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Mercredi
27 novembre 2024

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Clerk: Trevor Day

Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott
Greffier : Trevor Day

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CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Wednesday 27 November 2024 / Mercredi 27 novembre 2024

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Resource Management and Safety Act, 2024, Bill 228, Mr. Graydon Smith / Loi de 2024 sur la gestion des ressources et la sécurité, projet de loi 228, M. Graydon Smith

Hon. Graydon Smith	10633
Mme Dawn Gallagher Murphy	10637
M. Guy Bourgouin	10640
Mr. Robert Bailey	10641
M. Guy Bourgouin	10641
Mr. Andrew Dowie	10641
Ms. Sandy Shaw	10642
Second reading debate deemed adjourned	10642

Mount Pleasant Group of Cemeteries Act, 2024

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly)	10642
---	-------

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉES ET DÉPUTÉS

Community safety

Mr. Billy Pang	10642
----------------------	-------

Health care

MPP Wayne Gates	10642
-----------------------	-------

Glencoe greenhouse facility

Mr. Steve Pinsonneault	10642
------------------------------	-------

Mellaney Dahl

MPP Jamie West	10643
----------------------	-------

Life sciences sector

Mr. Sheref Sabawy	10643
-------------------------	-------

Environmental protection

Mr. Chris Glover	10643
------------------------	-------

Affordable housing

Mr. David Smith	10643
-----------------------	-------

Addiction services

Mr. Vincent Ke	10644
----------------------	-------

Holy Trinity Church

Ms. Laura Smith	10644
-----------------------	-------

Domestic violence / Maaveerar Naal

Mr. Logan Kanapathi	10644
---------------------------	-------

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEUSES ET VISITEURS

Ms. Jessica Bell	10644
Mr. Ted Hsu	10645
Hon. Mike Harris	10645

MPP Lise Vaugeois	10645
Hon. Sylvia Jones	10645
Mr. Sol Mamakwa	10645
Mrs. Karen McCrimmon	10645
Mr. Andrew Dowie	10645
Ms. Catherine Fife	10645
Mr. John Fraser	10645
Hon. Graydon Smith	10645
Mr. Logan Kanapathi	10645
Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady	10645
Hon. Nolan Quinn	10645
Mr. Joel Harden	10645
Ms. Laura Smith	10645
Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens	10645
Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon	10645
Mr. John Jordan	10646
Ms. Marit Stiles	10646
The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott)	10646
Mr. Amarjot Sandhu	10646
Mr. Joel Harden	10646
Mrs. Daisy Wai	10646
Hon. Stan Cho	10646
Mr. Anthony Leardi	10646
Hon. Michael Parsa	10646
Mr. Terence Kernaghan	10646
Hon. David Piccini	10646

QUESTION PERIOD / PÉRIODE DE QUESTIONS

Affordable housing

Ms. Marit Stiles	10646
Hon. Paul Calandra	10646
Hon. Doug Ford	10647

Affordable housing

Ms. Marit Stiles	10647
Hon. Doug Ford	10648
Hon. Paul Calandra	10648

Child and family services

MPP Jamie West	10649
Hon. Michael Parsa	10649

International trade

Mr. Andrew Dowie	10649
Hon. Victor Fedeli	10649

Paramedic services

MPP Lise Vaugeois	10650
Hon. Sylvia Jones	10650

Taxation

Mme Dawn Gallagher Murphy	10651
Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto	10651

University and college funding

Miss Monique Taylor	10651
Hon. Nolan Quinn	10651

Health care

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon	10652
Hon. Sylvia Jones	10652

Employment standards

Mr. Logan Kanapathi	10653
Hon. David Piccini	10653

Tenant protection

Ms. Jessica Bell	10653
Hon. Doug Downey	10653

School trustees

Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady	10654
Mr. Billy Pang	10654

Taxation

Mr. Stéphane Sarrazin	10654
Hon. Rob Flack	10654

Cost of living

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche	10655
Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy	10655
Ms. Chandra Pasma	10655
Hon. Michael Parsa	10655

Long-term care

Mrs. Daisy Wai	10656
Hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta	10656

Visitors

Mr. Ross Romano	10656
Mr. Vincent Ke	10656

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEUSES ET VISITEURS

Ms. Stephanie Bowman	10656
Mr. Andrew Dowie	10657
Mr. Chris Glover	10657
Hon. David Piccini	10657

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES / RAPPORTS DE COMITÉS

Standing Committee on the Interior

Mr. Aris Babikian	10657
Report adopted	10657

INTRODUCTION OF GOVERNMENT BILLS / DÉPÔT DE PROJETS DE LOI ÉMANANT DU GOUVERNEMENT

Working for Workers Six Act, 2024, Bill 229,**Mr. Piccini / Loi de 2024 visant à oeuvrer pour les travailleurs, six, projet de loi 229, M. Piccini**

First reading agreed to	10657
Hon. David Piccini	10657

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS / DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI

Housing Equity and Rental Transparency Act, 2024,**Bill 230, Ms. Bowman / Loi de 2024 sur l'équité en matière de logement et la transparence dans les modalités de location, projet de loi 230, Mme Bowman**

First reading agreed to	10657
Ms. Stephanie Bowman	10657

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Tenant protection

Ms. Jessica Bell	10658
------------------------	-------

Tenant protection

MPP Jill Andrew	10658
-----------------------	-------

Road safety

MPP Lise Vaugeois	10658
-------------------------	-------

Social assistance

Mr. Terence Kernaghan	10658
-----------------------------	-------

Land use planning

Ms. Catherine Fife	10658
--------------------------	-------

Road safety

Ms. Jennifer K. French	10659
------------------------------	-------

Autism treatment

Ms. Doly Begum	10659
----------------------	-------

Health care

Ms. Jessica Bell	10659
------------------------	-------

Addiction services

MPP Jill Andrew	10659
-----------------------	-------

Long-term care

MPP Lise Vaugeois	10659
-------------------------	-------

Tenant protection

Mr. Terence Kernaghan	10659
-----------------------------	-------

Addiction services

Ms. Jennifer K. French	10660
------------------------------	-------

Social assistance

MPP Jill Andrew	10660
-----------------------	-------

Addiction services

Mr. Terence Kernaghan	10660
-----------------------------	-------

Victor Soler

Mr. Ross Romano	10660
-----------------------	-------

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Time allocation

Mr. Terence Kernaghan.....	10661
Vote deferred.....	10661

Resource Management and Safety Act, 2024, Bill 228, Mr. Graydon Smith / Loi de 2024 sur la gestion des ressources et la sécurité, projet de loi 228, M. Graydon Smith

M. Guy Bourgouin.....	10661
Mme Sandy Shaw.....	10665
Mme Dawn Gallagher Murphy.....	10669
Ms. Catherine Fife	10669
Ms. Laura Smith	10669
Ms. Jessica Bell	10670
Mme Dawn Gallagher Murphy.....	10670
Hon. Sam Oosterhoff.....	10670
Ms. Catherine Fife	10673
Mme Dawn Gallagher Murphy.....	10674
Ms. Aislinn Clancy	10674
M. Guy Bourgouin.....	10674
Mr. Robert Bailey	10675
MPP Lise Vaugeois	10675

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 27 November 2024

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 27 novembre 2024

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Good morning. Let us pray.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND SAFETY ACT, 2024

LOI DE 2024 SUR LA GESTION DES RESSOURCES ET LA SÉCURITÉ

Mr. Graydon Smith moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 228, An Act to enact the Geologic Carbon Storage Act, 2024 and to amend various Acts with respect to wildfires, resource safety and surveyors / Projet de loi 228, Loi édictant la Loi de 2024 sur le stockage géologique de carbone et modifiant diverses lois concernant les incendies de végétation, la sécurité des ressources et les arpenteurs-géomètres.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I look to the minister to lead off the debate.

Hon. Graydon Smith: Good morning to everyone here in the chamber this morning. I'm pleased to lead second reading debate on Bill 228, the Resource Management and Safety Act.

I'll be sharing my time today with my parliamentary assistant, the member for Newmarket–Aurora, to speak to this bill.

But before I do that, a few personal words, as I introduce my first bill in this chamber, and those words are simply for my parents: my mom, who's watching today—good morning, Mom—and my dad, who's watching from above, thank you. Thank you for teaching me how important it is to be a person who helps others, works hard and tries to make a difference. Mom, you still continue to remind me of that every day. And, Dad, as someone who enjoyed the great outdoors, as a fisherman of great skill in both summer and winter, I hope you're enjoying your son's latest gig. It's because of you and because of my wife, Melissa, and my children, Gabby and Max, that I strive to create an even better Ontario that is full of opportunities and that recognizes that our natural resources and how we use them, manage them and respect them play a huge role in that betterment.

I also want to thank my staff, both in my office and at the ministry, for the great amount of work they've done,

not only on this proposed legislation, but every day. And to those back in the office, they are the best at what they do. When I come into the office, I am buoyed by your efforts every day, so keep it up, you're amazing. I extend the same words to my parliamentary assistant, who you'll hear from later.

Since day one, our government's demonstrated a determination to build Ontario's economy for today and tomorrow. This bill exemplifies that commitment and, if passed, would:

- fortify our shared capacity to prevent, mitigate and manage wildland fires, protecting families, communities, forests and industries across Ontario's fire region from an escalating threat;

- enable the permanent storage of carbon dioxide in deep underground geologic formations, helping industry to reduce their carbon emissions and meet climate goals;

- attract new surveyors to support Ontario's rapidly expanding infrastructure and housing needs; and

- improve my ministry's ability to take direct and timely remedial action to repair certain oil and gas wells that pose a public safety risk.

With another fire season concluded, I'd like to thank the staff in my ministry's aviation forest fire and emergency services branch, and all those who support them, for the incredibly important work that they do to reduce and manage the impacts that wildland fires can have on the people, communities, infrastructure and economic activity of this province. This past fire season—which was not as challenging as last year, thankfully—we managed about 475 wildland fires in Ontario. The number of hectares burned was 43% of the 10-year average and 20% of what we saw in 2023.

Meanwhile, in other parts of Canada, they experienced a devastating wildland fire season, expressed no more fully than what we saw happen in Jasper. Ontario was able to deploy our amazing rangers and support staff to Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia and the Northwest Territories to help. It is what we do and we do it well. Again, thank you to all those who serve in these challenging roles.

Despite the fire season being softer than the previous one, we know one thing is certain: That on the whole, fires are becoming more severe, larger and more frequent across Canada—and Ontario is not immune. In pursuit of our vision of an Ontario that works together through all sectors to reduce the risk and minimize the devastating impacts of wildland fires, creating safer and more resilient communities, our government is modernizing our wildland fire management program and making significant

investments in our resources to position us well for the challenges that lie ahead.

As minister, I'm signatory to the Canadian Wildland Fire Prevention and Mitigation Strategy with my fellow ministers from coast-to-coast. This strategy is a call to action, meant to mobilize all in society at reducing wildland fire risk. I'm pleased to note that the legislative changes proposed in this bill will support my ministry in leading this work in Ontario and position Ontario as a leader in Canada.

The Forest Fires Prevention Act is the primary provincial legislation that sets out rules and regulations for managing wildland fires in this province. It sets obligations for fire prevention measures, authorizes enforcement and defines offences and penalties. Bill 228, the Resource Management and Safety Act, if passed, would amend this act. First, the Forest Fires Prevention Act would be renamed the Wildland Fire Management Act and a purpose clause would be included to reflect a stronger focus on all aspects of wildland fire management necessary to combat the growing risk and impact of these fires. That means: greater focus on prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery, and ensuring that people and companies are aware of and comply with rules that are designed to prevent human-caused fires and prepare for fires when and where they occur.

The amendments we are proposing to the act, if passed, would help our ministry to manage the expected increase in wildland fire activity, while also reducing the risk that wildland fires pose to people, communities, infrastructure and economic prosperity. Reducing that risk is a shared responsibility. The amendments in this bill, if passed, would strengthen the collective responsibility for wildland fire management; enhance all aspects of wildland fire management, including prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery; and strengthen compliance and enforcement.

My ministry's long-term goal is an Ontario that works together to minimize the impact of wildland fires to create safer, more resilient communities. The act, as it stands, enables my ministry to enter into agreements for the prevention, control or extinguishment of grass, brush or forest fires.

0910

In keeping with our vision of an Ontario that works together to reduce wildland fire risk, this bill, if passed, would enable the ministry to enter into agreements on all aspects of wildland fire management. This could include agreements on wildlife fire management training with a municipality or a First Nations community, or an agreement to permit activities otherwise prohibited by the act such as a prescribed burn. In sum, this amendment, if passed, would enable increased collaboration among all involved in wildland fire management.

My ministry also aims to step up its work with municipalities and industries in the fire region to enhance wildland fire management. It's why we are proposing an amendment to the act that, if passed, would require these partners to maintain wildland fire management plans.

These plans would need to meet prescribed standards that would be set out in regulation under the act, should this bill be passed. Prescribed standards for these plans would include prevention, mitigation and preparedness activities. Meeting requirements for wildland fire management plans could mean updating an existing plan or creating a new plan.

The amendment, if passed, would allow the minister to deem a plan prepared for a different purpose other than a wildfire management plan if it meets the prescribed standards, such as a municipal plan prepared under the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act. My ministry will continue consultation with municipalities and industry to scope the proposals and identify potential resource needs, and we have the support of the president of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario—my former role—Robin Jones, the mayor of Westport. She says, "AMO applauds provincial action to modernize wildfire management. More frequent and intense wildfires due to climate change create significant risks for people and resources. Provincial-municipal partnership to prevent, prepare for, mitigate and respond to wildfires is needed to protect our forests and keep our communities safe."

My ministry staff will provide technical support to ensure adequate plans are in place to address the escalating risk of wildland fires. During a wildland fire emergency, my ministry draws on resources from the private sector, including equipment and sometimes equipment operators, to quickly respond using the resources at hand. We have 41 arrangements with companies in the forest industry that set out the terms of use for their equipment, each with its own terms, conditions and remuneration rates. Our personnel will often rely on forest companies in emergencies, even if those in other industries have similar equipment closer at hand.

That's why we're proposing to amend the act to enable my ministry to set out, in regulation, standard rates, terms and conditions when privately owned equipment is used in wildland fire suppression. The standardization of these agreements would reduce the administrative burden they now impose while making it easier to mobilize the closest equipment at hand. This amendment would also add to the circumstances under which my ministry could summon industry assistance, adding other related wildland fire emergency events such as evacuations. Industry strongly supports the clarity that standard terms and conditions would provide.

Let me turn now to the amendments we are proposing that are related to the enforcement measures within the Forest Fires Prevention Act. This bill, if passed, would bring the enforcement and penalty provisions of the act in line with other statutes of my ministry, including the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act and the Invasive Species Act. Strengthening these provisions would provide my ministry with the tools and powers it requires to hold bad actors responsible for failing to comply with or contravening the act to account.

Two of the amendments we're proposing to the enforcement and penalties provisions in the act, if passed,

would enable my ministry to exercise judgment in determining how best to proceed, depending on the circumstances of the case—in short, whether to resort to the court system, as the act currently requires, or, instead, to consider alternative measures.

Almost half of the wildland fires in our province are caused by people. Under the act as it stands, charges are laid when this occurs.

We recognize that alternative solutions may be preferable in some circumstances. Let me outline the first of these. This bill, if passed, would enable my ministry to issue administrative monetary penalties for non-compliance with the act, without initiating a prosecution. This option could be used to penalize activities that could start a fire or impede its suppression, such as operating equipment without the required spark arresters or failing to have a fire extinguisher on a work site. Forest industry companies are already subject to administrative penalties under the Crown Forest Sustainability Act. This proposed measure would, if passed, apply to all industries and persons subject to the newly named Wildland Fire Management Act. It's an approach that is fair, equitable and that follows modern regulatory principles, including progressive compliance.

The second of these amendments deals with remediation orders. We're proposing a measure that, if passed, would enable my ministry to issue a remediation order without initiating a prosecution. Such an order could require a person to plant trees or take part in a wildland fire education program. This could resolve issues more quickly than through the court system. Should this proposal be approved, the circumstances in which remediation will not be considered could be specified in a regulation under the act.

My ministry also deals with the question of costs. Under the act as it stands, for human-caused fires, the costs of suppressing or extinguishing a fire are automatically a debt to the crown. This obliges my ministry to seek recovery from individuals or companies that have caused the fire. An invoice is issued, and if it's not paid, my ministry considers civil action. This bill, if passed, would give my ministry discretion in determining whether to seek recovery of these costs in cases where recovery may not be possible, would impose hardship, or is not in the public interest.

Imagine this scenario: A driver pulls over after her car catches fire, and the fire spreads to the brush next to the road shoulder, igniting a wildland fire. Without the amendment proposed in this bill, this driver would be issued an invoice for the costs of suppressing or extinguishing that fire.

This bill, if passed, would also clarify my power to prohibit activities during wildland fire emergencies while also providing me with the authority to exempt persons from such orders in certain circumstances.

In addition to these legislative changes, my ministry is also undertaking policy and program initiatives to modernize the wildland fire program. These policy and program initiatives would increase our collaboration with

municipalities, Indigenous communities and industry. I'd like to tell you about several of these.

Our ministry aims to establish a wildland fire advisory committee to bring together all partners in the essential and life-saving work of fire risk reduction that is so crucial to protecting people, homes, communities, industries and our natural resources.

My ministry also aims to step up its wildland fire awareness campaigns to better inform Ontarians of wildland fire risks and hazards. We need to educate the public and promote their awareness of the prevention and mitigation actions they can take to reduce fire risk. We rely on the efforts of the public and our partners at the local level to take the steps needed to break that link between a spark and a flame. It will take all Ontarians, working together across the fire region, to reduce the risk of wildland fires, and the collective efforts of all partners to fulfill this vision of safer and more resilient communities in Ontario.

My ministry also aims to enhance its collaboration with Indigenous communities in natural hazard management to enhance support for the traditional use of fire, including cultural burning, and to enable wildland fire management led by Indigenous communities. We are proposing to work with Indigenous communities in a partnership that would consider their unique needs, values, cultures and voices to better manage wildland fires and develop fire-resilient communities.

0920

While wildland fires are too often caused by people, they also occur naturally. These natural fires, often ignited by lightning strikes, play an important role in renewing the boreal forest. Each wildland fire is assessed. My ministry then responds based on the situation and condition of the fire. When fires threaten communities, properties, our timber supply and the infrastructure that we all rely on, our fire crews are at the ready, acting as quickly as they can to contain the threat. Other fires are managed to limit their negative effects and, when it's safe to do so, some fires are only monitored. This enables us to use these fires to regenerate the forest. We also occasionally use prescribed burns to decrease fire risk in certain vegetated areas since vegetation can fuel wildland fires.

That brings me to another policy and program measure my ministry is consulting on that is complementary to this proposed bill. We are updating our guidance on managing vegetation since it does serve as a fuel source for wildland fires, recognizing that doing so could help us avoid fire losses. This could become an important asset in wildland fire resiliency planning and we see potential to integrate its use into natural resource-related practices such as timber harvesting, land use planning and development.

Speaker, to build the economy of today and tomorrow, our government must ensure Ontario has the skills and capabilities essential to getting the job done. That's why this bill, if passed, would help to support Ontario's rapidly expanding infrastructure and housing development needs by also amending the Surveyors Act. This act grants authority to the Association of Ontario Land Surveyors.

This is the self-governing body that oversees the licensing and governance of professional land surveyors in our province.

Surveying is at the foundation of all development—there's a pun in there somewhere. We rely on the information surveyors provide to build infrastructure, homes and communities. We also rely on surveyors to help communities recover from emergencies such as flooding in urban areas and wildland fires. Since boundary markers can be lost during these catastrophic types of events, many of the dedicated professionals who carry out this essential work are progressing towards the later stages of their careers. This suggests to my ministry and to their association that our province could one day face a barrier to growth owing to a lack of survey services. Already surveyors are in short supply across northern Ontario.

The measures proposed in this bill, if passed, would help to increase the availability of surveying services when and where they are needed. Our goal is to avoid delays in infrastructure and housing projects, as well as delays in property transactions and to increase the availability of survey services in northern Ontario, which as I noted, is underserved today. These amendments, if passed, would also enable survey firms to incorporate modern new technologies into their practices while enhancing the governance structure and professional oversight provided by their association. My ministry worked closely with the association in developing these proposals, which the association supports.

Al Jeraj, the executive director of the Association of Ontario Land Surveyors says, "The Association of Land Surveyors of Ontario is pleased to see the Ministry of Natural Resources' proposed changes to the Surveyors Act. These changes will modernize ... and allow our association to continue to advance our mandate of protecting the public. As the demand for safe, affordable housing and infrastructure continues to rise, land surveyors will remain essential in building the future of our province. I thank the province for their efforts in supporting our profession, and helping us meet the demands of a growing economy."

To become a licensed Ontario land surveyor, a candidate must complete a four-year degree and have up to three years of experience. Given the aging demographic within the profession and the increasing demand for survey services, Ontario needs to increase their supply.

In addition to increasing the supply of survey services, this amendment, if passed, would provide another very significant benefit: It would allow surveyors with less Canadian experience to undertake certain survey work under the supervision of a fully licensed surveyor. The Association of Ontario Land Surveyors is committed to bringing on internationally trained surveyors faster than it can today. This proposal would, if passed, help the association meet that commitment.

This bill, if passed, would also allow the association to issue a temporary licence to a person holding the equivalent of a full Ontario licence from another jurisdiction. As it stands today, the association has a labour mobility

agreement with other Canadian jurisdictions that allows a surveyor from one jurisdiction to obtain membership in another by demonstrating knowledge of local law. This means a surveyor coming into Ontario from another jurisdiction must pass an exam on Ontario law as it applies to surveying in our province. This can take a significant amount of time.

While in other professions, such as engineering, qualified practitioners can be brought into Ontario from other jurisdictions for emergency projects, the Surveyors Act, as currently written, does not permit this. As I've noted, during emergencies such as wildland fires and flooding in urban areas, property boundaries may be lost. Surveyors are needed on an urgent basis to assess the damage and re-survey boundaries. This is critically important to affected communities, as it allows them to rebuild and recover. A temporary licensing program would enable Ontario to respond more promptly to emergencies. Surveyors with a temporary licence would also be required to work under the supervision of a licensed Ontario surveyor.

A third amendment to the Surveyors Act is proposed in this bill, and it would, if passed, enable survey firms to use new and innovative technologies to deliver survey services. Firms would no longer be required to operate a physical consultation office or to maintain a schedule of posted hours. These amendments, if passed, would allow firms to enjoy the efficiencies provided by modern business practices.

Finally, this bill, if passed, would enable the association to provide increased oversight of the surveying profession. The proposed amendments would support the timely resolution of issues involving surveyor conduct by streamlining the complaints process. These changes would strengthen the profession, and build greater trust and confidence in the surveying industry.

Speaker, let me turn now to the proposed amendment to the Oil, Gas and Salt Resources Act that is included in the bill. The history of oil and gas extraction in Ontario dates from 1858, and over the 166 years since then, tens of thousands of petroleum-related wells have been drilled in our province, mostly in southwestern Ontario. When a well is not properly maintained, it can deteriorate over time, and this makes it more disposed to leak. Gas from a leaking well can contaminate drinking water or result in other hazards that can affect people and the environment. We need to prevent such types of events from occurring.

This legislation enables ministry inspectors to order well operators to take steps to address hazards related to a well or its associated equipment in these types of situations. In some cases, an operator may be unable to respond to an order for compliance, and this can happen in cases of insolvency or if a well operator is deceased. My ministry does not want to stand by while a hazard that needs to be promptly addressed persists unabated.

This bill, if passed, would enable my ministry to take action to address a hazard without the consent of an operator in limited circumstances where there is a non-compliance with a ministry order and when a non-compliant operator is bankrupt, insolvent or deceased. My

ministry would seek the consent of the landowner to gain access to the land where the hazardous well is situated. When that is not possible, we would seek a judicial warrant to enter the premises without the landowner's consent. This would enable us to remediate the hazard in a timely fashion. This measure, if passed, would help protect the public, property, the landowner and the natural environment nearby a hazardous well in these limited circumstances of non-compliance. It would allow my ministry to pursue a non-compliant well operator for the costs of the remediation.

0930

In the provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and British Columbia, they already have similar powers. We need this capability in Ontario, Speaker, and we have the support of the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs president, Rob Grimwood, who says the association "applauds the Ontario government and Minister Graydon Smith, Minister of Natural Resources, for their proposed legislation that will protect communities from hazardous gas wells and provide tools to recover costs for actions taken on the wells.

"This government's commitment to fire and life safety is very much demonstrated in its proposals to the FFPA and Oil, Gas and Salt Resources Act, respectively."

My ministry has in place a Legacy Well Action Plan to address the challenges arising from historical oil and gas wells. As it happens, my ministry staff are in the midst of conducting gas-detection surveys in Haldimand county this fall under this plan. But by implementing this plan, we aim to increase our understanding of the risks, develop strategies to manage these risks and support emergency planning and preparedness measures. This bill, if passed, would assist my ministry in meeting these aims, and this measure would be welcomed, as I said, by the fire chiefs and our municipal partners as well.

