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of Ontario



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(Hansard)**

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Mercredi
30 avril 2025

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CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Wednesday 30 April 2025 / Mercredi 30 avril 2025

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Protect Ontario Through Free Trade Within Canada Act, 2025, Bill 2, Mr. Fedeli / Loi de 2025 pour protéger l'Ontario en favorisant le libre- échange au Canada, projet de loi 2, M. Fedeli	
MPP Stephanie Smyth	189
Ms. Laura Smith	192
MPP Catherine McKenney	192
Ms. Stephanie Bowman	193
Mr. Sheref Sabawy	193
Ms. Peggy Sattler	193
Mme Lucille Collard	193
Hon. Todd J. McCarthy	194
Mr. Tyler Allsopp	195
MPP Wayne Gates	196
MPP Robin Lennox	197
Mr. Billy Pang	197
Ms. Peggy Sattler	197
Mr. Anthony Leardi	198
Ms. Chandra Pasma	198
Second reading debate deemed adjourned	199
Report, Financial Accountability Officer	
The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell)	199

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉES ET DÉPUTÉS

Automotive industry	
MPP Wayne Gates	199
Gilbertson's Maple Products	
MPP Bill Rosenberg	200
Cost of living	
Mme Lucille Collard	200
Riding of Mississauga–Erin Mills	
Mr. Sheref Sabawy	200
Climate change	
Mr. Peter Tabuns	201
Sault College Cougars women's hockey team	
MPP Chris Scott	201
Hamilton Homeless Mortality Data Project	
MPP Robin Lennox	201
Member for Scarborough Centre	
Mr. David Smith	201
Nova Music Festival Exhibition	
Mrs. Michelle Cooper	201
Canada's Kindest Community Contest	
Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady	202

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEUSES ET VISITEURS

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly)	202
Hon. Nolan Quinn	202
Mrs. Michelle Cooper	202
Mr. Logan Kanapathi	202
Hon. Michael Parsa	202
Mr. Andrew Dowie	202
Mr. John Jordan	202
M. Stephen Blais	202
Hon. Graham McGregor	203
Hon. Stephen Crawford	203
Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria	203
Hon. Nolan Quinn	203
Member's birthday	
Mr. Mike Schreiner	203

QUESTION PERIOD / PÉRIODE DE QUESTIONS

Ontario economy	
Ms. Marit Stiles	203
Hon. Stephen Crawford	203
Government accountability	
Ms. Marit Stiles	204
Hon. Todd J. McCarthy	204
Hon. Victor Fedeli	205
Government accountability	
Mr. John Fraser	205
Hon. Kinga Surma	205
Public health	
Mr. Adil Shamji	206
Hon. Sylvia Jones	206
Indigenous mental health and addiction services	
Mr. Sol Mamakwa	207
Hon. Vijay Thanigasalam	207
Flood prevention	
Mrs. Karen McCrimmon	207
Hon. Stephen Lecce	207
Nuclear energy / Mining industry	
MPP Monica Ciriello	208
Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto	208
Mr. David Smith	208

Manufacturing jobs	
Ms. Jessica Bell.....	208
Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy.....	209
Public health	
Ms. Lee Fairclough.....	209
Hon. Sylvia Jones.....	209
Land use planning	
Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady.....	210
Hon. Rob Flack.....	210
Housing	
Mr. Joseph Racinsky.....	210
Hon. Rob Flack.....	210
Home care	
Mr. Peter Tabuns.....	211
Hon. Sylvia Jones.....	211
Transportation infrastructure	
MPP Tyler Watt.....	211
Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria.....	211
Assistance to farmers	
Mr. John Jordan.....	212
Hon. Trevor Jones.....	212

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

Safer Municipalities Act, 2025, Bill 6, Mr. Flack / Loi de 2025 pour des municipalités plus sûres, projet de loi 6, M. Flack	
First reading agreed to.....	213
Hon. Rob Flack.....	213

**INTRODUCTION OF BILLS /
DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI**

Health Care is Not for Sale Act (Addressing Unfair Fees Charged to Patients), 2025, Bill 7, Mme Gélinas; MPP Lennox; Ms. Pasma / Loi de 2025 sur les soins de santé qui ne sont pas à vendre (lutte contre la facturation d'honoraires injustes aux patients), projet de loi 7, Mme Gélinas; MPP Lennox; Mme Pasma	
First reading agreed to.....	213
Mme France Gélinas.....	213
WSIB Coverage for Workers in Residential Care Facilities and Group Homes Act, 2025, Bill 8, Mr. Fraser / Loi de 2025 sur la protection à accorder aux travailleurs dans les établissements de soins en résidence et les foyers de groupe par la Commission de la sécurité professionnelle et de l'assurance contre les accidents du travail, projet de loi 8, M. Fraser	
First reading agreed to.....	214
Mr. John Fraser.....	214

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Health care	
Mr. Peter Tabuns.....	214
Taxation	
Mr. Andrew Dowie.....	214
Anti-vaping initiatives for youth	
Mme France Gélinas.....	214
Land use planning	
Ms. Catherine Fife.....	214
Anti-racism activities	
MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam.....	215
Education funding	
Ms. Jessica Bell.....	215
Taxation	
Mr. Anthony Leardi.....	215
Social assistance	
MPP Robin Lennox.....	215
Ontario Science Centre	
Mr. Peter Tabuns.....	215
Highway safety	
Mme France Gélinas.....	215
Health care	
Mr. Peter Tabuns.....	216
Northern Health Travel Grant	
Mme France Gélinas.....	216
Land use planning	
Mr. Peter Tabuns.....	216
Labour legislation	
Mme France Gélinas.....	216

OPPOSITION DAY / JOUR DE L'OPPOSITION

Consumer protection / Protection du consommateur	
Ms. Marit Stiles.....	216
Mr. John Fraser.....	218
MPP Wayne Gates.....	219
Mr. Brian Riddell.....	219
Mr. Chris Glover.....	221
Mme Lucille Collard.....	222
Mr. Tom Rakocevic.....	223
Ms. Chandra Pasma.....	223
MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam.....	224
Mme France Gélinas.....	224
Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens.....	225
Ms. Marit Stiles.....	225
Motion negatived.....	226
Committee membership	
Mr. Steve Clark.....	226
Motion agreed to.....	227

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Protect Ontario Through Free Trade Within Canada Act, 2025, Bill 2, Mr. Fedeli / Loi de 2025 pour protéger l'Ontario en favorisant le libre- échange au Canada, projet de loi 2, M. Fedeli

Ms. Chandra Pasma.....	227	Ms. Lee Fairclough	236
Ms. Laura Smith.....	228	Mr. Anthony Leardi.....	237
MPP Lise Vaugeois.....	229	Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens	237
Mr. Andrew Dowie	229	Ms. Lee Fairclough	237
Ms. Lee Fairclough	229	Mr. Anthony Leardi.....	237
Ms. Catherine Fife.....	230	Mme France Gélinas	238
Ms. Lee Fairclough	230	Ms. Lee Fairclough	239
Mr. Andrew Dowie	231	Ms. Sandy Shaw	239
Mr. Chris Glover	232	Mr. Matthew Rae	240
Mr. Anthony Leardi	232	Ms. Peggy Sattler	240
Ms. Catherine Fife.....	232	M. Anthony Leardi.....	240
Mr. Matthew Rae	233	MPP Lise Vaugeois.....	240
Hon. Caroline Mulroney	233	Mr. Chris Glover	242
Ms. Sandy Shaw	234	Mr. John Jordan.....	242
M. Anthony Leardi.....	235	Ms. Sandy Shaw	242
Ms. Lee Fairclough	235	Ms. Laura Smith.....	243
Ms. Catherine Fife.....	235	Mme France Gélinas	243
		Hon. Paul Calandra	243
		Second reading agreed to	244

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 30 April 2025

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 30 avril 2025

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PROTECT ONTARIO THROUGH FREE
TRADE WITHIN CANADA ACT, 2025
LOI DE 2025 POUR PROTÉGER L'ONTARIO
EN FAVORISANT LE LIBRE-ÉCHANGE
AU CANADA

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 17, 2025, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 2, An Act to enact the Buy Ontario, Buy Canadian Day Act, 2025 and the Ontario Free Trade and Mobility Act, 2025 and to amend various other Acts / *Projet de loi 2, Loi édictant la Loi de 2025 sur le Jour « Achetons ontarien, achetons canadien » et la Loi ontarienne de 2025 sur le libre-échange et la mobilité et modifiant diverses autres lois.*

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Further debate? I recognize the member for Toronto–St. Paul's.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am very honoured to be doing my inaugural address this morning.

I would like to begin by congratulating Madam Speaker on not only being elected Speaker of this Legislature but also making history as the first woman to hold this prestigious position. I am very much enjoying watching you deliver on your goal, your promise to bring the temperature down at times and to keep the chaos south of the border, as you had mentioned. You're right; we don't need that here. Hopefully, I can play a part in helping to make that happen.

I'd like to say a warm hello to everyone in the Legislature this morning. Many of your faces I know, and many of you who are in some of these seats, or might be at other times, I interviewed here and there over the years as a journalist. Now that I have the privilege to work with you all, I know that we can come together to deliver more for the people of Ontario and for the people who are the reason why we're all here today.

I'd like to acknowledge the service of our previous MPP for Toronto–St. Paul's, Jill Andrew. I know Jill and I share concerns about our public health care system, about

tenants' rights, transit, education. Thank you, Jill, for your dedication to the riding surrounding these matters.

I rise in this chamber today with humility, gratitude and a profound sense of responsibility. It is an honour to stand here as the newly elected member for Toronto–St. Paul's, a riding that stands out in our city and our province for its diversity and its beauty.

I'm looking around here right now thinking, "How did this happen? How did I end up here?" I'm now looking at my fellow MPP Stephanie Bowman. Stephanie and I had several conversations over a long period of time about the possibility of politics being in my future, but it was that one conversation on a cold Friday night back in January that pushed me to finally take the leap. So, thank you, Stephanie, for your encouragement and for your support, and now we get to sit beside each other.

If I can turn back time for a moment, I remember my dream as a kid was to be the Bionic Woman—if you know, you know. After that, as I was growing older, I wanted to be a police officer. There were many other dreams along the way, but safe to say that I wasn't exactly thinking of politics all the time. Another career did eventually come calling: journalism. If I think about it, right from the Bionic Woman to where I stand today, everything does align under public service.

For more than three decades, I sat on the other side of this process. I asked the questions, I held politicians to account, and I never imagined I would one day be standing on the floor of this Legislature, not behind an anchor desk but as an elected voice for the people. In other words, I am now one of the politicians to be held accountable.

Just two and a half years ago, in fact, I anchored our province-wide election coverage on CTV, not knowing I'd be a candidate in the next election that would follow it. So here I am, no teleprompter, no newsroom, no earpiece, no trusted producer, but I do have a deeper understanding and respect for our government and a greater respect for all of you before me who have committed your lives to public service.

I know that I am exactly where I was meant to be at this point in my life. I was born and raised in Toronto—in Don Valley West, to be exact—and this is where my dear mother still lives today. My three siblings and I went to public schools in north Toronto. We grew up in the 1970s, and it was a time of playing outside until the lights went on, it was a time when we got the chicken pox, not the measles, and it was also a time when there was a confidence and expectation about the next steps in life.

Post-secondary education took me to London, Ontario; first, Western University, and then Fanshawe College for

broadcast journalism. London is also where I started my career as a local radio reporter. After about eight years in London, I moved back home to Toronto, working at an all-news station; first, in radio at 680 News, and then in television at CP24. A job like this was a dream for someone who wanted to tell stories, who loved telling stories reflecting the community and the concerns, and covering breaking news as it happened. I was taught by, mentored by, worked with and for some of the best, most ethical people in the business—people who taught me about truth, accuracy and objectivity, and people who taught me the importance of giving voice to those who can't speak loud enough to be heard.

In recent years, the stories slowly started to turn on the people covering the news, eroding the faith in the fifth estate. We can thank a certain someone for popularizing the term “fake news” and for changing how some people think of those charged with reporting the truth. This has caused me great disappointment as someone who has spent more than 30 years in this industry. The accusations thrown around that Canadian journalists are editorially influenced by the federal government with subsidies is not only nasty but just not true. We have to preserve and respect journalism and accredited journalists who are working to tell the stories that impact all of us, and treat them with respect and stability, not with the blatant disdain and disrespect we've seen from some leaders.

COVID: It all had an immeasurable impact on so many of us, as you all well know, including journalists, and the weight of the responsibility to report during the pandemic was exceptional. It was a public duty and it was, in many ways, an honour. It was an honour to be one of the handful in a studio downtown when the streets looked abandoned, an honour to be broadcasting from home when sick with COVID or when a family member was ill. But it took its toll: stress, anxiety, burnout. It was time to move on.

Over the years, I'd had the chance to leave journalism and enter politics, but it never felt like the right moment—until now. Something shifted. I began to see the world differently. I saw the people in this province, what they had endured and how they were struggling to rebuild their lives after COVID, including our own children. I couldn't just stand by anymore. I knew it wasn't enough to hold leaders accountable from the sidelines; maybe it was time to become one myself. I felt called to step in and to be a part of the change from the inside, so here I am.

The truth is, politics and journalism aren't so different. Both are about listening to voices that often go unheard, pushing for meaningful change. So when a chance came to represent the community of Toronto—St. Paul's, I knew I couldn't let it pass me by. The good news is I intend to bring the skills that I've developed as a lifelong journalist into my work for the people of Toronto—St. Paul's and we are creating the St. Paul's News Network. That means continuing to share stories from the community highlighting the issues that matter and pushing for real, lasting change. This is going to be an ongoing conversation with the people of St. Paul's.

0910

During the campaign, I had hundreds of conversations—or interviews, as I like to think of them—at the door, and heard stories that need to be told, voices that need to be amplified. And just because the campaign is over, it doesn't mean those conversations are. In fact, they're only just beginning. I have a feeling they will inspire a whole lot of statements, petitions and private members' bills, so get ready.

Speaking of the stories of the riding, bordered by Eglinton to the west, Broadway to the north, Mount Pleasant to the east, the train tracks to the south and Dufferin to the west, St. Paul's is made up of contrasting communities. Someone said, “a tale of two ridings.” I say, “a tale of several ridings.” There are about 120,000 constituents, with some residents enjoying significant wealth and prosperity, while others are barely scraping by, with 65% of people in the riding actually renters. Issues of affordability, health care, lack of family doctors and the rising presence of anti-Semitism plague St. Paul's.

If you look at St. Paul's, you will see beautiful green spaces, the meticulously maintained lawns of Forest Hill and Cedarvale, and vibrant parks like Wychwood, where the farmer's market thrives. Streets like St. Clair West are lined with bustling restaurants, and the art scene is alive and well. There is also what's often called “young and eligible.”

But take a moment and look a little closer, and you're going to notice that many businesses have closed along Eglinton West in Little Jamaica, casualties of the ongoing delays of the Eglinton Crosstown LRT. You'll see two food banks, five Out of the Cold programs, five meal programs serving those in need, and you'll witness a growing sea of high-rises along Davisville, Lascelles, Yonge, Roehampton, Holly and Dunfield. This is where the stories of struggle lurk.

I'll forever be haunted by one conversation at an apartment building on Lascelles during the campaign. My light rap on the door was answered by a beleaguered-looking woman. I introduced myself and she was ready to talk. She was a Ukrainian mom who had come here over 30 years ago with nothing but the promise of opportunity in a new world with her husband. She and her husband had their daughter here. Then, the woman's husband died, the money dried up and she explained she could barely make her rent and had nothing left—no hope of getting out of her financial situation; no ability to move from an apartment she called horrible. She was trapped, and she told me, with tears in her eyes, that were it not for her granddaughter, she would leave this world.

I was actually so stunned by what I heard, I was speechless, but also blinking and thinking, what could I possibly say or do to promise to help this woman? I cobbled together something. I'm sure it didn't match nearly the gravity of what she just told me. I had to move on. But this conversation will forever haunt me, and it will forever be my guide and my driver.

Health care is another story. Like so many ridings across Ontario, the search for a family doctor continues in

Toronto–St. Paul’s. The Ford government recently did announce new measures to connect 300,000 people with 80 new primary care teams, but there’s only 2.1 million more to go. In the meantime, we’re left waiting for hours in overcrowded ERs. We’re looked after by exhausted doctors and nurses. When will this finally become a priority? As our health critic, Dr. Adil Shamji, puts it, “Any time now.”

And speaking of breaking news, Ontario is now reporting more measles cases than the entire United States. If there was ever a time to step up, promote vaccinations and fight disinformation, it is now.

Toronto–St. Paul’s faces many challenges, and one of the most alarming is the rising tide of anti-Semitism. I stand in this Legislature today in part because the Jewish community has placed its trust in me to be their voice, to speak out when silence is not an option and to call out the growing hate they’re being forced to endure in our riding, in our city, in our province and across Canada.

Toronto–St. Paul’s is home to one of the largest Jewish communities in the country, and yet, in today’s Canada, being Jewish means living with fear: fear of threats, fear of intimidation, fear of violence. And far too often, that fear is met with silence. Far too often, public officials look the other way. The reality is this: In our community of St. Paul’s, Jewish families rely on special security measures just to attend synagogue or send their kids to school. That should never be normal. But right now, it is.

In recent years, the wave of anti-Semitism we’ve witnessed here in Toronto and far beyond is horrifying. It’s not just unacceptable; it’s dangerous, and it threatens not only the Jewish community but the fabric of our entire society. That’s why I’m committed to taking action to protect Jewish communities from unlawful protests, to ensure hate crimes are prosecuted and support education that dismantles dangerous myths and hateful ideologies.

I’ll fight for Jewish students to feel safe on campuses and for every Jewish family to feel secure in their neighbourhood, because no one should hesitate to enter a place of worship, no member of our multicultural society should ever be made to feel unwelcome or unsafe and no Jewish person in Ontario should ever have to ask themselves, “Who will hide me?”

To the team that got me here: The Toronto–St. Paul’s provincial Liberal riding association, was ready to hit the ground running, thanks to the leadership of President Brandon Pratt and the dedicated volunteers who were ready to go.

Brandon, your commitment and hard work were truly game-changing for me, and I am deeply grateful for the time, energy and heart you poured into this campaign.

To our incredible campaign chair, Craig Ruttan, and co-managers Dominic Stewart and Brandon: I was in awe watching you work. You took a rookie and without missing a beat transformed her into a candidate in campaign mode. You always knew how to steady me. You calmed my anxieties while still pushing me to dig deep, buck up and keep moving forward, so thank you. Thank

you for your patience, your guidance, your protection and for helping me grow.

I spoke earlier about the volunteers, and truly, it was a village that lifted me up. You met me with smiles every day we headed out—often into snowstorms, as we all know—ready to do the work it took to get me elected. Every single one of you made a meaningful contribution, but I have to give a special mention to my brother, Burke, and his wife, Elisabeth, who, incredibly, were responsible for 20% of the door-knocking in the riding. They were machines, and they were on a mission. Well, mission accomplished, and I am eternally grateful to all of you.

To our leader, Bonnie Crombie: Thank you for believing in me, for giving the opportunity to run in one of the most prominent ridings in the city and to take on a two-term incumbent. I am honoured by the trust you’ve placed in me, and I’m committed to living up to the great responsibility for you and for the party. Because of your leadership, we regained official party status, and with 30% of the popular vote, we proudly became the people’s opposition.

To my caucus colleagues, the original nine: You already had a strong, united bond before the five of us newbies joined, but from day one you welcomed us with open arms and with wisdom and encouragement. I am excited for the next four years and everything we’re going to accomplish together as a team.

To my staff here at Queen’s Park: Emma Fortunato, my executive and legislative assistant—the keeper of all things Steph, as she calls it—she’s my right hand, sometimes my left, juggling it all, keeping me organized, grounded, caffeinated.

Will Reid, our special assistant for communications, the guy behind the magic of making our riding stand out, its being seen and heard across Ontario; that’s at St. Paul’s News Network. Thank you for your creativity, clarity and often perfectly timed idiom. You’re a comms wizard, and I’m lucky to have you.

Dalton Sanderson, our manager at the constituency office: Since the campaign, you’ve been there for me, building bridges, showing up for our neighbours, making sure the office is a true part of the community.

