined, with 67% of Canada's total emissions reductions. We have achieved this while taking the necessary steps to support job creation, attract investments and grow our economy.

The reality is that we don't have to choose between environment and economy. Our government has shown that we can do, and must do, both. We continue to work to achieve target while being responsive to changing and challenging economic and environmental challenges.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Questions?

Mr. Steve Pinsonneault: How does the proposed legislation help municipalities with small budgets adhere to emergency management standards?

MPP Bill Rosenberg: This proposed modernization of the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act aims to enhance municipal emergency management by recognizing community-led approaches, offering flexible—based on local needs and capacities. It would allow municipalities to collaborate on joint emergency plans and tailor their programs to reflect community characteristics.

The changes would help small municipalities allocate resources more efficiently and build local capacity. Since 2023, the Community Emergency Preparedness Grant has provided funding to support smaller municipalities, with \$10 million awarded to 227 of our communities.

The Ministry of Emergency Preparedness and Response will continue to support municipalities through the implementation of these changes.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Questions? Question?

Mr. Steve Pinsonneault: Are provincial declarations of emergency and emergency powers and orders impacted by this bill?

MPP Bill Rosenberg: The goal of this bill is not to change how the province declares emergencies, but instead to make Emergency Management Ontario the one window of emergency co-ordination and response in order to improve response, accountability and enhance communication.

The proposed amendments would, if passed, support strengthened emergency management approaches for all

phases of emergency management, including, as part of the response to a declared provincial emergency, where emergency powers and orders would remain available.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Question?

Mr. Joseph Racinsky: It's a privilege to ask a question of the member from Algoma-Manitoulin. Thank you for sharing your expertise on this bill, especially as a member from northern Ontario. I really appreciate everything you had to say this afternoon.

One of the changes in this bill has to do with the way that emergencies are declared at the municipal level, ensuring that municipalities have a plan that's proposed that outlines the way that they need to respond in an emergency, regardless of how the head of council feels on that issue. So, I just wanted to know what the member thought about those changes in this bill.

MPP Bill Rosenberg: Thank you to the member from Wellington. Our government is protecting Ontario by

tailoring emergency plans to local needs and establishing Ontario Corps as a key partner in emergency response.

The proposed changes aim to strengthen provincial leadership in emergency management by clearly defining roles, including the minister's leadership and the commissioner's operational oversight; setting out the EMCPA's purpose; and improving clarity, accountability and co-ordination across provincial programs.

This bill will also improve community emergency management by allowing flexible, collaborative municipal planning; clarifying emergency declarations and requests for provincial help; enabling coordination with Indigenous communities; regulating critical infrastructure; and allowing data collection and partnerships to support emergency efforts.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Thank you.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

Report continues in volume B.

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Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	
Watt, Tyler (LIB)	Nepean	
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
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Wong-Tam, Kristyn (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	