Speaker, I want to wrap up my time now speaking a bit about the new legislation that I'm really excited about, which is the Geologic Carbon Storage Act. My great parliamentary assistant will get into more detail on the environmental benefits of the act, if passed, but I just want to quickly touch on its economic potential. This bill, if passed, will allow the initial development of commercial-scale carbon storage projects in southwestern Ontario and could sustain as many as 2,400 existing jobs in Ontario's manufacturing, oil and gas, and utility sectors, and create up to 4,000 short-term jobs associated with the development of carbon capture and storage projects. It could help Ontario industries remain competitive by reducing the federal price they pay on carbon by as much as \$1.2 billion per year. These initial benefits may increase if carbon storage technology continues to advance and the development of carbon storage facilities in other parts of the province becomes commercially viable.

Enabling geologic carbon storage in Ontario could also enable industries investing in carbon projects to qualify for federal investment tax credits. The economic impact of these projects will be substantial. According to Natural Resources Canada, the economic benefit of three large-

scale carbon capture and storage projects could lead to a \$2.7-billion increase in GDP, based on a four-year construction time frame. Should this technology continue to advance and expand across the province, these benefits would only grow.

Speaker, the economic potential is great, and it's not just us saying it. Brian Johnson, the general manager and senior vice-president in Ontario at Enbridge, says they "commend the government for taking another significant step towards enabling carbon capture and storage ... on a commercial scale, supporting Ontario's energy-intensive, hard-to-abate industries—the backbone of our economy."

He goes on to say, "This effort not only ensures that ... jobs and investments stay within the province but also unlocks a new industry poised to attract billions of dollars in new investments and create tens of thousands of jobs, driving economic growth and sustainability across Ontario."

Well, Speaker, my time is pretty much up for now. Members of the House, I look forward to hearing your perspectives on the measures proposed in this bill, and now I'll pass things over to my parliamentary assistant.

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

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: Thank you to the minister. I'd like to thank him for his leadership on this file. I would also like to take the opportunity to thank him and the Premier for this opportunity to serve as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Natural Resources. I have learned so much about our province's natural resources—the opportunities, as well as the awesome responsibility for caring and protecting its biodiversity for this great province. It is truly a privilege to serve Ontarians on this great file.

Of course, a shout-out to the great residents of Newmarket–Aurora, who entrusted me with the honour to be their voice, to serve them and our province: Thank you, Newmarket–Aurora.

And most importantly, to my husband and our son: Thank you for being my rock. Your support means everything to me.

The measures our government is proposing in this bill reflect our steadfast commitment to building strong, resilient communities—communities that are prospering today, better prepared for natural resource hazards, able to grow, with access to the survey services they need and able to build on our new foundations—in short, positioned for prosperity today and tomorrow. This commitment is especially important in Ontario's resource-dependent communities, such as those reliant on the forestry sector.

Some may think of resource-based industries as merely traditional. And some may fail to recognize the importance of resource-based industries to the future prosperity of this province. I'm proud to say this government doesn't see things that way. And we're completely focused on opportunities for growth.

Let me start with the new legislation that is proposed in this bill: the Geologic Carbon Storage Act. As the minister said in his remarks, the economic impact of this legislation

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

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

So we touched on economic prosperity. But what about sustainable and environmental prosperity? Well, Ontario's natural resources hold incredible and unbelievable potential in just that and must work together to unleash their full potential.

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

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

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That is exactly why we're taking steps to introduce and regulate geologic carbon storage in Ontario. As it stands, about 30% of Ontario's greenhouse gas emissions each year come from essential industries like manufacturing and utilities. These industries produce the materials needed to build hospitals, roads and homes, and supply the energy that keeps the lights on in hospitals and long-term-care homes. They are vital to our province's functioning.

This bill, if passed, would enable these hard-to-abate industries to permanently store the carbon dioxide they emit in suitable underground geologic formations. In just the initial phase of development, commercial-scale carbon storage projects in Ontario could lower annual industrial carbon emissions by 11% to 15%—the equivalent of removing as many as two million cars from the road—reducing Ontario's total annual emissions by approximately 3% to 4%.

Rien que dans leurs phases initiales de développement, les projets de stockage de carbone à des fins commerciales

en Ontario pourraient réduire les émissions industrielles annuelles de carbone de 11 % à 15 %, ce qui équivaut à retirer de la circulation jusqu'à deux millions de voitures et à réduire les émissions annuelles totales de l'Ontario d'environ 3 % à 4 %.

This technology has the potential to significantly reduce the social costs of greenhouse gas emissions by as much as \$2 billion per year. The most suitable underground geologic formations for carbon storage in Ontario are saline aquifers and depleted oil and gas reservoirs found in southwestern Ontario, right where many of these industries are clustered. The proximity between industries and potential storage sites offers a significant advantage for the future development of carbon management in our province.

While geologic carbon storage is a new concept in Ontario, it has already been successfully implemented elsewhere. In fact, more than 40 carbon capture, utilization and storage projects are currently operational worldwide, including in Western Canada, Australia, Norway, the United Kingdom and the United States. According to the International Energy Agency, there are approximately 700 carbon capture projects in various stages of development across 50 countries. The technology has a track record of more than 50 years and it is eliciting broad support and growing levels of investment globally. This bill would help Ontario safely and responsibly engage proponents to implement carbon storage projects, following best practices from other jurisdictions.

Le Groupe d'experts intergouvernemental sur l'évolution du climat et l'Agence internationale de l'énergie ont affirmé que sans le déploiement à grande échelle de technologies de gestion du carbone, y compris le stockage géologique du carbone, il n'y a pas de voie réaliste permettant d'atteindre des émissions nettes nulles d'ici à 2050.

The International Panel on Climate Change and the International Energy Agency have stated that there is no credible path to net-zero emissions by 2050 without the widespread deployment of carbon management technologies, including geologic carbon storage. This technology is particularly suited for energy-intensive industries with large, fixed assets, such as steel, lime, cement, and oil and gas refineries—industries that cannot easily eliminate their carbon emissions through process changes. Permanently storing carbon dioxide underground is a viable way for the industries to achieve their climate goals.

Ontario's industrial base is a key part of the province's economy, and many communities, particularly in southwestern Ontario, depend on the jobs and economic activity generated by these industries. However, we are at a crossroads. Without carbon management strategies such as geologic carbon storage, there is a risk that industries may relocate to jurisdictions where carbon management technologies are available or to those where industrial carbon emissions are not yet subject to a price. This would have serious consequences for Ontario's industrial heartland and could result in the deindustrialization of entire regions.

Cependant, nous sommes à la croisée des chemins. En l'absence de stratégies de gestion du carbone telles que le

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

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

Ontario's long history of regulating oil and gas industries in southwestern Ontario gives us valuable experience in managing underground resources safely and responsibly. Our ministry has already overseen the storage of natural gas and hydrocarbons underground in salt caverns, as well as compressed air for electricity generation in Goderich. This expertise will help guide the development of geologic carbon storage projects in this province.

The Geologic Carbon Storage Act, if passed, would provide the necessary regulatory framework to enable the responsible design, construction, operation and closure of carbon storage facilities. It would also specify the requirements for post-closure management and ensure the long-term safety of these projects. The act would also clarify the ownership of pore space in Ontario and facilitate access to suitable underground formations for carbon storage. This is a critical step in advancing carbon storage technologies and ensuring that Ontario remains a leader in responsible environmental stewardship.

By supporting the Geologic Carbon Storage Act, Ontario will be better positioned to transition to a low-carbon economy. This technology will play a key role in helping industries meet their climate targets while ensuring that essential sectors can continue to operate and grow.

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

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

0950

This new building method is called advanced wood construction. It's a technology that uses engineered wood in place of more carbon-intensive products and factory-based manufacturing methods to prefabricate modular components off-site. These new materials can be used in

larger and taller buildings than those that can be built using conventional wood, including taller multi-family residential and office buildings, as well as institutional, commercial, educational and industrial buildings. And this technology can be used to build infrastructure, including bridges, wind turbines, towers and sound barriers. Imagine applying assembly line efficiency in the construction industry, using prefabricated components and just-in-time delivery.

Advanced wood materials are engineered out of wood fibre, including sawn lumber, wood chips and strands. Two products produced using this method are cross-laminated timber and laminated strand lumber. These materials are precision-machined and assembled in factories to create sustainable and highly efficient building components. Today, 11% of global energy-related carbon emissions come from the building materials used in construction and the way they are used.

Aujourd'hui, 11 % des émissions mondiales de carbone liées à l'énergie s'expliquent par le choix des matériaux de construction et la manière dont ils sont utilisés. Des matériaux à faible teneur en carbone, tels que ceux utilisés dans les techniques avancées de construction en bois, ainsi que de meilleures méthodes de construction pourraient réduire ce pourcentage en Ontario.

Notre gouvernement investit actuellement dans cette nouvelle technologie passionnante afin d'ouvrir un marché entièrement nouveau pour les producteurs de bois. Cette technologie pourrait également permettre d'introduire une innovation majeure dans l'industrie de la construction.

In July, we announced a significant investment of \$3.46 million in Element5, a manufacturer of cross-laminated timber. Element5 holds Forest Stewardship Council certification and uses wood from Ontario forests. The cross-laminated timber it produces is used in advanced wood construction. Element5 is using this new technology in ways expected to transform the building industry—prefabricating buildings inside factories.

Cette méthode permettrait d'accélérer la construction des bâtiments, de diminuer les coûts, de réduire l'empreinte carbone des projets de construction, de produire moins de déchets et d'atténuer les perturbations pour la communauté.

Element5 a élaboré un concept de logement résidentiel multiunités en bois massif. La société a également réalisé plusieurs projets de logements abordables et supervisés. Puisque nous reconnaissons le fort potentiel de cette technologie ainsi que de ses produits durables et de haute qualité, dans notre province richement boisée, au cœur de l'Amérique du Nord, mon ministère considère cette technologie comme l'avenir de l'industrie.

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

Speaker, our government's plans to grow our natural resource sector to support job creators, to create new jobs and to build critical infrastructure is all outlined in this bill.

Pour bâtir des infrastructures essentielles, madame la Présidente, l'Ontario continuera à avoir besoin d'agrégats. C'est pourquoi le ministère modernise également le programme des ressources en agrégats. Les ressources d'agrégats comptent habituellement le sable, le gravier, l'argile, la terre et le substrat rocheux. Ils sont utilisés pour construire des routes, des tunnels de métro, des maisons et d'autres infrastructures.

The aggregates industry is a powerful job creator, supporting more than 26,000 jobs in aggregate-related sectors, and it fuels economic growth with an annual production revenue surpassing \$1.6 billion. We know that Ontario's population is growing at a rapid pace. That's creating new challenges and new opportunities. We need the resources to accommodate that growth. That's why our government has been making significant investments into infrastructure, to position Ontario for the future.

Des projets tels que l'autoroute 413, le contournement de Bradford et le prolongement du métro dans la région du grand Toronto contribueront à relier nos communautés en pleine croissance et à ouvrir la voie à une plus grande prospérité dans toute la province. Lorsque je pense à la quantité de ressources nécessaires pour chacun de ces projets, je suis d'autant plus à même de reconnaître l'importance de notre secteur des agrégats.

Selon les calculs de l'Ontario Stone, Sand and Gravel Association, au cours des 20 dernières années, l'Ontario a consommé 3,4 milliards de tonnes d'agrégats, soit 170 millions de tonnes par an. Un seul kilomètre de ligne de métro nécessite plus de 90 000 tonnes d'agrégats. Ces chiffres peuvent être difficiles à comprendre, mais pour moi, ils montrent à quel point il est important pour l'Ontario d'avoir une industrie des agrégats solide, souple et fiable.

Projects like Highway 413, the Bradford Bypass and subway extensions across the GTA are all going to help connect our growing communities and pave the way for more prosperity across our province. When I think about the amount of resources required for each of these projects, I get an even deeper appreciation for our aggregates sector. Over the past 20 years, Ontario has consumed 3.4-billion tonnes of aggregate, which works out to 170-million tonnes annually, based on the Ontario Stone, Sand and Gravel Association's own calculations. Just a single kilometre of a subway line needs more than 90,000 tonnes of aggregate. Those numbers can be hard to comprehend, but to me, it just shows how important it is for Ontario to have a robust, adaptable and reliable aggregates industry.

Speaker, this is why our government has been working hard to support job growth and economic development in the aggregates sector by cutting red tape, driving reform and modernizing regulations. These measures are important to help us strike a balance between promoting innovation and sustainability while safeguarding environmental protections and minimizing the impact to our communities.

1000

All of this infrastructure—every road, every bridge, every subway line—needs a steady and sustainable supply

of stone, sand and gravel produced right here in Ontario. When our government thinks about the future of Ontario, we see a prosperous province filled with opportunity for our growing population. Our plan to make that vision a reality can't be done alone. That's exactly why we will keep working hand in hand with our aggregates partners to ensure that the industry is well equipped to lay the foundation for a brighter tomorrow.

The government will be consulting on and updating key operational policies for new pit and quarry applications. By clarifying application requirements, the government aims to make the application process more efficient and transparent.

Notre gouvernement appuie le rôle primordial de l'industrie des agrégats dans le développement des collectivités de l'Ontario. Les consultations publiques sur les politiques proposées auront lieu à l'hiver 2025. Le gouvernement est à la fois à l'écoute de la population et des entreprises qui créent les matériaux et les produits essentiels à la construction de l'avenir de notre province.

Tout comme nous le faisons dans notre programme des agrégats en rationalisant le processus de demande et en favorisant des pratiques durables, nous assurons un approvisionnement fiable en matériaux essentiels pour nos projets d'infrastructure.

But this bill is not just about the future of our economy. It's also about the future of our communities. By investing in our natural resources, we are creating jobs, stimulating economic growth and strengthening the social fabric of our province.

In conclusion, this bill is a critical step, a step forward in the journey toward a sustainable and prosperous future, un futur où je pense que je vais voir mon fils avoir du succès dans tout ce que notre province peut ouvrir.

By embracing innovation, investing in our natural resources and working collaboratively with industry, Indigenous communities and all stakeholders, we can build a stronger Ontario.

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

M. Guy Bourgouin: Il y a une petite communauté de mon comté qui a une taille et une population de 600 concitoyens. Très peu de ressources humaines : ils sont cinq employés en plein temps, avec un petit budget. Cependant, le territoire couvre un immense deux cantons, la majorité couverte de forêt. La chance qu'il y ait un feu de forêt est immense dans leur territoire, puis aussi, les régions habitées par la municipalité sont grandes. Mais cela ne leur donne pas autant les moyens—les moyens humains et financiers pour gérer de façon adéquate.

Ma question pour le ministre : comment votre projet-là va adresser ces petites municipalités qui gèrent des grandes régions, des grands territoires? Puis financièrement aussi, sur le côté des ressources humaines, parce qu'ils n'ont pas le moyen de le faire selon ce que vous allez demander. Ma question est : comment allez-vous faire pour aider ces municipalités-là financièrement et aussi avec les ressources humaines?

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: Merci au député de ses questions. La Loi sur la prévention des incendies de

forêt est la loi provinciale principale qui stipule la régulation pour gérer les feux de forêt en Ontario. Aucune modification importante n'a été apportée à cette loi depuis 1999. Nous devons toutefois la mettre à jour pour gérer la menace grandissante des feux de végétation.

C'est pourquoi la Loi sur la gestion des ressources et la sécurité propose de la modifier. Les modifications législatives proposées permettraient de faire ce qui suit : renforcer la responsabilité collective à l'égard de la gestion des feux de végétation—il y a plein d'autres choses—resserrer les règles et les conséquences en cas de non-conformité aux lois sur la gestion de faune et végétation—

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

Mr. Robert Bailey: My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources.

I listened closely to the parliamentary assistant's remarks this morning.

My question is kind of parochial. In one case, it's about the energy-intensive industry in Sarnia-Lambton and, of course, for the province as a whole.

Could you elaborate a little more on this new industry that could be developed and the impact it could have on my community?

Hon. Graydon Smith: Thank you for the question.

In the member's area, and all throughout southwest Ontario, what we see is opportunity—opportunity for Sarnia and other communities to continue to see investment in industries that have supported those communities for generations. And without taking this step, without enabling the Geologic Carbon Storage Act, we're going to lose those opportunities. Businesses are looking actively at where they are going to make investments, not only in Ontario, but I mean globally and in our country. They want to have access to this technology. We have been very clear over the last couple of years, as we've gone through this, that as much as there is a massive environmental benefit to this, there is a massive economic benefit to this as well.

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

M. Guy Bourgoign: Je dois revenir à ma question précédente. J'apprécie que la sous-ministre puis le ministre m'ont répondu, mais ils n'ont pas répondu à la question.

C'est correct de moderniser. Je pense que les municipalités n'ont pas de problème de moderniser. Mais ma question était : qu'est-ce que vous allez faire avec les petites municipalités, même les moyennes aussi, qui n'ont pas le financement mais aussi les ressources humaines pour être capables de répondre aux obligations que le ministère va imposer. Elles sont correctes avec la modernisation, mais elles ont besoin de solutions.

Je veux vous entendre, c'est quoi ce que vous allez faire pour aider ces petites municipalités-là? Je n'ai pas besoin de savoir que ça n'a pas été modernisé—on était dû pour une modernisation. Ça, ce n'est pas le problème. Ils reconnaissent qu'il faut moderniser. On sait que la planète se réchauffe. Mais comment allez-vous aider ces petites municipalités financièrement puis aussi avec les ressources

humaines? C'est ça qui est ma question. C'est ça qu'elles veulent savoir, puisqu'elles veulent être capables de répondre à vos—

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

Hon. Graydon Smith: Thanks to the member for the question.

As the member may know, I was in the municipal sector for a long time, and I certainly appreciate that a number of smaller communities sometimes face unique financial challenges. The point of the updates in this bill is not to create a burden for them. In fact, we've done a lot of consultation in advance of this, and we have the support of not only AMO, but of FONOM and Danny Whalen, their president, and Wendy Landry and NOMA. We want to consult more with municipalities and get the ground rules set for what these plans look like. We know certain communities already have plans; we can grow and use those as a base. And we're definitely going to work with municipalities, not against municipalities, to make sure that they have the safety in their communities, and all throughout the north, that they deserve.

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

Mr. Andrew Dowie: Resiliency is truly an important quality for all communities.

In southwestern Ontario, communities like Wheatley, not too far from my hometown, were rocked by an explosion caused by an abandoned gas well under a building in downtown Wheatley. The province—and the Ministry of Natural Resources, particularly—has made a commitment and is supporting Wheatley and southwestern Ontario by providing financial assistance and making changes to ensure communities are safe and prepared for oil and gas well emergencies.

I saw the government, during the summer, announce a \$7.5-million investment to help communities enhance emergency preparedness, as part of the government's \$23.6-million action plan to tackle the challenges related to legacy oil and gas wells.

I know the ministry also administers the Abandoned Works Program, which provides financial assistance to eligible landowners to support the plugging of oil and gas wells.

What does this bill do to reduce the risk of these particular wells?

Hon. Graydon Smith: Thank you for the question.

I'm glad you highlighted Wheatley—and a shout-out to the great folks of Wheatley, who have been through a lot. Since that tragic day, we have supported them every step of the way. I made a promise to the fire chief, the first time I met him, that when we said that we were going to take lessons learned from that event, it was not a hollow promise.

We have taken action on numerous fronts around abandoned oil and gas wells in southwestern Ontario, not only to plug more wells, but to give municipalities the funding to incent them to have local plans that work for their municipalities.

And through this bill, if passed, we're going to continue that path, to make sure that safety is a priority for not only us but for these communities, and make sure that we can get access to those wells that pose a risk, even if there are unusual circumstances.

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

Ms. Sandy Shaw: The explosion in Wheatley is a hard lesson that we must learn from.

What we know is that the abandoned oil and gas well problem is massive. It's huge. There are estimates that there are still up to 40,000 abandoned oil and gas wells in the province. The government is committing \$23.6 million. I can't imagine that's going to even come close to remediating these wells.

What I also see in this bill—two things: One is that you are starting to address the legacy of an industry that went wrong, and now you're introducing, effectively, a new industry.

Given the lessons from Wheatley, will you be doing extensive safety and public consultations when it comes to this new industry that you're proposing when it comes to carbon capture?

Hon. Graydon Smith: Thank you very much for the question.

As I mentioned earlier, those lessons learned continue to be implemented around oil and gas wells.

When we look to carbon capture, safety, of course, is paramount. We've been clear with industry, we've been clear with municipalities, as we have moved forward with carbon capture very methodically in Ontario through a number of steps, that safety is number one. We are not going to allow a project to go forward if there is a safety concern. We are going to make sure that any of these projects that occur in Ontario respect the fact that Ontarians need to remain safe, while at the same time we're opening up opportunities for environmental benefit and fiscal investment in our communities in Ontario.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

MOUNT PLEASANT GROUP OF CEMETERIES ACT, 2024

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Pursuant to standing order 93(a), I beg to inform the House that the Clerk has received a notice related to Bill Pr55, An Act respecting Mount Pleasant Group of Cemeteries.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Mr. Billy Pang: On November 8, I had the honour of joining a vital community safety meeting hosted by Markham Community Alliance. The meeting gathered community members, government representatives and York Regional Police to address urgent safety concerns, including car thefts, home invasions and robberies.

As a guest speaker, I provided updates on provincial actions to improve public safety and informed attendees about my private member's motion to proclaim November as Community Safety Month in Ontario. This initiative aims to boost public awareness around safety, support effective crime prevention and strengthen community policing across Ontario. Fostering safety through education and collaboration is key to building stronger, safer communities.

Additionally, the Ontario government has committed over \$1 billion to community safety initiatives, which include hiring additional police officers and judges, purchasing new helicopters, reducing court backlogs, combatting auto theft and more to enhance safety across Ontario.

As we all know, community safety isn't just about law enforcement. It's about empowering citizens to be proactive in protecting their homes and neighbourhoods. I thank our many engaged community leaders for partnering with us to make Ontario a better and safer place to live and raise their families.

HEALTH CARE

MPP Wayne Gates: In Niagara and across the province of Ontario, we are facing a severe shortage of family doctors. More than 2.5 million Ontarians do not currently have a family doctor and in less than two years that number will double. Some 40% of the doctors currently practising are considering retirement in the next few years and small, rural and northern communities are suffering terribly.

While we have made progress in Niagara thanks to the hard-working team of recruitment specialists, we know that this crisis has only worsened since the Premier and this government have been in power. They have had more than six years to address this problem and yet things are worse than ever before. This government will have underfunded our hospital system by \$21 billion by 2028. They spent years fighting nurses in court over the unconstitutional law Bill 124 while they spent \$1 billion on private staffing agencies, worsening the staffing crisis in health care. There have been a record number of emergency room and urgent care closures like Fort Erie.

What we need to do is reduce the administrative burden on doctors, increase funding for primary care, allow primary care teams to work together and make it easier for doctors who have trained internationally to practise in our community.

Let me be clear, Ontario deserves better than this government's record of failure on the health care file.

GLENCOE GREENHOUSE FACILITY

Mr. Steve Pinsonneault: I rise today to celebrate a milestone in my riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, the launch of a state-of-the-art, \$75-million plant propagation greenhouse in Glencoe. This cutting-edge facility is set to revolutionize our local agricultural sector by producing

over 100 million plants annually, including vegetables, flowers and herbs.

Beyond its impressive production capacity, this greenhouse is a boost of economic growth and job creation in Lambton–Kent–Middlesex. It has already created employment opportunities, and it is expected to attract future investment in the region. The development of this facility highlights our community's commitment to innovation and sustainability in agriculture. We are not only growing our local economy but contributing to Ontario's leadership in the agri-food sector.

I want to congratulate all those involved in bringing this visionary project to life. Their dedication and hard work have laid the foundation for a more prosperous future in our riding.

MELLANEY DAHL

MPP Jamie West: This Friday, Mell retires. For those of you who aren't from Sudbury, Mell is Q92's Mellaney Dahl. Q92 is Sudbury's first FM rock station and since 1990, they've been moving more rock than Vale.

Mell has been there since the beginning and Sudbury loves listening to Mell. She's quick with a laugh. She's got a caring heart. She's known for her dedication to helping our community. Mell is regularly involved with the chamber of commerce's International Women's Day. She mentors many young female announcers and she's an advocate for various charities—too many to list.

Closest to her heart, however, would be the Sudbury Food Bank. Mell is the president of the food bank and volunteers like Mell help ensure that the Edgar Burton Christmas Food Drive continues to be the largest per capita food drive in Ontario and one of the biggest in Canada. Knowing Mell, she'd ask all of us to celebrate her retirement with donations to the food bank.

1020

Nick Liard and her team at Q92 had this to say about Mell: "Every community would be lucky to have a champion and voice like Mell. She is a bright light for so many people through tough times in their life and a consistently amazing human being. I know she is going to miss all the people that she has connected with in the community, worked with at the radio station and charity work across Greater Sudbury but she deserves this, and her career is a benchmark for those getting into media."

Speaker, after 35 years as a Q92 announcer and content director, Mell will be greatly missed. I believe I speak for all of Sudbury when I say, thank you for everything, Mell. Congratulations. We hope you rock your retirement.