Sebastian Hickmott, our constituency assistant: Your kindness, patience and sharp eye for detail make a world of difference every single day.

You’ve each brought your energy, your talent, your full selves to this work, and I couldn’t ask for a better team. Thank you for standing by me and for believing in the work and making it so much fun along the way.

To my family: My children motivate me to do the best I can for this province. Spencer, Honor, Harrison and Reed, you’ve taught me everything I know about strength, patience, unconditional love. Most importantly, you keep our blended family laughing and keep us learning every day, and you make us so very proud.

Spencer, for your service to our country as a paramedic in the Canadian Armed Forces, with two terms of duty, the first in Poland, to help the refugees pouring in from

Ukraine after Russia invaded, and the second in the UK, training Ukrainian conscripts in combat first aid.

Honor, for your devotion to children and our future as an early childhood educator. I know your impact on these sweet little souls make the world a better place.

Reed, for your empathy and financial acumen. You're witnessing first-hand the affordability crisis and the housing shortage as you help new homebuyers navigate around the markets and financial uncertainty.

0920

And Harrison: Despite our warnings, you chose a family business. Getting your master's in media and journalism communications from Western helped you find employment in this competitive Toronto market. Won't it be awkward if I see you in the media studio?

You're beautiful, kind, loving humans, and you have all found such wonderful partners in Joelle, Jaegar, Dorothy and Naomi, who have so enriched our lives.

I want to thank my mother, Sally, who has 11 grandchildren. A former teacher, Mom has been my biggest inspiration, fan, and source of constant support and encouragement. With Sally, love multiplies and she's always enveloping all of us with her love. We are so lucky.

I want to thank my dear siblings, my best friends: the twins, Burke and Kim, and my younger sister, Andrea, as well as their partners, Elisabeth, Charles and David. Your support during this process was and continues to be remarkable.

I've also been blessed with loving in-laws: Tom and Jean, who live in North Bay, and Linda in Kingston, as well as brothers-in-law Richard in Toronto and Ted in Calgary. You're always there for me as well as your partners, Diana and Val.

If I feel any sadness today, it's because my dear father, Bill, a big advocate of community service, is not here to witness this special day. We lost dad in 2016 to Alzheimer's. Dad, I so wish you were here, but I do feel your strength in this moment, and I hope I make you proud.

Interjections.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Thank you. I'll drink to that.

To my husband, Paul Cook, a remarkable Toronto journalist I deeply respect: While I was out climbing snowbanks and maybe swearing under my breath about a certain Premier's premature election call, you were looking after all our family matters, and you were giving me the reassurance, strength and confidence to go on. You've been a pillar of support, patience, kindness and love, and I'm so very grateful for you and your love. Thank you.

To the people of Toronto–St. Paul's: I'll never lose sight of the fact that I'm here because of you. For those of you who did not vote for me, I want you to know I respect your decision, and I will continue to fight for you every day. I'll work to win you over one at a time. We have four years to get to know each other, and hopefully more, so be prepared for the story of Toronto–St. Paul's—for your story—to be featured prominently. I promise to be your

advocate, elevating your issues, your concerns and your voice.

To the people in the Legislature: I come to Queen's Park not as a career politician but as someone who has spent a lifetime watching this place from the outside, and I now want to help effect change from within. I bring with me love of this province, not just for the downtown streets in my riding but for the rocky shores and quiet lakes of northern Ontario, a place for which I hold deep affection.

We're facing a profound affordability crisis, a health care crisis and a crisis of public trust, but I know Queen's Park is a place where we can find real solutions together. More than that, I believe we can be a beacon of civility in a time where political discourse in our world has lost its way.

The people of Ontario deserve a Legislature that reflects their hopes, not just their headlines. I will do my very best to uphold that goal, leading with kindness, a welcoming smile and an open mind. That can go a long way.

I'm ready to serve, ready to listen and ready to do the work. Ontario strong.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Ms. Laura Smith: Thank you the member from Toronto–St. Paul's for giving us insight into her life. I'm always interested in hearing about their journey. I'm grateful we have somebody with so much experience in this House because we all come here with different experiences.

You talked about your pivot from journalism into politics, and I'm just wondering what the biggest obstacle was that the member faced in this journey.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: I was asked about the biggest obstacle. I think it was the pivot from what I did before as a journalist into something that is very advocacy-driven. In journalism, you try to have that objectivity, so you tell the stories, you observe, you watch, and you tell everything as factually correctly as you can. When you go and step into politics, it's like, "Now I'm advocating. I am part of this process. I'm not just watching, but I am as responsible as everybody else." So it's just that transition to, yes, you can talk and you can criticize and you can chirp and you can hold everybody to account, but now that you're here you have to remember, you are to be held to account. You've got to walk away from that 35-year career. I think it helps me, keeps me grounded and always keeps me on my toes.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

MPP Catherine McKenney: Thank you to the member from Toronto–St. Paul's. It was really lovely to listen to you and to get to know you, so thank you for that.

Again, you did mention that you're a retired broadcaster. You were an on-air anchor. Can you give us an example of one of the most interesting stories, whether it's the most amusing or most difficult, that you can remember reporting on?

MPP Stephanie Smyth: In 35 years, there are so many stories.

Can I start with something kind of funny? I got an opportunity to interview Felipe Calderón, the former Mexican President, and the producer said, “You have two and a half minutes.” “Wow. Okay.” Nine minutes later, they were saying, “Cut. What are you doing? It’s not that interesting to everybody now.” I got so involved with Felipe Calderón. It was just a very funny moment from a broadcasting perspective.

I think 9/11 was devastating. The world experienced that.

The next world event that came was COVID, and there is no doubt that COVID took its toll. The stories that were told from COVID were immeasurable, and to this day we are still living with the fallout of COVID. Everybody, I’m sure, has a family member who was impacted, either physically, mentally, financially. The health perspective still lives to this day. The stories, as I said, are endless and are continuing. I think that probably is the one that had the most impact. It was also a time when I remember watching from this Legislature—or, actually, not from this Legislature, but when we heard from a certain Premier every day at 1 o’clock. That was pivotal.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: I want to congratulate the member from Toronto–St. Paul’s on a wonderful inaugural speech and on her election. I also want to thank her for deciding to run and step up and serve her community. I know she’s going to be a great addition and a great public servant for Toronto–St. Paul’s.

The member talked about the media and the shifting landscape that we face in terms of seeking out the truth and having objectivity in our news.

I wonder if you could talk for a moment about what role politicians both here at Queen’s Park and across the country need to play in making sure that we have a sound, reliable fifth estate to portray the true stories of our nation.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: It is absolutely essential that all politicians respect the fifth estate. I think it’s something that we cannot take for granted. It is a pillar of our society, so we have to respect that on a daily basis. You can’t undercut, question, call out, as we’re seeing south of the border—“Oh, that’s fake news.”

I think what is vitally important is that we always tell the truth, as politicians, as people in government being held to account—we give accurate information so they give accurate information, but we don’t bypass; we try to always go through the traditional, trusted, accredited media organizations. Online, we know, there is all kinds of misinformation out there. We’ve got to be very careful about the organizations that we speak to and ensure that we’re getting the story out there through proper channels.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Thank you very much for that inspiring personal statement giving us a good overview of the past years of your career.

How do you feel now, as a politician who is going to be challenged by journalists? You were on the other side of the fence. You were the journalist who was trying to corner the politicians and hold them accountable. How do you feel now you are on the other side, dealing with your colleague journalists?

0930

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Thank you for that question. It did cross my mind, and I see many of them here every day. I know all of them and respect all of them for the work that they have done, and I have watched throughout my career and theirs. I think it is scary to be on the other side and know that that’s coming, and I think that motivates me to work in truth, honesty and to always work with the best interests of the people of Toronto–St. Paul’s. In that way, I can’t go wrong.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Congratulations to the member from Toronto–St. Paul’s on her inaugural address. I want to say how much we appreciated her acknowledgement of her predecessor, Jill Andrew, as the former MPP.

As MPP for London West, I was really struck by learning that the member had lived in London for eight years before she moved to Toronto. I wondered if she could share with this House what she gained from that experience living in London and how that is informing her new role as MPP.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Thank you for the question. London has such a dear place in my heart. Those years, I went to Western, as I said in my speech, and then Fanshawe College, and then, in this first job as a radio reporter at CJBK and BX93—that was my first exposure to civic politics, covering city hall. In fact, someone I worked with at CJBK, the radio station, went on to become mayor, Anne Marie DeCicco-Best. I literally learned so much there about the structure of local government, the transit commission, the LTU—all of the things.

London is like a beautiful mini-Toronto, and I mean that in a really great way. You’ve got the Forest City, you have all the greenery, the gorgeousness of the riding. And the educational aspect as well: Health sciences in London are absolutely—

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Response?

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Oh, 10 seconds. So going back to your question, it informs everything I did as a journalist, and now my understanding of politics as well.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

M^{me} Lucille Collard: A very warm welcome to MPP Smyth—she’s already demonstrated her great value among our caucus, and I look forward to working with her.

I’m sure as a reporter you’ve travelled the province, and maybe beyond. You’ve alluded very shortly about your connection with the north, and I would like you to speak a little bit more about that to give us some insight.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Thanks for that question. Northern Ontario is very dear to me because my in-laws,

first of all, live in North Bay, but their roots were in Kirkland Lake, Ontario. My in-laws' father—my husband's grandfather—was a heating and cooling engineer with the mining industry, in the booming times of Kirkland Lake, so they lived in Kirkland Lake. But in those days, you're going to have a camp on a local lake, and in fact that camp is within the family to this day, so we go there every summer. People ask, "Where is this cottage? Muskoka? Is it in the Kawarthas?" No, it's actually seven hours north, up Yonge Street, turn left. And we love it. It's a treasured time—

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Further debate?

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: As I enter the debate concerning Bill 2, I wish to confirm that I am sharing my time with the member for the Bay of Quinte.

It is a privilege and an honour to participate in the debate this morning on the proposed Protect Ontario Through Free Trade Within Canada Act. For more than 100 years, Ontario has been the beneficiary of one of the most successful and long-standing trade relationships the world has ever seen, that being Canada's economic partnership with the United States. Together, our two countries have built supply chains, created jobs and raised the standard of living for millions of people. But today, that relationship is under unprecedented strain. President Trump has imposed unwarranted and unjustified tariffs on Canadian vehicles, steel, aluminum and softwood lumber, and his administration has made it clear that additional tariffs and trade restrictions are under active consideration. How we respond will determine the course of our economy for decades to come.

We cannot wait for change to come from elsewhere; we must lead that change. This is about the ability of families to plan for their futures, of businesses to make investment decisions with confidence, and of workers to know that their jobs are secure. While our government continues to engage with our American partners, advocating for the removal of these unjust tariffs, we must also take meaningful steps to protect ourselves. We will do this by reducing our reliance on any one market, even one as important as the United States, by ensuring that our economy is resilient, diverse and self-sufficient. That starts with doing something we, as Canadians, should have done a long time ago. That means removing the barriers that prevent us from trading freely with each other.

Speaker, it should not be easier for a business in Ontario to trade with a company in Ohio than with a business in Nova Scotia or Manitoba. And yet, due to outdated protectionist policies, that has too often been the case. That ends now. Ontario is responsible for \$326 billion in interprovincial trade—more than any other province. Eliminating these barriers could boost Ontario's GDP by as much as \$23 billion annually according to a study prepared by Deloitte. Studies show interprovincial trade barriers cost our national economy up to \$200 billion each year, adding as much as 14.5% to the costs of goods and services. This is an unnecessary burden on Canadian families, and we are proposing to remove it. At the heart

of this legislation is a fundamental reform to the Canadian Free Trade Agreement. Every single one of Ontario's trade exceptions is being eliminated: no caveats, no conditions. This is not just symbolic; this is economic leadership.

But we are not stopping at removing exceptions. We are building a modern regulatory framework, one that is based on trust and mutual respect among provinces and territories. Our legislation proposes to enshrine the principle of mutual recognition. If a good or service is legally sold in one Canadian province or territory, it will be recognized as legal for sale in Ontario. Speaker, it really is this simple. If it's good enough for Saskatchewan, it's good enough for Ontario. If it's good enough for Nova Scotia, it's good enough for Ontario.

We are not compromising on safety or quality. Every province in this country has strong, rigorous standards. But regulatory duplication, where the rules are virtually identical but still require separate certifications, adds cost and complexity without any benefit. Consider just one example, Speaker: high-visibility safety apparel. Now, a construction crew from New Brunswick may spend thousands of dollars on safety gear that meets their provincial standards, gear that is functionally identical to what we require here in the province of Ontario, and yet, due to minor technical differences, they could be forced to purchase entirely new equipment just to work here. This kind of regulatory redundancy exists in dozens of sectors, from mining and energy to food production and consumer goods. It serves no one, and we are eliminating it.

Speaker, our reforms also address one of the most critical and overlooked sectors of our economy, that being trucking. Canada's trucking industry generates nearly \$40 billion in annual revenue, moving over 63 million shipments each year. It is the backbone of our domestic supply chain. Yet different provinces enforce different rules on weight limits, truck dimensions and operational requirements. These inconsistencies force trucking companies to adjust loads mid-route or switch vehicles at provincial borders. The result: higher freight rates, lower productivity and an estimated half a billion dollars in annual economic losses.

0940

So in partnership with other provinces, Ontario launched a pilot program in February 2025. Through mutual recognition, we will reduce the regulatory friction that holds back our supply chains because, quite frankly, it should never be easier for a truck to cross the border into Michigan than it is to cross the border into Manitoba.

This bill also takes important steps to remove barriers to labour mobility. We know that Ontario is home to a booming economy, with over one million new jobs created since this government was first elected in 2018. That's thanks to our government's leadership and initiatives that support investment and growth, creating the conditions for job creation and prosperity. From Honda's \$15-billion EV investment in Alliston to Ferrero's \$445-million expansion in Brantford, the demand for skilled labour has never been greater in the province of Ontario. But too often, workers who are fully certified in one province then must

navigate complex, costly and time-consuming processes just to work in another province within Confederation. This is a disincentive to work and it is a drag on productivity.

Our bill therefore proposes as-of-right registration: Workers already certified in another province will be automatically allowed to work in Ontario for up to six months while completing registration with the relevant regulatory body because, whether someone is an architect certified in Nova Scotia, a nurse trained in Alberta, an electrician registered in Manitoba, if they are good enough to work in their home province, they are good enough and welcome to work in Ontario.

We will also impose reasonable timelines on our regulators, ensuring that applications are processed quickly and fairly.

Finally, Speaker, we are acting on an issue that has long frustrated both producers and consumers, that being the sale of alcoholic beverages across provincial lines.

You may recall the 2012 Supreme Court of Canada case involving Gerard Comeau, a resident of New Brunswick. Mr. Comeau travelled to Quebec and purchased 354 cans of beer and three bottles of liquor to bring home to New Brunswick. He was charged with being in possession of more alcohol purchased out of province than was permitted under the New Brunswick Liquor Control Act.

Mr. Comeau challenged the act as a violation of section 121 of the Constitution Act, 1867. That provision of our original Constitution states as follows: "All articles of the growth, produce, or manufacture of any one of the provinces shall, from and after the union, be admitted free into each of the other provinces."

While Mr. Comeau was unsuccessful in his constitutional challenge, it did raise the profile of this fundamental issue with the public, and it led to action. In 2018, many provinces, including Ontario, raised or removed personal exception limits on alcohol. But now, we have an opportunity to go even further.

Our new legislation will lay the groundwork for interprovincial direct-to-consumer alcohol sales, starting with negotiations with other provinces. This will expand consumer choice, lower prices and open new markets for Ontario companies who produce world-class beverages that face costly restrictions selling across the country. It is time to trust Canadians to make their own choices and empower our producers to compete on our national stage.

Speaker, we are at a defining moment in Canadian history. We face growing protectionism from abroad, but the answer is not fear or retreat. The answer is bold action here at home. The answer is to tear down the outdated, unnecessary and costly barriers that divide Canadians economically.

We are making it easier to trade, easier to hire, easier to build, easier to grow. We invite every other province and territory to join us in this collective effort. Let us build a country where free trade actually means free trade, not just with our neighbours to the south but with our fellow Canadians. Let us remove the barriers that hold us back. Let us move forward together.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): I recognize the member for Bay of Quinte.

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: Thank you to all my colleagues who are here this morning. It is an honour to be here today to talk about the Protect Ontario Through Free Trade Within Canada Act, a critical piece—

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Pursuant to proceeding order 50(c), I am now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there have been six and a half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader directs the debate to continue.

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: Speaker, I move that debate continue.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Continue.

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: Well, thank you, everybody. I was on a bit of a roll there. We'll continue.

We continue to see the chaos and uncertainty that President Trump's tariffs have caused across the global economy. Markets have shed off trillions of dollars in value, which encapsulates the stress and challenges that businesses are facing. Businesses are pausing strategic investment decisions because they have no certainty as to what the future holds. As a former business owner myself, I know that they can't make decisions for five, 10 or 20 years out if they don't have an idea of what the next 12 months will hold.

No one can get a sense of what will happen with President Trump's tariffs, possibly not even the President himself. We have seen how fast he can change his mind: One minute, the tariffs are on, and then the next minute, the tariffs are off, or they're paused, or they're delayed. There is no coherent strategy. There have been exceptions for certain sectors, but at the same time, we hear talks of the President potentially expanding his tariffs to sectors such as pharmaceuticals.

Make no mistake, our government is going to continue our advocacy in getting the US to lift all of their tariffs on Canadian goods.

Minister Fedeli and our government recently returned from Washington, where they had productive meetings with elected representatives, industry organizations and trade officials. Ultimately, we are going to keep fighting, but we can't control the President's actions. That is why, simultaneously, we need to focus on strengthening our province's economy and doing the things that we can do irrespective of what happens in the United States. That is why you are seeing such an ambitious legislative agenda from our government, including the legislation that we are discussing here today, the Protect Ontario Through Free Trade Within Canada Act. This legislation positions Ontario as a leader within Canada.

We have long heard of the costs of interprovincial trade barriers. Every report and every study draws the same conclusions: Interprovincial trade barriers drive up costs, restrict competition and limit our country's economic growth. Interprovincial trade barriers can add up to 14.5%

to the cost of goods and services that consumers purchase. Those are not costs that Canadians can afford, especially as we face tariffs from the United States. Removing these barriers will see Canada boost its national growth between 4% to 8% annually, which would represent a potential gain of up to \$200 billion.

In Ontario, Deloitte reports that we could see up to \$23 billion in boosts to our annual GDP. Just think of what that could mean for our economy right here in Ontario. The cost and the benefits could not be clearer.

Ontario is Canada's largest player in interprovincial trade, worth over \$326 billion in 2023. That's the equivalent of 28.5% of our GDP. Interprovincial trade is up more than \$75 billion since we took office, and we know that we can grow it even further. That's why we are leading the country with this ambitious legislation that will tear down interprovincial trade barriers and allow for more free trade between provinces and territories.

This legislation has strong support from stakeholders who represent businesses and workers across the province. Let me take the time to highlight some of the support that this legislation has gotten to date.

The Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters said, "This legislation is a historic step towards making the movement of goods and people freer across Canada.... We encourage all provinces to follow Ontario's lead to build our country's strength."

0950

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce said, "By removing these obstacles, Ontario is sending a strong signal that it values economic co-operation and labour mobility. Businesses will benefit from greater certainty, lower costs, and improved access to talent. We commend the Ontario government for its leadership."

Speaker, this legislation has strong support from across the country. Politicians of all stripes have talked about the importance of removing internal trade barriers for decades. The previous Liberal government talked about it and did absolutely nothing, just like they did with several other key files. Now, our government is proud to lead the way with this decisive action. We hope that the members opposite will join us in supporting this legislation at a critical time for our province and our country's economic future. These are common sense measures that we can all get behind.

It doesn't make sense that a construction worker in Nova Scotia would have to buy a new safety vest or coveralls if they wanted to come work in Ontario. Unfortunately, this is often the case. We know that provinces and territories across the country have strong safety rules, and for good reason. But oftentimes, the slightest difference in regulations drives up costs and harms labour mobility. These are the measures that we as a country need to get rid of. We need to cut red tape and unnecessary duplicative regulation.