LIFE SCIENCES SECTOR

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Last week, we were at Roche Canada in Mississauga to announce a \$130-million investment with 250 new good-paying jobs. We know that life sciences are an important sector in Ontario, with more than 72,000 people, and we are continuing to see the industry grow.

Just like how Silicon Valley is a large hub for technology in North America, Mississauga is quickly becoming a large hub for pharmaceuticals and life sciences. In our city, we have many of the top industry players—\$2.7 billion of GDP from life sciences in Mississauga alone. Post-secondary institutions like the University of Toronto Mississauga continue to partner with these organizations to build the next generation of life sciences pioneers. UTM recently opened a new science building, allowing even more students to succeed.

By creating more access to biomedical labs, pharmaceutical companies can continue to innovate. For example, HDAX Therapeutics is working with UTM on therapeutic solutions for diseases. I recently attended a celebration where Amgen Biotech Experience and UTM had provided educational experiences to over 8,000 students in Ontario.

The pharmaceutical and life sciences sectors in Mississauga and Ontario continue to thrive. Our government is fostering the conditions for this growth, and we'll continue to get it done.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Chris Glover: There's been a number of coyote attacks on pet dogs in Liberty Village. I spoke last week with some of the residents there.

Bianca was walking her dog when she was chased by a coyote. She picked up her dog and the coyote continued to chase her with the dog in her hands. She thanks the people in Liberty Village who actually came to her rescue and, as a group, was able to scare the coyote away.

Patrick, who is very familiar with hazing, said that he was walking his dog at 7:30 in the morning. A coyote came and started to attack his dog, and he had to fight off that coyote.

Yesterday, there was an attack posted on the Facebook group in Liberty Village.

The question is, why are these attacks becoming so much more common now? The relationship may be that this government destroyed the wildlife habitat on the west island without an environment assessment. They also have exempted the Ontario Line construction from an environmental assessment. Environmental assessments are designed to protect wildlife, they're designed to protect the environment and they're designed to protect people.

So, what we believe is that the dens of these coyotes have been destroyed and now they've been pushed into the city and they're becoming much more desperate and aggressive. That may be leading them to the dogs.

It's not just me saying this. I talked to David Lewis, who does environmental assessments, and he said that a key component of environmental assessments is to assess how much wildlife is there, how much wildlife will be displaced and to make a plan for that. Without this plan, this government's actions destroying the west island at Ontario Place has put residents in Liberty Village at risk.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr. David Smith: I rise today to commend our government for its steadfast commitment to addressing

Ontario's housing crisis. I had the opportunity to participate in the affordable housing and land development bus tour in Scarborough, focusing on transit-oriented development sites within Scarborough Centre. This initiative highlights a powerful approach to integrating affordable housing with accessible transit, helping to create vibrant, connected communities.

Affordable housing is not just about building homes, it's about ensuring these homes are within reach of essential services, jobs and opportunities. TOD sites make this possible by linking housing with accessible transit options, which reduces transportation costs for families, supports sustainable urban growth and enhances quality of life for residents.

Our government has committed over \$1.8 billion to housing-enabling infrastructure, supporting the construction of at least 1.5 million homes by 2031. This bold investment addresses our growing housing needs and fosters sustainable, inclusive communities across Ontario.

I'd like to extend my gratitude to Mark Richardson and his team, the technical lead for our tour, for his insight and dedication in showcasing how these developments are transforming our community for the better.

ADDICTION SERVICES

Mr. Vincent Ke: Last week, the Ontario government introduced the Safer Streets, Stronger Communities Act, 2024. This legislation includes provisions for supervised consumption sites, including five in Toronto.

Speaker, I've heard growing concerns from families and businesses about the unintended consequences of these sites, including safety issues near schools and playgrounds and reports of vandalism, drug use and crime in surrounding areas.

This bill has received overwhelming support from constituents, with many sharing feedback such as, "Applause for Ford for standing strong under pressure and taking real action." Another said, "This is fantastic; it is the decision a rational person would make."

Community leaders agree that prioritizing prevention and rehabilitation over enabling drug use is the true solution to the addiction crisis. Research supports that a balanced approach with investments in prevention, treatment and recovery is more effective and sustainable.

This bill marks a significant step forward in safeguarding public spaces while addressing the complex issues around addiction.

HOLY TRINITY CHURCH

Ms. Laura Smith: Last Saturday, Thornhill kicked off the holiday spirit at the historic Holy Trinity Church with an afternoon of festivities at their Christmas market and lunch. Along with the handmade Christmas decor, delicious butter tarts and the fudge—which, by the way, I bought the last of—this year was particularly special, as I was introduced to the new minister, Rev. Maria Ling. I want to welcome her to her role and thank her for her hospitality, as well as all of the members of the ACW, the

Anglican Church Women. They help with the sale and the preparation of the delicious meals. I had just a great time.

Their festival of Christmas is an annual event that has been serving the Thornhill community for so many years, with the proceeds going to help charities that help women and children, something dear to everyone in this room's heart.

Recognizing that the holidays can also be a really difficult time for some, on the evening of December 6, they actually host a special Advent service for those grieving a loss. It's known as blue Christmas. I think that's really incredible, and I want to thank Nancy Cutler for her dedication in bridging those gaps for the community. Not everyone has a great Christmas experience, but she makes sure that it involves everyone.

I also want to thank sisters Hillary and Miriam for being such compassionate volunteers through their weekly Out of the Cold program.

Holy Trinity Church has such an amazing and a special group of people who truly embody the spirit of the holidays 365 days a year. I want to thank them for their incredible job in the community.

1030

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

MAAVEERAR NAAL

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: November is a deeply emotional month. Intimate partner violence is not just a problem, it is a growing crisis across the province. Women and girls are subject to unimaginable physical, emotional and psychological harm. This vile form of control robs them of their fundamental right to live freely and safely. Our government remains committed to fostering an environment where every woman can live with dignity and safety, free from fear. Ending intimate partner violence is a daunting challenge, but we must confront it with resilience and eradication.

Mr. Speaker, this week is Maaveerar Naal. It holds significance for Tamils around the world and the Tamil community, especially Tamil residents in Markham–Thornhill, as we reflect on the many lives lost during the Sri Lankan Civil War. To mark this, actor Karunaas Sethu travelled from Tamil Nadu, India, to release a film called Salliyargal here in Markham and York region. This film highlights the extraordinary service of medical workers during the final stages of the war.

Salliyargal is more than a film, it is a cultural testament to the resilience, ultimate sacrifices and stories of a generation, ensuring their voices are preserved for the generations of the future. Let us draw strength from these stories as we continue to build a safer, more compassionate world where every human race can live peacefully, without fear and persecution.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Jessica Bell: I'd like to introduce members of the University of Toronto NDP who are here at Queen's Park

today: Kate Martens, Samuel Sarjeant, Mathis Cleuziou, Kabeer Haider, Ash Donachie, Raymond Bhushan, Luca Rampersad, Jake Barton and Anika Dhaliwal. Thank you so much for being here. It's a pleasure working with you.

Mr. Ted Hsu: I would like to welcome a couple of visitors here who are with Good Roads: Cathy Burghardt-Jesson, the mayor of Lucan-Biddulph; and Cheryl Fort, the first vice-president of Good Roads, who is the mayor of Hornepayne. Welcome to your House.

Hon. Mike Harris: We have many paramedic chiefs from across the province who are here today, and I want to give a special shout-out to John Riches, who is the chief of the region of Waterloo paramedics. Thank you very much for being here. I look forward to meeting with everybody later.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: I have two groups I would like to welcome today. From Good Roads, Guy Godmaire, director of Good Roads; Kristin Murray, director; and Rayna Gillis, CFO. We've already met. Welcome to your House. Thank you so much for being here.

I would also like to welcome the—I believe there are as many as 18—members of the association of paramedic chiefs here. In particular, I'd like to welcome Shane Muir, who is the chief of the Superior North EMS; Andrea Joyce, director of paramedic services, Naotkamegwaning EMS; Steve Turner, manager, Lambton county EMS; Melissa Roney, deputy chief, Greater Sudbury. Thank you so much for meeting with me this morning, and welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: As has been mentioned, I would also like to welcome the Ontario Association of Paramedic Chiefs. In particular, I know that President Greg Sage and the paramedic chiefs from across Ontario are having productive meetings. Welcome to the Legislature of Ontario.

I would also like to welcome Life Sciences Ontario to the Legislature. I encourage everyone to take a few minutes to drop in after 5 at the legislative dining room to learn more about how Ontario is on the cutting edge in the life sciences.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: *Remarks in Anishiniimowin.*

Good morning. I would like to introduce Jessie Clelland and Camerra Yuill Robar, who are here with the Medical Laboratory Professionals' Association of Ontario—but also Nancy Liu, the president of the Ontario Association of Pathologists. It was great to meet with them this morning. Meegwetch for the important work that they do.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: It's a pleasure to introduce some guests today. I'd like to welcome Nancy Peckford, Justin Towndale and Andrew Blackburn, from Good Roads.

I'd also like to welcome, from the Eastern Ontario Regional Laboratory Association, Jeffrey Dale and Dana Vajcovec.

Finally, from Life Sciences Ontario, I'd like to welcome Eric Tse, Trisha Hutzul and Alex Muggah.

I look forward to meeting with you all. Welcome to your House.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I want to wish a warm welcome to everyone from the Ontario Association of Paramedic

Chiefs, and particularly, from our neck of the woods down in the deep southwest, Justin Lammers from Essex-Windsor EMS and Jeff Brooks from Chatham-Kent EMS. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'd also like to welcome Chief John Riches, from the Ontario Association of Paramedic Chiefs. I look forward to our meeting.

Also, Life Sciences Ontario's president, Jason Field, and manager of government relations, Charlini Nicholapillai, I look forward to speaking to later on at the reception.

Mr. John Fraser: I'd like to welcome Megan Harrison, who is the mom of page Alina Doja, from Ottawa South, who is the page captain today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Graydon Smith: I want to welcome Jeff McWilliam, who is the chief of the Muskoka Paramedic Services, here with the OAPC today and a fellow Miami Dolphins fan, so a double hello.

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: I am honoured to rise today to introduce Mr. Karunaas Sethu, a former MLA of Tamil Nadu, renowned actor, producer, composer and singer. With his impactful career in both the arts and politics, Karunaas is a true advocate for creativity and advocate for marginalized communities through his films and songs. Please welcome him to the Legislature of Ontario, Canada.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Assuming there are no objections, I'd like to continue with the introduction of visitors.

Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady: I'd like to welcome to the House Clare Loftus, who is with me from the great riding of Haldimand-Norfolk. Clare is currently studying criminology at Laurier university and will move on to law school in England in just a few years. Welcome to the House, Clare.

Hon. Nolan Quinn: I'd like to welcome the mayor of Cornwall, Justin Towndale, who is here for the Good Roads advocacy day.

Mr. Joel Harden: A very special person back home is watching the live feed. I want to shout out my beloved, Clare Roscoe. Happy birthday, honey, and thank you for everything you do for CHEO and you do for our family. We love you.

Ms. Laura Smith: I would very much like to welcome members from my team in my office, Ms. Delia Marquez; Flora Khani, who is with the ministry; OLIP intern Annie Dowd; and, third day on the job, new to politics, new to this room, Ms. Taia Samuel.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Good morning, Speaker, and thank you for allowing me to rise and welcome to our House Joseph Falzata as well as Julie Kwiecinski, from CFIB. Welcome to your House, and thank you for that lovely meeting this morning.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Good morning, everyone. It is my pleasure to welcome clever Craig Meerkamper, who is curious about political life, and so, hopefully, he doesn't get turned off politics today with us.

I'd also like to welcome the good people from Good Roads—my former colleague city councillor passionate Paul Ainslie and awesome Andrew Blackburn—and the

talented Toronto Paramedic Services, all of you who are here and brave Bikram Chawla.

I'll see you later this afternoon. Welcome to your House.

Mr. John Jordan: I want to welcome Mike Nolan, chief, Renfrew county paramedics, founder of the VTAC program.

1040

Ms. Marit Stiles: I'd like to acknowledge here today with us the former MPP for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, Paul Miller. Welcome to the House. It's nice to see you.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I, too, would like to welcome the former member, who served in the 39th, 40th, 41st and 42nd Parliaments. Welcome back, Paul. It's great to see you here.

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: I would like to make an introduction on behalf of my colleague from Brampton East: a page captain from Brampton East, Maadhav Saini, a resident of Brampton East and student from Williams Parkway Senior Public School. Thank you for your hard work and for being passionate about learning more about the Ontario Parliament.

Also, in attendance are Maadhav's father, Gulshan Saini; mother, Bhawana Sharma; and younger brother Paarth Saini. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Joel Harden: I also just want to acknowledge our friends from the Salvation Army who are here in the chamber today. Thank you for all you do to keep people well and safe. I look forward to your reception at noon.

And yes, to the good people at Good Roads: Scott Butler, thank you for all you do. Thomas Barakat and the whole team that is talking about road safety, I look forward to your reception at 5 p.m. Thanks for being here.

Mrs. Daisy Wai: I would like to introduce Nancy Liu, pathologist and president of the Ontario Association of Pathologists; John Tzountzouris, registrar and CEO of the College of Medical Laboratory Technologists of Ontario; and John Soltys, district 5 representative for the Medical Laboratory Professionals' Association of Ontario. I look forward to our meeting this afternoon.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Tourism, Culture and Gaming.

Hon. Michael Parsa: A great guy.

Hon. Stan Cho: Thank you to the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services.

Two introductions this morning: The first is my BFF from Timmins, a friend of the Minister of Mines and I, Councillor Kristin Murray. Welcome to the Legislature.

Second is—well, listen, this guy served some time with me at the Ministry of Finance. You can take the man out of the ministry, but you can't take the ministry out of the man. Kyle Jacobs is here with his parents. Thank you, though, for leaving your younger, more handsome brother here with us at Queen's Park.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I'd like to take this opportunity to introduce and welcome the Medical Laboratory Professionals' Association of Ontario, including their CEO Michelle Hoad, as well as representatives from the College of Medical Laboratory Technologists of Ontario,

the Eastern Ontario Regional Laboratory Association and the Ontario Association of Pathologists. Thank you for your significant contributions and welcome to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): And the very patient Minister of Children, Community and Social Services.

Hon. Michael Parsa: I appreciate it. Thank you very much, Speaker.

I'd like to welcome divisional commander, Lieutenant Colonel Brian Armstrong, and divisional officer personnel secretary, Lieutenant Colonel Lynn Armstrong, from the Salvation Army, who are joined by front-line leaders from across the province. To the entire Salvation Army team who are here at Queen's Park, thank you so much for joining us. Thank you for everything that you do.

Members, please join them in room 228 for their lunch reception right after question period.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It gives me great pleasure to welcome individuals from the Medical Laboratory Professionals' Association of Ontario, Wes Morrison, Catherine Streutker, Jeffrey Fuller; as well as Life Sciences Ontario individuals, RJ Kayser, Russell Williams, Peter Brenders, Mark Smithyes and Michael Di Tomasso; as well as individuals from Good Roads, Chris Traini and Will Wuehr. I look forward to our meetings.

I also want to give a warm welcome to paramedic chief Stephen Turner, who is here in the House today.

Hon. David Piccini: I'd like to just single out two folks from the Medical Laboratory Professionals' Association of Ontario: Natalie Goodman and Dr. Katie O'Reilly, who I see are here today. Welcome to Queen's Park. I'm looking forward to having lunch.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): That concludes our introduction of visitors for this morning.

QUESTION PERIOD

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms. Marit Stiles: Good morning, Speaker. My question is for the Premier. According to the Financial Accountability Officer, housing costs were responsible for 70% of the inflation that Ontarians experienced in just the last quarter—skyrocketing home prices, skyrocketing rent, and there's no relief in sight. Housing starts are actually down 18% so far this year.

So I want to ask, on behalf of young families, on behalf of tenants facing rent hikes and eviction and on behalf of seniors who are considering tents: Has the Premier simply given up the fight on the housing crisis?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To respond, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I'm not sure where the Leader of the Opposition has been, because we have been asked by them and they don't seem to be listening. I agree with her: Housing prices have gone up over the last year. Why? Because interest rates went up faster than at any point in

time in the country's history. It was this Premier who got to the microphone and asked, begged, the Bank of Canada and the federal government to do something about bringing interest rates down. It priced out of the market those who wanted to buy their first home. It priced out of the market those who were building homes. It priced out of the market those who were building purpose-built rentals.

I absolutely agree, and this is why I have asked the Leader of the Opposition to work with her federal counterparts to bring down a federal government that has caused interest rates to increase at the level at which they have, that caused inflation to skyrocket out of control. Now, more than ever, when we are faced with a crisis south of the border that threatens the financial health of the entire country, I beg the Leader of the Opposition: Call the federal government, tell her federal counterparts to hold them accountable so that we can keep things moving properly in the proper direction here in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary question?

Ms. Marit Stiles: The evidence of their failure is very plain to see, because housing starts are collapsing here in Ontario, while they are rising in most other provinces in Canada—interesting.

Ontario ranked eighth in per-capita housing starts last month, behind British Columbia, behind Manitoba, behind Quebec and behind Alberta. Under this government, Ontario is building at less than half the rate necessary to achieve our goal of 1.5 million new homes. So has the Premier given up on this housing goal?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Again, an ironic question coming from the Leader of the Opposition that has voted against every single proposal that we have brought forward to help unlock housing starts in the province of Ontario.

As I've said on a number of occasions, prior to the rapid increase in interest rates, we were building more homes, more starts than at any other time in the history of the province. And that's not just single, detached homes; that's also purpose-built rentals.

We knew, as the Premier highlighted, that when interest rates increased at the speed at which they were going to, we had to put in place other things so that when those interest rates started to come down, we could unlock a persistent housing boom in the province of Ontario. That is why we brought forward over \$3 billion worth of housing-enabling infrastructure that the Minister of Infrastructure has highlighted across the province of Ontario, tying infrastructure to home building. We've also tied that to strong-mayor powers, because we expect our municipal partners to work with us to get shovels in the ground so that we can meet our goal of 1.5 million homes.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The final supplementary?

Ms. Marit Stiles: This Premier ignored the recommendations of their own Housing Affordability Task Force. They refused to legalize fourplexes and they refused to

legalize mid-rises near transit as of right. They cut funding for community housing by 70%. They don't want public investment in new housing, but they don't seem to want private investment either.

Since the legislative session started, the Premier has been obsessed with spas and bike lanes and tunnel fantasies. Is this because he so badly needs to distract people from his total failure on housing?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Members will please take their seats. Order.

I'll remind the members that we refer to each other by our ministerial title or our riding name, as applicable.

Premier.

Hon. Doug Ford: I just want to remind the Leader of the Opposition: We led the charge across the country on removing HST on purpose-built rentals. We introduced over \$3 billion in new funding for municipalities, for funding the housing-enabling infrastructure fund, and the opposition voted against it. We included \$1.2 billion in funding for those who meet or exceed housing targets. The opposition voted against it.

1050

Mr. Speaker, let me quote a friend of mine named Mayor Steven Del Duca: "Frankly, this housing affordability crisis began when I was still sitting at the provincial cabinet table." Mayor Steven Del Duca, January 17, 2024.

So maybe when you were propping up the Liberals, destroying the province, chasing 300,000 jobs out of this province, hiking electricity rates, making sure it wasn't affordable for companies to stay here—maybe we'd have more housing. We led the country in housing until your counterparts decided to keep the federal Liberals—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Premier will take his seat.

I remind the members to make their comments through the Chair, not directly across the floor of the House.

The next question.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms. Marit Stiles: I mean, maybe the Premier should go talk to folks in BC and Manitoba who know how to build housing in the country, you know? They know how to get things done.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Ms. Marit Stiles: They've got bigger shovels than yours, my friend.

Let's talk about why this matters: Last week, I was in Ottawa listening to people who feel like they have been completely left behind by this government.

I met Lynn. She is 64 years old. She's worked her whole life. She was looking forward to retirement. She had a bit of bad luck, and you know what? She lost her home. She ended up homeless. She lived in her car for eight weeks before she could even find a place to sleep in a

shelter. She told me over and over again that she never imagined being homeless.

People are on the brink of losing their homes and this government is doing nothing about it. Why is this Premier leaving people like Lynn behind?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Members will take their seats.

For the second time today, I'm going to remind the members to make their comments through the Chair.

The Premier can reply.

Hon. Doug Ford: Again, let's just go back a little bit here—we set records: More housing built, more rentals, more than any time over the last 30 years. In 2021, there were 99,566 homes; in 2022, 96,000 homes; in 2023, 89,000 homes.

All we're asking is when we put these motions together to make sure we support the municipalities that you support us. Unlike the Liberals, that ended up electing as a leader the most NIMBY mayor that we've ever seen in Ontario that built nothing—actually, Mississauga shrunk under her leadership; sky-high taxes; DCs that we've never seen before.

We're doing everything we can to work with the 444 municipalities to make sure they get rid of the fees—the 38% fees before you even get a shovel in the ground. You're paying \$150,000 before you even get a shovel in the ground to build the condos, to build—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Ottawa Centre will come to order. The member for Sudbury will come to order. The member for Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas will come to order. The member for Hamilton Mountain will come to order. Over here, the government House leader will come to order. And who else was it?

Interjection: Pick one. Pick one.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Red Tape Reduction will come to order.

The supplementary question?

Ms. Marit Stiles: Cars are not homes. Tents are not homes, right? Most other provinces are building more homes faster than here in the province of Ontario under this Premier's watch. Housing starts haven't been seen this low since the 1950s, Speaker.

When I speak to industry, let me tell you that a few years back, they were trying to find workers; today, they're laying people off because Ontario's residential construction sector is shrinking. Homes are not being built. Jobs are disappearing from the province. So I want to know if this Premier is okay with young, skilled workers moving out of this province to build homes that are simply not being built here in Ontario.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Eglinton–Lawrence will come to order.

The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Speaker, let's unpack what she said there. Housing starts are at their lowest in many

decades, and I'll agree with her: Single, detached housing starts are at their lowest that we've seen in a long time, primarily because of the interest rate increases. But that's single, detached homes.

So I ask the Leader of the Opposition: If I bring forward proposals that will unlock single, detached housing construction across the province of Ontario to get it to the highest levels in the history of the province, will the member opposite support that? I'm willing to guess that she won't. It's a convenient thing that she's left out, that although single, detached are at their lowest level—and that's an absolute fact—purpose-built rentals are remaining at some of their highest levels ever.

Do you know why that is? I'll tell you why that is: because this Premier and this Minister of Finance worked to eliminate the HST on the construction of those projects. When I was in Ottawa last week, they said the only reason they're getting purpose-built rentals in the ground and affordable housing in the ground is because we removed DCs on that. When you lower—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Waterloo will come to order.

The final supplementary?

Ms. Marit Stiles: Housing is not being built here in the province of Ontario the way it is being built in BC, in Manitoba, in Alberta and most of the rest of this country. You cannot blame the interest rates for your constant failures. We've proposed Homes Ontario, but the Premier opposes public sector solutions. The NDP proposed making it easier to build housing of all kinds, as recommended by their own task force, but the Premier opposes private sector solutions too. It seems like donating to cabinet ministers is the only way to get anything done with this government.

My question is, what's the going rate to get you back to building in the province of Ontario?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Members will take their seats.

I think, for the third time today. I will remind the members to make their comments through the Chair.

The Premier.

Hon. Doug Ford: Mr. Speaker, I don't even know where to begin here. We're against the private sector to build homes, that she shouts and screams non-stop if we do anything to support the private sector. She's against public housing, because she's against building anything, and she's against building infrastructure that helps homes get built. She's against the 413, the Bradford Bypass—you're against building \$50 billion in new hospitals. She's against putting money back into people's pockets, because the NDP and Liberals believe it's their money. It's not the taxpayers' money, it's their money.

We've never ever seen an influx of employment that we've seen here in Ontario. Over 850,000 people are working today that weren't working six and a half years ago. We've seen \$70 billion of investment in our province,

no matter if it's \$45 billion in EV that they voted against or life sciences—\$5 billion that they voted—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas will come to order. The member for Hamilton Mountain will come to order. The Leader of the Opposition will come to order.

The next question.

CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

MPP Jamie West: My question is for the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services. Suzanne's eight-year-old child has been on the autism wait-list and her family is in crisis. Suzanne has been trying to provide 24/7 care for her daughter. She had to quit her job. She's facing bankruptcy and she's completely burnt out. After exhausting every possible avenue, Suzanne made the heartbreaking decision to give guardianship of her daughter to children's aid so she can get the care she needs. Today, Suzanne's eight-year-old daughter lives five hours away from Sudbury in a foster facility in Mississauga.

Question: How has the Conservative government allowed such a heartbreaking failure to happen to this family?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Members will please take their seats.

The Minister of Children, Community and Social Services.

Hon. Michael Parsa: I thank my honourable colleague for the question. I just want to share some facts with my colleagues in this House today. Six years ago, the program wasn't up to the realities of then, let alone the realities of today. When we formed government, 8,500 families had access to one stream of support under the previous government, which the NDP supported. Fast-forward to today and the member is talking about the number of families that are enrolled in the program. I will tell you why: It's because we increased the funding to \$600 million. Then we increased the funding by \$120 million again to more than \$720 million.