Think of the cost for a Nova Scotia construction worker who wants to come work in our province. Perhaps they want to come work at one of the many manufacturing plants that are being constructed as a result of the tens of

billions of dollars in investment our province has landed over these last few years. This unnecessary duplication in the rules governing safety apparel between Nova Scotia and Ontario drives up costs for our workers.

A pair of coveralls can often cost a worker upwards of \$200. That means that if a crew of 20 construction workers from Nova Scotia were needed to come work on a manufacturing plant being set up here in Ontario, they would have to foot a bill of upwards of \$4,000, despite them already owning safety apparel that is good for use in Nova Scotia. These are the types of redundancies that Canada needs to prioritize getting rid of. And with our legislation, we are going to ensure that a good or service that is good enough for sale, use or work in one province is good enough for sale, use or work in Ontario.

Interprovincial trade barriers have existed in our country for far too long. They weaken competition, drive up costs and limit our country's economic growth. As the largest interprovincial trader in Canada, Ontario is proud to lead the way in removing these barriers. We need other provinces to join us and take bold and ambitious action to scrap these unnecessary barriers.

Over the last seven years, our government has focused on creating an environment within Ontario that encourages investment and job creation. We have cut over 550 pieces of red tape and lowered the annual cost of doing business by \$8 billion. By creating these conditions for businesses to succeed, we have landed game-changing investments, including \$46 billion in new automotive investments, over \$6 billion in life science investments and tens of billions of dollars in tech investments. We've also seen businesses create one million new jobs since 2018.

Now, as we are faced with an unprecedented threat from the United States, we must do everything we can to protect the progress that we have made. We need to ensure that we have true free trade and labour mobility within our province to reduce our dependence on the United States, who are no longer a reliable partner. We need to tear down the barriers that are costing the Canadian economy up to \$200 billion annually and adding up to 14.5% to the cost of Canadian goods and services.

Let's work together to unlock Canada's true economic potential so that we can lower costs and create more good-paying jobs for the workers across the country and right here in the province of Ontario.

Thank you very much, and I look forward to your support of this bill.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

MPP Wayne Gates: I want to talk about Niagara a little bit. I've been fighting for years to get Ontario wines in the LCBO—VQA wines made with 100% Niagara grapes—and including getting our grapes going across the country.

Since we've taken the American booze off the shelves at the LCBO—and this isn't how much we drink, but I just want to show what's happened—Niagara wines have exploded. Red wines are up 71%. White wines are up 67%. Sparkling is up 28%. That's not a fluke. That's what

happens when we finally give people the choice to support their neighbours and buy local and buy right here in the country.

So my question is very clear: Do you support giving more shelf space at the LCBO for VQA wines, spirits, craft beer and continue to not have American products on our shelves forever, and certainly before any American product, even after the tariffs are gone and Trump is no longer the President of the United States?

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: Well, the member opposite makes an excellent point. As far as the question is concerned, if you look at part VI, section 10 of Bill 2: “Except as otherwise provided in this section, this schedule comes into force on the later of July 1, 2025....” So we’re moving quickly. And the act is to be called the Protect Ontario Through Free Trade Within Canada Act, 2025. But as you can see, on the front page of the bill on the orders table, it is in fact An Act to enact the Buy Ontario, Buy Canadian Day Act, 2025 and the Ontario Free Trade and Mobility Act. So it is about buying Ontario, buying Canadian, and it’s consistent with section 121 of the original Constitution Act, 1867, originally called the BNA Act. The fundamental bargain, a confederation among the original four provinces, was free trade within Confederation.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

MPP Robin Lennox: The NDP is strongly supportive of creating meaningful employment opportunities and strengthening our economy by diversifying our trade partners. But we must ensure that as we cross provincial trade barriers, we don’t sacrifice the regulations that protect our labour rights and keep our workers safe.

This week, we recognize the Day of Mourning and the far too many workers who have been lost or injured on the job. With this legislation, how will the province plan to prevent a race to the bottom where lower-standard jurisdictions receive preference?

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. We understand how important it is that we have strong safety regulations, not just in Ontario but across Canada to ensure that workers are safe on the job and that while they create the productivity that they need, they’re being protected. That’s why we’re doing this mutual recognition: because we know that other provinces have stepped up as well, and that if a good or service or a worker is registered in another province, and it’s deemed to be good enough for Nova Scotia or New Brunswick, that it will also be good enough here in Ontario.

What we’re trying to do is get rid of the duplicative redundancies that often come in these regulations that only drive up costs, that only make it more difficult to do business and that hinder our economic growth, which is so desperately needed at this time as we face this struggle and oncoming challenge from the United States. So we are going to do both things: grow our economy and make sure that we’re keeping workers safe at the same time.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Mr. Billy Pang: This question is for the minister. For far too long, we have heard about interprovincial trade barriers that make it difficult for provinces to trade between each other. Whether it’s the agricultural sector or the trucking sector, there are too many barriers that stop the free and fair trade of goods within our country. Can the minister share with us: How will the barriers that are being removed in this legislation lower the cost for families and businesses in the province?

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: Thank you, through you, Speaker, to the member for the question—very appropriate and timely.

It is about protecting Ontario families. It is about standing up for and creating the conditions for growth and prosperity for businesses, particularly our small businesses.

The cost of interprovincial trade barriers is well documented. It’s not just Deloitte’s study, but in study after study, report after report, we continue to see just how costly interprovincial trade barriers are. Sadly, it took the existential threat from the Trump administration and its threats on tariffs and the declaration of a trade war to have us pursue this calling.

Estimates show that interprovincial trade barriers can add up to 14.5% to the cost of goods and services. We cannot afford that anymore in the face of the Trump tariffs, and we will not stand for it anymore. We will stand by the fundamental bargain at Confederation.

1000

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thank you to the government members who spoke on this bill. This bill includes a provision to declare a Buy Ontario, Buy Canadian Day annually in June. Certainly, that may help encourage consumers to purchase Ontario-made or Canadian-made products. But my question to the government members is, why is the government entering into agreements with US-based companies like Starlink, like Staples, and with international companies like Therme to do government business when there are perfectly appropriate Ontario or Canadian companies who could do that work for the province of Ontario?

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: Perhaps the member has forgotten, but I’ll remind the member of the Building Ontario Businesses Initiative Act, 2022, and regulations under that act that were filed in April 2024. This is about building Ontario businesses, so whatever the name of the company may be, whatever the origin of the company may be, if they employ Ontarians and they have offices in Ontario, they will be part of the prosperity that will affect positively Ontario workers and Ontario-based businesses. That’s the litmus test.

We are a nation under threat. We are a province under threat. We will not rely on one trading partner. We will diversify, but it begins with this proposed legislation, with tearing down interprovincial trade barriers that are inconsistent with section 121 of our Constitution Act, 1867—as I said, a fundamental bargain at Confederation. We are moving forward on that basis and what better day

to declare it than the 158th anniversary of Confederation, this coming July 1.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Mr. Anthony Leardi: My question is for the member from the Bay of Quinte. He was talking about the provisions of this particular proposed legislation that would make labour mobility a better thing in our country. I certainly support that because we don't want a situation where we're trying to drive up costs for people here in Ontario based on labour mobility laws which make it more expensive to build in Ontario. That's not something we want. We want to make it less expensive to build in Ontario, and at the same time, preserve all of the protections that are in place for safety in the workplace. I think that's very important, too.

I want to ask the member from the Bay of Quinte, with respect to the legislation that we're debating today, what provisions in this legislation assist in those goals?

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: Thank you to the member from Essex for that question. There are a number of provisions in this bill that enhance labour mobility across Canada to be able to make sure that our businesses here in Ontario and right in my home riding of Bay of Quinte have access to the labour force that they so desperately need.

That includes expanding as-of-right rules to more regulated medical professions. I was talking to the owner of Hitchon's hearing services in Belleville the other day. They can't get more audiologists, people who study the ability to hear. They need that for their business. They don't have them locally. That's a great profession that we would be able to bring in under this new regulation by expanding those as-of-right rules.

Also, the mutual recognition of registered workers, as we talked about, with construction workers, with so many others: Their ability to work here is hampered by unnecessary regulation and often, in cases, too many delays. We're going to get those people in and we're going to get them to work and keep building Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Further debate?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: It's always a pleasure to rise on behalf of the residents of Ottawa West–Nepean to speak in this House. Today I am rising to speak about Bill 2, the Protect Ontario Through Free Trade Within Canada Act. Of course I need to start by mentioning the context in which we're debating this bill, which is threats from Donald Trump, and we saw him reiterate those threats on Monday, right in the middle of our federal election. This is a serious and existential threat for our country.

I also want to pause and congratulate our new Prime Minister, Mark Carney, and our newly elected members of Parliament. This is a moment where we all need to come together to protect our country, so I also want to thank the thousands of volunteers across the country who stepped forward and worked hard to defend their vision of our country and the policies and the values that they believe in. We may not always agree, but I think it's important to have all those voices together at the table working in unity

to defend our country and our province—a Team Canada, Team Ontario approach, because make no mistake, we are very different countries.

I want to share a story about the moment this came home for me. It's a moment I've been thinking about a lot over the past few months. I went to graduate school in the US and I served on the grad student senate. We were debating a proposition about providing health care for all of the students at the university. Health care in the US is not publicly funded, publicly delivered. Everybody has their private insurance—I shouldn't say everybody because there's actually many people who do not have private insurance and who therefore can't access health care or who have to go deeply into debt in order to get health care.

So we were debating this proposition that would provide health insurance for every single student at the university, and it would only cost \$20 per semester in order to provide this coverage. I sat and listened in the debate to speaker after speaker who opposed this proposition because they already had health insurance. Their position was, "Why should I pay for other people to have health care when I already have health care?"

I was a pretty poor student at the time; I was carefully managing my budget to make sure that I could pay rent and buy groceries. Despite that, to me it was a no-brainer that we should all contribute \$20 a semester to provide health care for everyone, and that it was totally worth that price to see thousands of students at that university access health care and to be sure that that health care would be there for them without going deeply into debt.

I think that's a key part of what makes us different as Canadians, that we truly believe we need to look after one another and sometimes we need to make sacrifices, sometimes we need to adopt policies that help to ensure that everybody is looked after. That's a key goal for us, and we're rightly very proud of our public health care system. Unfortunately, I think this government is chipping away at the edges of that public health care system, and the idea that we should all be able to access health care with our health card and not with our credit card. But, broadly speaking, this is a very important value for Canadians and for residents in Ontario.

We've also seen that this is a comparative advantage for our economy. The past few decades have shown there are companies that are willing to locate in Canada and in Ontario because not only do they not need to cover the cost of health insurance for their employees, but they know that they will have access to a healthy, well-educated base of workers. Our publicly funded education system is another foundation of that comparative advantage, particularly compared to the US. It's another area where, I think, unfortunately this government has been chipping away at this system that looks after one another.

But I think these are important comparative advantages that we should keep in mind. I'm going to come back to this issue of comparative advantages later. For now, I just want to emphasize that we have a distinct identity, and that identity is centred around looking after one another and

making sure that everyone can live with dignity and security in our province and in our country.

This threat is so great because our economy is so heavily dependent on our relationships with the United States. Ontario is the most trade-reliant province in Canada, and one in five jobs in Ontario depend directly on trade with the United States. If we lose that trade, we have a significant number of jobs, a significant number of workers who are seriously at risk. If we were a country, we would be the US's third-largest trading partner. Nearly 85% of our exports go to the US, so we seriously need to find new trading partners, both within Canada and with our domestic allies across the world.

Just to share one example of the impact of some of the trade barriers that are faced within Canada: A few weeks ago, I was at a reception for Big Brothers Big Sisters of Ottawa and I was speaking with a board member there who works for a digital data services company in Ottawa. He told me that most of their business is with the US because it's far easier for them to work in the US than it is in other provinces. This is a great example of one of the kinds of services that we need to ensure has the capacity, has the ability, has the opportunity to work with other provinces in Canada. We need to harness that economic potential that we have in Ontario to make sure that we are building a strong economy and growing the number of jobs here. Statistics Canada has said that the inter-provincial trade barriers are akin to a 7% tariff.

1010

So there is a need to take a look at these interprovincial trade barriers, but we shouldn't just be talking about dismantling, because this is an opportunity for us to also look at workplace health and safety regulations. Workplace health and safety regulations are frequently cited as an example of an interprovincial trade barrier, that there are different standards for protecting workers in different provinces. This is everything from standards for hearing, head, foot and eye protection at work sites; fall protection training standards; filtering respirator standards; testing for automated vehicles and corporate registry requirements.

This is not just an academic exercise that we are talking about here, Speaker. Earlier this week, we celebrated the Day of Mourning, a day where we remember those who have died on the job as well as those who have been forever changed through a workplace injury or a work-associated disease. In 2023, there were 1,507 workplace fatalities in Canada. That's 1,507 people who did not come home at the end of a workday. There are an additional 274,022 claims related to lost work time due to injury or illness that is associated to the job. That's over 200,000 people who have lost time because of a work-related injury, and that understates it because we don't actually know how many claims were denied by workplace compensation boards and how many workers never bothered to file a complaint in the first place because they had so little expectation of actually receiving a fair hearing and receiving fair compensation. So we have a lot of work to do in Canada on workplace safety, because every worker

should come home at the end of the day. No parent should receive a call that their child is not coming home.

At the Ottawa ceremony to recognize the Day of Mourning, we heard from a parent, Jennifer Chenier, who lost her son Nick in a work-related accident two years ago in Ottawa. It was incredibly moving and heartbreaking to hear Jennifer share her story, and to hear about her fight for justice for Nick over the past two years. We don't want anybody to receive the call that Jennifer received. We don't want anybody to have to fight for justice for their child the way Jennifer has had to fight for Nick.

We need to protect our workers. Saving jobs and protecting workers isn't just about making sure that we have jobs to replace ones that may be lost due to this trade war; it also means making sure that workers have the health and safety protections that they need.

One reason why we have different standards across the country is because the scenario is not always the same. Just to take one example from the trucking industry, you don't necessarily need the same standards to drive a truck across the straight, flat ground of the prairie as you do to drive a truck through northern Ontario, where it's hilly and where our roads are unfortunately in a poor state of maintenance because the government leaves it up to municipalities who don't have the fiscal capacity to look after the Trans-Canada Highway. We need to make sure that trucks are not only safe enough to drive those flat, straight stretches of the prairies, but that they are safe to drive on our northern Ontario highways so, again, every trucker comes home safely at the end of a shift and every trucker is returned to their family.

This is an opportunity for us to harmonize standards at the highest possible level so that we are protecting workers across the country—

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): It is now time to end the debate.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

REPORT, FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICER

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): I beg to inform the House that the following document was tabled: a report entitled the Potential Impacts of US Tariffs on the Ontario Economy, from the Office of the Financial Accountability Officer of Ontario.

It is now time for members' statements.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

MPP Wayne Gates: Auto workers are saying it loud and clear: If you want to sell cars here, you must build here. At a rally in Windsor last weekend, I stood with workers, many of them Unifor members who travelled from Niagara to protect Canadian jobs. These workers

have helped build this province, and they're asking for one thing: Put politics aside; stand up and fight for our jobs.

We've built cars in Canada for over a hundred years, and Canadians buy two million vehicles yearly. I'll say it plainly: This is our industry, these are our jobs, and we're not backing down. The minister stood up yesterday with partisan political shots and no plan. That wasn't leadership. I saw leadership at the rally. Workers stood united, driving from one border community to another, from all across Ontario. They put political leanings aside, united in a common front. They don't care what party you're from; they're fighting for their jobs, for their community, for their families.

Trump's reckless tariffs have already caused thousands of workers in Windsor to be laid off, and tens of thousands more across Ontario are at risk. Workers want to know that governments are going to stand up for them. Our advantage over the US is our publicly funded health care and education, our highly skilled workforce and our world-class manufacturing. We can't allow any car company to take equipment out of our plants and ship it to the American plants. Once the equipment is removed, it is never coming back and our jobs are gone. We must fight back like hell to protect workers' jobs in Ontario. Fighting back makes a difference.

GILBERTSON'S MAPLE PRODUCTS

MPP Bill Rosenberg: In 1936, one of our very own former MPPs, Bernt Gilbertson, founded Gilbertson's maple syrup. Bernt represented Algoma-Manitoulin—it was just Algoma back then—from 1967 to 1975. One of his many successful endeavours was the tapping of trees to make maple syrup, known as liquid gold. Four generations later, they're still one of the largest maple syrup producers in Ontario. Bernt's sons, Don, Rick and Greg, carried on that tradition, and, in 1967, they built a welcoming venue where people could come from all over the area and eat their fluffy pancakes with Gilbertson's maple syrup.

In 2006 the older pancake house was replaced with a modern timber building, modern kitchen and a gift shop with, of course, maple syrup, tasty maple treats and giftware. The new building was simply called the Pancake House. Today, grandsons Calvin and Brent are in charge. With more modern equipment, they have 40,000 taps, 300 kilometres of tap lines and 500 acres, and produce around 50,000 litres of maple syrup per year.

It's great to know that there's another generation waiting in the wings to take over. A couple of weeks ago, Jeannine and I were two of the 15,000 to 16,000 people who travel to Gilbertson's every spring to have that tasty Gilbertson's maple syrup. We also had the privilege to chat with Brent, who gave us a tour. It's a great operation.

Congratulations to the Gilbertson family, another successful Ontario farm-to-table product.

COST OF LIVING

M^{me} Lucille Collard: One in four households in Ottawa is experiencing food insecurity. Since 2019, visits to the Ottawa Food Bank have surged by 90%. Food affordability is out of control, and families are struggling to meet their basic needs. Last week, I visited food banks in my riding and served meals at the Ottawa Mission.

The volunteers are extraordinary, but no amount of community generosity can replace the responsibility of government. Charities are doing their part; now government must do theirs. In a province as wealthy as Ontario, allowing people to go hungry is not just unacceptable; it's immoral. Hunger is not inevitable. It's the direct result of policy choices, and right now, those choices are failing people. We need immediate, stable funding for food banks. But even more importantly, we must fix the root causes. That means raising Ontario Works and ODSP to livable levels. Today, someone on OW might receive just \$733, and that doesn't cover rent, let alone food.

1020

Speaker, no one should be pushed into poverty by the very programs designed to support them. This government has a moral and civic obligation to act. Fund food banks, raise income supports and ensure that no Ontarian is left behind.

RIDING OF MISSISSAUGA—ERIN MILLS

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: It is an honour to return to Queen's Park for my third term as member of provincial Parliament for Mississauga—Erin Mills. I'm humbled to be trusted once again to serve my community and continue our hard work. To the people of Erin Mills, thank you for your trust.

Speaker, we ran a hard-fought campaign, focusing on issues that are important to our community. We are ready to continue delivering on those promises. Already, our government has made tremendous progress to build Mississauga with new infrastructure and better services. For example, the South Common Community Centre in Erin Mills is being renovated, thanks to our investment of \$45 million.

We're also going constructing a new French Catholic elementary school in Churchill Meadows with a \$21.9-million investment.

Additionally, the province has recently announced \$19.9 million to build housing-enabling infrastructure along Ninth Line in Mississauga.

Mississauga will soon be home to the largest emergency department in Canadian history, with the new Mississauga hospital.

The Hazel McCallion LRT project is still actively undergoing and nearing completion, and we are working on two-way, all-day GO train service—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Members' statements?

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Even in the midst of Trump's trade war on Canada and the rest of the world, climate damage continues to drive up our cost of living and take lives. Wildfires like the one that devastated Jasper, Alberta, and floods that are seen around the world continue to cause tragedies. It's clear that we have to act.

Ontario's climate plan, which is already profoundly, fatally weak, continues to fail. The most recent national report on Canada's carbon pollution shows that Ontario continues to have increases in its carbon pollution, not reductions. Things aren't getting better; they're getting worse from this province.

Climate action can provide thousands of jobs. It can cut our cost of living. It can actually give us a more healthy environment. The government's failure to act hurts us all.

SAULT COLLEGE COUGARS WOMEN'S HOCKEY TEAM

MPP Chris Scott: I rise today to extend heartfelt congratulations to the Sault College Lady Cougars women's hockey team on their remarkable achievement of securing their third straight remarkable national championship in the American Collegiate Association Division 2.

They did it in a 6-2 win over Assiniboine down in Missouri. I got a chance to meet Emma Lee, who opened up the scoring last week.