The previous government—8,500 families in total had access to one stream of service. Today, tens of thousands of families are accessing all kinds of supports thanks to this Premier, thanks to—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): If you repeatedly ignore the Speaker's request to call you to order, you'll be warned.

1100

Supplementary question?

MPP Jamie West: Back to the minister: There is some hope, Speaker. Children's aid told Suzanne that Imagine Therapeutic Services has a place for Suzanne's daughter in Sudbury, but they need the minister to sign some paperwork. I asked Suzanne if she wanted to say anything to the minister. She said, "We really want her home for

Christmas. I'm not sure if I can afford to visit her, and that would break my heart again."

Speaker, there has been an application on the minister's desk for over a year. My question, Minister, is: Will you sign this paperwork?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): For the fourth time, I would ask the members to make their comments through the Chair.

The response?

Hon. Michael Parsa: The honourable member will know that the government doesn't actually direct our providers when it comes to placements, but what I can tell you is what our government is doing to support families across the province.

We know that some children and youth require more specialized supports—those with complex special needs. That's why we increased the complex special needs funding to \$105 million, the highest in the province. We went a step above that. We introduced the integrated pathways to make sure that more than 11,000 families with children and youth with complex needs have access to specialized supports, those wraparound supports through multi-disciplinary teams across the province.

On this side of the House, we will not give up on any family. We'll continue to make the investments to make sure every family, every child, every youth in this entire province has the supports they need, when they need it.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Hamilton Mountain is warned.

The next question.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Andrew Dowie: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade. Under the previous Liberal government, Ontario was openly seen as a high-tax, anti-business jurisdiction. The former CEO of Fiat Chrysler mentioned to Premier Wynne at the time, "I think you need to create the conditions to be competitive." Businesses fled the province, taking tens of thousands of jobs with them, and under their watch, companies rarely considered Ontario as a place to expand and grow their operations.

Our government has changed that. We've restored Ontario's global reputation and promoted our province as the best place to do business. As a result, global companies are investing and expanding in Ontario at record levels. One example is NextStar's \$5-billion EV battery plant in my riding of Windsor—Tecumseh, creating 2,500 good-paying jobs.

Speaker, can the minister please highlight how our government ensures Ontario remains a top destination for businesses to invest and to grow?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: We just returned from Singapore, where Ontario opened our very first trade and investment office in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. Singapore is one of the world's strongest and most diversified economies, making it the perfect location for

Ontario's new office. With our new ASEAN office, Ontario will have a gateway to a union of 10 states in southeast Asia with a combined population of 600 million people. This will allow our province to forge new partnerships, bolster trade opportunities and land even more job-creating investments right here in Ontario.

We now have a total of 14 offices worldwide that have attracted \$9.5 billion in new investment and facilitated market access for 1,500 Ontario companies. Ontario is open for business.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary question?

Mr. Andrew Dowie: By promoting Ontario on the world stage, we're ensuring that the province can land more job-creating investments. In my riding, I mentioned NextStar's historic \$5-billion investment, which is creating 2,500 jobs directly and thousands more indirectly. Recently, NextStar hit a pivotal landmark as they began the production of battery modules. This investment is truly a game-changer for the hard-working families of my riding and the entire surrounding region. They could have set up shop anywhere, but they chose Ontario. Right across the province, in my colleagues' ridings and ridings across the province, including members opposite, we are seeing companies invest in Ontario and create good-paying jobs.

Can the minister highlight how, by letting the world know Ontario is open for business, we're seeing job-creating investments land in our province?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: As a result of our extensive travels last year, 137 companies from around the world landed in Ontario, invested \$11 billion and created 12,200 new jobs right here in Ontario. Companies from around the world look at Ontario, and they see a beacon of hope that is amidst this global turmoil that's going on. They look at Ontario and they know we're reliable, we're credible, we're safe. They continue to choose Ontario because we have everything here that they need to succeed.

We've lowered the cost of doing business by \$8 billion since we were elected, and that has resulted in, as the Premier said earlier today, 850,000 new jobs created in the province of Ontario. Companies from all around the world know that Ontario is open for business.

PARAMEDIC SERVICES

MPP Lise Vaugeois: To the Premier: Ontario loses 400 to 500 paramedics each year because the pay does not match the responsibilities or scope of practice of these health professionals. Graduates of a three-year nursing degree earn \$64 an hour, while graduates of a three-year paramedics degree only earn \$44 an hour. Paramedics used to carry six medications; now they are responsible for over 22 and will soon be carrying four restricted narcotics.

The demanding work schedule, exposure to trauma and low pay are the reasons paramedics leave the profession. What is the Ministry of Health doing to correct the pay gap for these health care professionals so that we can retain paramedics in Ontario?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To reply, the Deputy Premier and Minister of Health.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Of course, I am thrilled to have the paramedic chiefs here today.

I think back to all of the work that paramedics have been doing for so many years in our communities, whether it is expansions of community paramedic services; whether it is 911 models of care—that, actually, the paramedic chiefs and the paramedics themselves brought forward and we adopted to ensure that we could deal with decreasing the emergency ED wait times. It is this incredible work that just speaks to the professionalism and the innovative, creative, outside-the-box thinking that our chiefs and our paramedics across Ontario do.

I also think of the investments that we're making to ensure that we have sufficient paramedics being trained in the province of Ontario—a Learn and Stay program that actually increases the access to paramedics, particularly in northern Ontario, where we have seen a bigger need.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary question?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Northern Ontario has a critical shortage of paramedics. In the district of Thunder Bay, we are currently short 21 paramedics—

Hon. Sylvia Jones: You don't listen. You've got to listen to the answers.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Thank you, I'll sit down. Go ahead.

The reality is, perhaps the minister should—through you, Speaker, the minister needs to listen to reality. In the district of Thunder Bay alone, we are currently short 21 paramedics. Whatever they're doing is not working.

The northern Ontario municipal association recommends that the province introduce targeted funding for rural, remote and northern paramedic services so that regions can offer competitive salaries and benefits, and upgrade equipment and bases in order to attract and retain paramedics. Will the government be accepting the recommendation of the northern Ontario municipal association to fully fund regional paramedic services?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Members will take their seats.

Before I call upon the minister to answer, I'll ask her to come to order and then answer the question.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: I'll do my best.

What we have is we have 300 new paramedic seats available in the province of Ontario. Those are paramedic expansions that, under Premier Ford, we have been able to do since 2018.

In Thunder Bay—because I think, I hope you would be interested in what's happening in your own community—98% of those seats are filled in the city of Thunder Bay.

1110

I do not understand why the member is not celebrating all of the excellent work that the paramedics and the chiefs and the leadership have been doing since 2018. They bring forward suggestions, ideas, proposals; we act on those,

whether it is community paramedicine, whether it is 911 models of care. Those innovations are making a difference in each and every one of our communities, and the member opposite should be celebrating that.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock for one second. I think that's the fourth or fifth time that I'm going to remind the members to make their comments through the Chair. If members continue to do that, I'm going to interrupt you in the middle of your question or the middle of your response and remind you in the middle of your question or response.

Start the clock. Next question.

TAXATION

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: My question is for the Minister of Energy and Electrification. Families across Ontario are feeling the financial pressure from inflation; the costs of living keep going up; groceries, gas and home heating are all more expensive; and now the Trudeau-Crombie carbon tax is making things even worse.

Every day, Ontarians are struggling to get by, yet the federal government keeps adding costs. The Trudeau-Crombie carbon tax is driving up the price of everything, including electricity. It's unfair for hard-working families and it hurts our economy. Ontario has been a leader in clean energy, we've already done the heavy lifting; our nuclear power and clean technology are proof that we don't need this harmful tax.

Speaker, can the minister please explain how our government opposes this regressive tax?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The parliamentary assistant and member for Mississauga–Lakeshore.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I want to thank the member from Newmarket–Aurora for that question. She's right: Ontario doesn't need a Trudeau-Crombie carbon tax. It's regressive and counterproductive in the fight against climate change. Our government will always choose technology over taxation to reduce emissions and provide affordable, reliable and clean energy.

We're already a leader in clean energy. Almost 90% of our energy is emissions-free. We're already on track to hit our Paris accord targets. Ontario is responsible for 86% of Canada's emission reduction. From our trade mission to Europe, to Boston last week, everywhere I go, I hear our energy is top of mind and is reliable.

The federal government needs to scrap this tax and support the work that our Premier and our minister is doing for affordable energy in this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary question?

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: The cost of living for families is soaring, and they are feeling the financial strain. Because of the Trudeau-Crombie carbon tax, life is now harder and more expensive. It drives up the cost of groceries, gas and goods, but it doesn't stop there—oh, no. It's also putting pressure on Ontarians' electricity system.

Thanks to our government's investments, Ontario is already a leader in clean energy, driven by our support for

nuclear power and innovative technologies. Ontario has shown the world that we do not need punishing taxes to cut emissions. Instead, we're helping our global partners adopt clean solutions while keeping energy affordable at home.

Speaker, can the minister please tell us how Ontario is sharing its clean energy expertise while protecting families from this harmful tax?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Ottawa South will come to order.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I want to thank the member again for that question, and she's right: Ontario is leading in clean energy, not just in Canada, but around the world. Former Progressive Conservative minister Elizabeth Witmer's plan 21 years ago to phase out our coal in Ontario achieved the single-largest emissions reduction in North America.

In our trade mission to Europe, we signed an agreement to help develop small modular reactors in Poland so they can phase out their 60 coal plants. Ontario's families will benefit from the investments and the jobs we create. We also shared that Ontario will donate almost \$5 million in energy infrastructure to Ukraine.

Speaker, we now have the expertise and the Canadian-made technology to reduce emissions at home, while also helping our allies to decouple from Russian oil. Together, we'll make Ontario a global energy superpower.

UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE FUNDING

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is for the Premier. Post-secondary institutions across the province have been chronically underfunded for years. With skyrocketing deficits, thousands of layoffs are imminent, and the impact to our education and social service workforces is unimaginable. Programs are being cancelled at alarming rates, and schools are left in a tailspin to react. We are already short educational assistants. We are already short developmental service workers.

Premier, our systems are in crisis. Will you provide the necessary funding today?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I remind the members to make their comments through the Chair.

The Minister of Colleges and Universities will respond.

Hon. Nolan Quinn: Funding for the sector is the highest it has ever been. Earlier this year, we invested an extra \$1.3 billion, which is the highest amount in almost 15 years. That's on top of the more than \$5 billion we give annually to the sector.

We're currently actively collaborating with our post-secondary partners, and we've had a number of them working with us. Since the unilateral decision by the federal government to reduce the amount of international students, we've been squarely focused on ensuring we have programs that get students into rewarding careers that address our labour market needs right across the province.

Speaker, staffing decisions and human resource decisions lie solely with the institutions.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary question?

Miss Monique Taylor: Back to the Premier: Families who have been desperately stuck and languishing on wait-lists are now left to find therapists or supports in their child's school or in the community that do not exist. Supports are not being replenished because of this Premier's poor decisions. Educational assistants and developmental service workers are in high demand. And yet, these programs have been cut on so many campuses.

When will the Premier get back to basics and ensure we have a post-secondary system that supports the needs of our communities?

Hon. Nolan Quinn: Again, since the federal government's unilateral decisions without any stakeholder engagement or consultation, including all of the institutions—you mentioned early childhood education. That was actually missing from the list that is approved—through our international students. So they are making the situation even more challenging for all of Canada.

Speaker, we'll continue to work with our institutions to ensure that we have a world-class education system, which we have had for decades and we will continue to have for decades. We will continue with our \$5-billion annual investment into the post-secondary education sector, on top of the \$1.3 billion we invested earlier this year—the largest in 15 years.

We will continue to collaborate with all of our institutions and our stakeholders to make sure that we are squarely focused on labour market needs.

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Families across Ontario are struggling to make ends meet. Their children are in overcrowded classrooms. They cannot find an affordable place to live. And they can't find the primary care they need.

What is the provincial government doing to help them? Ripping out bike lanes in downtown Toronto. Talk about skewed priorities. Enough of the municipal meddling.

News flash to the member from Etobicoke North: You are not the mayor. You are the Premier, so start acting like one.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'll remind the member to make her comments through the Chair.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: The government has failed to address the health care crisis in Ontario, and I see the effects in my community. Speaker, 23,000 people in beautiful Beaches–East York are living without a family doctor.

My question to the Premier is, when will the one in four people in Ontario without a family doctor finally get access to one?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. Government House leader, come to order.

The Minister of Health.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Where to begin, Speaker? Okay, let's start at the beginning.

The beginning was, in 2015, the Liberal Party chose to cut 50 medical seats across Ontario. What does that equate to? That equates to 450 young people who either had to leave Ontario or choose a different profession because the Liberals of the day decided that they could get away with cutting 50 medical seats.

1120

Now, fast-forward to what we have done. Every single medical school in the province of Ontario has expanded the number of medical seats available to young people to train and practise in the province of Ontario. In fact, in Scarborough, in York region and, of course, in Brampton, we are opening new medical schools in the province of Ontario.

We are making investments as a government, that, for decades to come, are going to make an impact in every single community, and we will continue to make those investments regardless of what the Liberals did previously.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: I've had countless constituents reach out to me in search of a family doctor, frantic because their current family doctor is retiring. This government's own figures suggest that three million Ontarians are at risk of losing their family doctor in the next five years due to retirement. That's over 2,300 doctors in Ontario who are 60 years of age or older—2,300.

What is this government doing about it? Where are the logical, preventative measures to help the people of Ontario because, news flash, we are not on track to replace them, thanks to this government's lack of focus and complete lack of foresight, like wasting 48 million taxpayer dollars smashing up Toronto bike lanes.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Government side, come to order.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Speaker, to the Premier: What are you doing to fill the gap of family doctors set to retire in Ontario, and when will you retire as Premier?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of Long-Term Care, come to order. The government House leader is warned.

The Minister of Health can reply.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Far be it from me to give advice, but I think you'd better stick to bike lanes.

When I was appointed Minister of Health, one of the first things we did was to direct the College of Physicians and Surgeons in the province of Ontario to quickly assess, review and, ultimately, license internationally educated and trained physicians. What has that equated to? It means that over 60% of our new licensed physicians in the province of Ontario are actually internationally trained. We are repatriating. We are welcoming people to the province of Ontario. If you want to live, work and practise

in the province of Ontario, we have your back. We will continue to make these investments.

And, Speaker, I want to remind the member opposite that, actually, according to true data, CIHI, the Canadian Institute for Health Information—something that everyone can actually look up—Ontario leads Canada in the number of physicians attached to patients.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: My question to the Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development. Life is more expensive for everyone. Workers are trying to get by. Businesses are doing their best to keep their doors open. In Ontario, we need to make sure people can keep more of their hard-earned money. Speaker, at the same time, we need to help businesses grow, compete and create jobs. The old approach of raising taxes and fees only makes things harder for everyone. That's what the Liberals and NDP did when they were in power.

Our government promised to take a different path. Please, can the minister tell us what we are doing to lower costs for workers and employers in Ontario?

Hon. David Piccini: Thanks to the excellent member for that question. I know he's been such a strong advocate for young people in his community, getting them into rewarding careers in the trades.

Speaker, it's exciting times. We've got the Ontario Line. We've got Highway 413 and the Bradford Bypass, the largest investment in public transit in Ontario's history and the largest infrastructure spend. Homes, hospitals, schools—you name it. But we often don't talk about the people who are going to build these buildings, and that's young men and women in the trades.

Unfortunately, previous governments taxed the trades to death while, under the leadership of this Premier, we've waived the exam fee—\$150 back in their pockets. Through other fee removals, we saved over \$330 annually. That's \$3.6 million for over 11,000 tradespeople every year back in their pockets so we can build a stronger Ontario together.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary question?

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: Thank you to the minister for that answer and for his strong leadership. Every worker should feel safe at work. No one should worry about getting hurt on the job.

Workplace injuries can change a life forever. They can also impact and hurt the workers' families. Mental health is just as important as physical health.

For years, the previous Liberal government did nothing to help. They put more taxes on workers, making it harder for employers to focus on their safety. Our government knows this was wrong. That's why our government needs to keep taking action to support workers and their businesses.

Can the minister please explain how we are helping workers to stay safe and businesses to stay strong in Ontario?

Hon. David Piccini: Thanks to the member for that question. In my first answer, I talked about all of the savings we're passing on to young men and women entering a rewarding career in the trades, but you also have to create a competitive business climate. That's what this Premier has done through lowering taxes for small businesses.

I'm visiting businesses in my riding like Jebco. Thanks to lowering the class A industrial electricity rate, thanks to lowering the payroll tax, the plant manager there told me they're hiring. That means more rewarding careers in the trades.

We're also supporting workers in staying safe. I announced over \$400 million, unlocking those funds through the WSIB to support smaller employers, especially keeping workers safe on the job site. We're lowering the payroll tax. We're unlocking funds to keep workers safe. We're creating the climate for a better workplace environment for Ontario not just today but for years to come as we build a stronger Ontario.

TENANT PROTECTION

Ms. Jessica Bell: My question is to the Premier. There are over 53,000 people waiting for a hearing at the Landlord and Tenant Board. Tenants and landlords are waiting months, sometimes years, for their issues to be resolved. The LTB is a broken and dysfunctional tribunal that has been fundamentally failing to deliver on its mandate for years.

My question is to the Premier. You've had six years to fix the LTB. Why is it still broken?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I remind the members to make their comments through the Chair.

The Attorney General.

Hon. Doug Downey: I appreciate the opportunity to update the member opposite on actual numbers and actual facts, but let's start with the fact that we have invested a total of 53 million additional dollars across the system. We have doubled the number of adjudicators. We have taken hearings from eight to 10 months to three months and dropping for nonpayment of rent. We are getting the job done. We have no backlog in 11 of our 13 tribunals, and that is proof positive that we are on the job, and we are getting the job done.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary question?

Ms. Jessica Bell: I hope that 53,000 people who are waiting for a hearing at the LTB are listening very carefully to that answer because they have a different understanding of how the LTB is operating.

The government is proposing changes to the LTB that will discriminate against renters and make the LTB more dysfunctional, not less.

Organizations from the Toronto real estate board to Tribunal Watch have been calling for practical solutions to resolve the backlog at the LTB. Those recommendations include returning to in-person hearings when re-

quested; reopening in-person regional centres; and selecting and training adjudicators that are impartial and fair.

My question is to the Premier. Can this government bring in these recommendations so that everyone, tenants and landlords alike, can have access to justice?

Hon. Doug Downey: On behalf of the 80 full-time adjudicators—we doubled it from 40 to 80—I take offence to the categorization that they are anything but fair and impartial. It is an independent tribunal, and it operates that way.

That \$53 million that we've invested in the last three years has been voted against by that party at every single turn. We have reduced the backlog in the Landlord and Tenant Board by over 30% since January. We are on the job. We are getting the job done and we will continue to do it with whatever misinformation they continue to throw out—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member will withdraw the unparliamentary comment.

1130

Hon. Doug Downey: Withdraw.

Mr. Speaker, we will continue to operate on the facts of the situation and not the innuendo that we're hearing from others.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Waterloo will come to order, and I'll remind the Attorney General to be careful with his choice of words.

The next question.

SCHOOL TRUSTEES

Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady: My question is for the Premier. Last month a story unfolded about four trustees with the Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board who travelled to Italy in July to purchase \$100,000 in artwork. The majority of the artwork was purchased for a new flagship school under construction on Powerline Road in Brantford. I am certain a number of local artists would have been thrilled to provide artwork for St. Padre Pio. These four also spent \$50,000 in travel and hotels, and enjoyed a \$1,600 dinner at a gourmet hotel and spa according to an FOI request.

The Minister of Education announced in October that ministry officials had been asked to conduct a governance review of the trip. Could the Premier please detail what that governance review process looks like, how it's unfolding and when taxpayers may be able to find out the findings of the review?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The parliamentary assistant and the member for Markham–Unionville.

Mr. Billy Pang: Thank you for the question. Transparency is very important to our school boards, and they need to be responsible and accountable for how they spend money. That's why we started the investigation, understanding and looking into these types of expenses. School board trustees are responsible for these types of expenses.

Thank you again for the question.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary question?

Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady: Thank you to the member opposite. But taxpayers deserve a review that is far more than a toothless tiger. It's unacceptable and it's unconscionable that while parents are donating school supplies to their kids' schools, four trustees are running around Italy spending money like drunken sailors.

Rick Petrella, chair of the board, said the trip was an error in judgment. That might be believable had the trip not come a month after the school board approved changes to its trustee expense policy: changes like a bump from economy class to business class for travel outside North America, allowance of charges above the standard hotel room rate and the elimination of maximum rates for meals.

A petition has been launched calling for the immediate resignation of Petrella, Dan Dignard, Bill Chopp and Mark Watson. My office has been inundated with calls asking why these four trustees continue to sit around the board table and make decisions with taxpayer dollars.

Speaker, through you to the Premier: Will this government pick up the phone, call the school board and tell these four trustees their service is no longer needed?

Mr. Billy Pang: Thank you again for the question. This year, we are continuing to increase our investment in education with a total budget of \$39.3 billion, an increased investment of almost \$2 billion compared to last year. That includes a \$28.6-billion investment in core education funding that is ensuring we continue to have a successful school year.

While we will continue to invest in support for students, we need to understand that school boards have their own responsibility and accountability to look into how their trustees are spending, and this one is under continued investigation. We will keep you updated for the results of the investigation.

TAXATION

Mr. Stéphane Sarrazin: My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness. The carbon tax raises home heating costs, it makes commutes more expensive and it's a drag on the nation's wealth and competitiveness. But it's also making it harder for working families to put food on their tables. What's worse is that the two carbon tax coalitions in Ottawa and across the aisle here both don't care. They're radicals committed to this tax. They're not listening and they're not budging.

This is incredibly sad as we approach a holiday season that should be a time for plenty. Many working families will not be able to afford a quality Christmas meal. Will the minister please outline the impacts of the carbon tax on food and grocery costs?

Hon. Rob Flack: Thank you to the member for Glen-garry–Prescott–Russell and a great MPP indeed.

Food prices rose over 10% in 2022, 6% last year, and are projected to rise 4.5% this year. A 2018 study by McGill researchers confirmed that the carbon tax raised

food prices and lowered food consumption. That was before six compounding rounds of carbon tax increases.

Dalhousie University estimates that the average family of four are now spending over \$16,000 a year on food, up \$700 from last year. The food price reports consistently cite higher input costs and higher federal inflation as contributing factors. All of these rising costs and inflation are fuelled by the weight of a compounding carbon tax.

Let's give families a break this Christmas. Let's get rid of this punitive carbon tax.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The supplementary question?

Mr. Stéphane Sarrazin: Thank you, Minister.

The impact of the carbon tax on food prices must be highlighted and focused on. You cannot have a tax that raises input costs, energy costs, transportation costs and production costs without impacting the price of food on shelves.

Since 2019, this tax has taken \$32 billion out of the pockets of working families nationwide, and we can't forget that the tax will continue to compound. It will increase from \$80 a tonne this year to \$170 a tonne by 2030. The impact on food prices will only continue to grow.

Speaker, can the minister share what stakeholders are saying on the impact of the carbon tax on food prices?

Hon. Rob Flack: I want to thank the member as well for his great advocacy for farm families in his riding.

Speaker, I want to share a quote from the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association: "The carbon tax increases the cost of transporting inputs like seed and fertilizer, and transporting vegetables to market ... These costs ultimately increase the cost of food."

Here, Stephen Heckbert, executive director of the Canadian Pork Council: "Adding a carbon tax onto farm inputs means that the price of food goes up."

We have been rightly fighting this disastrous compounding carbon tax from day one. It's punitive. It's unfair to farm families. I ask everyone to join together to ask the end, the scrapping, of this punitive carbon tax.

COST OF LIVING

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: My question is to the Premier. Ontario marked a shameful new record: 3.5 million people relied on a food bank in the past year. Hard-working people with full-time jobs are lining up at food banks. This government is failing to deliver the basics.

Premier, you say you will always listen. Food banks are telling you that the—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'll remind members to make their comments through the Chair.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: Thank you.

Food banks are saying that the main reason so many are relying on them is because nearly all of people's paycheques go toward housing costs. It goes toward paying the rent.

Premier, will you pass the NDP's Rent Stabilization Act so people have money to feed themselves?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Once again, I'll remind the members to make their comments through the Chair.

To reply for the government, the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Thank you to the member. Thank you for that important question.

Mr. Speaker, there is no question that many people are struggling in Ontario, across the country and in many parts of the world. That's why we acted early to help people out, that we help them with their day-to-day costs, and not the least of which is through providing supports like the gas tax cut. For many people who have to drive to take their kids to school or to get to a job, we cut the gas tax. Contrast that to the federal NDP and Liberal Party that support a carbon tax which takes money out of people's pockets.

But we didn't stop there. For those who take transit, particularly here in the GTA, we moved to one integrated fare, saving \$1,600 for the daily commuter. That's real money in their pockets. We'll continue to support the hard-working people right across this province.

1140

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The supplementary question? The member for Ottawa West—Nepean.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: This government has been in power for six years, and things have only gotten worse. Food banks in Ottawa have seen an increase of 90% since 2019. That has been entirely on this government's watch.

This year, the Ottawa Food Bank served 2.4 million meals, a 43% increase compared to last year. Every month, the food bank is setting new records.

How many people in Ottawa need to be using a food bank before the Premier will finally take serious, concrete action to help people pay for housing and buy food?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Members will please take their seats.

The Minister of Children, Community and Social Services.

Hon. Michael Parsa: Thanks to my colleague for the question. In fact, it's only this party and this government that's fighting for Ontarians to lower the cost of living and make life more affordable since we formed government.

The Minister of Finance alluded to some of the measures that we've put in place to make sure life becomes more affordable for Ontarians. I could talk about the LIFT tax credit that reduces or removes 1.7 million low-income earners from the Ontario income tax portion of the province; or One Fare that the Minister of Finance alluded to: a \$1,600 reduction for individuals who take public transit in our province.

We can talk about the Student Nutrition Program that our government supported, increased the funding by \$6.15 million last year and partnered with other partners within the Student Nutrition Program to increase that, and through the Healthy Students Brighter Ontario campaign, increased that support by an additional \$5 million.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to making life more affordable for Ontarians, we'll continue fighting for them.

I just wish that the NDP and Liberals would start supporting us—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you.

The next question.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mrs. Daisy Wai: My question is for the Minister of Long-Term Care. Every Ontarian deserves to age with dignity and comfort, but many in our diverse communities are asking that our long-term-care homes better reflect their needs.

We've heard stories about seniors struggling because their care doesn't match their cultural, religious and language preferences. Imagine being in your final years, unable to eat familiar food, speak your own language or practise your faith.

Ontario's diversity is our strength, and it should be reflected in our long-term-care homes. Families worry their loved ones won't receive culturally appropriate care, leaving our seniors feeling isolated. Building more homes is important, but those homes must meet cultural needs too.

Can the minister please tell us how our government is addressing this issue in long-term care?

Hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: I thank the member for her important question. Cultural homes are the crown jewel in our long-term-care crown. We in Ontario are so fortunate and so uniquely positioned to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate care.

Since I became the Minister of Long-Term Care, I had the privilege to visit many cultural homes, including Polish, Ukrainian, Jewish, Mennonite, Italian and francophone, of course. As a result of my visits and following extensive conversations with the sector, we proposed a cultural care home pilot to study changes to Ontario's long-term-care admissions. This pilot gives greater flexibility to care coordinators to better match new residents with their diverse cultural, religious and linguistic needs.

Ontario's diversity is our greatest strength. As an immigrant myself, I know the importance of culturally and linguistically appropriate care. When I visit residents and I can speak to them in Polish or in French, for example, I see the light in their eyes. So we will do everything it takes so that we can cater to all the needs of our residents, including their cultural and linguistic needs.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Thank you very much, Minister.

Speaker, we know that Ontario's population is diverse, and every resident in long-term care deserves to feel at home. For many seniors, this means living in a home that reflects their language, traditions and culture.

Under the previous Liberal government, Ontario's long-term-care system lacked culturally specific care options. This left our seniors feeling isolated and disconnected from the world that they have known all their lives. It also impacts the families who want their loved ones to be cared for in an environment that respects their values and their beliefs. I've heard from many families in

my community in Richmond Hill who are asking for cultural care homes and more options for their loved ones.

Speaker, how is our government ensuring that the new cultural care pilot truly reflects the needs of Ontario's diverse communities?

Hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Once again, I thank the member for her question. As a representative of an ethnic community herself, I thank her for her advocacy, because she understands first-hand the importance of linguistic and cultural care. That is exactly why we are piloting these changes first.

We know that when it comes to our beloved long-term-care residents, we can't have a one-size-fits-all approach. Our government has worked with the long-term-care sector every step of the way, and that will not change today. We are ensuring no resident who needs long-term care is denied long-term care, and this pilot grants care coordinators flexibility to allow residents of equal clinical need to be better matched to homes that also service their cultural needs. We have engaged in historic capital builds of cultural homes, including Ivan Franko Ukrainian homes, Arabic homes through the Church of Virgin Mary and St. Athanasius, and Muslim homes by the Muslim Welfare Centre, to name just a few.

We are building more cultural care homes today, working with community groups around the province to build a long-term-care sector as diverse as Ontario itself.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Sault Ste. Marie has informed me he has a point of order he wishes to raise.

Mr. Ross Romano: I'd be remiss not to have this opportunity to welcome some guests in the members' gallery. I have from my hometown of Sault Ste. Marie and from my Algoma University alma mater—also the best university there is—director Brian Leahy, vice-president Craig Fowler, and president and vice-chancellor Asima Vezina. Welcome to the House.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I gather the member from Don Valley North may have a point of order.

Mr. Vincent Ke: I would like to introduce the board members of SOLO, Small Ownership Landlords of Ontario Inc., sitting upstairs in the public gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park.

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

The House recessed from 1147 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: I have a few guests I'd like to introduce today. First of all, I would like to welcome the folks from Good Roads who I met, including my good friend Cathy Burghardt-Jesson.

I'd also like to welcome folks from the Life Sciences Ontario lobby day, including two constituents, Alison and James, as well as Diana and Amy.

I'd also like to welcome two of my staff members, Kamrana and Rob, and last but not least, Jason Ash from my constituency, who is the co-chair of the Leaside Towers Tenants Association.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I want to wish a truly warm welcome to Dave Cassidy, who is a local legend in Windsor-Essex—former president of Unifor Local 444 and doing great work even now. Welcome to Queen's Park, Dave.

Mr. Chris Glover: I'd like to welcome to the House a number of people from Life Sciences Ontario: Jill Archibald and Monica Soos, as well as Christine Lennon and Nicole DeKort. I really enjoyed our conversation, and I hope you have a wonderful day here at Queen's Park.

Hon. David Piccini: It's too many to get in in the allotted time, but I'd like to just give a warm welcome to the incredible team I get to work with every day at the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development who are all here to see the fruits of their labour with a bill introduction, and a number of stakeholders who are here today to support us. It's through their voice that we're putting words into action in our sixth Working for Workers bill. I just want to thank you all for being here today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE INTERIOR

Mr. Aris Babikian: Speaker, I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on the Interior and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Meghan Stenson): Your committee begs to report the following bill without amendment:

Bill 186, An Act to limit the liability in respect of agritourism / Loi limitant la responsabilité à l'égard de l'agrotourisme.

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

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

INTRODUCTION OF GOVERNMENT BILLS

WORKING FOR WORKERS SIX ACT, 2024

LOI DE 2024 VISANT À ŒUVRER POUR LES TRAVAILLEURS, SIX

Mr. Piccini moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 229, An Act to enact the Skilled Trades Week Act, 2024 and to amend various statutes with respect to

employment and labour and other matters / Projet de loi 229, Loi édictant la Loi de 2024 sur la Semaine des métiers spécialisés et modifiant diverses lois relatives à l'emploi et au travail ainsi qu'à d'autres questions.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'll invite the minister to briefly explain his bill if he wishes to do so.

Hon. David Piccini: I would. Thank you, Speaker.

Our government is introducing the Working for Workers Six Act, 2024. Again, I want to draw attention to everybody sitting up in the gallery who have had a pen and a profound voice in the legislation that I bring before the House today. It is through them that we're doing this, and I'm very grateful for all of them and the impact that they've had on this legislation.

Its package of regulatory changes and other actions would, if passed, help protect the safety and well-being of workers and their families, keep costs down for workers and businesses, honour workers and grow Ontario's workforce.

Our proposed changes would expand on the groundbreaking actions across five previous Working for Workers Acts since 2021 and build a brighter future for all Ontarians to ensure our province remains the best place to live, work and raise a family.

Again, I'd like to thank them all, Speaker. Thank you.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

HOUSING EQUITY AND RENTAL TRANSPARENCY ACT, 2024

LOI DE 2024 SUR L'ÉQUITÉ EN MATIÈRE DE LOGEMENT ET LA TRANSPARENCE

DANS LES MODALITÉS DE LOCATION

Ms. Bowman moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 230, An Act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 and the Technical Standards and Safety Act, 2000 with respect to residential tenancies / Projet de loi 230, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2006 sur la location à usage d'habitation et la Loi de 2000 sur les normes techniques et la sécurité en ce qui concerne la location à usage d'habitation.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Would the member for Don Valley West like to briefly explain her bill?

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: Yes, I would. Thank you, Speaker. First of all, I would like to thank my staff, including Michael Fontein, for their work on this bill, as well as tenants, including Jason Ash, who is here today, who provided input.

I'm pleased to rise to describe my bill today, the Housing Equity and Rental Transparency Act, 2024, which would, if passed, require remote monitoring of an elevator's operating availability and require reporting of elevator outages that last more than 24 hours within seven days and within seven days after the elevator is returned to service.

It would require reporting of maintenance requests and deem them part of the record when a landlord applies for an AGI.

It would require implementation of a system to access visitor parking for buildings of 100 units or more.

It would provide for rent abatement of 20% if a vital service like heat and water is withheld.

It would require video surveillance and security guards in complexes with 100 or more units.

It would remove authorization for the landlord to give a notice of eviction for late rent if the tenant's rent is paid directly by ODSP or Ontario Works, or for late payment of one rental period.

And it would require, if passed, that landlords cool common areas between May 15 and September 15 to a temperature of 26 degrees Celsius or less.

PETITIONS

TENANT PROTECTION

Ms. Jessica Bell: This is a petition that is calling for rent control to be applied to all homes, including homes that were first occupied after 2018. We have many tenants in our riding who live in new purpose-built rentals. Some of them come in—they're students, they're new to Toronto or Ontario—and they don't know their rights. They move into an apartment and then suddenly, after a year, they find that their rent is going up by \$500, \$1,000 or more a month. It's very concerning.

I fully support this petition, and I will be giving it to page Juliet.

TENANT PROTECTION

MPP Jill Andrew: This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it's calling for the government to understand the emotional and financial implications of demolition evictions and the way in which they negatively impact the livelihood, the supports, the sense of community and the mental health and protection of housing of tenants who are essentially told that their home of decades in some cases, especially seniors who are on a fixed income, will be gone—poof—just like that.

1510

This petition is calling for the Ontario government to stop the needless demolition of rent-controlled buildings across Ontario, especially during a housing crisis and an affordability crisis. This petition is calling for the Ontario government to reinstate universal rent control, ensure rental housing replacement protections for all tenants,

ensure that people are housed in the middle of an affordability crisis and to beg this government, the Conservative government, to actually create real, affordable housing that keeps people housed and off the streets of St. Paul's and across the province.

I couldn't support the petition more. I'm going to affix my signature and hand it over to Ryan. Thank you, Ryan.

ROAD SAFETY

MPP Lise Vaugeois: This petition is entitled "Safe Roads for All." It's a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it really takes up the concerns of people in northern Ontario about the lack of enforcement, with training, the lack of fines, the lack of monitoring of training, the lack of staffing of inspection stations.

Ultimately, it asks that all testing and licensing of commercial drivers be returned to the Ministry of Transportation to be done by public servants within the Ministry of Transportation.

I fully support this petition and will give it to Maadhav with my signature. Thank you.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It's my honour to present the following petitions on behalf of Dr. Sally Palmer, professor emerita at the school of social work in the faculty of social sciences at McMaster University, and I want to thank Dr. Palmer for her tireless advocacy on this issue.

The petition is "To Raise Social Assistance Rates." As this petition points out, the government is actively keeping people below the poverty line. This is what's known as legislated poverty. People cannot afford rent, people cannot afford food, people cannot afford the basics of life. People are struggling to live across Ontario, and that is on this government's watch.

It is within this government's power to fix all of that. They could double social assistance rates, as this petition calls for.

It's something we fully support, I fully support. I will affix my signature and deliver it with page Jonah to the Clerks. Thank you.

LAND USE PLANNING

Ms. Catherine Fife: This petition is entitled "Protect Farmland and Sustainable Growth in Waterloo Region."

I want to thank the Fight for Farmland folks, including Kevin Thomason and Hal Jaeger, for collecting hundreds, if not thousands, of signatures.

To summarize: There are 770 acres of prime agricultural land in Wilmot township which has now been threatened with expropriation at the urging of this government and at the funding of this government.

At the end of the day, Speaker, I just want to let the people in this Legislature know that the people in Wilmot are not willing hosts for an undisclosed EV battery plant

or some other large manufacturing organization. This is prime agricultural land. It's meant to be farmed, and the people in Wilmot township in Kitchener–Conestoga have our full support in this.

ROAD SAFETY

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm glad to be able to share a petition that I received from about 120 folks as part of the Ontario Confederation of Clubs, motorcycle riders from across the province based in Windsor but from Oshawa, Whitby and Caledon, Welland. They are very concerned about serious injuries and deaths that are happening to motorcycle operators on our roads. They are concerned that in order to save lives of motorcycle riders, they need legislative help. The majority of these incidents aren't the fault of the rider and are a result of another operator, usually a full-sized vehicle.

They have written this petition in support of Bill 15, Fairness for Road Users Act, and they're calling on the government to support and pass that act to amend the Highway Traffic Act and create an offensive contravention causing death or serious bodily harm to not only keep them safe but ensure that with injury there is not further insult and to increase the penalties.

This initiative has been before the Legislature a long time. I support it. I will affix my signature and send it to the table with page Ryan.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Ms. Doly Begum: I have a petition here from Ontario families fighting for better support for children with autism. Over the years, I've had the privilege to meet a lot of these families, who go above and beyond to support one another and support those who are on the spectrum. They need the support and they need the funding that this province can provide.

What these families go through has been traumatizing. We hear from a lot of moms and dads who put themselves on the wait-list, and then when they finally get that call, there is no funding, or sometimes they get the funding and they don't have that spot, and they're in this limbo. So a lot of these families come to my office in tears. And I know a lot of our colleagues have those conversations, in tears, because it is something that we can change.

The Ontario Autism Program was broadly broken by the Liberals, and we know that the changes this Conservative government made it really worse.

So this petition I fully support—it is making sure that the funding caps are not based on age and income, and making sure that the children who need the support and who need the funding get that funding as soon as possible.

I fully support this petition. I will affix my signature to it and give it to page Macarius to give to the Clerks.

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Jessica Bell: This is a petition entitled “Urgent Family Doctor Shortage in Chinatown and Ontario.”

In response to many concerns and emails and calls we have had from our community, we have been gathering petitions to call on the Ontario government to increase the number of family doctors in the Chinatown area, including doctors who are fluent in Mandarin and Cantonese, so that people in our area can receive medical care in a language that they are proficient in.

I support this petition, and I will be giving it to page William.

ADDICTION SERVICES

MPP Jill Andrew: This petition is titled “Petition for Continued Operation of Supervised Consumption Services and Associated Harm Reduction Programs.” This petition expresses to the Legislature that a person dies every two and a half hours from the toxic drug supply in our province. This petition is calling for a humanitarian response to what is an overdose crisis.

This petition responds to the government and says that they need the government to reverse their decision to close CTS sites and ensure all established CTS sites remain operational and adequately funded.

This petition recognizes that doctors, nurses, front-line health workers, experts, scholars—there's evidence-based research documenting the success of CTS sites, whereas the government's decision to close these has no research backing it whatsoever.

I absolutely support this petition. I'm affixing my signature to it, and I am handing it over to Maadhav.

LONG-TERM CARE

MPP Lise Vaugeois: This petition is entitled “Support Bill 21, the Till Death Do Us Part Act.” It recommends that the Minister of Long-Term Care pass Bill 21 so that seniors have the right to live together as they age. It actually surprises me that this has not been passed already.

I fully support this. I would like to see seniors be able to stay together. I will give it to Mahee, with my signature.

TENANT PROTECTION

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: The petition I have to read into the record is to bring back real rent control and to support the Rent Stabilization Act, on which I am a co-sponsor.

1520

This petition points out how the average rent has risen by over 50% in the last 10 years and how people are struggling during this cost-of-living crisis. They are spending more than a third of their income on rent.

It also points out how the last Liberal government opened up huge holes in renters' rights while allowing for vacancy decontrol.

This would stabilize the rent prices in between tenancies to make sure that people have a safe place to call home.

It also calls for more supports for the Landlord and Tenant Board and tougher penalties for landlords that do not properly maintain a renter's home.

It's something that I fully support. I will affix my signature and deliver it to page Elissa for the Clerks.

ADDICTION SERVICES

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I have a petition here for continued operation of supervised consumption services and associated harm reduction programs. These sites, known as consumption and treatment services sites, have been instrumental in preventing thousands of deaths from the toxic drug supply. Folks are very concerned that the closure of these sites will increase the number of preventable deaths, injuries, hospitalizations, emergency room visits, and the incidence of HIV and hepatitis.

The closure of these sites is making people very nervous across communities, because they offer access to other health and social services, including addiction treatment—well-utilized services. The closure of these sites is a withdrawal of important health services for people who use drugs, and consequently, this will be a denial of their right to health care. We will, unfortunately, inevitably see an increase in drug use in public spaces.

I would say that, based on what people have shared with us here, they would like to see a reversal of the decision to close these safe consumption and treatment sites, ensure that all of the sites remain operational and adequately funded—to increase funding for these sites, and also to ensure access to voluntary, publicly funded and not-for-profit, evidence-based treatment.

Of course, I support this. I will affix my signature and send it with Anuva.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

MPP Jill Andrew: This petition is titled "To Raise Social Assistance Rates," and it's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

This petition expresses concern that the Ontario Works rates have been frozen since 2018 and small increases to ODSP—or ODS poverty, as community members refer to it—have left recipients struggling below the poverty line.

This petition recognizes that at the height of the pandemic, during the CERB program, folks were receiving \$2,000 a month—which, in my community of St. Paul's, would barely get you a one-bedroom.

People who are on ODS poverty and OW are asking for this province to at least double—at least double—ODSP and OW rates so they can live above the poverty line.

I absolutely agree with this petition. I have affixed my signature. And I want to thank Professor Palmer for collecting.

ADDICTION SERVICES

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It's my great honour to present the following petitions on behalf of RNAO, the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario, who are calling upon this government to continue the operation of

supervised consumption services and associated harm reduction programs.

First and foremost, I think it's important that we listen to the front line on this issue.

As they point out, a person dies every 2.5 hours from toxic drug supply.

They're pointing out how these supervised sites prevent thousands of deaths. They prevent hospitalizations. They prevent emergency room visits. They prevent greater increases in HIV as well as hepatitis. To take away these is to take away essential health care services—and it's a denial of their right to health care.

If these places are closed, it will lead to an increase in drug use in public spaces.

I hope that the government will listen to the experts at RNAO and reverse their decision to close these sites.

I fully support this petition. I will affix my signature and deliver it to page Autumn for the Clerks.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Point of order?

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: On a point of order: I'd like to correct my record of October 31. While debating the fall economic statement, I had a question from the member from Parkdale–High Park related to this government's handing out of rebate checks prior to election, as well as rebate cheques provided by the McGuinty government prior to an election.

Those cheques were announced in 2009. I said there was a key difference from the cheques being issued under this government. I said there was a surplus when in fact there was a modest deficit in 2009. The surplus was in 2008. I should have said that the key difference was that those cheques were issued to help households and offset the introduction of the HST.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I just would like to remind the member that that is not correcting the record. You are essentially asking to restate it, and that is not a legitimate point of order. You're not correcting your record.

VICTOR SOLER

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Point of order? I recognize the member for Sault Ste. Marie.

Mr. Ross Romano: I'm remiss to provide this news but also want to have this opportunity to thank a member of my office, in the chief government whip's office, the government of Ontario.

I'm not going to be here tomorrow. Tomorrow is effectively the last day of Victor Soler, and I want to say thank you, sir, for all the work in the office, and congratulations as you move on to new and bigger things. Thank you.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 26, 2024, on the motion for time allocation of the following bills:

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

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

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): My understanding is that the opposition, the member for London North Centre, has some time left on the clock.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: As I conclude my remarks, I want to remind this government that time allocation shuts down consultation, it removes the ability of people to participate meaningfully within the legislative process, and I urge this government to actively engage with stakeholders across the community to ensure that legislation is as well informed as possible.

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

Mr. Jones has moved government order 110 relating to allocation of time on Bill 223, An Act to enact two Acts and to amend various Acts with respect to public safety and the justice system, and Bill 227, An Act to amend various Acts.

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

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

All those opposed to the motion will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

Vote deferred.

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

AND SAFETY ACT, 2024

LOI DE 2024 SUR LA GESTION

DES RESSOURCES ET LA SÉCURITÉ

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 27, 2024, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 228, An Act to enact the Geologic Carbon Storage Act, 2024 and to amend various Acts with respect to wildfires, resource safety and surveyors / Projet de loi 228, Loi édictant la Loi de 2024 sur le stockage géologique de carbone et modifiant diverses lois concernant les incendies de végétation, la sécurité des ressources et les arpenteurs-géomètres.

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

M. Guy Bourgouin: C'est tout le temps un plaisir de me lever et représenter les bons concitoyens de Mushkegowuk—James Bay.

On this Bill 228, An Act to enact the Geologic Carbon Storage Act, 2024 and to amend various Acts with respect to wildfires, resource safety and surveyors, I will be sharing my time with my great colleague of Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas.

1530

There are a few things I will outline in my 30-minute speech. I will touch on: that this bill receives due process—I'm really concerned about that; consultation with First Nations; the municipalities and the wildfire management plan; the firefighters labour shortage; insurance and cost to owner-operators, because we'll be asking—in this bill it talks about owner-operators; and the carbon capture.

The first one I want to touch about, definitely, is concern about governments following due process. Now, how fast would this bill go through? We're talking about a 111-page bill to be passed, and we were just briefed this morning. Now, this government had months to work on this—months—and we were given this yesterday. And then this morning, we had a 20-minute briefing on these 111 pages, and we're here to debate here today. If we want to have great debate—and we all want to make better bills. I think this is a disrespect to this process and this House.

Je trouve que c'est un gros manque de respect. Comme étant à l'opposition officielle, c'est notre devoir de faire sûr que les projets de loi que le gouvernement—puis le gouvernement est majoritaire, en plus. Je ne sais pas de quoi ils ont peur, mais c'est une façon qu'on pourrait avoir des bonnes discussions, puis avoir un peu—qu'on puisse être préparé et aussi de parler à nos commettants ou les personnes qui vont être affectées par ce projet, les municipalités, les Premières Nations. On parle des « firefighters ». On parle de tout qui peut être impacté—on parle des géologues, on parle des ingénieurs. Écoute, c'est un projet de loi qui est important. Il va y avoir une nouvelle industrie qui va être toute attachée avec ça. On n'est pas contre l'industrie, mais il reste que—je pense que la population doit être informée, doit avoir une chance d'être informée. Puis aussi, que nous, comme députés—on a été élu pour représenter une grosse partie de la province—puissions poser des questions et être préparés pour avoir un bon débat. C'est pour ça qu'on a été élu.

We're elected for that, to have good debates in this House. To have a bill—we got it yesterday. We get the briefing this morning at 8:30, you know, and be prepared to have a great debate? We are ready to have debates, but it could be so much better to have more time to prepare so that we can have these discussions and make sure that we are on the right path. Just because you have a majority doesn't mean that you should plow through everything.

We're talking about one new part where there's 69 parts to an act, Geologic Carbon Storage Act, 2024—to 69. My colleague will probably touch more than me on that because it's mostly environmental. But the fact is, we're talking 69 parts in this act. I think it's worth the time to have a great discussion.

What we've seen in this House right now—time allocation and a six-hour debate. This is what's probably going to happen to this bill.

Probablement, avec toute l'allocation de temps pour discuter, ce qu'on voit depuis la dernière semaine, c'est qu'on discute pour six heures—six heures de temps sur un projet de loi. Puis, après ça, on l'envoie en comité pour une journée. Puis, après ça, c'est fini. Six heures de débat pour un projet de loi qui a 111 pages? On parle de 69 nouveaux articles, pour une nouvelle industrie. Je pense que ça mérite bien plus que ça. Puis on l'envoie en comité pour une journée. Avez-vous oublié comment loin, comment grand que l'Ontario est? On demande à des commettants ou à des « stakeholders », comme on les appelle, des partenaires, de venir parler sur ce projet de loi. C'est neuf heures—moi, je demeure à neuf heures de Toronto.

I live nine hours away from Toronto. If somebody wants to come here and speak in the committee one day, how do you get there? How do we get here? Isn't that disrespecting the people of Ontario, stakeholders of Ontario? People that would love to speak on this bill, they have to drop everything and come here because probably it's six hours and then it will be the next day. Because as we've seen, the next day—pow. We're in committee, and that's done. Move on to the next.

C'est ça qu'on vit, comme c'est là. C'est ça qui se passe dans la province de l'Ontario. Si ça, ce n'est pas un manque de respect à la démocratie, bien tabarnouche, vous avez une leçon à apprendre en démocratie.