Again, I want to say, that's not one, that's not back-to-back; that's a three-peat for our girls, and I couldn't be more proud. There are two Canadian teams that get to be in this league of 52, and they've made us all so proud. This victory is a testament to the team's unwavering dedication, skill and teamwork.

Leading the charge was our very own Halle MacLachlan, and she concluded her collegiate hockey career with this triumphant win. She was our team captain for this season, and her leadership both on and off the ice has been nothing short of inspirational.

I ask all members of this House to join me in celebrating Sault College Cougars women's hockey team and wishing them continued success in their future endeavours. Thank you very much.

HAMILTON HOMELESS MORTALITY DATA PROJECT

MPP Robin Lennox: Today I would like to highlight an important community project that is ongoing in Hamilton Centre, the Hamilton Homelessness Mortality Data Project. For far too long in Hamilton, deaths of our unhoused neighbours went untracked and largely unrecognized. In 2021, a group of health care providers, social workers and researchers at McMaster collaborated to begin tracking how many deaths of our unhoused community members were occurring, whether they were outdoors or in shelter, and what caused their deaths. Over

the first three years of data collection, they recorded 116 deaths, which is one death every 10 days.

In the most recent data, more than half of those who died were living outdoors. We should all be outraged that the average age of death was 42 years old. That's half the life expectancy in Hamilton. If we discovered a medication that could improve life expectancy by 40 years, we would all be hailing it as a miracle, clamouring to mass-produce it and making it affordable and accessible to all. But that miracle prescription isn't a pill; it's housing, and similarly, we should be doing everything we can to ensure that every Ontarian has access to it, starting with immediately funding more supportive housing.

I would like to thank Dr. Inna Berditchevskaia, Gessie Stearns, Dr. Claire Bodkin, Suraj Bansal, Dr. Jill Wiwcharuk, Dr. Nicole Chang and Dr. Sarah Ge for this important work and advocacy. Thank you.

MEMBER FOR SCARBOROUGH CENTRE

Mr. David Smith: Madam Speaker, let me begin by offering my heartfelt congratulations to you on your historic election as the first female Speaker of this House. It was truly an auspicious occasion, a proud moment for this Legislature and for the people of Ontario.

I also wish to extend my congratulations to all returning and newly elected members. It is an honour to stand among you as we begin this 44th Parliament.

Today I rise with a deep sense of gratitude to mark the beginning of my second term as member of Parliament for Scarborough Centre. Representing such a vibrant, diverse and resilient community continues to be the greatest privilege of my public life. In the over 30 years of my political life, I have seen many campaigns, but this winter election was certainly the first. It reminds us all that democracy remains strong even when the sidewalk is full of snow.

Allow me to also acknowledge the many volunteers who supported me throughout this journey. This commitment, energy, and unwavering belief in our shared vision were truly inspiring. This renewed mandate is one we shared together. I also—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Members' statements?

NOVA MUSIC FESTIVAL EXHIBITION

Mrs. Michelle Cooper: I am honoured to rise in the House today for my first member's statement, and to speak about an extraordinary and deeply solemn event that I attended last week in my riding of Eglinton–Lawrence, the Nova Music Festival Exhibition. This is a powerful and moving exhibition commemorating the tragic events of October 7, 2023, when Hamas launched a brutal terrorist attack on Israel. Over 1,200 innocent people were murdered; 251 women, children and men were taken hostage; and 59 hostages still remain in captivity in Gaza. Many of these people included the attendees of the Nova

Music Festival, a celebration that was meant to bring people together in music, peace and joy.

The Nova Music Festival Exhibition does more than simply recall that tragedy. It provides a space for reflection, for mourning and for healing. First-hand testimonies and artifacts tell the stories of those who were lost, those who survived and those who were taken hostage. It invites all of us to listen, learn and to remember. It is a testament to the resilience of the human spirit and a powerful reminder of our shared responsibilities to stand united against hatred in all its forms—against terrorism, anti-Semitism and violence.

1030

I strongly encourage all members of this House and all Ontarians to visit this exhibition. Let us honour the memory of those who were lost, support those who continue to carry the scars and recommit ourselves to the values of peace, compassion and common humanity.

CANADA'S KINDEST COMMUNITY CONTEST

Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady: Speaker, I have the honour of being the only member able to stand in this House and declare I represent Canada's kindest community. After a coast-to-coast search, 2,300 entries and thousands of inspiring stories, Coca-Cola Canada named Jarvis in Haldimand county the inaugural winner of its Kindest Community Contest. Some Six hundred communities were nominated as the company's Holiday Caravan tour travelled Canada, but the little town of Jarvis, at the crossroads of Highways 3 and 6, stood out amongst the others. Grounded in the belief the world needs more kindness, Coca-Cola set out to find, celebrate and then reward the community that shared the most acts of kindness.

While I'm sure there were many great nominees, I can attest Jarvis is indeed a special place where people just come together, they set aside their differences and they host events like JarvisFest in August and the Jarvis Light-Up during the Christmas season. The Jarvis Light-Up is one of the most spectacular Christmas events; think Chevy Chase's Christmas Vacation on steroids. The Light-Up has the entire town participating and literally each and every home is decked right out. There's really no way of describing it other than magical.

When the caravan makes its way back this Christmas season, it will bring with it \$50,000 to support the needs of the Jarvis community. Coca-Cola Canada did well. Jarvis is a very small town with a very large heart, and locally we all knew it, but now all of Canada does too. Congratulations to the entire town of Jarvis. I can't think of anything better to be known for than kindness.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): We have with us in the west Speaker's gallery today a delegation from the

Senate of the Republic of Kenya. Please join me in warmly welcoming our guests to the Legislature.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Also in the Speaker's gallery: the Honourable Pat Finnigan, Minister of Agriculture, Aquaculture and Fisheries for the province of New Brunswick. Welcome.

Hon. Nolan Quinn: I would like to welcome a good friend from my previous world running a Dairy Queen. He owns one in Sherwood Park. No worries to all of my colleagues: He's not a Senators fan; he's an Oilers fan.

Interjection: Boo!

Mrs. Michelle Cooper: I have visitors here from the riding of Eglinton–Lawrence. I have Michal Ohana, who is a Nova Music Festival survivor up, in the gallery; Shani Ivgi, who is a survivor of the Nova Music Festival attack; Ofir Amir, who is also a survivor of the Nova Music Festival attack; and Jesse Brown, who is the lead Canadian representative from the Nova exhibit. Can you stand up, please?

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: Madam Speaker, it's my great honour to introduce to the House Selvarajah Muraledaran, a distinguished community leader and passionate advocate for social justice. In recognition of his unwavering dedication to public service, he was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia, a testament to his profound commitment to humanity. Through his leadership with Aiyamidun—that means “share the food with others”—Muraledaran has the simple goal of ending the cycle of poverty, hunger, and empowering education for marginalized children. The Aiyamidun food program represents a sustainable solution to hunger, child labour, and educational inequality in Sri Lanka.

Hon. Michael Parsa: Good morning, Madam Speaker. I'm thrilled to introduce today's page captain from the great riding of Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill, Serena Lu. She is joined by her proud parents here, Catherine Liu and Louie Lu. Welcome to Queen's Park. I'm super proud of your daughter and looking forward to meeting you after question period.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: Likewise, I wanted to wish a warm welcome to Parker Grisch, a page from my great riding of Windsor–Tecumseh, who's also a page captain today, and his father, Michael Grisch, who's here in the gallery. I'm looking forward to welcoming them for lunch after question period.

Mr. John Jordan: I'm pleased to introduce Michael Bell, a friend and colleague from my community health centre days, and now president and CEO of the Lennox and Addington County General Hospital, a great advocate for health care. Welcome to Queen's Park, Michael.

M. Stephen Blais: Trois classes de la 10^e année du cours de citoyenneté et d'éducation civique de l'École secondaire publique Louis-Riel ont visité l'Assemblée législative hier soir. Il est toujours formidable de voir les étudiants participer directement au processus démocratique. Merci à tous d'être venus et merci beaucoup aussi aux enseignants qui ont rendu cette visite possible.

Hon. Graham McGregor: I want to welcome the Ghai family today. We have Brampton North's own Hasrat Ghai serving as page captain and we also have a former page from last year, Hasrat's older brother, Guransh Ghai, as well as family members Manpreet, Shaminder and Manjit Ghai. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Stephen Crawford: Good morning. I would like to introduce Cheng Jia, who is the mother of page Eric, who is page captain today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: I want to welcome the marine council of Ontario to Queen's Park. We have Steve Salmons, Dave Shorey, Claudine Couture-Trudel, Hannah Bowlby, Mike Riehl, Maguessa Morel, Rym Cheriet, Sam Pane, Mandy Sharma as well. I want everyone to join us from 5 to 7 for the reception. Thank you.

Hon. Nolan Quinn: I recognize I said the Senators and got booed—I forgot to mention the name also of my guest here today, Michael Liber, coming from Edmonton. Welcome, Michael.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Unfortunately, we're out of time.

MEMBER'S BIRTHDAY

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Point of order: I recognize the member for Guelph.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I would like to wish a very happy birthday to my friend and colleague the member for Kitchener Centre.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Remember, we will be recognizing genuine points of order. Birthdays may be mentioned during the introduction of guests.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Is this a genuine point of order? Okay. We're now going on to questions.

QUESTION PERIOD

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Ms. Marit Stiles: This question is for the Premier. Ontarians are thinking hard right now about how they're going to spend their hard-earned money in the face of these massive economic threats from the United States. Some 85% of Canadians have already replaced, or plan to replace, US products with Canadian alternatives. People want to make informed choices. They want to keep more money in their pocket, while they also fight back against Donald Trump's tariffs by choosing Ontario-made and Canadian-made products at the grocery store.

1040

My question to the Premier is, will you support Ontarians and make it easier for people to shop locally?

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

Hon. Stephen Crawford: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. On February 27, the people of Ontario went to the polls. They gave the Progressive Conservative government, under Premier Ford, a third consecutive majority government with a larger percentage of the vote than in the previous two elections. The reason they did that is because they believe this government, under Premier Doug Ford, has a plan in place to protect the people of Ontario.

Let me start out by saying I do agree with the member opposite on one thing: Ontarians do deserve to make informed choices. That's why our government is taking a real, measured approach to protect consumers and businesses right here in the province of Ontario.

Let's be very clear: We do not want to burden both the people and the small businesses in this province with overregulation, which will complicate their lives and make life more difficult. Instead, we're engaging with stakeholders, consumers and industry leaders to build real, lasting solutions that work for the people of Ontario. That includes transparency and clear labelling, without punishing the people of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back the leader of the official opposition.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, Ontarians don't need a lecture, they need a plan.

During the pandemic, those same big-box retailers that I'm talking about—companies like Loblaws and Sobeys and Walmart—they raised their prices by about 11% and they brought in record-high profits while Ontarians paid the price. These same big-box retailers are making more than twice as much profit right now as they did before the pandemic.

Our motion today is going to prevent those big-box, grocery retailers from taking advantage of periods of what I would call economic shock—and, boy, are we about to face that—by requiring them to clearly label when they also raise prices by more than 2% within a one-week period.

Will the government make sure that we are not being gouged at the grocery store during this period of great economic uncertainty?

Hon. Stephen Crawford: Thank you again for the question. I would suggest to the Leader of the Opposition that perhaps you should talk to businesses—small businesses, medium-sized businesses, large businesses—because clearly you haven't. What you're suggesting is going to complicate the way business is being done in the province of Ontario.

Ontarians are already making and choosing to support local business. They're proud to buy made-in-Ontario products. That's why we introduced Buy Ontario, Buy Canadian Day, to build on that momentum celebrating the great Ontario products we have right here in Ontario. We're enforcing fair pricing through the Consumer Protection Act, which safeguards against misleading claims and price gouging. These protections are already on the books and we're using them.

Our government will continue to protect consumers, and will also defend the jobs, businesses and communities that keep this province strong.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the leader of the official opposition.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Look, Ontarians need you to stand up for them, not just your big corporate friends, okay? That includes small businesses.

One day a year? People need this kind of thing every single day, 365 days a year. People all over the province of Ontario are re-evaluating how we spend our hard-earned tax dollars. We want to choose Ontario-made products. We want to choose Canadian-made products. They want their money going to their communities, not to American companies. That's why I've proposed a motion to support people to choose Ontario and strengthen Ontario next time they're at the grocery store.

Will you support our opposition day motion this afternoon, or are you going to just keep supporting Galen Weston?

Hon. Stephen Crawford: There's a reason why that party is in opposition once again: Because they would drive all business and investment outside of the province. We are a province—guess what—when you drive into Ontario, when you cross the border from Quebec or Manitoba or New York, there's a sign there. You know what that sign says? "Open for business." We're open for business in this province under Premier Ford.

Let me make it clear: We will stand up to foreign threats, including the reckless tariffs and economic bullying, but we're not going to turn inward and hurt the businesses and the small businesses right here in Ontario. As always, we're going to focus on what we need to do to reduce red tape regulation, strengthen local supply chains, build consumer confidence and grow jobs right here in Ontario.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Marit Stiles: I'll just say this: What small businesses want right now is a level playing field. They don't want a government in the pocket of Galen Weston.

Speaker, two weeks ago, the Premier and his ministers said that Bill 5 was about mining, but hidden in the fine print, it quietly rolls back protections that this government actually promised. I want to give you an example of that. I want to take the Dresden landfill as an example, because during the election the community was promised a full environmental assessment. That's in writing. Now that's being cancelled, using a mining bill as an excuse. That's not cutting red tape; that is breaking trust.

To the Premier: Why is the Premier backing out of this promise the moment the election is over?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks.

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: Madam Speaker, through you to the leader of His Majesty's loyal opposition: We are facing an existential threat, as the members opposite know and the members on this side well know—un-

precedented. So whether it's Bill 2, our need to end interprovincial trade barriers, or Bill 5—and I'm responsible for five schedules to Bill 5. One of them does address the Dresden landfill site. We have a serious challenge when it comes to landfill capacity. We are exporting 40% of our waste to Michigan and New York. We will not have the capacity if we do not act now urgently to make sure we have the capacity to divert our waste and to have the landfill capacity expanded.

So yes, we made a decision. We pivoted in the face of a crisis to build our landfill capacity and make sure that we can meet the challenges of addressing that.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: I'm sure the people of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex would love to hear from their member of provincial Parliament on this, but I'll go back to the Premier: We support mining, we support development on this side of the House and we support streamlining permits. But on this side of the House, we believe that the fastest way forward is doing it right the first time.

Speaker, this government's bulldozer-first approach is going to slow things down, it's going to tie projects up and it is going to set us back again. It opens the door to the same kind of backroom deals and preferential treatment that has become a habit of this government. It's a habit we cannot afford.

Why should this Premier, with his pattern of broken promises and preferential treatment, be trusted with such extraordinary power?

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: Madam Speaker, to the Leader of the Opposition, through you: This bill, these bills, this initiative on all fronts, are about balance. It's why I'm proud to be a Progressive Conservative. It's why I'm proud to be part of a Progressive Conservative government led by Premier Ford, elected for a third historic majority government with a clear mandate from the people. We put it out there, what we needed, by way of a mandate, and we put it out there because it's about balance.

When it comes to environmental protections, we have the strongest environmental protections, quite frankly, in the world.

We welcome businesses from all over the world to consider investing in Ontario, but they won't be able to do it if we don't get out of our own way. As the editorial in the Globe and Mail said during the election campaign, how does Canada win the race for capital? "Get out of our own way." We don't trample on Indigenous rights, we don't undermine environmental protections, but we do build the Ontario of tomorrow by saying we're open for business.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: I'll be very clear with the member opposite: They did not put this out there. They made a promise, and they are breaking that promise to those people and to Ontarians.

Back to the Premier of this province: Protecting Ontario actually starts with trust. I want to be very clear. This bill is not about strengthening and speeding up mining. Let's just do away with that notion. Bill 5 hands sweeping power to override any provincial law for any infrastructure project, whether it's a landfill or a luxury spa. Overriding property rights, workplace safety—no criteria, no transparency and no trust.

1050

Back to the Premier: Does the Premier really believe we are protecting Ontario by handing any government the power to override our laws with no checks, no limits and no public accountability?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: It has never been more important for Ontario to ensure it remains competitive to attract job-creating investments. We are facing a once-in-a-generation crisis with President Trump's tariffs. He has been clear: He is coming after our industries and after our jobs. Just today on CNBC, Howard Lutnick, their commerce secretary, said, "We are accelerating permits to build US factories faster."

Speaker, we are in a war. We are in an economic war. If we sit around and do nothing like the opposition wants us to do, we'll be handing our jobs to the US on a silver platter. We are going to do everything in our power to ensure Ontario remains the best destination for those jobs.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. John Fraser: My question is for the Premier, but I do have to say: Hey, great game last night, eh? Go Sens!

Interjections: Boo!

Mr. John Fraser: Oh, come on.

Interjections: Boo!

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you. Thank you very much.

Yesterday in my question regarding Therme, I referenced the Auditor General's report into Ontario Place, and I'd like to remind the Premier of this quote from page 1: "We found that the" call-for-development "process and realty decisions were not fair, transparent or accountable to all participants." And when you consider this in the context of a \$2.2-billion deal and a 95-year lease, I think any reasonable person would be concerned. It kind of looks like people have something to hide. Everybody seems to have something to hide.

I guess my question to the Premier is, why will the Premier not be accountable and transparent to Ontarians about this \$2.2-billion backroom deal?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Response? I recognize the Minister of Infrastructure.

Hon. Kinga Surma: We have been transparent and accountable. We've updated the public the whole way. We've been elected three times, and Ontario Place redevelopment was part of that mandate to bring it back to life. And when the Leader of the Opposition filed a complaint with the Integrity Commissioner questioning

the competitiveness of the procurement, the Integrity Commissioner found that there were "insufficient grounds for me to conduct an inquiry."

Madam Speaker, we know what the people of Ontario want. They want a site that they can enjoy. They don't want a site that the Liberals left abandoned for years, flooded, falling into disrepair. What they want is a wonderful place that they can go and enjoy with their families, and we will get that done for the people of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Supplementary?

Mr. John Fraser: What I read is right on page 1 of the report. You have to read the whole thing. You can't just read what you like to read in all these reports.

This \$2.2-billion backroom deal is part of a pattern with this government. We saw it with the \$8.2-billion backroom deal for the greenbelt, MZOs, urban boundaries: The minister's office and Premier's office staff are using their personal emails and cellphones to do government business. They're trying to get around the record-keeping process. We know this.

The privacy and information commissioner is currently engaged with the Premier's office on this, and they're asking for something. So what I want to know from the Premier is, can he assure everyone in this Legislature today that no one in his office or any minister's office is using their personal emails or cellphones to do government business on the spa?

Hon. Kinga Surma: This is really rich coming from someone that will not even recognize the facts. The fact is that the AG clearly stated in her public announcement that there was no interference from the Premier's office. The Integrity Commissioner wouldn't even investigate the Leader of the Opposition's inquiry.

Madam Speaker, the truth of the matter is the Liberals failed. They failed Ontarians when they failed Ontario Place. They left it in disrepair. It was starting to flood. Budweiser Stage had to cancel their concerts. We are fixing that.

Finally, after 35 years, we have a plan forward. The site is under construction today, and in a number of years, families will be able to go there and enjoy the site and enjoy the spa and enjoy the lake of Ontario, no thanks to them.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Supplementary?

Mr. John Fraser: If the Premier is satisfied with "not fair, transparent or accountable," we've got some serious problems in this province.

The question here is that there's a pattern with the government. Both the Premier's office and the minister's office are using their personal emails and cellphones to do government business. Again, the privacy and information commissioner has raised this; it's a serious concern. They shouldn't be doing this.

Just like in the greenbelt, just like in ministerial zoning orders, just like in urban boundaries—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Government side will come to order.

Mr. John Fraser: We all know it over there; I can see it on your faces—staff are using their personal emails and personal cellphones. And why wouldn't they? There's somebody else at the head that uses their personal cellphone that's not interested in turning it over to the Ontario people to do government business.

So, my question again: Can the Premier assure this House that no minister's office staff or Premier's office staff are using their personal email—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the minister for a response.

Hon. Kinga Surma: While that member will focus his energies on slanderous behaviour and attacking members in this House, we will not. What we will do, though, is exactly what the people of Ontario want us to do, and that is focus on the economy, focus on protecting Ontario, focus on protecting this country.