Je ne dis pas ça pour être sarcastique ou être ignorant, parce que je crois en le processus de la démocratie. Je crois en comment on est structuré. Je crois en comment ce Parlement ici fonctionne. Queen's Park, c'est important. Puis qu'est-ce qu'on fait et comment vous agissez envers l'opposition officielle et le reste de la population de l'Ontario, c'est un gros manque de respect à la démocratie et non seulement aux personnes qui vous ont élus et les personnes qui m'ont élu pour représenter leurs concerns et les concerns de tous les députés qui sont ici, qui veulent faire sûr qu'ils sont capables de débattre.

On est prêt à débattre. On est prêt. Même si vous nous manquez de respect, nous, on—si peu de temps. Ça fait des mois que vous travaillez sur un projet de loi—et paf! Envoie, demain matin on pogne ça, puis go, on passe. Le bulldozer embarque, et ici, on se fout de la démocratie. Je trouve tellement un manque de respect—

Une voix.

M. Guy Bourgouin: Des millions d'Ontariens, absolument. C'est ridicule qu'on fasse ça puis qu'on pense qu'on fait un bon travail. Je trouve que c'est un travail qu'on pourrait faire tellement mieux.

Il y a une raison pourquoi qu'il y a l'aigle en haut, qui est le gouvernement, et il y a le hibou en arrière, ici. Il y a de l'historique derrière ça. C'est pour essayer de conseiller au gouvernement ce qui se passe dans les projets de loi, pour essayer de travailler ensemble pour faire certain que la législation est bonne.

C'est vrai qu'on ne s'entendra pas sur tout, et je suis le premier à reconnaître qu'il y a des bonnes choses dans ce projet de loi-là.

There is good stuff in this bill. We recognize that. But there are some we are concerned about. And that's our job, and so is yours.

Mais de jouer les jeux qu'on jouait, comme c'est là—six heures de « time allocation ». Je vous dis, c'est ça qui va arriver. Puis après ça, on va être une journée en comité et on dit qu'on fait notre travail comme législateurs. Madame la Présidente, je pense qu'on a failli, que le gouvernement a failli à son devoir. Mais en même temps, ils nous font faillir à notre devoir à cause de leurs réglemmentations, puis ça, ce n'est pas correct. Je ne crois pas que tout le monde est d'accord avec ça, et si vous l'êtes, vous avez une leçon à apprendre quand ça vient à la démocratie.

There are a lot of moving parts in this bill. When we think about the consultations that I just talked about in French, here we have environmental groups that would love to be able to talk on this. I'm sure there are engineers who would love to speak on this. Industry experts would love to speak on this. First Nations would love to speak on this. But see, if we give only one day to come down and speak on this, are we getting their expert advice on this bill? No, we're not. We're failing; your government is failing at that miserably.

I don't think this bill is receiving the treatment and consideration that it should have—that it should have had, I should say. It will get done in one day at committee, especially considering the geographic impact of this bill. In this bill, we're talking about wildfire management plans. This is important. I live up north. Guess what? We're surrounded by forests. I think this morning an MPP across the aisle was speaking about that, that it has to be reformed. Yes, it has to. I don't think the municipalities are disputing that it has to be reformed, but at least municipalities have to have a say in it.

And then, of course, the geo-carbon storage, there are some concerns with that also and how it's going to be done. Because I can tell you, when it comes to First Nations, what happens on their traditional territories, they're really concerned. They feel they've not been listened to, or they're not being at least consulted. And the consent part of it—it's not being respected.

The bill is going to have a significant impact on constituents and folks all across the north, and they deserve an opportunity to weigh in on it. People can't just drop everything, like I said, to come to downtown Toronto and speak on a bill. They need the time to come here and be able to express—this is their House. It's not our House, it's their House. Have we forgotten that? Have we forgotten about that when we're dealing with this type of expedited bill?

1540

So this is definitely the first thing that I wanted to speak on, because I feel that passing bills this fast and thinking that we're doing the right thing in the process—I think we're failing miserably. This government is failing miserably by silencing voices that should be heard.

J'aimerais parler des Premières Nations. Je pense que c'est important que je mentionne les Premières Nations.

I need to speak of the schedule that talks about First Nations—schedule 2, section 12. In the bill, it states: “The minister shall only issue a research and evaluation permit or a storage permit if the minister is satisfied that...

“(e) adequate consultation with Indigenous communities has been carried out, if the activities for which the permit is sought have the potential to adversely affect established or credibly asserted Aboriginal or treaty rights....” It goes on.

This is what I’m concerned about. This is where my concern comes from: “adequate.” Why don’t we just say what the government is saying—well, it should be what the treaties are saying—“free and informed consent”? First Nations have been saying this. You heard my colleague from Kiiwetinoong express that many times. Adequate consultation means different meanings to any individual in this place. My adequate consultation, I can tell you, is different than maybe from somebody on the government side. To put a term like “adequate”—“Well, we did consult; it was adequate.” But I can tell you, the “adequate” for First Nations won’t be the same as on the government side.

I say that because First Nations have lived some difficult, difficult times, and we’ve seen government abuse their power when it comes to First Nations.

The language is way too—and it’s intentionally. C’est intentionnel. Le mot « adequate » is intentionally vague, and it’s very subjective language. It wasn’t put there just because it was a mistake. No, no; it was purposely put there. What does “adequate consultation” mean? Who prescribes or decides this?

First Nations are fed up. We have, what, seven or eight First Nations suing the government because they do not have the prior and informed consent of what’s happening on their traditional territories, and now we see language like this? Haven’t you listened to them? Vous ne les écoutez pas? Le consentement des Premières Nations—il y a sept communautés autochtones qui actionnent le gouvernement, comme c’est là, pour ces mêmes raisons-là. Puis on vient jouer avec des mots comme « adequate »?

Puis, quand ça vient à leur territoire—when it comes to their territory, this is unacceptable. It’s unacceptable when storing geo carbon requires intense intervention of the natural areas and will likely occur on treaty territories, and free, prior and informed consent is constitutionally required. First Nations are requiring it.

What do you think is going to happen if you don’t do this? I can tell you, you will be seeing it more and more because First Nations are organizing. They are trying to speak to you. They are trying to tell you, the government, to please sit down with them. You heard my colleague from Kiiwetinoong again this week talk about it.

The First Nations are fed up. They’re suing this government. There will come a time that they will say, “Enough is enough,” and I think the time is very close, if not here already, because you cannot continue operating this way with First Nations.

When I look at Attawapiskat—they’ve learned their lessons, I can tell you, Attawapiskat, with the De Beers company. Right now, this community is landlocked. They

can’t even expand on their traditional—they live on their traditional territories. They want to build homes. They want to expand their communities, because they don’t have anywhere to go. And they’re landlocked because of a road. De Beers is putting in the bump-up already. The term is “bump-up,” but there’s a dispute for the road, and the government is not doing anything to side with them.

There’s an agreement done. The federal is on board to pay for the land for the province. The community is on board. The province has agreed in principle, but yet, they don’t want to sign on the dotted line to finalize it, and the federal say, “Well, until the province is on there, we can’t do anything. We want to make sure that it’s secure.” And it’s all based on liability.

But this community has been held hostage on their traditional territories. You can guarantee, when it comes to things happening on their traditional territories, they’ve learned. They’ve seen what happened at Attawapiskat. You cannot say words like “adequate consultation” anymore and get away with it. You need to respect First Nations.

Vous avez une obligation de respecter les Premières Nations. Je peux vous dire que la communauté d’Attawapiskat, ils ont appris leur leçon. Pourtant, on a une entente sur papier. Le fédéral est là. La province a dit : « On a une entente de principe. » Mais ils ne veulent pas signer. Ce n’est rien qu’une question d’environnement ou—comment je dirais ça—de « liabilities ». Mais c’est une communauté qui est là et, comme c’est là, qui ne peut pas grandir, qui ne peut même pas s’épanouir puis être capable de répondre aux besoins de leur communauté à cause qu’on a un gouvernement qui joue le jeu, qui est irresponsable.

There are intentionally no protections for them, so the fact that the government is basically opening the flood-gates to create a whole new industry with this bill—don’t get me wrong; we’re not against this new industry. Au contraire, we just want to make sure that people have a chance to speak on these 69 new changes—that First Nations have a chance—and this is why we’re concerned, and Indigenous people are concerned. We need to do this right.

I want to talk on municipalities, and I want to start with—I had a chance to reach out, and I’m lucky that some of these municipalities have great working relations, but they did send me something to express some of their concerns. We’re talking small communities—one small community—and this is what she wrote:

« Voici ce que j’en pense ...

« (1) Je ne connais pas les exigences prescrites que doit rencontrer un tel plan. »

On parle du « wildfire management plan ». C’est un plan pour gérer les feux de forêt qu’il va y avoir. J’aurais dû donner un petit peu de [inaudible]. Les municipalités, maintenant, vont être obligées de faire un plan pour être capable de gérer les feux de forêt potentiels. On le sait, avec la température ou le climat qui se réchauffe, on va être sujet—puis, le gouvernement semble le reconnaître, parce que s’ils sont là pour demander un plan des

municipalités, je pense qu'ils reconnaissent que ça va juste s'empirer. La situation des feux de forêt va encore s'empirer.

Je reviens à la lettre :

« (1) Je ne connais pas les exigences prescrites que doit rencontrer un tel plan. Je présume qu'elles seront » prescrites « par après, dans un règlement. Inquiétant de ne pas savoir ce que doit contenir ce plan et difficile de savoir si une petite municipalité comme la nôtre sera en mesure de répondre à ces exigences. »

Je n'ai pas oublié : j'avais envoyé le projet de loi pour essayer d'avoir un peu d'information, pour essayer d'avoir des points qu'on puisse discuter. Le temps est très court.

« (2) Notre municipalité est de toute petite taille — population de 600 — « avec peu de ressources humaines (cinq employés à temps plein) et un tout petit budget. Cependant, le territoire que l'on couvre est immense (deux cantons) et majoritairement recouvert de forêt. Les chances qu'un feu de forêt survienne sur notre territoire et à proximité des régions habitées de la municipalité sont grandes mais cela ne nous donne pas autant les moyens, humains et financiers, de le gérer de façon adéquate.

1550

« (3) En vertu de la Loi sur la protection civile et la gestion des situations d'urgence (EMCPA : Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act), la municipalité est déjà tenue d'avoir en place un plan d'urgence, un comité de gestion des urgences, un coordonnateur des situations d'urgence, etc. Ce programme nous oblige à nous pencher sur les risques les plus importants ... les feux de forêt figurent déjà en tête de liste. Au lieu d'avoir un plan "à part", on pourrait peut-être ajouter une section à notre plan d'urgence existant pour adresser uniquement les mesures d'urgence additionnelles requises (selon les exigences) advenant un feu de forêt. Si cela n'est pas possible, on risque de dédoubler les efforts à ce titre : autre plan, autre comité de révision, etc. Dans les petites municipalités, il n'y a personne de dédié uniquement à la gestion des urgences. C'est tout simplement un autre chapeau qui doit être porté par le personnel en place.

« (4) Si les exigences prescrites sont de nature technique/scientifique, relativement au particularités/comportement des feux de forêts, nous n'avons pas les connaissances nécessaires pour préparer un tel plan et nous devons avoir recours à des experts dans le domaine. Ces experts se trouvent au sein du ministère des Richesses naturelles qui, ironiquement, est celui qui nous ordonne de préparer un tel plan. Il doit sûrement déjà exister un "template" au sein du ministère de ce en quoi consiste un plan approprié dans les circonstances ... »

Comme on peut voir, c'est que ces municipalités-là sont très concernées. Elles se demandent aussi, financièrement, si ça veut dire des coûts additionnels?

Does that mean additional costs? Because when you have 600 people living in your municipality and they're already taxed to the max, and they are paying heavy taxes—and if this happens, then what will the municipality do? These are the questions that need to be answered. And when you have public consultations, municipalities, small

municipalities could come and ask these questions and try to get some answers. But this is what's happening, and these municipalities are extremely concerned. They're asking, "How is this going to apply to us? We don't have the manpower"—human resources. "We don't have the human resources." Because like I said, five of these people are the same people and they're already doing the best they can—experts dans le domaine des feux de forêt.

So some of these questions—"quels soutiens ou ressources"—these are the types of questions she was asking me. « Quels soutiens ou ressources ou aide financière vont être fourni par le ministère pour que les municipalités puissent créer ces plans d'urgences? ». So, tu sais, in English, what resources or what financial resources are we going to get so that these municipalities or these small municipalities will be able to create this plan? It's a great question, but that needs to be answered because it makes a huge difference to them.

In the 2022 Auditor General Value-for-Money Audit: Management of Hazards and Emergencies in the Environment, it's reported that Ontario only had one FireSmart community, while British Columbia had 150. At this time, Ontario had only budgeted \$1 million into the FireSmart program over the three years leading up to the audit. The ministry does not employ expert staff to assist municipalities with the FireSmart program or create fire management plans, unlike other provinces like BC.

Again, we're going to ask this: Are they going to get the experts? Maybe they will. Maybe they will, but we don't have that answer. Municipalities don't have that answer. And we don't know how these new requirements to set our wildlife management plans affect First Nations. If these obligations are imposed on First Nations, what support will they receive from the province to implement them? Will they receive financial or technical assistance from the government to the same extent as municipalities—great question—or will the province pass the buck to the federal government and say it's their responsibility to support First Nations in wildland fire management, like they do with everything else? We've seen this government always say, "Oh, it's not provincial. It's federal"—the famous Ping-Pong game they keep playing between federal and provincial. I just talked about Attawapiskat, about this famous Ping-Pong game. It's the community of Attawapiskat that's paying a heavy, heavy price.

So what's going to happen with this new fire plan? How is that going to affect these communities? Again, if you think the municipalities lack services—well, go up north. Some of the fire equipment—they did receive new trucks, but some are still fighting to try to get a fire station to put the truck inside. Some of their trucks are older. The equipment is older. The training is not as adequate as it should be. Are they also going to be imposed—they need all the training that surrounds it. That could be impacted.

I went to Fort Albany, and the deputy chief brought me in the helicopter, and I saw where the fires stopped. They were evacuated a couple of years ago in Attawapiskat. The fires stopped maybe a kilometre away from the community. They were lucky. So how's that going to affect them?

Because these communities are small, they don't have all the resources. We've seen, too many times, federal and provincial playing the game—"Oh, it's not our responsibility. It's federal." "Oh, no, it's not federal. It's provincial." That is wrong. First Nations deserve the same services as any municipality, and the help they need, and the finances to be able to help protect their communities. And yet, no, if this is time-allocated, we may not see that—they may not be able to come here and talk about this bill.

I want to talk about the firefighter labour shortage. There's a shortage of firefighters here in Ontario. In 2005, we had 214 wildfire crews; last year, we had 144—we had 71 fewer crews less. How are we going to protect our communities with less boots on the ground? One good thing is, the government recognizes that there are going to be more wildfires, so we've got to do better. And the reason why there are less, people are leaving the field—because it's all about reclassification and protecting these wildland firefighters.

We hope, in the new bill that's coming, that the minister just announced, that the forest firefighters will be the same as the firefighters in the municipalities—that they'll be covered for presumptive. Right now, it takes them double the time. So for 10 years or 15 years—wildland firefighters, it will take 30 years. They're seasonal firefighters, so they have to work double—30 years—and yet, we recognize that firefighters in municipalities will have it after 15. The wildland firefighters are exposed to more carcinogens because they're sleeping in the bush, near the fire. They don't change their clothes as often. They don't have air pack systems. They only have bandanas. They don't have the equipment. This is what's happening. Yet we have a bill that we may not have time enough to discuss. People cannot come. They will time allocate it, and in six hours this discussion will be done. One day in committee—salut, bonjour, on continue. Merci, madame la Présidente.

1600

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

M^{me} Sandy Shaw: Pour commencer, je suis complètement d'accord avec mon collègue le député de Mushkegowuk—Baie James que c'est un grand manque de respect de cette institution des députés qui essayent de faire leur travail quand le gouvernement ne nous donne même pas, à nous et à nos « constituants », l'occasion de comprendre ce qui est devant nous. C'est vraiment, vraiment un grand manque de respect, et ça continue, mais qu'est-ce qu'on peut faire? Ça dit plus au gouvernement que nous, parce que nous travaillons fort chaque fois que nous sommes présentés avec un projet de loi comme ça.

As we have said: This bill, Bill 228, is a very substantial, very large bill that, in essence, is creating an entirely new industry. Schedule 2 of this bill, which comprises the largest chunk of this very massive bill—I think if people could see the scale and scope of this bill—is what I'm going to focus my attention on today. Because I find it completely ironic that we have a government here that is rushing headlong to create an entirely new industry

that poses economic benefits, no doubt, but also poses significant potential risks, both economic and when it comes to the health of individuals and the health of our planet. It's also ironic that in the same bill where they are creating, essentially, a new industry, we have a bill that's tidying up, trying to clean up the legacy of an industry that has caused so much damage here in the province of Ontario—actually, across Canada—and that is the abandoned oil and gas problem that we have here in Ontario.

I just want to spend a little bit of time talking about what happened in the small town of Wheatley, which really is a cautionary tale that we all need to be learning from. If people don't know or aren't aware, in August 2021, there was a small town in southwest Ontario called Wheatley, and essentially, the downtown of Wheatley was levelled. Many people were hospitalized, buildings were flattened, and many believed that this must have come from an abandoned and forgotten well that was underneath the town. Even though they didn't know that this one well was there, they have since found out that there are more former wells that officials were previously unaware of. I want to say that the damage in Wheatley was so severe that the fire marshal couldn't really determine the cause, but residents in the area reported smelling gas and continued to fear that there could have been other wells posing a danger to the community.

It's important to know that we don't have good facts on how many abandoned oil and gas wells there are in Ontario. In fact, as the member from Mushkegowuk—James Bay said this morning, this bill was dumped on us yesterday afternoon. We had a 20-minute briefing with the ministry. I asked, "How many abandoned oil and gas wells are in the province?" They are going to get back to me. I asked, "What is the cost to remediate one of these wells?" Hard to say; they're going to get back to me. These are the kinds of facts that we should have before us when we're talking about the scale and scope of the problem of abandoned oil and gas wells. Industry estimates that the number of abandoned oil and gas wells—some say 27,000; some say as many as 40,000. Industry estimates put the number of potentially dangerous wells at 4,400, along with several thousand more that may not have even been identified.

One of the things that I think is really difficult about this problem when it comes to abandoned oil and gas wells is that, in many instances, these are on private property. The way the legislation works now is that, if you are a private property owner and you end up with an abandoned oil and gas well on your property that you weren't aware of, it is your responsibility to cover the cost. What I'm saying here is that this is an industry that has caused significant financial damage and financial cost to people, but it doesn't even come close to identifying the human cost.

Again, estimates are hard to come by, but in Wheatley alone, we're talking about—maybe \$50 million, maybe \$100 million was the cost to mitigate the damages in Wheatley, but the folks in Wheatley continue to suffer from the impact of that.

A gentleman by the name of Doug Lamb, who lived a block away from the blast, can't shake the events that changed his life forever. He said, "I can't sleep, and I keep on thinking what's going to happen. And I worked all my life to get where I'm at now I lost everything. Everything is gone." He was unable to get back to his Wheatley home. Lamb and his wife have moved five times since. His nerves are shot as he suffers daily with the unknown. And Lamb is not alone.

Another woman said, "I believe that I suffer from self-diagnosed PTSD, I hear sirens where there aren't any. I stop and catch my breath when I hear sirens. I still have difficulty driving" downtown.

This goes on and on, to identify the human cost, the impact it has on people's sense of safety and well-being in their own community.

It's especially troubling when we don't know where these abandoned oil and gas wells are. It used to be that they were mostly out in rural areas, out in the country, on farms. Many agricultural sectors still use these as a form of energy. But in many instances, because these wells have been orphaned, left behind by industry because there are no records to track where they are, they are now closer and closer to urban centres.

In fact, part of Hamilton is called Waterdown. It's an area of the region of Hamilton. and it is now a burgeoning community with lots of new families moving in there. There is an abandoned oil and gas well in downtown Waterdown, which is a fully urban centre, and it's there because, when they were expanding, when they were building these suburbs in this expanded development, no one knew that the thing was there in the first place. So that is the risk we face.

I would like to also say that the Auditor General, after the explosion in Wheatley, in her report in 2022, highlighted several issues with gas wells in Ontario—and they included wells that are not plugged or are poorly maintained. At least 36% of wells in Ontario could be dangerous because they are poorly maintained, improperly plugged, or have not been plugged at all. We have wells that are leaking—high-risk wells that have been leaking since at least 2018, wells that are plugged with materials that can lose their integrity. Speaker, 30% of wells were plugged before 1970 using materials like logs, gravel and lead, which can lose their integrity, clearly, over time. She also identified the province's failure to identify and inspect high-risk wells. She said that, clearly, the province is failing to identify and inspect high-risk wells. She concluded by saying, "The lack of so much basic information about natural hazards across the province is surprising and troubling." I can't help but agree with the Auditor General, and I can't imagine that anybody hearing these stats would feel otherwise.

This government opened up the Oil, Gas and Salt Resources Act in May 2023. That's the act under the Ministry of Natural Resources that oversees this problem. And at the time, they opened up the resource act through one of their red tape reduction bills, but at the same time failed to actually—opened up the act but failed to, at that

time, put the funding and the energy in place to work on identifying this huge problem. When we're talking about an unknown number of mines, we're talking about maybe 4,000, 5,000 mines that pose an imminent risk, we're just lucky that Wheatley was the only town where we've had an explosion. We're also lucky, in Wheatley, that we didn't suffer loss of life. It was a busy downtown area that exploded. If you see pictures of it, the place is completely flattened. We want to make sure that we're looking at this in a very proactive, serious way, but the costs to address this problem are absolutely astronomical.

The point I'm trying to make here is, here we are left holding the bag. Taxpayers and property owners are left with this cost. Property owners are required to remediate. Taxpayers are required to remediate. The industry that created this is long gone. And we still haven't fixed this problem, but now we are rushing headlong into creating an entirely new industry and not learning the lessons from an industry that continues to plague us, continues to pose significant risks to health and our economy.

1610

I would say to the government—and I asked the minister this morning—given the lessons of Wheatley, given the scale and scope of orphaned gas wells across Ontario, will you be having extensive public consultations on this bill? He really didn't answer my question. He didn't say, "Yes, we will."

He did say that the safety of Ontarians is utmost. That is what is the basic that can be expected of a government, but I'm going to continue to insist that the government makes sure that, given the implications for this new industry that they're opening up, the people are informed.

Ms. Catherine Fife: That's not too much to ask.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Not too much to ask, absolutely. I think it's really important to know—I talk about the cost. Again, numbers are hard to get, but the median cost to plug an oil and gas well is \$76,000. Depending on how deep the well is, that can increase by 20% for every 1,000 feet. Clearly, the older the wells, the more costly they are. These are significant costs.

These costs are just to plug the well. These are not the costs to reclaim and to remediate the area around it. Because decommissioning involves plugging the well and removing surface equipment. Then the land around the well also needs to be restored to its predevelopment state because there are significant contaminant issues when it comes to these wells, which is quite clearly common sense.

One of the problems here is that there was never a fund. These oil and gas companies were never required to pay a security deposit to cover these costs. They just created the damage, took their profits and left town. As I said before, taxpayers are left holding the bag for this cost, and if you happen to be unlucky enough to end up with a leaking abandoned oil and gas well on your property, you have to cover the cost.

I had a constituent who called me to say that he had a water well on his property and that an abandoned oil and gas well on a neighbouring property was leaking through

the strata and contaminated his water. He was completely on the hook to build a new well, so again, huge problem.

I think what we need to understand is that these contaminants enter the groundwater, as I've just described, because these wells are orphan wells and so they do release hazardous substances into the groundwater. This can happen even when a well is plugged or sealed, because maybe the cap is missing or maybe it was sealed with concrete. Over time, concrete degrades. Maybe it was poorly sealed in the first place. They pose a significant risk to the environment and public health. For example, some of the things that these wells can release is hydrogen sulphide and methane.

That hydrogen sulphide is what the people of Wheatley smelled, because they reported smelling the smell of rotten gas. I'm honestly saying, if you were at your cottage, if you were at your trailer, if you were somewhere that you smell rotten gas—pardon me, rotten eggs—and you're not anywhere near where you would actually smell natural gas, you need to make sure that is not an unidentified subterranean gas well that you were not aware of.

And when it comes to—that's our groundwater and our soil that is contaminated, but it is a significant source of methane emissions—as I said, hydrogen sulphide and methane. That's a major contributor to greenhouse gases and I would just like to say that methane is 80 times more potent than carbon dioxide. So in Ontario, emissions from abandoned wells are underestimated by a factor of 920, compared to inventory estimates. So a significant contributor to greenhouse gases, to climate change. Hydrogen sulfide also emits a toxic gas.

I would just say that, again, the number of wells is really unknown. There is no map. There's no clear identification. The government is not proactively going out and trying to identify these wells. A lot of people think that this is a problem that exists in Alberta only. But I think what is not well-known—which I didn't know until this came to my attention when Wheatley blew up—is that Ontario actually has an oil and gas industry that is older than Alberta. We have more wells abandoned here than in Alberta. People identify this as a problem with Alberta because we identify Alberta with oil and gas, but in Ontario, this is a significant factor here.