We will continue to attract investment into Ontario to the tune of \$70 billion—\$46 billion worth of EV manufacturing. We will continue to spend \$200 billion on building the infrastructure that the people so desperately need and desire in this province.

Madam Speaker, a clear mandate was before the people on February 28 and the Premier is back in his chair.

PUBLIC HEALTH

Mr. Adil Shamji: For the Premier, Madam Speaker: 10 years ago, the vaccination rate for measles in Ontario was 94%. Then, in 2018, that happened, and the Premier went on a rampage. He slashed hundreds of millions of dollars in public health funding, forced chaotic amalgamations of public health units, eviscerated vital public programs like waste water testing, and silenced public health officials.

Now, the vaccination rate for measles in Ontario is only 70%, and he has single-handedly managed to undo a century of public health progress. He's made us a leader, not of anything we want to be proud of, but in cases of measles across the continent. We now have more cases of measles in Ontario than all 50 US states combined.

Madam Speaker, why won't the Premier say anything about measles or take any action?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Response? I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Speaker, where do I start? First of all, they were absolutely amalgamations of public health units that were welcomed and asked for. We made it available. The public boards brought forward their recommendations. We accepted. We actually invested to ensure that they could do those amalgamations.

Specifically regarding measles, absolutely, it is disturbing to hear that a preventable illness is not being—

Interjections.

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

I don't want to start naming, especially ministers. Please, would the government side come to order?

I apologize. The minister can continue.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: We have been very clear that there is a measles vaccination available—it's been available for over 50 years—that we need to ensure people have access to. We directed public health units over a year ago to refocus their efforts to ensure that they were doing childhood vaccinations, getting that catch-up.

We have ensured that there are sufficient measles vaccinations available to all public health units, and we have assured local communities that have a higher rate of influxation that they are getting the support they need.

1100

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Supplementary.

Mr. Adil Shamji: Madam Speaker, the results speak for themselves. There are children in Ontario who are hospitalized with measles. There are parents with sick children searching online to figure out if their kids might have measles.

Last year, I revealed that the Premier has over 32,000 people in his riding without a family doctor. Amazingly, he has managed to outdo himself. He now has constituents in his own urban riding being notified that they were exposed to measles just recently at the Woodbine Mall and Fantasy Fair.

I actually have to give it to the Premier because he has done something that is really quite extraordinary. He has done to measles what he was supposed to do housing and done to housing what he was supposed to do to measles. Measles was supposed to go to zero and housing was supposed to spread like wildfire.

Madam Speaker, to the Premier: When will the Premier finally get serious and take meaningful action about our worst outbreak in three decades?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: You know, it's actually quite sad that the member opposite is trying to politicize what is a deeply concerning outbreak in the province of Ontario.

We have a measles outbreak in communities that is spreading, and we have ensured, through public awareness campaigns—almost a 20% increase in public health unit budget spending to ensure that people understand the value and the importance of getting their children vaccinated. We will continue to do that because, unlike the member opposite, I do not want to politicize this; I want to make sure people have the support they need and get the vaccine when it's appropriate.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Supplementary.

Mr. Adil Shamji: Madam Speaker, if this government purports to take health care so seriously, why are the results so poor? It is because this government is more concerned with politicking and grandstanding with goons, rather than addressing the health of children.

Example: Last week, the Minister of Education wrote a letter to all parents at daycare, warning them about possible changes to federal child care funding that might happen in March 2026. The Minister of Education had two options: write a letter to fearmonger about hypothetical child care changes one year from now or write a letter to inform parents about measles and educate them about immunization. Of course, he ignored measles.

This government always chooses its own interests over Ontario's interests, and its half-hearted measures to address measles have failed. When will the Premier take real action?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Perhaps it's an appropriate time to recap what we've already discussed: first of all, almost a 20% increase in budgets for public health units because we know the important work that they do in our communities; a medical officer of health that, over a year ago, reinforced and directed to public health units that they must refocus their efforts on childhood vaccinations; a public awareness campaign to ensure that every parent and caregiver understands that measles is, with two doses, almost 100% preventable.

I will do the action; our government will do the action. You can politicize this all you want, but what I want is to ensure that parents and caregivers understand the value and importance of a vaccine that has been in the province of Ontario for almost 50 years.

INDIGENOUS MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Meegwetch. This government talks about accessing our resources and our homelands. At the same time, the First Nations and the north continue to deal with a mental health and addiction crisis.

I ask the Premier: Your government's mental health plan isn't working. Children as young as 10 years old continue to die by suicide. When will Ontario—this government—step up and improve access to better mental health and addiction services in the north?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

Hon. Vijay Thanigasalam: Indigenous mental health has been ignored by the previous government for far too long, but this government, under the leadership of this Premier, is taking action. We have increased the annual funding for Indigenous care organizations by over \$40 million through the Roadmap to Wellness program. Additionally, we are investing over \$60 million in annual funding to support Indigenous-led mental health, addictions and well-being supports. This helps individuals, families and communities to heal from the impacts of intergenerational trauma, through a culturally safe and responsive program. Our government is making historic investments, and we are already seeing results.

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

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: The millions this government member talks about, we do not see it in the First Nations that I come from. But the first step is to make sure everyone can access mental health services.

Every day, the Sioux Lookout Meno Ya Win Health Centre has multiple patients with mental health emergencies who wait up to a week to access form 1 beds in Kenora and in Thunder Bay. To the Premier: Will this government commit to a 20-bed schedule 1 facility in Sioux Lookout?

Hon. Vijay Thanigasalam: Our government is open to working with the member opposite. As I mentioned in my previous answer, Indigenous communities from across the province have told us time and time again that reconnecting with the land and engaging with it as a partner in the recovery processes is crucial for healing.

In addition, on the mental health and addiction portion, over 50% of Addictions Recovery Fund treatment beds are going to northern and Indigenous communities. I just want to break down a few things. The investment of \$7 million to support the land- and water-based healing projects in the Indigenous communities, such as Batchewana Nation, Kettle and Stony Point Nations—Madam Speaker, I can go on. For the time being, I want to make sure that I'm open to—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Before we move on to the next question, just a reminder to remove your phones from the desk if you're going to be responding or asking a question.

Further questions?

FLOOD PREVENTION

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Across the province, after yesterday's severe storms, tens of thousands have been left without power. From Timiskaming to Ottawa, they are approaching flood stages along the Ottawa River. As the river level rises, those without power are terrified for their homes because they cannot rely upon their sump pumps to protect them. Residents of rural Ottawa fear that water management efforts are focused on profits rather than on flood prevention.

I reached out to the minister's office this morning for an update. Could the Minister of Energy please share with us this update about the urgent situation and how soon those in need will have the power restored?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Over the past weeks, Ontario faced one of the largest and most significant storms, really, since the 1990s. I know the member is speaking about the most recent challenge facing the grid today. There is incredible work being done by the utilities of Ontario and Hydro One, where they leverage thousands of workers from across Canada to get power restored. I think we owe it to them to say thank you for working around the clock to make sure power is restored and people's lives can carry on.

The Minister of Emergency Preparedness has been leading the way in ensuring that the province has the resources pre-deployed ahead of these extreme weather events. We've been working with local communities, first responders and, of course, utilities. In fact, we've leveraged resources from as far away as New Brunswick to Saskatchewan to make sure power gets restored.

I will do everything possible, working with the local communities of Ottawa and the rest of Ontario, to make sure we can get back to normal in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The member for Kanata—Carleton.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: But that answer isn't good enough, especially when I gave the minister time and let him know that I would be asking him that question this morning. I'd like to know how many people are without power and when that power will be restored. It is hurting people's futures, and they want to protect their homes. This isn't the first time that communities have been put in danger because of ineffective planning and prevention.

1110

This government and power generation companies have a moral responsibility to improve river water level management. Not emptying reservoirs when there is river capacity means that there will be no safety buffer when the river basins are impacted by increasingly serious precipitation events. This has happened three times since 2017. The last flood, the Premier came to my community and others and promised to take the necessary action to prioritize—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Response? Back to the minister for a response.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I am slightly confounded; I have no recollection of the member opposite telling me about this issue. However, I look forward to hearing more about it, and obviously we can work together to advance the public good of your community.

At the end of the day, we have asked the Independent Electricity System Operator and the Ontario Energy Board to enhance resources on the ground when it comes to grid resilience. We have one of the cleanest grids in the country. We're proud of that.

We're making investments to secure it from these extreme weather events. We have leveraged resources, technology and infrastructure to ensure we buttress this against these weather events that are happening throughout the year. We're working with the Minister of Natural Resources, the Minister of Emergency Preparedness. We have done amazing work working with conservation officers to get ahead of the problem and to prevent these very issues before they happen. We'll continue to work with all members, including you, to resolve the issues in your community.

NUCLEAR ENERGY

MINING INDUSTRY

MPP Monica Ciriello: My question is for the Minister of Energy and Mines. As our population grows, people and businesses need more energy. Ontario is already a leader in clean and reliable energy. We must keep building on that. That means building more nuclear power. It also means cutting red tape and speeding up approvals for energy projects. When we move faster, we help our economy grow, we support our workers and we attract new businesses. Big projects like the Darlington small modular reactor show what we can do. This work creates jobs and helps families across our province.

Can the minister please explain how our plan to grow nuclear power, cut red tape and build faster will help meet Ontario's energy needs and support our economy?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member from Mississauga–Lakeshore.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I'd like to thank the member from Hamilton Mountain for that question, as well as on your great victory a month ago.

Ontario's need for power will grow by 75% by 2050. More people are moving here, more homes are being built, and more cars and factories are using clean electricity. Our government is taking action. We're building more energy projects, with a focus on nuclear power. We're cutting red tape and speeding up approvals. This helps build faster, create jobs and bring in new investment.

One key project is the Darlington small modular reactor. It will create 17,000 jobs during the construction. It will keep 2,000 jobs for 65 years, and it will add \$500 million to our economy each year.

We are also signing over \$1 billion in deals to sell Ontario's nuclear technology to other countries. Ontario is leading the world in clean energy, and the world is watching Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Question?

MPP Monica Ciriello: I want to thank the parliamentary assistant for his answer. Across the world, countries are moving fast to lock down minerals and energy that they need. The United States is threatening new tariffs that put our workers and businesses at risk. But Ontario is showing leadership. We know that mining and a strong energy system are key to protecting our economy and growing good jobs. We can't afford long delays that drive away new projects. We must speed up approvals for new mines and build more clean power to meet our growing needs.

Can the parliamentary assistant please explain how our government's new plan will help build mines faster, power industries and make sure Ontario stays strong in the face of global economic threats?

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

Mr. David Smith: I thank the member from Hamilton Mountain. Last week we introduced major legislation. It will speed up critical mineral development. The "one project, one process" system will cut approval time by at least half. It should not take 15 years to open a mine. Other places, like Australia and the European Union, do it in under 10 years.

In the past decade Ontario's mining output grew by 50%, but there is still more to be done. Ontario holds one of the world's largest untapped mineral reserves. These minerals can create many good-paying jobs for years to come. Ontario will lead the way in securing the resources we need for the future.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Ms. Jessica Bell: My question is to the Premier. This morning's FAO report paints an alarming picture for Ontario's economy. US tariffs will send our province into a recession, lower employment and raise consumer prices.

Workers are worried about their jobs and Ontarians are worried about paying the bills.

Can the Premier tell the people of this province the action he has taken to protect consumers and save Ontario jobs from Trump's tariffs?

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

Interjection.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Thank you, Minister, for that singular applause.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. It sounds great to say, "Madam Speaker." Again, congratulations to you. It's the first time I rise in the House to say that to you. And to my critic in your new role as my critic, thank you for that question.

First off, I'd like to just congratulate Prime Minister Carney on his election and all those—Pierre Poilievre, Jagmeet Singh and others, all the candidates—who put their name on the ballot to fight for Canada.

That's what we are going to do together. We're going to fight for Canada. A good place to start is with interprovincial trade. This government, this Premier, this caucus is leading the charge in Canada to bring down trade barriers in this country, which could, some say, increase GDP by some \$250 billion. That's one way that we will work together to make sure that we protect Ontarians and we protect this economy.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Question?

Ms. Jessica Bell: A core challenge is how reliant Ontario is on the United States. We saw in the report today that over 900,000 Ontario jobs are US-export-related and most of them are concentrated in manufacturing. The FAO is reporting nearly 60,000 fewer manufacturing jobs in 2026—next year. We have auto workers in Windsor who are putting themselves between company trucks and the border to stop them from shipping equipment south. They want the government to have their back.

My question is to the Premier. What steps is the Premier going to take to ensure that Ontario jobs stay in Ontario?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Breaking news from the FAO, Madam Speaker: Tariffs have an impact on the Canadian economy. Well, thank you to the FAO. Of course we're not going to speculate on what impact that may have on trade and on jobs. But I will tell you this: The status quo is no longer acceptable for the Canadian economy. We will do whatever it takes to protect Ontarians, protect their jobs, protect the communities and protect the businesses.

Let's take another example of how this government is taking action, not sitting on the sidelines: Bill 2—the specialized economic zone—so we can build more, faster. What a concept: to build, get shovels in the ground faster right across this province, where we have incredible natural resources, incredible energy opportunities, incredible infrastructure opportunities. We are taking action because that's what we need to do to protect Ontarians, to protect the economy. We're going to do it together with the federal government—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Question?

PUBLIC HEALTH

Ms. Lee Fairclough: It remains a mystery to me as to why the government spent 2.2 billion taxpayer dollars and signed a 99-year lease at Ontario Place with a foreign-owned company while failing to protect millions of people without access to primary care. The government's sad record on health care continues, as measles has risen to at least 1,020 cases, higher now than the United States, which only has 184. But we've heard nothing from the Minister of Health on a plan. In fact, even the media are acknowledging that my colleague the member for Don Valley East has a more developed plan than our Ministry of Health.

1120

My question to the Minister of Health is, why is your government ignoring this preventable public health emergency that can devastate children and families?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: The only part of that question that I agree upon is the last statement. It can absolutely devastate our youngest children, which is why, over a year ago, the Chief Medical Officer of Health directed all public health units—who, by the way, have received an almost 20% increase to their budget to focus on childhood vaccinations. We have begun a public awareness campaign because we know that people need to understand the value and importance of a measles vaccine that has been in Ontario for almost 50 years. We have also begun a public awareness campaign to, again, ensure parents and primary caregivers understand the importance of getting their children vaccinated.

I am not happy that we have an outbreak. I am concerned. But we need to ensure that public health units have and do have all of the resources and the supports they need from our provincial government.

Ms. Lee Fairclough: This government's seven-year record on health care has weakened our system. From primary care to home care to hallway medicine and long-term care, it is a failure to protect people and their families. Now we have an outbreak of measles in our province with a higher number of cases than all of the United States. More needs to be done.

Will the Minister of Health take immediate action to really warn the public and tell this House of a plan of action to get the spread of measles under control?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: You know, it really underscores the importance of the work that we have been doing since Premier Ford formed government in 2018. Last year, in February 2024, we were able to announce 78 primary care multidisciplinary teams. Those teams have now hired, and they are taking on patients across Ontario.

Two weeks ago, we announced with Dr. Philpott another intake to ensure that our primary care expansion has happened. Of course, Friday is the last day for those, and we will start assessing and announcing our next round of primary care multidisciplinary teams.

Finally, and most importantly, we have ensured that individuals who want to be licensed and practise in the province of Ontario can quickly do so through the College

of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario. Speaker, I'm proud to share with the chamber today that you can get your licence within two to three days in Ontario.

LAND USE PLANNING

Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady: My question is to the Premier. I've stood in this House in the past to talk about the reckless proposal by Empire Homes to establish a city of 40,000 at the Nanticoke industrial park. The industrial park in Haldimand county is one of the largest of its kind in Ontario, with Stelco and Imperial Oil as the largest tenants. The park was also home to North America's largest coal plant prior to it being shuttered in 2013.

In 2019, this government created provincially significant employment zones, an excellent idea that was sadly sidestepped under Bill 97. Prior to the Christmas break, I asked the then Minister of Municipal Affairs whether the application of an MZO had come across his desk. The answer was no. Recently, I learned Empire Homes had applied for the MZO in September 2024. As I knocked on doors this winter, the people of Haldimand and Norfolk asked the same question: Where does the MZO sit? It has not hit the environmental registry. So can the people of Haldimand–Norfolk please receive an update on the status of the MZO?

Hon. Rob Flack: As I think the member opposite knows, we are facing a housing crisis in this province, the likes we haven't seen for a long, long time. I think she also knows ministerial zoning orders remain an important tool to advance provincial priorities like long-term care, transit-oriented communities, municipal infrastructure and housing.

We will continue to stay in touch with her with respect to the MZO, as for in your community, but understand, the new framework we've set forward with our MZOs has clear and rigorous expectations and consultation requirements to ensure transparency and local support. We are proud of the partnerships we've developed throughout this province. We continue to put this framework in place, and we will get shovels in the ground and build homes faster.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the member for Haldimand–Norfolk.

Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady: I appreciate the response from the minister. However, I maintain an industrial park is no place for people, let alone 40,000 of them.

I hope the minister is working with the Minister of Energy because, prior to Christmas, Nanticoke was identified as one of three potential sites for energy production. As I knocked on doors, it was clear the riding favours an energy project at the industrial park rather than people for many reasons, like good-paying jobs, which relates back to the provincially significant employment zones.

Six elections locally have now been fought and won saying no to the MZO. Haldimand county's mayor and the community have made clear they have not been a willing host. Four councillors have said yes, but ironically, these same councillors also support an energy project at Nanticoke.

Locals know that power and people cannot coexist, especially in an industrial park. And as we heard this morning, Ontario's electricity demand will grow by 75% by 2050.

Speaker, what will this government choose: Will it prioritize Empire Homes and another MZO or meeting the province's electricity demand and creating more good-paying jobs?

Hon. Rob Flack: Thank you for this question. We're in a housing crisis, and I think we all know this. We have to get shovels in the ground faster and create the conditions to get those shovels in the ground faster. Speed has not been our friend and also the cost of building has not been our friend. Thanks mostly to these Trump tariffs that are coming our way, we have to get shovels in the ground faster.

It's important to note, Speaker, that our new zoning framework establishes expectations for proponents and municipalities, Nanticoke or Haldimand included. It strengthens partnerships with municipalities and provides opportunities for consultation before a zoning order is made.

We will continue to consult and work with our municipal partners to ensure that we make the right decisions in the right time, following the framework we have put in place with regard to MZOs.

HOUSING

Mr. Joseph Racinsky: Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. The people of Ontario are counting on our government to protect our economy and build a better future for everyone. Home builders, workers and families all want the same thing: less red tape and more action. They want governments to make it easier to build homes.

That's why our government must continue to lead by speeding up approvals and getting shovels in the ground faster. When we make it easier to build, we grow our economy, create jobs and help more people find a place to call home.

Through Bill 2 and Bill 5, we're cutting red tape and making bold changes to get it done. Speaker, can the minister explain how these bills will protect Ontario's economy and get more homes built?

Hon. Rob Flack: As we've said earlier, the people of Ontario spoke on February 28. They elected a strong, stable majority government led by this Premier. Why? Part of our agenda is to tackle this housing crisis dead-on.

In my short time as minister, I've been meeting with our key stakeholders, home builders, not-for-profits, municipal partners—and guess what? Yesterday, I was with Mayor Parrish in Mississauga, where we met with 30 home builders for a housing round table—a really good meeting, a positive meeting. Guess what their number one concern was? Red tape and speed—consistently throughout the province. It's taken too long to get shovels in the ground through process and it costs too much.

We're creating the conditions to build more homes faster. That's why Bill 2 and Bill 5 are critical to kick-starting our housing starts in this province, and that's why we're going to enact them and that's why we're going to protect the Ontario economy.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member for Wellington–Halton Hills.

Mr. Joseph Racinsky: Thank you to the minister for your response.

Families and individuals across Ontario, not just in the GTA, want to see more homes built and more jobs created. From big cities to small towns, they want faster approvals, less red tape and more buildings.

Groups like the Ontario Home Builders' Association have been clear: Bills 2 and 5 are helping to protect Ontario.

The local leaders in northern Ontario are stepping up and showing that they are ready to build as well. They know that cutting red tape and speeding up projects means stronger communities and a stronger economy.