When we're talking about the industry that we are creating—right? We're talking about creating an industry, the Geologic Carbon Storage Act, there's a lot of questions that need to be asked, and they need to be asked in light of the mess that we are left with, the mess that has been left behind. Nobody, really, from the government side wants to talk about it and I can't blame them, because the costs are astronomical. I mean, when it comes to—again, hard-to-get numbers, but the Parliamentary Budget Officer estimates the cost of orphaned wells in Canada will reach \$1.1 billion by 2025.

As I said, Ontario owns the lion's share of those abandoned wells, so that's a significant, significant liability hanging over our heads. And it's industry; it was a profitable industry that came to Ontario, benefited from our natural resources, and skedaddled and left us with a

mess. Do we want to do this again with a new industry? I don't think so.

Again, back to my colleague from Mushkegowuk—James Bay, who said, “The government may think they're being clever by using time allocation, by not going to committee. The government may think that they have all the answers.” But I just can't imagine the bureaucrats this morning that had no answers for me on this, on the abandoned-oil-and-gas-well issue.

So how does this government anticipate all of the hazards that a significant industry, a significant change when it comes to geologic carbon storage, will create? We're talking about drilling into the strata, which is essentially what we did with oil and gas wells, and it didn't turn out well. I'm not saying that this won't. I'm just saying, maybe, as a government, you might want to clean up the mess of a previous industry before you open wide the doors to a new industry that may burden future taxpayers with the same kind of legacy.

I want to focus a little bit on—we're talking a lot about wildfires here and wildland firefighters, and I think that's important. Again, the questions are so many. I mean, the fact that we have seen, you know, when it comes to conservation officers that address some of these, they are underpaid, they're underfunded, they're understaffed. The Auditor General's report also identified that there are the full-time equivalent needed to address invasive species and to do all of the things that conservation officers take care of.

They don't have enough resources, staff resources. We heard clearly that when it comes to wildland firefighters, they are under-resourced, they're underpaid, they're part-time. Sometimes they're volunteers, which is kind of crazy if you think about the fact that we now have a bill that is essentially saying that our forest fire season is going to be year-long. It's going to be year-long.

So I don't disagree that, given the impact of climate change that's fuelling more and more of these intense fires, we need to be prepared—absolutely. But how? Wanting to be prepared and not putting the human capital to do that makes no sense.

1620

I listened to the Minister of Natural Resources present his bill this morning, and honestly, he did not use the word “climate” or “climate change” one single time. But I can only take it to mean the fact that—again, acknowledging that wildfire season is going to be year-round really is like a tacit acknowledgement that climate change is the cause of these unprecedented wildfire seasons that we're seeing and that, hand in hand with fighting fires, we should be putting in place things to address what fuels that in the first place. As we know, we have a government here that has no climate plan and that seems to just want to turn their back on the obvious evidence that this is getting worse and worse.

We've talked about flooding: these unprecedented flooding events that are happening in our communities, the insurance costs, the cost to people whose homes get flooded. The climate emergency is real and it is here. Your

acknowledgement that wildland fires in our province are continuing to escalate is one half of the argument. The other half of the argument is—can we just actually acknowledge it and be real? Climate change is the biggest problem, and this government is doing nothing to address that.

We know in this House how bad it is. I remember sitting here last summer during one of the unprecedented wildfire seasons that we experienced. We sat in this House, all of us, and we could smell the smoke. We could smell the smoke in this chamber. And I just want to talk about how toxic wildfire smoke is. For some of us, our lungs were burning, our eyes were burning. There were special air quality alerts, no doubt, issued.

Let's just talk about what is in wildfire smoke. When wildfires burn, they burn through forests and grasslands and, clearly, they produce smoke. Smoke can be a major source of air pollution for people in Canada—I mean, that's kind of obvious. Wildfire smoke can be carried thousands of kilometres from the fire zone. We also know that because don't you remember the people in New York City? The late-night talk shows were complaining about the smoke coming from Canada. They were smelling this in New York City, so it travels. The smoke can impact air quality in areas close to and far away from the actual fire.

So, wildfire smoke is toxic. It is a mix of gases, of particulates that contain ozone, methane, sulphur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide, carbon monoxide and fine particulate matters. So fine particulate matters—it's PM2.5. When a particulate matter, which is a component of smoke, is small enough, it becomes called a "fine particulate," and it's measured by parts per million. So PM2.5 is what represents the main health risk when it comes to smoke from wildfires.

The small particulates that result from wildfires are a source of concern for health experts, and they measure the amount of fine particulate matter with a diameter of 10 microns or less. Basically, for us to understand that, that's roughly 30 times smaller than the diameter of a human hair. So these obviously can't be seen, but because they're so small, they penetrate deeply into our lungs and into our body. They're really dangerous, and there's absolutely no known safe level of exposure for some of these pollutants, particularly when it comes to fine particulate matter.

So what that means is that even at low levels, this can impact your health. As smoke levels increase, obviously your health risk increases, and air quality—we can smell the smoke, so we all can say, "Yes, it must be bad air quality." It could affect your health even if you can't see or smell the smoke because these particulate matters penetrate deep into our body.

Ontario has an Air Quality Health Index, but this quality doesn't track that ultra-fine particulate matter. Almost all other provinces do so. They track this. But not Ontario.

I asked many times of this government why they don't update their air quality index to include that fine particulate matter. I even moved a motion in the House "that, in the opinion of this House, the Legislative

Assembly of Ontario should immediately update our Air Quality Health Index to incorporate the AQHI-Plus, which has increased sensitivity to PM2.5"—that's the particulate matter—"to reflect the risks associated with wildfire smoke and match the conditions experienced in our environment."

The federal government uses this measure, but Ontario isn't using it. The federal government recently updated its air quality index to better reflect the threat posed by wildfire smoke, but Ontario isn't using the improved system, leaving gaps between the information available and the true health risk. I also moved a motion because of that, because of the very fact that people don't really understand the true health risks, that the government also clearly update and clearly communicate clean air guidelines that correspond to activity levels, tailored for various age groups and conditions, while educating the public on how to interpret and respond to air quality health data so that people can make informed decisions.

Because the fine particulate matter isn't tracked and isn't reported on, it's hard for people to know. They go out, it doesn't smell bad, they don't smell the smoke, they think it's okay. But it's not being measured, and it's not being reported. Kids, people with asthma, older folks—this is information that they absolutely could use.

The other thing that I moved a motion on when it comes to air quality in the province that is certainly impacted by forest fires is that we look at establishing cooling and clean air centres in communities across the province during the summer months and gather data on how these centres could be used by vulnerable groups during extreme heat waves, wildfires and special air quality alerts.

Winnipeg has a clear air centre. They actually did a trial of this to get ahead of the smoky wildfire season. There are many communities that are doing this. I think it's really important that if we're going to look at fighting fires, we also have to look at what this government can do to make sure that people are protected, vulnerable people, people that may not be able to shut their windows and their doors, which is the advice that we get in these air quality alerts. We need to look at ways so we can keep these people safe.

We need look no further than the heat dome event that happened in BC. I think people don't understand the scale and scope of that. I have it here in my pile of information that I wasn't able to get to in the short term. During that heat dome event in BC in the summer of 2021, 619 people died. It's shocking. This government needs to get ahead of these to keep people safe.

I want to also just say Hamilton has particularly struggled, because of its industrial sector, with air quality, and I think that one of the things that I did ask the minister about is that we don't look at the cumulative impact of emissions. Each industry can get a licence to emit, but we don't look at the cumulative impact. So if I'm emitting 10 parts per million, which is within the guideline, and someone else is doing that, we are not looking at the full scale and scope of how it's impacting particularly people in Hamilton and in other communities where they have a lot of industry.

Again, I asked the minister this morning, given that we have this legacy of abandoned oil and gas wells and industry that has left us with a significant financial and emotional burden and that we are embarking on an entire new industry that also will pose significant risks, will he make sure of two things: that this new industry creates a fund so that they can pay for the damage that they create, and that they will commit to extensive consultations. Because we never again want to see a Wheatley in any of our communities in Ontario.

With that, Madam Speaker, thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Questions?

1630

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: Ma question est pour le député de Mushkegowuk—James Bay.

Alors, nous avons un programme de croissance solide. L'Ontario investit des milliards de dollars sans précédent dans les infrastructures, notamment les écoles, les hôpitaux, les transports en commun, les routes, les ponts et, bien sûr, les habitations.

Madame la Présidente, les arpenteurs-géomètres professionnels de l'Ontario sont essentiels à l'accomplissement de ce travail. L'annexe 4 de la loi 228 parle des diverses modifications essentielles pour attirer davantage de géomètres vers la profession.

Donc, ma question au député : est-ce que vous pouvez supporter ces modifications?

M. Guy Bourgouin: Merci pour la question, et merci pour la question en français, en passant. Tu sais, ça me donne l'opportunité de parler français en Chambre.

Écoute, je l'ai dit : il n'y a pas juste du mauvais dans le projet de loi. Mais pour répondre à votre question, vu que c'est « time-allocaté » puis que ça va être—quoi? On va débattre de ça pour six heures, puis après ça, une journée? Je trouve qu'on manque l'opportunité d'entendre, comme vous avez dit, les géologues ou les techniciens ou des architectes et tout le reste qui est attaché. Il y a des communautés qui vont être peut-être affectées par ça.

On n'est pas contre l'industrie—je l'ai mentionné dans mon discours—mais on a une obligation de faire sûr qu'on peut répondre aux questions puis qu'on ait les réponses nécessaires attachées avec ça, qu'au moins, le projet de loi va-t-il couvrir, puis qu'est-ce que le gouvernement va mettre dans le projet de loi, les réglementations qui vont toutes entourer le projet de loi.

Mais, y a-t-il du bon dans le projet de loi? Je suis le premier à le reconnaître. Mais je crois qu'on manque d'opportunités d'avoir des experts qui vont venir témoigner et donner du temps nécessaire pour être capable d'avoir de bons arguments et aussi de faire certain qu'on couvre tous les angles de ce projet de loi-là.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I think both members, from Mushkegowuk—James Bay and Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, highlighted some of our concerns with Bill 228, Resource Management and Safety Act. In particular, though, the member from Hamilton West—Ancaster—

Dundas talked about the safety issue. Schedule 2 is very problematic. We should all be very concerned about this part of the legislation. It's a very significant piece of this new law that effectively sets up a new industry. Since the gas companies want to use storage as a way for them to make hydrogen out of fossil gas, we are potentially talking a lot of money and a lot of risk.

The act does reference safety, which is critical because carbon dioxide tends to stay close to the ground when released, so smothering issues are substantial. So this alone needs extensive public consultation and study.

Do you think the consultation process has been flawed? Do you think that this is ultimately a flawed piece of legislation?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Well, we have seen time and time again the government having to retract entire pieces of legislation because they rushed it. So I would say that this is flawed in its lack of consultation, and I would say it's flawed in its underemphasizing the significant risks that this industry can present. We're talking about drilling into the ground when we—none of us here are geologists. We need to be able to ask experts what they think about this, because it cannot be that this government and their industry folks are the only people that have an opinion on this. My guess is this legislation is flawed because those are the only people they have talked to. And if they rush this through time allocation and we get six and a half hours of debate and no committee, absolutely it's flawed if for no other reason than it was created behind closed doors for industry purposes and doesn't take into consideration the needs of the people of the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Ms. Laura Smith: This legislation would help protect communities by reducing wildland fire risk and highlighting the importance of proactive prevention efforts. And this bill, if passed, will modernize and update the enforcement provisions of the act and will clarify the minister's order powers to prohibit activities in areas that have been declared wildland fire emergencies.

I'm glad that the member from James Bay talked about this bill as being a good effort. Will the member opposite support the changes proposed in the bill that, if passed, will help build safe, resilient and innovative communities that are prepared for the challenges of the wildland fire season that will come upon us?

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: You know, like I said, we got this yesterday, we had the briefing notes this morning, and now we're debating this for the first time on this bill. Will I support it? Well, I just heard an answer, and I was looking to what a colleague had said: "Well, we did talk to the geologists." Well, you know what? Maybe I would love to speak also to geologists—I would have liked to have the opportunity to do that. But you've been time-allocating six hours, and then it's done and then back to committee. Don't you believe we deserve the same respect—that you had the time to create this bill, ask the experts, so that you can present a bill? I think we deserve

the same respect, and so do my constituents because I'm here to represent them, and I will.

This is why I told you about this small community who has concerns; they would love the same respect that you had, at least—a couple of months to write this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Ms. Jessica Bell: I would like to thank the member for Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas and the member for Mushkegowuk—James Bay for your presentations.

I have a question for the member for Mushkegowuk—James Bay. I read the bill, I listened to your presentation. You talked a lot about how this bill is pretty significant—has a lot of schedules to it, a lot of changes—yet we're not getting a lot of time to debate the bill and think about it and also to reach out to stakeholders.

Your initial assessment: How does this bill affect the people of your riding?

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: You know, I had a chance to speak with municipalities, First Nations, but there was one I really wanted to touch on—it's about owner-operators. In this bill, now, owner-operators will be asked to go firefight. "Well, we're surrounded." "Well, these people own a piece of equipment." But we don't realize some of these pieces of equipment are worth a lot more than \$1 million. Companies used to own this piece of equipment; they shed their responsibilities, and now workers own this piece of equipment.

So, if I'm asked to use my bulldozer or my feller buncher to cut a line to break the fire, what happens if my machine burns? Will the government pay my insurance? Will they replace my machine? Because if my machine burns, insurance will say, "Well, you're at risk now, Guy. It's going to cost you more money." How is this going to affect—what about maintenance? Because if I'm in front of the fire, guess what? All the filters are intaking the smoke and all the other debris; who's going to cover my cost for all this?

These are the type of questions, these are the type of issues, and people will be affected. Owner-operators will be affected by this; will they be compensated accordingly? The answers should be coming from the rep, but we don't have time to find out.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Quick question, quick response.

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: My question is to the member from Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas. Before I go into the question, I do want to note that public consultations—there was an open portal for consultations. As the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Natural Resources, we were conducting consultations throughout the summer. I just wanted to throw that in, and obviously, there's more consultations to go.

My question, because you've talked about the Oil, Gas and Salt Resources Act: What that is asking for in schedule 3 is so that the Minister of Natural Resources can take prompt and direct remedial action to address certain hazardous oil and gas situations.

So, to the member opposite: Do you support that type of amendment?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Well, I have to say, our invitation to your consultation must have gotten lost in the mail because we and our constituents did not participate in that—we weren't invited.

What I will say is that the Ontario Petroleum Institute, I imagine, were one of your big consultants because, in fact, they were clearly in favour of this. We're talking about people that are injecting—the process that is going to inject carbon into the ground, and it's not actually clear whether or not this is, on balance, going to have less or more impact on the environment. We don't know—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Thank you.

Further debate?

1640

Hon. Sam Oosterhoff: I greatly appreciate the opportunity to rise today to speak to second reading of the Resource Management and Safety Act, 2024. I'm looking forward to sharing a bit more about a number of different aspects of this legislation. I promise to be a little more structured than I was the other day speaking to different legislation because it's very, very important that every single aspect of this legislation is carefully considered and, of course, also reflects all of the feedback that we've heard from industry and from so many job creators and from those in our province over the last number of years.

Speaker, this is a truly transformative step in this legislation. It's a transformative step in Ontario's approach to resource management and economic innovation. And this legislation reflects Ontario's leadership in achieving a balance between environmental sustainability and economic growth, ensuring that our industries remain competitive, our communities remain resilient and our province is positioned for long-term success.

The bill addresses several critical areas such as modernizing wildland fire management, updating the Surveyors Act and ensuring public safety around hazardous oil and gas wells. But today, I'm going to be focusing on what I believe to be one of the most important and exciting aspects of this legislation: the forward-looking actions that are being taken to enable geologic carbon storage. This initiative has the potential to be a game-changer for many energy-intensive industries in the province, for our environment and for the communities that we all serve.

Ontario's energy-intensive industries—such as steel, cement, and concrete chemicals, our manufacturers and our agricultural sector, along with our energy producers—fuel our economy. We know that they provide thousands of well-paying jobs. They support countless families putting food on the table and they drive economic growth across the province. They are in many cases the start of our robust supply chains that we have here in Canada.

In my role as Associate Minister of Energy-Intensive Industries, I've had the opportunity to meet with many of the leaders of these industries across Ontario. I look to my left and I see the member for Sarnia—Lambton; I had the privilege of visiting a number of facilities in his riding.

These are industries that are committed to our province, and they're committed to the amazing talent that we have here. They're investing in reducing emissions and they're doing so while protecting jobs and maintaining Ontario's competitiveness with our neighbours. But these industries face high costs and real challenges, from managing high emissions to navigating the rising cost of a punitive carbon tax.

This is where our government really stands apart from so many others. We are unapologetic in backing our industries by investing in innovative technologies, like geologic carbon storage, to help job creators reduce emissions, stay competitive and grow. We are offering real, practical solutions, not heavy-handed and, frankly, lazy taxation schemes like the federal Liberal carbon tax.

Our approach puts opportunity and innovation over taxation. By supporting technologies that actually reduce emissions while creating clean, high-paying jobs, we're proving that there is a better way to protect the environment. It's one that strengthens the economy and builds a brighter future for youth and families.

Speaker, we're also working hard to ensure that Ontario's businesses have access to competitively priced and reliable energy to meet future demand while keeping costs low for consumers. I'm going to speak a bit more about this in a few minutes. It's about ensuring that Ontario remains a place that industries choose to invest in, to create jobs and lead on environmental innovation as I have seen from so many of the people I've had the opportunity to visit with and tour. This bill is an example of our government's relentless focus on growth and our unwavering commitment to building a sustainable future for the people and businesses who call this province home.

When we talk about geologic carbon storage, it's not just about tackling a single problem. Instead, it's about addressing a necessity for both our economy and our environment. First off, carbon capture and storage is an economic necessity. This provides a viable solution for reducing emissions from energy-intensive and hard-to-abate industries. I've had the opportunity to meet with many of these industries, from steel, cement and chemicals. It allows these industries to maintain their global competitiveness. CCS offers a direct and innovative way to address their emissions and ensure that these industries are able to meet their climate obligations without undermining their growth or their ability to create more jobs.

Speaker, it's also about environmental impact. This technology has the potential to cut emissions here in the province of Ontario by five million to six million tonnes annually. That's the equivalent to taking two million cars off the road. This isn't just a small step forward; this is really a leap forward towards achieving Ontario's ambitious climate goals.

Now the International Energy Agency provides the world's most authoritative and comprehensive source of global energy data. I know all members in this chamber will be excited to hear that "under IEA Sustainable Development Scenario, carbon capture technologies will

play an important role in supporting modern and flexible power systems." It would be impossible to meet "long-term climate goals without applying carbon capture, utilization and storage technologies at scale in the power sector" without "the virtual" overnight "elimination" of "gas-fired generation as well" as "significant early retirements and potential for existing stranded assets."

Without the widespread adaptation of technologies like carbon capture and sequestration, there's no credible path to meeting these ambitious climate targets while maintaining reliability and affordability for the people of this province.

The potential of geologic carbon storage goes far beyond emissions reductions. It's also a transformative opportunity for Ontario's economy, one that's creating jobs, reduces costs for businesses and attracts significant investment into our province. We know that just the initial development of commercial-scale CCS facilities in Ontario alone can sustain up to 2,400 jobs in manufacturing, oil and gas and utilities. On top of that, the construction and implementation of these projects would create 4,000 short-term, high-paying jobs in project development, benefiting workers, families and communities across this province.

We also know that this technology could help reduce the carbon price burden for Ontario's industries by up to \$1.2 billion, keeping more money in the hands of job creators to reinvest in innovation and growth.

Speaker, this will also enable cost savings. By enabling industries to store their carbon emissions instead of paying for them, CCS provides a real and immediate alternative to the federal carbon tax, which burdens businesses and job creators. This technology will reduce the carbon price burden for Ontario's industries by up to \$1.2 billion annually, keeping more money in the hands of businesses to reinvest in innovation, growth and job creation.

We also want to talk about investment attraction. With the federal government offering investment tax credits for CCS projects, Ontario is positioned to become a hub for clean technology development and global companies coming to this province. By enabling CCS, we can attract significant capital investment into our province and reinforce Ontario's position as a leader in environmental innovation and economic growth. It's not just about keeping existing companies here; it's also about making sure that Ontario is the first choice for companies looking to invest in the future of clean technologies.

Speaker, this is how you lead in a competitive global economy. By embracing technologies like CCS, Ontario can achieve meaningful emissions reductions, foster job creation and attract the investments that will power our economy for decades to come. It's about building a future where families, youth and job creators can thrive in a province that's not only cleaner but also more prosperous.

Now, one of the greatest advantages Ontario has in advancing geologic carbon storage is our province's natural and strategic positioning, which makes us uniquely suited to lead in this technology.

First, Ontario's southwestern region is home to the ideal geology for CCS. With saline aquifers and depleted oil and gas reservoirs, this region provides the deep underground formations needed to safely and permanently store carbon dioxide. These natural features are critical for the development of CCS projects and position Ontario as a prime location for this emerging sector.

Second, the proximity to major industrial hubs here in southwestern Ontario gives us a competitive edge. Many of the energy-intensive industries that I've had the opportunity to visit with and tour over the last few months had many conversations about the importance of the locations of these sites here in this region. We have manufacturing and chemical production, heavy industry that's supporting global growth and growth in our country, but the proximity that we have to southwestern Ontario's geologic formations will help significantly reduce transportation costs and logistical challenges, making CCS projects not only more viable but also more efficient. It's a win-win for businesses and the environment.

1650

Finally, Ontario does have a long history of managing underground storage safely and effectively. For decades, we've seen the storage of natural gas, compressed air and other resources in underground formations. This expertise that we've developed in this province ensures that we are fully equipped to regulate CCS projects with the highest standards for safety, reliability and environmental stewardship.

Leveraging these natural and strategic advantages allows Ontario to lead the way in carbon management while also ensuring that our industries remain globally competitive. By building on our strengths—our geology, our industrial base and our regulatory expertise—we can make CCS a cornerstone of Ontario's clean energy future while driving environmental progress and economic prosperity.

While geologic carbon storage is new to Ontario, it is far from an untested concept. This technology has been successfully deployed for over 50 years around the world, including in Norway, Australia and the United States, with over 700 projects currently in development globally. These projects have demonstrated the safety, the efficacy and the transformative potential of CCS to reduce emissions while also responsibly supporting industrial growth.

Here in Canada, Alberta and Saskatchewan have already taken the lead. They have shown how CCS can be successfully implemented to drive economic benefits while also advancing climate goals. Ontario now has the opportunity to join these provinces in establishing CCS, carbon capture and sequestration, as a cornerstone of our clean energy future. By doing so, we ensure that our industries remain globally competitive and that Ontario continues to attract investment and innovation.

It's not just the International Energy Agency. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the IPCC, have both stated that CCS is essential to achieving net-zero emissions by 2050. Without the widespread adoption of technologies like CCS, there is simply no credible path to

meeting these ambitious climate targets without potential brownouts or other scenarios across the globe. We need CCS to reach net zero.

Ontario has the expertise, the natural resources, and now, with this legislation, also the regulatory framework to make CCS a reality. By embracing this proven technology, we are taking a bold step towards ensuring that Ontario leads in lowering emissions, as we have already done.

Now, Speaker, the changes outlined in this bill are critical to ensuring that we're securing Ontario's economic expansion but also continuing to build out our clean, reliable, and affordable energy advantage. It's an advantage that we've cultivated over the past six years. We know that Ontario is uniquely positioned. We have over 90% of our electricity currently coming from non-emitting sources such as nuclear and hydro. The clean energy system, supported by our highly skilled workforce, a competitive business advantage and abundant natural resources, is what we proudly call our clean energy advantage. But we want to do more than have an advantage. We want to be a clean energy superpower.

This advantage is a source of pride. It's a cornerstone of the economic growth that we've seen in this province. Companies are choosing Ontario because of our clean grid and our commitment to fostering an investment-friendly climate. Major players like Stellantis, Volkswagen and Algoma Steel are demonstrating their confidence in this province. They're bringing investments in electric vehicle production, grain, steel and more. These investments don't just fuel our economy; they provide good, well-paying jobs and new opportunities for families across this province.

The demand for electricity in Ontario is growing at a pace we haven't seen in over 20 years. According to the IESO, the Independent Electricity System Operator, we're going to need 75% more power in this province over the next 25 years. That's like building four and a half cities the size of Toronto and adding that to the grid. Investments like Volkswagen's battery manufacturing plant or Algoma's green steel production alone add the equivalent of the annual electricity of Ottawa.

Meeting this demand isn't about just keeping the lights on. It's also a generational challenge, one that demands foresight, innovation and action. That's why to meet this growing demand, we've tabled the integrated energy plan here in this chamber. The Affordable Energy Act will ensure that Ontario continues to receive clean, reliable and affordable power for families, businesses and industries alike. It's a demonstration of a collaborative approach that our government has taken. It means we're working together with one vision, and this bill builds on that strategy, proactively supporting energy-intensive industries while also ensuring sustainable growth. It underscores the commitment to delivering here in Ontario, a province that is the best place to work, to live and to invest.