Speaker, can the minister please tell the House how cutting red tape and working with our municipal partners ensures we protect our economy and build more homes for all Ontarians?

Hon. Rob Flack: Well, Speaker, as a member outside the GTA, like my friend opposite, I understand these concerns all too well. You know, the Ontario Home Builders' Association praised Bills 2 and 5. Why? Because they're reducing red tape.

1130

Last week, along with many of my colleagues here, we attended NOMA—Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association—meetings up in Thunder Bay, and we had some great delegations. It was great to be with our northern friends and municipal leaders, and like the GTA, they share our same concerns. Like Mississauga, they too see red tape reductions needed because they too have aggressive targets. Take Dryden, for instance: They've set their own housing targets, Speaker. It was really good to converse with them, really good to work with them.

Bills 2 and 5 will speed up building homes right across Ontario, right across this province and also, most importantly, and again, it will protect our Ontario economy.

HOME CARE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Premier. Sarah Block is a constituent of mine who is disabled and dealing with an autoimmune disease. She recently required surgery, which left her with very limited use of her hands. Even after begging, she could only get four hours of home care per week after the surgery.

Can the Premier tell us if he considers this adequate care for a person facing profound limitations?

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

Hon. Sylvia Jones: While I obviously cannot speak to an individual example, I'm happy to follow up with your office if you provide that information.

I think it's important to appreciate and understand that we have been making substantial investments in our home care sector. There is no doubt that as people transition away from hospital acute care, they need those supports in community. Sometimes that can be a rehabilitation centre, sometimes that can be a long-term-care centre and sometimes it can be in their own home. We are making those investments because we absolutely understand how important it is for people to be able to continue their recovery in the most appropriate place.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Again, to the Premier: Ms. Block developed a bleeding rash because four hours of care a week was not enough to provide her with adequate hygiene. To avoid further complications, she had to hire someone to provide supplementary care—care she could not afford on her disability income.

Again, to the Premier: Why does the government provide such limited care that people are left to suffer or go into debt to avoid further illness?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: So, again, I will remind the member opposite that as Minister of Health it would be inappropriate for me to comment on an individual case. What I can tell you is we continue to make investments in the home care sector because we have seen the value and importance of the service that they provide.

When we hire and train more personal support workers, when we ensure that we have a Learn and Stay program that allows nurses who want to train in the province of Ontario the ability to do so with the province of Ontario covering their tuition and their books, those are investments that we are making to ensure that individuals like your constituent and people across Ontario have access to those critically important services as they access our health care system.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

MPP Tyler Watt: My question is for the Premier. Barrhaven is one of the fastest-growing communities in Ontario, and residents need the province to step up and provide the proper infrastructure to meet the needs of our community.

Queensway Carleton Hospital is still being funded as a rural community hospital despite serving 50% of the residents of the city of Ottawa and surrounding areas.

Public transit infrastructure is sorely needed, especially since the province cancelled funding for the LRT extension to serve Barrhaven residents.

And despite numerous promises over the years, there hasn't been a single shovel in the ground for the new Barnsdale interchange. Speaker, through you to the Premier: When will the Barnsdale interchange be completed?

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

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: In fact, it was this government that went to Ottawa, made this commitment

and guess what? When the budget was tabled, the members from Ottawa sitting across the aisle voted against that agreement.

It was this Premier that went to Ottawa, struck a new deal: \$500 million of additional support for the city of Ottawa. And what did the members elected from the city of Ottawa do? They voted against the interests of their own city, which is interchanges.

In fact, one of the members—
Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Opposition members will come to order.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: —across the aisle there from Ottawa actually advocates for tolls on Highway 174, a highway that we will be uploading to protect the infrastructure and the highways across the city of Ottawa.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Supplementary?

MPP Tyler Watt: Speaker, that answer isn't worth anything to my constituents, who have been waiting for years and who have heard plenty of empty promises from this government.

I'm wondering if the infrastructure minister has been too focused on building a luxury spa in Toronto instead of the things people need, like a simple interchange for my community.

The Premier talks a good game about building roads and highways, but he has had nearly seven years to build an on-ramp and he can't even get that done. Even the sign they put up, which the member was just talking about, for the Premier's photo op has been removed, and not one shovel in the ground.

With all the tax dollars that the Premier is willing to throw around to his well-connected developer friends, why haven't the residents of Nepean seen any work on the Barnsdale interchange, and when will they get some results from this government?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Madam Speaker, maybe that member should pick up the phone, call his mayor and ask about the work that has been completed on that project and that continues to be completed on that project—

Mr. Stephen Blais: There has been zero work on that project.

Interjections.

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

The member for Orléans will come to order. The government side will come to order.

I apologize. The minister may continue.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Here are the facts, Madam Speaker. We launched an Ottawa new deal, with the agreement of the mayor and the Premier of this province. And guess what? Those members over there, when their city was going to get an additional \$500 million of support—hundreds of millions of dollars with respect to new infrastructure, roads, highways, interchanges—voted against the interests of their own community. In fact, we've had an opportunity to build five new additional bridges in the Ottawa area; every single one of those

investments was opposed by the members opposite. We're uploading Highway 174 there as well because the members opposite advocated to toll that highway. That would be completely unfair to the residents of Ottawa.

We will continue to build. We'll get shovels in the ground. We're going to continue to build this province, and we will be investing \$28 billion over the next 10 years across this province to get it done.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. John Jordan: My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness. Farmers across Ontario work hard every day to feed our province and the world. But now, with the threat of new US tariffs and growing protectionism, they face real risks.

We know that farming is not just a job; it's a way of life. And when farmers are hurt, whole communities feel it. Speaker, our farmers need real support to deal with these uncertain times. They need our government to continue to stand with them, invest in them and protect them.

Can the minister tell the House what steps our government is taking to support Ontario farmers and give them the confidence they need to keep growing?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness.

Hon. Trevor Jones: Good morning, Speaker. Congratulations, Speaker.

I want to thank the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston for always working hard to always think about farmers and advancing agriculture.

When President Trump first began threatening tariffs against us, we accelerated our plan to protect Ontario. Those threats were exactly why we increased our business risk management program by an historic \$100 million, to a total of \$250 million, just this past January. This provides confidence and long-term certainty for Ontario farmers now, when they need it most. This investment builds on previous increases to programs back in 2020. We listened to our food producers, we listened to our farmers, we listened to our food processors and followed their guidance to allow unused funds to be carried over for future years in the event of claims.

Under this Premier, we'll always protect our farmers, no matter what comes our way.

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

Mr. John Jordan: Thanks to the minister for his leadership.

Our farmers are strong. It is clear that our farmers can compete and win on the world stage. But to do that, they need real support to grow their markets and find new buyers. Other countries are moving fast to sell more food and farm goods. Ontario farmers need our government to continue to help them open new doors and create new opportunities. They need to know that we will always have their back, both here at home and around the world.

Speaker, can the minister please tell the House how our Grow Ontario Strategy is helping farmers and agri-food businesses grow exports and find new markets around the globe?

Hon. Trevor Jones: Since 2018, Ontario's agri-food exports have increased 65% to \$26.2 billion. That's our record in government. That's the leadership of our Minister of Rural Affairs and our Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing—my predecessors, who built a strong record for this investment.

Through our bold 10-year Grow Ontario Strategy, we're aiming to achieve 8% annual export growth through 2032. To do that, we launched our \$12-million Grow Ontario Market Initiative to help Ontario agri-businesses expand to new markets. In 2023 alone, our exports increased 10% to the European Union and 12% to the UK. Dynamic economies all over the world, from South Asia to South America, are increasing their agri-food exports and they want all things grown in Ontario.

Our government is ensuring Ontario's farmers will be ready to seize on this tremendous opportunity from all over the world.

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

The House recessed from 1141 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF GOVERNMENT BILLS

SAFER MUNICIPALITIES ACT, 2025

LOI DE 2025 POUR DES MUNICIPALITÉS PLUS SÛRES

Mr. Flack moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 6, An Act to enact the Restricting Public Consumption of Illegal Substances Act, 2025 and to amend the Trespass to Property Act respecting sentencing / *Projet de loi 6, Loi édictant la Loi de 2025 visant à restreindre la consommation en public de substances illégales et modifiant la Loi sur l'entrée sans autorisation en ce qui concerne le prononcé des peines.*

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Hon. Rob Flack: Yes, briefly: The proposed legislation, the Safer Municipalities Act, if passed, would help protect public spaces by restricting the consumption of illegal substances in public spaces where people live, work and gather. We are giving law enforcement the tools they need to address illegal drug use in public spaces, including the ability to intervene, issue directions and remove prohibitive substances.

We are also strengthening the Trespass to Property Act to better deal with repeat offenders and persistent viola-

tions. These steps will help keep our communities safe and support the rule of law right across Ontario.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

HEALTH CARE IS NOT FOR SALE ACT (ADDRESSING UNFAIR FEES CHARGED TO PATIENTS), 2025

LOI DE 2025 SUR LES SOINS DE SANTÉ QUI NE SONT PAS À VENDRE (LUTTE CONTRE LA FACTURATION D'HONORAIRES INJUSTES AUX PATIENTS)

Madame Gélinas moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 7, An Act to amend the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991 and the Integrated Community Health Services Centres Act, 2023 to address unfair fees charged to patients for health care services / *Projet de loi 7, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1991 sur les professions de la santé réglementées et la Loi de 2023 sur les centres de services de santé communautaires intégrés pour traiter de la facturation d'honoraires injustes aux patients à l'égard des services de soins de santé.*

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

First reading agreed to.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'll start by saying that this bill is co-sponsored by the MPP from Ottawa West–Nepean, MPP Pasma, as well as the MPP from Hamilton Centre, MPP Lennox. The short title of the bill is called Health Care is Not for Sale Act.

More and more, private, for-profit health care providers are being licensed by this government and are charging unfair fees. The Auditor General told us as such.

The bill makes changes at two levels. The first one is the colleges that regulate the health professions. If a physician or a nurse charges a fee they were not supposed to charge because it is an insured service or charges a fee that is a barrier to access to an insured service, the college would be allowed reprimand, as well as pull the licence of that particular health care professional.

The second one is that the government funds about 930 private, for-profit—what used to be called—independent health facilities in Ontario. If they charge unfair fees to patients for a service or to access a service, those could also be charged or lose their licence.

The bill is there to protect people and make sure we continue to have the Canadian way, not the American way, of health care services.

WSIB COVERAGE FOR WORKERS
IN RESIDENTIAL CARE FACILITIES
AND GROUP HOMES ACT, 2025

LOI DE 2025 SUR LA PROTECTION
À ACCORDER AUX TRAVAILLEURS
DANS LES ÉTABLISSEMENTS DE SOINS
EN RÉSIDENCE ET LES FOYERS DE GROUPE
PAR LA COMMISSION DE LA SÉCURITÉ
PROFESSIONNELLE ET DE L'ASSURANCE
CONTRE LES ACCIDENTS DU TRAVAIL

Mr. Fraser moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 8, An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 / Projet de loi 8, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la sécurité professionnelle et l'assurance contre les accidents du travail.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. John Fraser: Essentially, this bill is for personal care workers—PSWs—youth service workers, development service workers working in residential settings, ensuring that they are covered by WSIB. The basic fact of the matter is, some people are covered, others aren't because of their employer. It's unfair and unsafe. People doing the same work should have the coverage.

We said this was being read for the first time. It's the sixth time it's been read for the first time and debated twice. I have to talk to as many ministers. I hope this bill gets through or the ministry acts on it.

PETITIONS

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I am introducing a petition calling on the province of Ontario to provide health care based on people's need, not on their financial resources. The Premier and his health minister have made it clear they are planning to privatize more and more parts of the health care system. In response, we need to ensure that system is not privatized. We need to put in place the funding for proper education for nurses, doctors and other health care professionals and we need to ensure there are enough nurses on every shift and in every ward in our hospitals.

I agree with this petition. I sign it and I give it to page Ellie to submit.

TAXATION

Mr. Andrew Dowie: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the federal government's previous carbon tax policy contributed to soaring fuel prices and economic pressure on Ontario residents;

"Whereas Ontario's provincial gas tax cut has helped offset these costs and should remain in place even with the elimination of the federal consumer carbon tax;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To fulfill the government's commitment to making the gas tax cut permanent and stand up for taxpayers in the face of damaging federal and international policies."

I'm pretty happy to sign this petition. I will send back with page Kareem.

ANTI-VAPING INITIATIVES FOR YOUTH

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from Colin and Hélène Pick, who come from a beautiful community in my riding called Capreol. You may have heard about Capreol before.

1310

The petition is called "Protect Kids from Vaping." As you know, Speaker, we know very little about the long-term effects of vaping, especially on youth. But we also know that there is some really smart marketing done by the tobacco product industry that is causing more and more youth to become addicted to nicotine through the use of e-cigarettes and vaping. We've learned some hard lessons from the impact of smoking on health. I don't want those to be repeated on the health of our youth that pick up vaping.

Hundreds of people have signed the petition. They call on the government to make sure that we put forward strong measures so that we keep vaping away from kids.

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

LAND USE PLANNING

Ms. Catherine Fife: The good people of Wilmot township have been under threat of expropriation for over a year now. This petition calls on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pause all plans to expropriate and rezone lands in Wilmot township for industrial use.

The people of Wilmot township are even more afraid today because of Bill 5. Bill 5 creates these economic zones where the law no longer exists, Madam Speaker.

I want to remind the Legislature and the government that while we are under threat of tariffs from Donald Trump south of the border—I want to remind you that food sovereignty is national sovereignty.

We need farmers to do their job in the province of Ontario. They need to be protected. I'm calling on the Legislative Assembly and the government to do their job as well and protect farmers.

ANTI-RACISM ACTIVITIES

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Petitions? I recognize the member for Toronto Centre.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Thank you very much, Speaker. It's my first opportunity to rise and to also congratulate you on your new post. It's a very proud moment.

I would like to submit this petition. It calls upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to urgently pass bills to implement specific laws designed to protect Black individuals living in Ontario from anti-Black racism, discrimination, unjust punishment from law enforcement, exclusion and systemic barriers. This is a pervasive and long-standing problem in Ontario. We are all aware of it.

We want to be able to move this forward as quickly as possible, Speaker, and by doing so, I would just list two things that this group is calling for. They're calling that we uphold law enforcement and make sure that they're accountable for discriminatory practices with robust oversight and anti-racism training.

They are also calling on us to make sure that comprehensive education and awareness programs are implemented as soon as possible.

I am proud to submit this, will put my signature to this petition and send it to the centre table with Kylian.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Jessica Bell: This is a petition entitled "Invest in Public Education Now." The petition signers are calling for the Ministry of Education to adequately fund the public education system in Ontario.

This is very relevant right now because school boards across Ontario are debating their budgets. Almost all of them are facing significant funding shortfalls, and they're having to make very tough choices. There's not enough funding for special education. Many schools, especially in downtown Toronto, are aging, and there's not enough funding for repairs. Class sizes are very large.

I support this petition, and I'll be affixing my signature.

TAXATION

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I have a petition here and it talks about, essentially, the affordability matters, and it talks about how many people in the province of Ontario rely on their vehicles not only to get to work but also to get to appointments and to fulfill their familial responsibilities. It also talks about how affordability is being affected by the tariff war with the United States and how such things can cause an increase in the price of food and also in the price of everyday living.

I notice that there's a lot of young people here in the chamber today, and I'm sure that one day they would like to own a home and be able to own a car and get to the obligations that they have. Maybe they're looking for full-time employment and they want to start their careers. I think that this is an important issue. I think about them when we're in this chamber.

This petition calls upon the Legislative Assembly to consider the impacts of our trade war with the United States and to address this through a lowering of gas tax

prices, and I certainly support that idea for the benefit of all these young people in the chamber today.

So I will sign this petition, and I will give it to this fine young page—his name is Liam—and I will ask him to bring it over to the Clerk's table.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

MPP Robin Lennox: I'm very pleased to present this petition from Sally Palmer, who is a professor in the School of Social Work at McMaster University. This petition calls on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to urgently address the very, very low social assistance rates in Ontario that are keeping many of my constituents in legislated poverty. We would ask that the Legislative Assembly double social assistance rates for both OW and ODSP.

Thank you very much. I will send this down.

ONTARIO SCIENCE CENTRE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: The Ontario Science Centre is a beloved institution in this province, one that needs to continue in its home location. The Premier has made it clear that he wants to get rid of it. He wants to demolish it.

This petition calls for a reversal of that decision, protection of the science centre so that it can be reinvested in and renewed, and the holding of community consultations about the science centre's future.

I agree with this petition, I've signed it, and I give it to page Nimrata to give to the Clerk.

HIGHWAY SAFETY

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Lianne Reardon from Foleyet in my riding for this petition. It's called "Make Highway 144 Safe." Highway 144 is a highway that connects Sudbury to Timmins through Highway 101, but it's also the highway that connects most of the people of Foleyet to Sudbury and everywhere else down south.

They are worried. There have been multiple accidents, many of them deadly, just in the last few months on Highway 144. But it's like this every year. There are many collisions that bring long, long highway closures. When there is a death, you can expect 12, 16, 24 hours where the highway is closed. There is no workaround. You're stuck on the highway. The last gas station is in Dowling. You go 300 kilometres and except for the watershed there is nothing—lots of beautiful moose and beautiful forests, but nowhere to pull over and nowhere to warm up.

The people are asking the government to organize a round table with representatives from the Ministry of Transportation, the police, the ambulance and tow truck operators, the shipping companies, the mining companies, the school bus drivers and the road users, because there are solutions that could be put forward, and they would like to be heard.

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

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: As you are well aware, there is an ongoing primary care shortage in Ontario, to the extent that I hear consistently for my constituents who can't get a doctor. I hear from doctors in my riding that many are going to retire and so my constituents will face an even greater shortage in the years to come.

This petition calls on the Legislature to guarantee that everyone in Ontario has access to a primary care provider, that there needs to be increased investment in primary care in the next provincial budget and that we need to expand primary care options in areas that currently have gaps by investing in those areas.

I agree with the petition, I sign it, and I give it to page Kylian to give to the Clerk.

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Mariette Aspirot, from Chelmsford in my riding, for this petition. It is called "Let's Fix the Northern Health Travel Grant."

As you know, Speaker, not all health services are available in northern Ontario. But to make the services accessible to all, people who live in the north are supported by the Northern Health Travel Grant, where we are reimbursed a certain amount of money for travel. The first hundred kilometres of travel is not covered, but anything longer than 100 kilometres, we get reimbursed. I think it's just been raised to 44 cents a kilometre for the rest of the travel. We also get a small, \$150—it just went from \$100 to \$150—for accommodation if we have to go to Toronto or Ottawa or elsewhere to gain access to the health care services that we need. For many Ontarians, this continues to be a barrier because the amount that the government gives is not enough. It's impossible to find overnight accommodation in Toronto for \$150. It puts a real strain on families, who sometimes decide not to go through with the plan of care that could improve their health, that could save their lives—the lives of themselves or their children.

So they ask that the Northern Health Travel Grant be looked at again to make it fairer for everybody, no matter where you live in Ontario, to have access to our wonderful health care system.

1320

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

LAND USE PLANNING

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, as you're well aware, there have been ongoing threats to the greenbelt. We've gone through a few fights in this Legislature so far to protect it. The Premier seems to have an undeniable interest in coming back and revisiting this question from time to time.

Therefore, this petition calls on the Legislative Assembly to take action whenever the greenbelt is threatened to protect it from any plans to remove land from that greenbelt and to protect existing farmland and sensitive wetlands.

I agree with this petition. I've signed it and I give it to page Nimrata to give to the Clerk.

LABOUR LEGISLATION

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Jeff Wilkinson, who is from Garson in my riding, for this petition. It's called "Enact Anti-Scab Labour Law."

As you know, Speaker, strikes and lockouts are rare in Ontario: 97% of all collective agreements are negotiated without any work disruption. Anti-replacement worker laws have existed in Quebec since 1978; in British Columbia since 1993. They existed in Ontario under the NDP government in the early 1990s, but the Mike Harris government did away with it.

The anti-scab legislation is really to keep communities together. When scab labourers are used during a strike or a lockout it really, really breaks the fabric of a community. The long-term impact of a company bringing in replacement workers during a strike or a lockout can be devastating. I can speak to a strike in my riding that happened in 2009 where there are still families that don't speak to one another because Vale—the company at the time—used scabs during the strike.

We don't want this to happen to any other community. A lot of people in my riding, they have lived through what it's like to have scabs cross the picket line. They don't want this to happen to any other community.

So I join them in signing this petition and I will give it to my good page Gabe to bring it to the Clerk.

OPPOSITION DAY

CONSUMER PROTECTION

PROTECTION DU CONSOMMATEUR

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the leader of His Majesty's loyal opposition.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I move the following motion:

Whereas Ontarians have a right to make informed decisions about how they spend the money they've earned; and

Whereas price gouging and price-fixing by large corporate retailers has been widely reported in recent years, particularly on essential goods and during times of economic uncertainty; and

Whereas Ontarians are increasingly choosing to support Ontario-made and Canadian-made goods over American products in response to Donald Trump's tariffs and threats to our sovereignty;

Therefore, in the opinion of the House, the government must implement consumer protection measures including

requiring big box stores to clearly identify when they raise prices by more than 2% within a two-week period, when a product has been imported from the United States, and when products are made in Ontario and in Canada.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Ms. Stiles has moved opposition day motion number 1.

I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Before I begin, I want to acknowledge the results of this week's federal election, while I have an opportunity. I want to congratulate Prime Minister Mark Carney. The challenges ahead are serious, and as the official opposition here in Ontario, our focus is very clear: We are going to use our power in the Legislature every single day to strengthen Ontario, to look after people, to get Ontario building and to grow our economy. And I have to say, it was fun watching the new Prime Minister campaign on a plan to "get the government back in the business of building homes." Because, you know what, Speaker? That's our Homes Ontario plan, word for word. I mean, I'm flattered, but I'll be a whole lot happier when we actually get moving on it.

Now, I know there are some, and maybe even a few across the aisle, who think that this week's results were the end of the road for our federal cousins. They've said that before, and every time, New Democrats prove them wrong—not with noise but with results.

New Democrats brought public health care to this country. New Democrats delivered dental care and drug benefits for millions. New Democrats secured child care that families can actually afford. No party has fought harder or delivered more for Canadians and for everyday people than New Democrats.

More than anything, New Democrats are people who care more about the person who's sitting across from them than about themselves. That's the spirit that we are bringing into this Legislature as the official opposition: Not to play politics, but to strengthen Ontario, because that is the work that people sent us here to do.

A few months ago on the campaign trail, I stopped by a family-owned grocery store. The owner—a man who has been in business for, gosh, 30 years—walked me to the aisle and he pointed at two jars of honey. One jar came from a local beekeeper who was just down the road and the other was a US import. He told me how proud his customers are to support Ontario products, and they show real pride in supporting their own.

Then I met with this young father, he has two kids, he's got a mortgage, he's got a fridge that he said always seems to be emptying faster than it should. He said to me—and I wrote it down—"Every Saturday, I grab my cart, walk into the same grocery store I've gone to for 15 years and I wonder, what's going to cost more this week? It's not just that it's expensive," he said to me. "It's that I never see it coming."

That's what people in Ontario are feeling right now: proud, resilient, but tired of being left in the dark—and they're not wrong to feel that way.

Now, you know, Pierre Trudeau once said that living next to the United States is a lot like sleeping next to an

elephant. No matter how friendly it seems, you feel every twitch and every grunt. Well, someone said to me not long ago: "Sure, but what if the elephant that you're sleeping next to was rabid? Well, maybe it's time to get out of bed." Because, Speaker, when you're dealing with a neighbour that's unpredictable, like we are, you don't just lie there and hope for the best; you protect what's yours.

We are in a country that was built by working people—working people who believe in something bigger than themselves, who built a better life with their own two hands. We look after each other and we don't leave anyone behind when the ground starts to shake. That's the Canada that I know. That's the Ontario that we are here to strengthen. Let me say this very plainly: Canada will never be the 51st state.

Now, everywhere I go, as I go around the province, I see this: Parents choosing Ontario-made products to support good Ontario jobs; workers building with pride and purpose; farmers and small business owners keeping our communities going. Ontarians are stepping up. They are stepping up, even in the face of those rising costs that I talked about, even in the face of growing uncertainty. Many of those same Ontarians are asking themselves, rightly: "Why wasn't Ontario in a stronger position in the first place, before this storm hit?"

It's a fair and it's a very serious question, because the truth is that we should have been. We should have been more ready. But for too long, this government's attention and previous government's attention was spent elsewhere, chasing headlines, running away from them. While people were asking for action on the basics, too often here in the province of Ontario the focus of the government was on damage control. While we cannot go back, we can change how we respond now, to strengthen Ontario together.

1330

Today, we're giving the government a chance to do something right. We're bringing forward a simple, practical solution. Our motion proposes clear, common-sense consumer protections to choose Ontario and strengthen Ontario.

(1) We're going to require grocery giants like Loblaws and Sobeys and Walmart to label any sudden price hikes. What that means is if a product price jumps up more than 2% in two weeks, mark it. If a store can label a sale, they can darn well label a price hike.

(2) Our motion will tell the government to have those big box corporations label all US imports.

(3) It requires those big box stores to promote Ontario-made and Canadian-made goods by clearly labelling local products. Make it easier for people.

What does that mean for a family out shopping on a Saturday? Well, it means no more shell games, no more sticker shock when you get to the checkout. If that box of cereal shot up in price overnight, you're going to know, and you're going to know why. If you want to buy local, you will find it more easily. It's the right to know, and it's the power to choose.

Now, Speaker, I want to be clear: This is part of a broader vision that we are bringing forward. Since the start

of this session, our team has been very, very focused. We reached out to the Premier to propose a Team Ontario approach on tariffs—we're still waiting for a reply, by the way. We struck a leader's advisory council on tariff response and economic security. We launched a working group on critical minerals. We're going to keep using our power as the official opposition to strengthen Ontario.

I really do want to believe that every member in this chamber wants what's best for the people they represent. That's why we ran. So, here's the test: If you believe in transparency, support this motion. If you believe in Ontario-made jobs, support this motion. If you believe in a government that works for people, support this motion—because on this side of the House, we're proud to stand up for people. We're proud to say we'll look after people, and we'll get Ontario building. We'll grow our economy. That's how we choose Ontario, and that's how we strengthen Ontario.

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

Mr. John Fraser: It's a pleasure to speak to this motion. I want to thank the Leader of the Opposition for bringing it forward.

I do want to make some comments about the election. Again, I said earlier this week that all candidates should be congratulated, and we've turned the page with the federal election.

I do want to say, in all deference to my colleagues to my right or to my left, that no, the NDP—I agree—aren't dead. I've got some experience about seven seats. You can go from seven seats six years ago to getting 500,000 more votes than the official opposition in just almost seven years. That's what you can do: You can go back to solvency. So, my phone is available. I'll take a call, not for the job but any advice—for free, because I really do like my colleagues to the right here, who are actually to my left.

The reason I like this motion is I've spent half of my career in the grocery business. I'm not going to have another fishmonger story; I promise you—

MPP Wayne Gates: Hope it wasn't Loblaws.

Mr. John Fraser: Oh, it was a lot of different stores, yes: Loblaws, Steinberg's, Independent Grocer. I worked for small stores. I was a fishmonger. I bought produce. I did all sorts of things. I managed stores. So I know the business pretty well.

There are things in this motion that I'll have to say—honestly, I don't think that they're practical. And I don't want to be critical, because I am going to support the motion.

I think the most important thing is right up at the head—and I'll tell you what the next important thing is after this. We had a situation in this country where the Competition Bureau found that there was price-fixing for bread. That's not good for anybody. And anyone who tells you, "Oh, that's it. That's all we did"—it's like, it's happening. It continues to happen. And I would encourage the government, because they have some ability to do it, because they are the government, to encourage the Competition Bureau

to take a harder look at where else this is happening in the industry. It's just a natural tendency. When we look at it for gas—there are a lot more different things than groceries. So I think that's the most important thing. And that's the thing, when I look at this, that I think would be the best action that we could get to come out of this—is to take a hard look at this, to hold people to account.

The second thing is the "Buy Canadian, Buy Ontario"—government has a role in that. They can help, like they do already, by providing promotional materials, encouraging, advertising. Instead of advertising about how great we are, advertise about how great Canadian products are, about how great Ontario products are. There won't be another election for four years—or maybe not. We don't know. Maybe we'll have another early one. So maybe we could just stick to that, as a government, instead of telling us how great the government is. Spend the hundreds of millions of dollars on doing that.

I do think that retailers are doing a good job of labelling Canadian products. People are actually actively doing that, so much so that they go into the—I was talking to the guy in the produce department at the Loblaws down the street from me. There were strawberries. They had the Canadian strawberries, the hothouse ones—I don't know if people have seen those; they're actually quite good—and, I think, some Driscoll's berries from the US. He said, "We're not selling any of these." They were on sale. People are buying the Ontario strawberries that are more expensive. So there's already a desire there—and it's only for the government to enable, to encourage. They've got the money. They've got the power. They've got the pulpit. Use it. Add to the desire of Ontarians and Canadians to shop Canadian. It is really there. People are actively getting off Amazon. People want, people need—in this climate crisis, people need to take an action. They did it in the federal election by voting in record numbers. They want to buy Canadian products. They want to do something to help, even if it's small. They want to contribute. I think that's an important part of this motion, and I encourage the government to take it seriously.

The part that I have a challenge with is the labelling of a product that has gone up by 2%. Product prices shift all the time; 2% is not a lot. I'm not sure that it's practical or advisable from the perspective of what we want to put resources into.

There's no question, groceries cost more. I spent a lot of time in the grocery business, so when I go into a grocery store, I look at prices. I'm a cherry-picker; I'll admit it. I shop around. So I can see prices, especially on the grocery shelves and in produce and in the meat too, where stuff is like—"That price is higher than I think it probably should be. It's a bit out of whack." I go to different stores, and especially in the grocery stores, I say, "Why is it \$5.99 over here and \$3.99 over here?" They all do different mixes.

The kind of good news is, there is pressure for prices to come down right now, and you can see it. I spend a lot of time; I know what I'm looking at, and so I can see that pressure. I can see it in the flyers. I can see it in the stores.

So the thing I really believe that we need to worry about is companies coming together to agree that they're going to price something at a certain price and be anti-competitive, work against the market, which is kind of interesting because one of the arguments is like, "The market demands that we charge this much," but then, there's this stuff that happened like bread price-fixing, which is, "No, no, we're going to control the market," which is not market-based politics. So you can't have it both ways.

1340

I'm glad this is at the top of the motion. Like I said, I'll be supporting it and my colleagues will be supporting it. I don't want to use up too much time because I could be here all day talking. You all know that. I think one of the things in the motion that I would like to see is—do you know what would make it more affordable for people to buy groceries? The income tax cut the Premier promised almost years ago—actually, seven years ago. Seven is a lucky number. Maybe we will get something in the budget. That's what needs to happen, taking the HST off home heating and hydro, cutting the small business tax rate. Those are things that will help people create jobs, have more money in their pocket so they can afford food, or more afford food, I should say.

Like I say, I will be supporting this motion. I agree with the substance and most of the motion. I do think that the price-changing notification—I don't think it's practical. I think the threshold is too small. I'm just being technical about this, but the intent of the motion is exactly what people need right now and I'm happy to support it. Thank you very much.

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

MPP Wayne Gates: I obviously support the motion. We're not telling people what to buy. We're saying, "Give them the tools to choose Canadian, if they want to." This isn't just good for local business; it's good for the entire economy.

The Bank of Montreal last week: A modest shift in spending to Canadian goods could mean \$10 billion—that's with a B—added to our economy every year. That's jobs; that's growth; that's Niagara families putting food on their table, putting money away for their first home, saving for their children's education. We've got the workers and the product; now let's make sure we've got the policies to match.

If you want to support "Buy Local, Buy Canadian," it just can't be empty words at a press conference. A month ago, the Premier said he may legislate Canadian-made labels, so why haven't we? Ontario has the levers to make it happen. Do you know in the LCBO we control that? We can say what we put on our shelves. The grocery stores, shelf space, we regulate that. Procurement in schools and hospitals are in the billions of dollars. That's our jurisdiction. We can make sure we're using local workers. It makes no sense to me that we haven't done it yet. Don't wave a flag in one hand and give an American company a pass on the other. Back it up. Put in real support behind

Ontario jobs, our farmers, our Ontario producers, our auto workers. The people are already buying in. Now is the time for government to catch up.

I want to talk about something that should be common sense: buying Canadian and buying local. Because at the end of the day, residents in Niagara and right across Ontario work hard for their money. They should have the right to know where their dollars are going and choose to put money back into their own communities. That's why I've been pushing for buy-local policies for years.

Now, I come from Niagara and the auto sector. Let's be clear: We've seen first-hand what "Buy Canadian" means when you actually make shelf space for it. I'm going to give you an example. I've been fighting for years to get more Ontario-made wines in the LCBO—something we control—the VQA wines made with 100% Niagara-grown grapes. Look what happened since American products were pulled off the shelves and should never go back, quite frankly: Sales of Niagara wines have exploded. That's not because we drink a lot in Niagara. They've exploded. Red wine is up 71%, white wine is up 67%, sparkling wine is up 28%. That's no fluke. That's what happens when we finally give people the choice to support their neighbours and their communities. And it's just not about wine. It's about every product we could make, right here at home.

Speaker, this motion is about consumers having honest information and real options. People in Niagara want to know if their product is made in Ontario, if it's made in Canada or if it comes from across the border, especially now that Trump's tariffs are on workers.

I want to finish up by saying, this morning, I listened to a response to one of our leader's questions about price gouging. You know, it was a Premier that said, right here in this Legislature, that if he finds one company that is price gouging, he would hit them over the head with a sledgehammer. Loblaws has been price gouging for years, continuing to do it—where's the sledgehammer? Where's the protection for our workers? The only thing that has happened with Walmart and not going after price gougers—the only thing that has gone up is our food banks. Our families are using more food banks because they can't afford groceries. It's ridiculous.

I want to talk quickly on auto tariffs because I don't have a lot of time. Trump wants to go after our auto sector. We've been building cars in this country for over 100 years. We produced some of the highest in quality. We have the productivity. We have health and safety standards better than anywhere in the world. And I'm going to say to the Conservatives, to the NDP and the Liberals: If they have to fight and take over plants in the province of Ontario to save their jobs, because if the equipment leaves—make no mistake about it, if that equipment leaves Ontario and leaves those plants, it's never coming back and the jobs are going with it.

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

Mr. Brian Riddell: Our government is focused on protecting Ontario consumers and supporting businesses that drive our economy. Our ministry knows that we have

that duty. We are strengthening consumer protection legislation while boosting business opportunities and reducing red tape. We must safeguard consumers as they make big decisions in their lives, whether it is purchasing a home, signing contracts for home renovations or being tied to long-term leases on HVAC systems or water heaters. We take this matter very seriously and will never stop taking action to protect Ontario.

We know that it is very critical that everything we do in this province continues to grow and become more technologically advanced. After dreadful years of neglect and silence under previous governments, our government has stepped up and created solutions that are suitable for a dynamic and increasingly digital moderate marketplace that we have today.

Our government is taking action to improve the lives of Ontarians by actively building stronger protections for our valued consumers. This will always be our ministry's top priority. We will not sit back while new types of scams are in play to take advantage of our most vulnerable communities. After all, Ontario's marketplace has evolved significantly over the last two decades. Consumer protections need to reflect today's realities of an online world as more people are shopping online, banking online and relying on technology more than ever.

Over the years, our government has received an increased number of complaints from the public and stakeholders about harmful, misleading or costly business practices. It has also been brought to our attention that there are real or perceived gaps in enforcement. The people of Ontario have made it clear that they want to take actions to ensure their rights as consumers are protected. We know these issues disproportionately affect new Canadians, seniors and other vulnerable consumers, while undermining a fair and competitive economy.

To address these issues and more, our ministry has introduced Bill 142, the Better for Consumers, Better for Business Act, 2023, which was passed with everybody in this House voting for it. This legislation is a true testament to our efforts to strengthen and modernize consumer protections in Ontario.

Speaker, our government thrives when we work together with communities to hear and address their concerns. We are engaged in thoughtful consultation with industries, stakeholders and consumers to ensure any action we take creates meaningful impact for Ontario and supports businesses.

This bill proposed a new Consumer Protection Act and amended the last Consumer Reporting Act. We have modernized the main piece of legislation that sets out rules for consumer protection in Ontario. This includes requirements of plain-language contracts, protecting the rights for consumers to reject unsolicited goods, and for clear, mandatory disclosure of obligations for new home sales. The act is another example of our government delivering on its commitment to put everyday Ontarians first by enhancing their consumer protections, while maintaining an environment of innovation and competitiveness.

1350

We are already taking strong action to ensure fair pricing and protecting consumers through existing laws under the Consumer Protection Act. By modernizing our consumer protection laws, we are in line with Ontario's red tape reduction strategy by holding businesses to a high standard of compliance, while maintaining strong consumer safeguards.

We are strengthening prohibitions against unethical conduct by prohibiting various contract terms and providing fairer exit options for consumers and their families. For example, we are tackling the critical issue of businesses unfairly increasing the prices on goods and services by establishing rules on price escalation clauses.

Under the Consumer Protection Act, businesses are strictly prohibited from engaging in these unfair practices. Consumers are allowed to withdraw and seek a refund within one year. While incidents still can occur, our ministry has developed methods to further protect the people of Ontario.

If an Ontario consumer has been harmed by unfair practices, we have made it simple for people and businesses to submit a complaint to our ministry, which will investigate this issue on a case-by-case basis. We cannot tolerate practices such as aggressive sales tactics and misleading claims. That's why it is a key objective of these amendments: so that we can have some transparency in these events. We are giving Ontarians the power and tools to monitor their consumer files, reports and scores when it comes to protecting their credit reporting information.

In addition, our ministry is holding bad actors accountable, such as doubling maximum fines, to further deter offences in our marketplace. Simply put, the new Consumer Protection Act promotes a competitive marketplace where businesses are required to comply with consumer protection rules.

We also passed the Homeowner Protection Act, 2024 shortly after to ban the use of notices of security interests, also known as NOSIs. We broke new ground with the passage of this legislation, a first of its kind in Canada. As a result, we are saving Ontarians from losing their homes to appalling scams where bad actors have scammed our seniors and some of the most vulnerable residents for their own financial gain. We are ensuring that those who engage in this scam face penalties for NOSI violations. This bill bans the registration of consumer NOSIs on land registries and deems all currently registered NOSIs for consumer goods to be expired and unenforceable, providing immediate relief for affected consumers. With consumer NOSIs no longer enforceable, real estate agents will be able to complete transactions for clients more effectively.

It is important to note that these changes do not eliminate a business' security interest in a fixture or invalidate the contract with the consumer. Rather, they focus on closing a loophole that has been used by bad actors to scam hard-working people in Ontario. Make no mistake: We will continue to listen and build trust with our

residents in order to protect Ontarians as they spend their hard-earned money.

These pieces of legislation account for the endless examples of how this government remains committed to building a safer, fairer, stronger economy for the future generations to come. We carried out our promise to keep Ontario consumers safe. While the opposition supported the previous government and ignored consumer protection for more than 15 years, we have stuck to our mandate and provided Ontarians with the protections they need and deserve to engage in our market worry free. We strive to streamline the process to ensure business compliance without overburdening them with red tape, especially during a time when we need to strengthen and not strain our economic recovery.

Let me be clear: For far too long, red tape and regulatory roadblocks have impeded the free movement of goods and services within our province and across our country. In a time of uncertainty as we work to eliminate our internal trade barriers and fight against unfair US tariffs, Ontario is leading by example by tackling the affordability challenges to lower the cost to families to live comfortably and thrive. We are repairing the detrimental damage done by previous governments as we support workers such as farmers, builders, auto workers and entrepreneurs across this great province and nation.

A major step towards this mending is our government's Bill 2, Protect Ontario Through Free Trade Within Canada Act, 2025. This bill demonstrates how Ontario remains open for business and ready to confidently lead our country. We cannot afford to sit around at a time when families are struggling to pay for household essentials. Families need to be reassured our government is there for them, and we are—every day.