Speaker, we've already delivered significant energy savings for businesses and families. Programs like the comprehensive electricity price, the industrial conservation initiative and the electricity rebate have collectively

reduced the cost of doing business in this province by \$8 billion a year. These measures are creating a climate that allows families to thrive and industries to grow. In fact, over the last six years, we've seen record investments as a result of our clean energy advantage and pro-business policies.

Let's contrast this for a second. We saw what happened under the former Liberal government, propped up by the NDP. Short-sighted energy policies drove out 300,000 good-paying jobs and placed unnecessary burdens on job creators. Now, under Premier Ford's leadership, Ontario has not only reversed this trend but actually added 800,000 new jobs since 2018. And industries that I have met with, like industrial electric vehicle manufacturing, greenhouses, data centres and mining have all flourished, thanks to our commitment to clean, reliable and affordable energy. It's no coincidence that companies are choosing Ontario. It's because we continue to advance an agenda of growth and prosperity, sending the message very clearly that Ontario is open for business. And this legislation will ensure that we continue to capitalize on those strengths, making Ontario a leader in clean energy and economic growth.

Speaker, this bill is not only about our energy security. It's also about the people and the businesses who depend on it and need to know that we have a clear plan to reduce emissions while supporting economic growth. It's about building sustainability for all of our industries, including in the hard-to-abate sectors. We aren't giving up on the workers in those jobs, and we're not giving up on those industries. We've seen ideologies coming across from the aisle that say, "No. They can shut up; they can go home. They don't need to continue to work here in Ontario." But the reality is there is no path to net zero without this legislation and without this technology for many of those industries.

While the focus of my remarks this afternoon has been on the transformative potential of geologic carbon storage, I do want to also briefly acknowledge the other critical parts of this legislation that will also help the people of Ontario. This bill seeks to modernize the Surveyors Act, which is a vital step to accelerate housing and more infrastructure development, especially in underserved areas like northern Ontario. We know that this modernization will help in those areas. We also know, through the Wildland Fire Management Act, that this is a significant enhancement to how we safeguard our communities and industries from escalating fire risks. With fires becoming larger and more frequent, these updates will strengthen prevention and mitigation and response efforts while protecting families, businesses and our natural resources. We also know the importance of cracking down on hazardous wells while ensuring the safety of our communities through the Oil, Gas and Salt Resources Act.

Together, these measures create a more cohesive and forward-looking framework for a stronger Ontario. This bill isn't just about solving today's challenges; it's also about building a foundation for future growth and for future safety and sustainability. It addresses critical needs

across a range of sectors, and it's a continued demonstration of our work to get it done for the people of Ontario.

I want to acknowledge especially a few different individuals with this. Graydon Smith, the Minister of Natural Resources and his parliamentary assistant, the member for Newmarket–Aurora, have done fantastic work to reach out to so many stakeholders in this, and I want to acknowledge and thank them for that work. I also want to extend my gratitude to Minister Lecce for working with me to bring more energy-intensive industries around the table here in Ontario and participating in feedback on this kind of a piece of legislation. We had a great discussion paper that was out to industry and to many people in the province of Ontario who participated in their feedback over the course of an extended period of time to make sure that we got it right.

This legislation demonstrates our commitment to continuing that work; to continuing to go beyond the ivory towers of downtown Toronto; to go beyond this chamber, as beautiful and illustrious as it is; to go out into regular people's lives and ask them about what they need to see and to speak in a way that's not speaking down to but rather asking for solutions from actual industries, actual job creators, the people who take the risks—not pontificate about what they should do, but rather ask them what the supports are. They need to be able to reduce emissions and continue to provide those jobs.

1700

I'm thankful that we have legislation that's responsive and reactive to the needs of job creators, that continues to build a cleaner, more vibrant economy. I hope all members in this House will be willing to join me in supporting it. I know many on this side will; I invite you to as well.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: It is so interesting to hear the member from Niagara West. This is a direct quote: that this legislation is absolutely key to getting to net zero. In fact, he said that there is no getting to net zero without this piece of legislation. In what world is that actually the path to getting to net zero?

I just want to point out that this is a piece of a legislation that the government is ramming through this House: six and a half hours of debate; no public consultation; no extensive stakeholder outreach, especially to those people who are most affected, the sectors that are most affected. How in the world is this the way to craft a piece of legislation?

In fact, basically, you're delivering for the Ontario Petroleum Institute. Now, if you check the lobbying registry, they are there. If you check the fundraisers, they are there. This is basically a gift to the Ontario Petroleum Institute.

This is supposed to be a democracy, where we come into this place and we do the best for people. How do you reconcile—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Response? I recognize the Associate Minister of Energy-Intensive Industries.

Hon. Sam Oosterhoff: I want to thank the member opposite.

These are some of the organizations that she's saying, "You know what? Shut down your business in Ontario. You don't need to do any work here in Ontario. You can fire all those people who work in those industries." We have the steel producers of Canada, the Cement Association of Canada, Hydrogen Ontario, Fertilizer Canada, Cabot, Stelco, ArcelorMittal Dofasco, Canadian Fuels Association, the chemistry association of Canada, Association of Major Power Consumers in Ontario, and Ontario Mining Association.

She's telling all of the hundreds of thousands of people who work in these sectors—these are sectors where you cannot completely cut out every single emission. You need to have carbon capture to get rid of those carbon costs and to get rid of the associated carbon release. They're saying, "We don't care. Get out of this province. You don't need to do business here."

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

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: I'd like to thank the associate minister for his words today on this important debate.

Since this bill will enable the development of a commercial-scale carbon storage project in our province, through the proposed Geologic Carbon Storage Act, it could lead to the establishment of new industrial activity in our great province.

You've already noted great expansion of the carbon management sector around the globe, with 700 projects in development in 50 countries. So my question to the associate minister: Could you tell this House how commercial-scale geologic carbon storage projects, if established in our province, could benefit the people of Ontario.

Hon. Sam Oosterhoff: Fantastic question. I want to thank the member for her question because this is foundational to the ability of many of these hard-to-abate industries to continue to exist in Ontario.

If we don't have a particular format in place to allow them to get down to net zero, they're not going to be able to hit net zero because they're not going to have a place to put some of that carbon. There's only so much you can change your processes to make them carbon-free. There are certain things—I'm thinking of the creation of fertilizer, for example, using a number of different industrial processes. You look at the chemical sector that is foundational to many of the things that we take for granted in everyday life. Some of those processes have extremely high heat requirements, and you can't necessarily achieve that without some carbon by-product. The reality is, if you're able to take that carbon, sequester it deep into the ground, you're able to continue to run a business here in Ontario.

It's not just the businesses who are relying on it; it's also the thousands of construction jobs that are going to be associated with the deployment of commercial-scale carbon capture.

It's good for the economy, it's good for the environment, it's good for Ontario.

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

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: A 2021 study done in the US showed that 80% of carbon capture projects failed. Over the decades that this technology has been in practice, tens of billions of dollars being spent, and only the emissions used to refine and produce the petroleum—it captures 0.1% of their emissions and considers zero of the 80% of the emissions of the product.

We have reached 1.5 degrees, and we are surpassing that. For all of us who have kids who are worried about the next step, we should be concerned.

This year alone, Canada's insurance billings doubled—doubled—from over \$3 billion to \$8 billion.

This has been proven, in Australia and so many countries, to be another subsidy to oil and gas companies.

Tell me, what can you do to make a just transition—because oil and gas are not the future forever.

Hon. Sam Oosterhoff: Speaker, I'm not sure what world the members of the Green Party live in, because the reality is, I'm assuming they drove here on roads that had some level of tar that was being used in building the roads. I'm sure that they use phones or have other pieces of equipment that have plastic within them. So I'm assuming that their goal is to essentially shut everything down; don't put in place any innovative ways to actually reduce the emissions.

CCS is a tool that allows us to take out the harmful carbon particles that are obviously impacting climate change and to actually be able to put those away, while continuing to enjoy a standard of living that I'd say almost everyone in the province of Ontario wants to see continue to improve. And one of the reasons the quality of life continues to improve is because of being able to have access to energy. We need to have CCS to be able to allow us to continue to build out those industries that provide hundreds of thousands of jobs in every corner of this province. I'm not saying goodbye to those jobs, and I hope you won't either.

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

M. Guy Bourgouin: Je sais que son français est bon, fait que je vais lui demander une question en français.

Les feux de forêt : les compagnies, avant, avaient des pièces d'équipement. Ils les ont vendues à leurs travailleurs. Ce sont maintenant aux « owner-operators » qu'appartiennent les pièces d'équipement. J'en ai parlé dans mon allocution. Il y en a de ces pièces d'équipement qui valent des millions. Fait que là, maintenant, le ministère va dire à cet « owner-operator »: « Bien, on a besoin de ta pièce d'équipement pour faire une passe pour être capable d'empêcher le feu de passer. »

Ceci dit, qu'est ce qui arrive à cet « owner-operator » si sa pièce d'équipement passe au feu? Ça, ça veut dire qu'il va perdre—parce qu'une pièce d'équipement lui appartient, ça veut dire qu'il va perdre des salaires pendant des années. Peut-être pas des années, mais quelques mois, peut-être un an. Ça, ça veut dire que ses assurances vont

probablement augmenter. Aussi, son équipement doit être entretenu, les filtres et tout.

Qui va payer pour ça? Parce que ce n'est pas l'employeur, parce que l'employeur, c'est une compagnie, puis lui, il est une compagnie. Je vous demande qui va compenser cet individu?

L'hon. Sam Oosterhoff: Oui. Je vous remercie pour votre question cet après-midi. Je n'ai pas une réponse pour l'exemple spécifique que tu décris, mais je comprends que cette législation augmente les supports et aussi les soutiens pour les personnes qui combattent les feux au Nord.

L'importance d'une force de travailleurs très « responsive » au nord de l'Ontario pour combattre les différents feux de forêt est absolument une « centrepiece » de cette législation particulière. Je comprends que le ministre, il essaie d'assurer que chaque personne qui travaille au Nord, qui combat les feux différents, que notre gouvernement soutient les personnes qui font leur service au Nord contre les feux différents. Et nous avons beaucoup d'intentions de continuer à améliorer nos supports pour les communautés et aussi pour les différents individus qui combattent les feux au Nord.

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

Mr. Robert Bailey: I listened to all of the debate today—very interesting.

I just wanted to say that, along with the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex—he and I share the Dawn Hub. I know you visited there with Enbridge. We're used to this carbon capture and other underground storage.

Many years ago—I won't go into how many—I worked at a major company in the Chemical Valley. We had underground storage there, deep wells—3,000 feet deep or more—where we've stored these types of products safely for many years.

I know there's all kinds of storage that takes place out in Alberta at this time. The technology is there. We're doing this all over.

Can you elaborate a little more on the safety that you know of from your travels and your studies?

Hon. Sam Oosterhoff: It's really remarkable. I have to say, having gone to a number of different nuclear power plants, actually, in the province, which are incredible, the security around those bases, first of all, is taken very, very seriously.

1710

But secondly, the technologies that—they walk you through how the actual injection happens, how they analyze the soil, and the quantity of soil and what the sequestration impacts are going to be. These are multi-year processes. It's not like they grab a pipe, they throw it in the ground, they start shooting carbon down there and hope it all turns out well. This is a very, very practical solution.

But the reason it's practical is because it's safe and because it's been done for over 50 years on 700 projects where we've been able to examine the consequences of this action. We know that it is safe, that it can be done responsibly and done in a way that reduces emissions and,

again, protects economic growth. Those two aren't necessarily in conflict with each other. We're marrying them, and we're getting the job done here in Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Before we move on to further debate, I just wanted to clarify, if you are rising on a point of order, you may correct your record, but you may not expand on an argument or any commentary that you made previously.

Further debate?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: We have a complex bill before us. There are 69 parts to the bill. Apparently, the member opposite, who was just speaking, considers himself an expert in the area, but, unfortunately, the rest of us—when we're elected as MPPs, we're not elected because we're experts in everything. We are elected to be responsible, to look carefully at whatever legislation is brought before us, to listen to experts and to bring that information back to our constituents so that our constituents can also feel confident that the government is working appropriately. But what we keep seeing here is the use of closure to shut down debate, to limit public consultation, and that, to me, does not do justice to what we have been elected to do here in this Legislature.

There are specific issues in the bill. I think there are some good things in the bill. I would like to believe that carbon capture is fantastic—who knows? Maybe it is. But when are we going to study it? When are we going to study it as members of the opposition? When are we going to study it in a way that can be shared with our constituents? Apparently, never.

In the bill, there are questions about how First Nations consultation is represented; it's not. One word is there, and it says “adequate.” Why not say “free, prior and informed consent,” which is the standard? “Adequate” looks to me like a get-out-of-jail card for not respecting the rights of First Nations to be consulted and, frankly, to have their lands protected.

One thing that is apparent in the bill is that there is an unacknowledged but tacit admission that climate change is real. That appears on page 6. Accepts the reality, really, because when you talk about changing the firefighting scenarios, trying to really plan ahead for a more extensive fire season, then that is an acknowledgement of climate change.

But I have to say, I am deeply, deeply disappointed in the way that this government has handled its relationship with wildland firefighters. We had a commitment from the Minister of Labour in this House and in a private meeting, along with the MPP for Thunder Bay-Atikokan, committing to changing the classification of wildland firefighters to be the equivalent of urban firefighters or structural firefighters, and we had a commitment that they would get the WSIB coverage they need.

In spite of an amendment that was proposed by the NDP to fix what could have possibly been an oversight in how that WSIB coverage is expressed in the previous bill, Working for Workers Five, that amendment was rejected. So what we know, in fact, is that both of those com-

mitments have not been fulfilled, and that is extremely disappointing.

We want to understand how the government plans to fight wildfires in November or March with an unemployed workforce—a workforce that is hemorrhaging staff because the government refuses to reclassify them as firefighters. We know that the number of fire crews is down despite the increased fire season. With the changes that are in this bill, will the government increase the resources of its fire crews and finally reclassify these first responders? That is the question. So, I really ask myself: Well, there are these plans, but who is going to actually do the firefighting?

Let's go on. Schedule 1 increases the powers and scope of wildfire inspectors and will permit designated conservation officers as wildfire inspectors for the purposes of the act. What is the plan to actually enforce these measures when they have a retention crisis in both wildfire firefighters and conservation officers due to a lack of recognition and corresponding low pay compared to comparable sectors?

We've got other areas where the government has toughened penalties but starved enforcement resources. We have presented this a number of times in this House. Conservation officers have been promised for 12 years that their classification would be changed. They're in the bush, they are dealing with people who are armed, they're often on their own, they're miles and miles from any kind of backup, and yet they are classified as resource technicians and paid not very well, which is why there is a retention crisis with conservation officers similar to the crisis with wildland firefighters.

Who's training the conservation officers to be wildfire inspectors? That's not part of their job training right now. So, I ask myself: Well, okay, who's going to do the work, considering they're only hired for a short season? Is the work season going to be extended? What about the WSIB coverage? You're going to see more and more wildland firefighters and conservation officers leaving, which is happening consistently across the province because the work is not respected. The workers themselves are not respected. We know they're needed—absolutely needed.

We also know that this idea of wildfire inspectors—again, you're talking about using conservation officers not trained to do it. And then amongst the wildland firefighters, there are hardly any experienced firefighters left because they won't stay, they're not staying, because the pay and working conditions are abysmal. This government can't even keep its promise to provide the WSIB coverage to protect those workers who are exposed to an incredible amount of carcinogens over the five- or six-month periods that they're working. They don't have PPE. They're sleeping on the ground where the smoke settles. They're wearing a bandana. They're stuck in the same clothing for weeks at a time. There's nowhere for showers—all of those things, and yet they're disrespected.

Frankly, again, it's the government breaking its promises. That was a pretty public commitment, I must

say, that the Minister of Labour made and has betrayed with every single Working for Workers bill.

Toughened penalties: I'm going to talk a bit about inspections and the whole scene with inspectors because we've got traffic enforcement officers—well, we've got half of what the province needs, and they're in the same bind. You can't retain them because they're not being paid adequately, particularly given the danger of that job. Traffic enforcement officers are often dealing with angry drivers who don't want to be pulled over and they're also dealing with car thieves. That sounds pretty scary to me, to be confronting a car thief either on the road or at an inspection station. But their work is not respected. They are not paid adequately.

It's a pattern across this government that public servants are consistently underpaid. You cannot then retain them, and guess what? The inspections don't happen. So we have this \$31-million inspection station for vehicles in Thunder Bay and no staff. I guess it's good for contractors, but the government is not willing to actually staff these places. I can tell you, people in northwestern Ontario are very, very angry about the fact that that station is not inspected. We had four deaths just this week involving three tractor-trailers, two of them head-on collisions. Both of those drivers died, and another two drivers died. One was a tractor-trailer, one was an SUV.

There is no reason to trust that this government actually is interested in enforcement. Fines get raised: Sure, raise the fines, but the fines are never applied.

1720

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: “We have the safest roads.”

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Yes, and we get this line about having the safest roads in North America. That is so embarrassing and really shameful.

I bring that up because it's a consistent pattern and, with firefighters, they don't have the tools, they don't have the resources, they don't have the person power to do their jobs safely. They're not staying, and because they won't stay, that expertise is not there.

So I don't know what the government plan is when they say it's going to be a much longer fire season. That's an important acknowledgement because that's true. We are at risk of much greater and longer fire seasons and hotter fires as well, particularly with the spruce budworm now infecting trees across the north because they go up like tinder, unfortunately.

Then, another question is, will this government increase resources to the FireSmart program? In the three years leading into the pandemic, the FireSmart program was only funded to the tune of \$1 million. The FireSmart program is where municipalities would receive support and resources toward wildfire management plans as is now a requirement under schedule 1. Okay, but so far, we only have one community that has got a FireSmart plan even though it was introduced before the pandemic. When and how is this going to happen? Who is providing the expertise? Are they going to be paid? Is the burden going to be on municipalities? We don't know.

I think the member from Waterloo pointed out that there are certainly some conflicts of interest behind the lobbying behind this particular bill, and that is certainly a very significant cause for concern. We're talking about geologic carbon storage. What's interesting to me—so, out of this debate, I have learned about the situation in Wheatley, where an abandoned well exploded and flattened the community. I had no idea, actually, until I was part of this Legislature, that we had an oil and gas industry in Ontario, and I would guess that probably a great deal of Ontarians don't know that and certainly don't know that there are abandoned wells throughout the province that pose a risk.

Now, in the briefing this morning, one of the questions was, how many inspectors are there? We hope to get that answer back from the ministry, but given how few inspectors there are and how few inspections are taking place in all other places—I'm thinking again in particular of highway safety but also labour, occupational health and safety. Those inspections are way down. So it's difficult to have confidence that the work will be done to make sure that—first of all, we've already got how many? It's hundreds, thousands—I have no idea—of abandoned oil and gas wells throughout the province that do pose a significant safety risk.

The member from Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas was mentioning that there's actually one in Waterdown. Now, I've actually lived in Waterdown. My mom lived there for quite a few years, and we had a sinkhole in the backyard.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Right. I remember that.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Right? They pop up all the time, which tells you there's a lot that's actually quite unstable about the geology in the region's limestone. There are holes here, there are holes there.

Again, it could be good; maybe this is good; maybe it's not. Maybe it's a total sellout to the petroleum and gas industry.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: Maybe?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Yes, I suspect that it is because, really, it just allows them to produce and produce and produce. But for me, the bottom line is that all of us here need to have the ability to bring ourselves fully up to speed, listen to people who bring different perspectives to the question so that we are making a really considered, solid decision, but instead, what keeps happening again and again is that we get closure. In the last two bills that we had, we got closure and, frankly, complete disinterest in facts, in evidence; and somehow some pride in ignoring evidence in terms of the effect of removing bicycle lanes and really destroying safety, not doing a thing about congestion by putting a lot of people at risk; and then the refusal to consider any evidence about the safe consumption sites.

Again, lots and lots of evidence that contradicted the government's aims, and yet we have closure. The public consultation on the bike lanes was unanimously opposed to what the government is doing.

We need the time to understand the implications, to understand the science as best as we can and to be bringing in experts from a range of perspectives on these problems, and I don't trust that that's going to happen. I think that, again, we're pumping stuff in the ground.

There are other things. We're talking about bringing the surveyors law up to date so that people from out of province can come and people from out of country can come. It's probably a good thing. But for me, the first question I asked myself was, "Does it make a difference where a surveyor comes from? Do they need local knowledge?" I don't know, so that's a question I would like to bring to committee: "Please explain to me how this works. What difference does it make? Why is it in here? Why is it considered a good idea?" As I said, I'd be happy to say, "Yeah, okay. That's a good idea now that I understand," but I'm not going to have that opportunity.

There are things that I certainly worry about when it talks about potential leakage from carbon capture and what the significance of that is. We know that carbon, when it's released, stays very low to the ground. So what is the risk? I'd like to know. I'd like to have the opportunity again to look very, very closely at every aspect of this bill in order to have an informed decision about it.

Again, it would be a rare thing indeed that any bill comes forward, written by any party, that's perfect in its first form. We know that the idea of having debate and having committee is to be able to make amendments, to learn, to read, to bring in outside perspectives so that we can make the bill better, but we keep seeing actions to move things forward very quickly.

The only reason that we're under pressure to move things quickly is because we started five weeks late. You're cancelling sessions anyway. We could be having night sessions. We often cancel the session from 1 to 3 now, so what's the problem? Why can't we take the time that's necessary?

It raises really, very serious concerns, I think, for all of us on the opposition side when bills are rammed through, and that raises the question of why. Why is it being rammed through? What is it we're not supposed to be seeing? What is it we're not supposed to be discussing?

We've heard that many, many issues have been raised on this side of the House today with concerns. We've heard from someone from the other side who could definitely be a salesman for carbon capture. I'm glad he's so confident in it, but I'm not sure that we should be that confident in it. Again, we know that the government has been informed by lobbyists, by their primary donors, as we've seen in many other cases. It's very difficult to have the confidence that we need.

I have to say I wonder about liability, of where the liabilities are going to lie. If this is on private property and there's a leak, who's paying? There's a problem when there's a gas and oil leak on a property. If it's on private property, who pays? It looks like it's the person—

Ms. Sandy Shaw: The taxpayer.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: —or the taxpayer. It looks to me, the way I read this, that it would be the taxpayer's

responsibility, in many cases, if a company has gone bankrupt or they've left.

So it just seems to me that there are enough questions about the content of the bill—and the fact that we are not going to have time to really take this bill apart. We just received a briefing this morning, only 20 minutes long. The bill came out yesterday. I ask again, what's the hurry?

Why undermine the democratic process that we are elected here to uphold? We are elected to take the time to very, very seriously consider any legislation, because what we do here impacts people's lives profoundly.

I will stop there. Thank you for the opportunity to speak.

Report continues in volume B.

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Hsu, Ted (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Jama, Sarah (IND)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	
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Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Trevor (PC)	Chatham-Kent—Leamington	Associate Minister of Emergency Preparedness and Response / Ministre associé de la Protection civile et de l'Intervention en cas d'urgence
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Leardi, Anthony (PC)	Essex	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
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Lumsden, Hon. / L'hon. Neil (PC)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	Minister of Sport / Ministre du Sport
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Oosterhoff, Hon. / L'hon. Sam (PC)	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	Associate Minister of Energy-Intensive Industries / Ministre associé des Industries à forte consommation d'énergie
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	
Parsa, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (PC)	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires
Pasma, Chandra (NDP)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	
Piccini, Hon. / L'hon. David (PC)	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de l'Immigration, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences Deputy Government Whip / Whip adjointe du gouvernement
Pierre, Natalie (PC)	Burlington	
Pinsonneault, Steve (PC)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	
Pirie, Hon. / L'hon. George (PC)	Timmins	Minister of Mines / Ministre des Mines
Quinn, Hon. / L'hon. Nolan (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	Minister of Colleges and Universities / Ministre des Collèges et Universités
Rae, Matthew (PC)	Perth—Wellington	
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
Rasheed, Kaleed (IND)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	
Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Indigenous Affairs and First Nations Economic Reconciliation / Ministre des Affaires autochtones et de la Réconciliation économique avec les Premières Nations Minister of Northern Development / Ministre du Développement du Nord
Riddell, Brian (PC)	Cambridge	
Romano, Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Sarrazin, Stéphane (PC)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Saunderson, Brian (PC)	Simcoe—Grey	
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	
Shamji, Adil (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Skelly, Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	Deputy Speaker / Vice-Présidente Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, David (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Graydon (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Smith, Laura (PC)	Thornhill	
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Tangri, Hon. / L'hon. Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	Associate Minister of Small Business / Ministre associée des Petites Entreprises
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain / Hamilton-Mountain	
Thanigasalam, Hon. / L'hon. Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	Associate Minister of Housing / Ministre associé du Logement

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Rural Affairs / Ministre des Affaires rurales
Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associé délégué à la Santé mentale et à la Lutte contre les dépendances
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Vaugeois, Lise (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
Williams, Hon. / L'hon. Charmaine A. (PC)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity / Ministre associée des Perspectives sociales et économiques pour les femmes
Wong-Tam, Kristyn (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	