Not only will our government unlock the country's full economic potential, but we will decrease the cost of goods and services that our families rely on. Bigger opportunities are provided for our hard-working Ontario people as we continue to support jobs, strengthen supply chains and use our collective purchasing power to invest back into communities.

We are standing together like never before in supporting our economy. Speaker, Ontarians are already choosing to support made-in-Ontario products, and that is why our proposed Buy Ontario, Buy Canada Day Act, if Bill 2 passes, will build that momentum.

We are promoting pride in local goods. Our government is answering the call from Canadians that say they want to see more Canadian-made products promoted in our stores. Ontarians understand that shopping local is not only patriotic, it's practical. We will always stand up for Canadian goods and services, and we will not be pushed around by the threat of tariffs.

In 2022, we introduced the Build Ontario Business Initiative, also known as BOBI, to address the needs of our local economy and provide Ontario businesses with greater access to procurement opportunities. This initiative strengthens our province's supply chain resiliency and prepares Ontario for evolving trade situations, so that

Ontario consumers can rest assured our government will protect them in times of crisis.

We will always stand up to foreign threats, including reckless tariffs and economic bullying from our neighbours, but we will not turn that fight inward by saddling Ontario companies with unnecessary red tape. Our government will continue to work with stakeholders to increase transparency and accessibility, and we will always do so to protect our province's economic competitiveness.

Speaker, our focus is clear: We are strengthening local supply chains, building consumer confidence and growing jobs right here in Ontario. Our province is delivering powerful results, and it is our obligation to the people of Ontario to ensure they are protected against unfair business practices, fraud or scams and aggressive sales tactics. We are protecting Ontario consumers, protecting Ontario businesses and protecting Ontario's future.

I look forward to providing many more updates to Ontarians on the work our ministry continues to do as we stop bad actors and implement new protections to protect Ontario.

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

Mr. Chris Glover: We, in Ontario, are facing a crisis that's been 40 years in the making, and it's been made by government policies, both here in Ontario and at the federal level as well. We've got 80,000 people who are homeless in Ontario. We've got 1,400 encampments in every riding and in every part of this province. We've got 50,000 people, mainly young people, leaving the province every year because they can't afford homes here. One in 10 Ontarians is using a food bank. You wonder, how has this happened?

1400

Over the last 40 years, there's been a massive transfer of wealth from low- and middle-income people to the very wealthiest. The top 0.1% income has increased by 650% over the last 40 years, whereas the bottom 90%—the median income and among the bottom 90%—has decreased by 4%. So 90% of Ontarians have been living in a depression for the last 40 years. Now, on top of these economic crises, we face this existential threat from Donald Trump—a threat to our economy, a threat to our sovereignty.

And so today, the NDP has introduced a motion to take a couple of steps towards addressing both of these crises, the cost-of-living crisis and also the sovereignty crisis. The motion is very simple, but the government has said that they won't be supporting it because one of the parts of the motion is just to label made-in-Ontario and made-in-Canada goods. The government has said, "No, this motion is just adding red tape." Well, that's not just red tape. That's actually something that people want because Ontario consumers want to support Ontario workers and Ontario businesses. So this is worth doing.

They also have said they want to support Ontario businesses, but they continue to give our tax dollars to foreign companies. The \$2.2-billion tax subsidy in Ontario

Place is a perfect example. And the Premier, instead of supporting Ontario businesses, is promoting an Am-Can proposal that more deeply integrates our economy with the US.

The motion is for big box stores to clearly label made-in-Canada products and to label when they are raising the prices of goods more than 2% in a week. We need this very simple motion to pass. It will help address the food crisis because it will make the inflationary cost of food clear and transparent. And these big box stores need to be transparent because they have been accused—they have been found guilty by the consumer protection bureau of fixing the price of bread. They've raised food inflation by 11.4% since the pandemic, whereas the actual inflation rate was 5.9%. They are contributing to the food insecurity of this province.

This motion will help to address both the economic crisis that we've been facing for a long time and also the sovereignty crisis by helping Ontario consumers to support Ontario businesses. I hope the government will change its mind and actually support this NDP motion today.

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

M^{me} Lucille Collard: As the member of Ottawa–Vanier, I rise to respond to the motion presented by the official opposition, a motion that is rooted in values that we, on this side of the House, share deeply: that is, fairness, transparency and respect for the hard-earned money of Ontarians.

The motion before us states plainly that Ontarians have the right to make informed choices about how they spend their money. It recognizes that price gouging and price fixing, especially by large corporate retailers, have become increasingly visible and deeply troubling, particularly on essential goods.

It calls attention to the reality that, in response to President Donald Trump's new tariffs and renewed threats to Canadian sovereignty, many Ontarians are actively choosing to support Ontario- and Canadian-made products over imports from the United States.

Speaker, those are facts. They reflect also what I hear in Ottawa–Vanier every day. Families are doing their best to stretch each dollar. They want to buy local. They want to support businesses that support Ontario workers, but too often they are left without the clear information they need to make those choices. And with the cost of essentials still climbing, people are understandably angry that corporations continue to post record profits while families are forced to make sacrifices.

So let me be clear: The Ontario Liberal caucus supports the values that underpin this motion. We believe consumers should be informed when prices rise sharply. We support stronger protections against price gouging, and we agree that Ontarians should be empowered to support domestic products in response to the real and present economic threat posed by protectionist policies from the United States.

But, Speaker, values alone are not enough. What's missing from this motion is a practical, implementable plan, and that's where we, as Liberals, must offer both support and constructive critique.

Let's take the first element: requiring big box stores to identify when a product's price increases by more than 2% within a two-week period. In theory, that may sound simple. However, in practice, it does introduce a complicated regulatory framework that this government frankly has shown no interest in developing or maintaining.

Price changes happen for a variety of reasons: supply chain issues, exchange rates, supply costs and seasonal demand. Tracking and reporting every 2% fluctuation across thousands of products is not just a policy challenge, it's a logistical one, especially if there is no enforcement capacity behind it. And given this government's track record of underfunding consumer protection agencies and dismantling oversight bodies, we have real doubts about whether such a system would be enforced at all.

Second, the motion proposes that retailers clearly identify when a product is imported from the United States. Again, the intention is right—we should be helping Ontarians support domestic goods, but we must also acknowledge that many products have complex supply chains, with components sourced globally and assembled across multiple jurisdictions. Mandatory origin labelling at this scale is administratively heavy, and it's not clear how it would be monitored or who would bear the cost.

And third, Speaker, while we absolutely support the clear labelling of Ontario- and Canadian-made products, we believe the most effective way to encourage this is through government-backed incentives and public education campaigns—tools that help businesses comply without creating new burdens, particularly for small and medium-sized businesses.

This motion in its current form lacks those key details, and that's not a minor issue. It's the difference between a motion that leads to real outcomes and one that simply makes headlines.

In Ottawa–Vanier, we know that small retailers—many of them immigrant- and women-owned—are already navigating economic uncertainty and inflation. They want to do right by their customers. They want to be part of the solution. But adding complex labelling and pricing regulations without clear guidance or support could overwhelm them and push more business into the hands of the very corporate giants that we're trying to hold accountable.

So, Speaker, our Liberal caucus believes in a smarter path forward, and here's what we would be proposing:

- strengthen existing consumer protection laws with real enforcement powers. Don't just create new rules, give agencies the tools and funding to enforce them;

- launch a government-led Buy Ontario and Made in Canada campaign, with standardized labelling and marketing support for businesses that participate voluntarily;

- introduce targeted penalties for demonstrable price gouging and anti-competitive practices by major corporate retailers, backed by transparent investigations;

—invest in public-facing digital tools that allow consumers to track price changes, product origins and ethical business practices so that the responsibility doesn't fall only on retailers to disclose but empowers consumers to verify;

—and finally, recognize that affordability isn't just about information, it's about income. Let's talk about raising the minimum wage, addressing housing costs and supporting families with policies that put money back in their pockets.

Speaker, we support the official opposition in bringing this motion forward, but the concerns are real and the urgency is clear. President Trump's tariffs are already hurting Canadian producers. We need to act—and fast—to shore up our economy and defend our sovereignty through consumer empowerment and smart policy. But let's ensure that any new measures are workable, enforceable and built with input from the very people and businesses they affect. Ontarians don't need just symbolic gestures; they need solutions they can see and feel at the checkout counter.

1410

We in the Ontario Liberal Party are committed to working across party lines to get this right for consumers, for workers and for Ontario's economic future.

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

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Good afternoon, everyone. It's been seven years of a provincial government that has spent so much time in the United States. Trade missions—so proud of bragging about that relationship and in seven years, you would have thought we would have been tariff-proof, right? That amazing, loving friendship they had with the United States—imagine the joy they had on election night at their election parties.

What do we get? Tariffs. What else do we get? Talks of annexation. I wonder where they got that idea from, that we would welcome it so greatly. What else did we get? Small business replaced by American big box stores and chains. Forget about ServiceOntario; go to Staples to get your licence.

This is the legacy of this government: bumbling, working their way through legislation that's been mismanaged and then relying on crises to get re-elected. And we've had crises. We've gone through a pandemic and now, another global crisis: a huge trade war. So now, if you take it from the words of the Premier, we're all on Team Canada. And so today, as part of that Team Canada, Team Ontario approach, we've tabled legislation you just can't say no to. Because it's about transparency. It's about pride and supporting Canadian businesses.

Yet, we are hearing—I must have misunderstood—transparency is red tape to these guys. We just want to let consumers know that when they go to buy a loaf of bread, it was made in Canada. We know we can't rely on these grocers. It's like a pyramid scheme. There are a few companies that own all of it. It's an illusion of competition. We heard about the bread price-fixing. You can't trust that.

We, as politicians, are encouraging people to shop Canada, to shop Ontario. All we're going to do is ask them to treat consumers with respect. Right? We know during a crisis—during the pandemic, we saw some grocers charge 20 bucks for Lysol wipes. We just heard about the new Consumer Protection Act from the government side. Well, guess what? They told people to call a consumer hotline during that crisis. Some 30,000 people called register price gouging and under this government, how many charges were laid?

Interjections: Zero.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Zero.

We hear again today, “Oh, leave it to us. There's no gouging. We're going to take care of it. We're going to ensure that consumer protection and fairness is going to happen.” Today, you have an opportunity, a golden opportunity, to show the people of this incredible province that when grocers, big box stores, when there's a sale—oh, there's that big red sticker, it looks like an explosion on the package, right? But when they're raising prices, tell us, too. Come on. Don't gouge us. We're going to tell people to buy Canadian. We're going to tell people to buy Ontario.

With that new business—80% of people here have said they're going to buy more Ontario and buy more Canada. Just treat our consumers with respect. Government members, transparency is never red tape. Do something right by consumers. Vote yes. Join Team Ontario. Join Team Canada. Do the right thing.

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

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I'm happy to rise today to speak to this motion put forward by the leader of the official opposition, calling for big box stores to clearly label products as “made in Canada” or “made in Ontario,” and for big grocery chains to publicly report when they raise prices by more than 2% in a single week. This will support the right of families to choose the products they know will help our provincial economy and protect them against price gouging at a moment when families are struggling with the cost of living.

Right now, people are navigating the uncertainty caused by Trump's tariffs, but they've already been squeezed by the rising cost of everything under this government, including groceries. They're spending more than they can afford on housing, leaving little money for essentials like food. And now, these tariffs risk making groceries even more unaffordable.

In this context, it is absolutely unacceptable that big grocery chains like Loblaws, Metro, Sobeys and Walmart are continuing to make record profits every year. There's also a big risk here because we know that these big grocery chains have taken advantage of crises in the past to raise prices. During the pandemic, their profits nearly doubled from \$2.4 billion to \$6 billion after they had raised prices by nearly twice the rate of inflation. But this Conservative government failed to take action to stop this behaviour while it was happening. They created a 1-800 line to allow consumers to report price gouging during the pandemic.

They received 30,000 complaints, but not a single charge was ever laid.

Consumers deserve protection and making these companies publicly report when they are hiking prices is an important step in fighting price gouging. I want to take a minute to talk about why this matters. In my riding of Ottawa West–Nepean, I've had many individuals share with me how hard it is to get by. Jeanette is one. She's on ODSP and she has diabetes. After paying her rent, Jeanette only has \$275 left for everything else, including paying bills and buying groceries. This means that Jeanette has to choose between skipping meals or eating foods that are not healthy for a diabetic. Either way, she's putting her health at risk. It is not fair to allow big grocery chains to force people like Jeanette to fund their record profits, when she is barely scraping by.

We are also seeing, in this moment of crisis, that the people of Ontario want to support our economy, support our businesses, support local jobs. They are looking to buy made-in-Canada, made-in-Ontario products, and we need to make it easier for them to do that. I know I find it frustrating when I'm in the grocery store and I see a maple leaf above an item, and I think, "Oh, great. It's made in Canada." Then I pick it up, turn it over, and I see it clearly says it's a product of the United States. We should not be forcing people to read the fine print, Speaker. It should be easy and straightforward for shoppers to identify that something actually is Canadian. It shouldn't require advanced education and eyesight to see really small font in order to be able to find out.

We can help people who want to make the choice to buy Canadian and buy Ontario by requiring big box stores to have clear and consistent labels when a product is Canadian. I would like to think that affordability and consumer choice are something that we can all agree on in this House, although a government member just said that those values are red tape. But I would urge government members to reject that opinion and to vote in support of this motion.

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

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: It's always an honour to rise in this House to speak on behalf of the great people of Toronto Centre. I rise in support of this motion, which, if passed, will require big grocery corporations to disclose sudden price hikes and empower consumers to buy Ontario and buy Canadian products much more easily. This motion would require those big box retailers, such as Walmart, Loblaws, Sobeys, to disclose when their products have gone up more than 2% over a period of one week and to label those products as "made in Ontario."

You know, Speaker, 2% may not seem like a heck of a lot, but that 2%, compounded every week, that's how price creep goes up, and that's when we see price gouging. For struggling Ontarians, that is a lot. Donald Trump's reckless tariffs have shown us that it has united Canadians like never before from coast to coast. Canadians are wanting to choose to "Buy Ontario" and "Buy Canadian" products. But it's becoming much more difficult for them

to see that, because they're standing in the grocery aisles poring over the soup cans, poring over different products as they're trying to inform themselves.

So standardizing a very simple way of disclosing is not difficult. These are big, multinational chain companies, many of them with shareholders in the US. We're not asking small businesses to do this; we're asking big corporate giants to own up. We need to label those goods when prices are rising and out of control. Consumers deserve to know when there is a sudden price hike.

1420

During the COVID pandemic, this government said they would crack down on price gouging, but they never did. They set up a hotline that we've all heard about: 30,000 calls went in, and not a single charge was laid.

They also opened up US big box retailers, and they asked small businesses on all our main streets in every single town and city to shut down. I don't know what is the love affair that this government has with American big box retailers, from Staples to all the other big chains. This government has an opportunity to show what it takes in order for them to support Ontarians right now.

The government also railed against the carbon tax. We heard it all throughout the last session. Now that the carbon tax is off the table, I haven't seen the prices come down on gas; I haven't seen the prices come down on food. Speaker, who are they serving?

What we need to do is have this government be able to respond to consumers and be able to work with each and every single one of us. That's what Ontarians are asking for. Donald Trump started this trade war, but we will win it.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: Je vais commencer en disant quelque chose sur lequel tout le monde en Ontario et la plupart des gens au Canada vont être d'accord : on ne sera jamais le 51^e État. C'est clair. On ne le sera jamais.

Comment fait-on pour s'assurer de ça? Bien, on travaille ensemble. On choisit l'Ontario et on choisit de renforcer l'Ontario.

La motion que ma chef a mise de l'avant aujourd'hui et dont les députés ici en Ontario discutent, c'est une opportunité de travailler ensemble pour renforcer l'Ontario. On ne dira pas aux gens ce que vous pouvez acheter et ce que vous ne pouvez pas acheter. Ce n'est pas ça du tout. Vous pouvez continuer d'acheter tout ce que vous voulez, mais si vous voulez acheter un produit de l'Ontario ou un produit du Canada, on va mandater que l'étiquette le dise clairement.

Je suis sûre qu'on a tous fait la même affaire : on s'en va dans un magasin, et puis là, on regarde—l'étiquette dit « produit du Canada », mais tu commences à regarder l'étiquette plus en détail, puis tu te rends compte, « Oh, non, non, non. Ça dit que ça vient des États-Unis, cette affaire-là. » Donc on la remet là, puis on continue à chercher.

D'avoir un étiquetage qui dit clairement quelles sont les règles à suivre pour savoir si c'est un produit de l'Ontario

ou du Canada ferait une grosse différence. On ne vous dit pas que vous devez le faire; on vous dit tout simplement que si vous voulez acheter canadien, si vous voulez acheter ontarien, vous aurez l'information dont vous avez besoin pour le faire. Ça, c'est de un.

De deux, ce que l'on veut faire—on doit tous manger. Les besoins de base, c'est qu'on doit tous avoir un toit et on doit tous avoir de la nourriture. On va à l'épicerie pour acheter notre épicerie, mais vous avez tous vécu la même chose. On arrive à l'épicerie puis on dit : « Bien, voyons donc. C'était 1,99 \$ la semaine passée et là c'est 2,99 \$. » Qu'est-ce qui se passe là? Ou, mon favori, c'est, oui, c'est encore 1,99 \$, mais le montant a diminué de moitié. Qu'est-ce qui se passe, là?

Bien là, tout ce qu'on va demander, c'est, encore, un étiquetage qui laisse savoir aux gens, comme vous et moi, quand vous êtes à l'épicerie, si un produit a augmenté de plus de 2 % dans l'espace d'une semaine. C'est quelque chose qui est facile à faire, mais c'est quelque chose qui va changer la donne.

C'est facile, en ce moment, pour les grandes chaînes—que l'on parle de Loblaws, de Metro, de Sobeys ou de Walmart—d'augmenter les prix. À moins que vous ayez une vraie bonne mémoire : « Bon, il me semble que c'était 1,99 \$. Depuis quand que c'est 2,99 \$? »—tu sais, là, de mémoire. Mais là, il va y avoir une étiquette devant vous qui va vous le dire. Ça, ça va changer les comportements des grosses compagnies d'épiceries, pour s'assurer que s'il y a une augmentation à y avoir, bien, qu'ils le disent, puis je suis sûre qu'on va leur poser des questions, qu'ils auront à le justifier.

Ce sont des petits pas, mais des petits pas qui vont démontrer qu'ensemble tout est possible, qui vont démontrer que, oui, on veut s'entraider entre Ontariens et Ontariennes.

Je peux vous dire que le plus gros producteur de patates ça vient de mon comté, Poulin patates. Je suis très fière de dire que maintenant YIG les vend. Ils ne les vendaient pas avant. Ils les vendent, les patates de Poulin patates, parce que les gens demandent d'acheter local. Continuez de demander d'acheter local. On va réussir tout le monde ensemble. Elbows up. Merci.

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

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I rise today to talk about the need for greater transparency during a time when Canadians have chosen to take a stand against Donald Trump's tariffs. Ontarians have said enough is enough. I've called out corporate grocery giants for using the pandemic as an excuse to gouge consumers. We are averaging \$7 to \$8 for milk, \$7 for a pound of butter and \$7 to \$9 for eggs. This is absolutely ridiculous.

I walked into the grocery store the other day and I saw a huge display of beautiful raspberries for \$1.50 and another display of green grapes for \$1.40 a pound. These are prices we have not seen in years. Hold on, what's the catch? They were US products. I saw people in real time make a choice to purchase more expensive berries just to make a point.

Ontarians are taking a stand. They are doing their research, and they are making conscious choices to support local. They are choosing principle over price. That takes integrity, Speaker. It's time that our leaders match their energy. We need transparency, not just in trade policies but in the very systems and companies that dictate the cost of living for everyday people. When the price of everyday items like milk and butter and eggs skyrockets while corporate profits hit high records, we know something isn't right. It's not inflation; it's not just supply and demand. It's greed, plain and simple—greed.

Ontarians are tired of it. They're tired of hearing excuses while their grocery bills are ballooning. They're tired of being told just to shop around. They're tired of watching huge corporations pat themselves on the back for staying afloat during the pandemic while quietly padding their pockets and their bottom line. Enough is enough.

Transparency means knowing where our food comes from. It means understanding who profits and who pays. It means being able to walk into a store and trust the prices reflect fair wages, fair trade and fair treatment, not a CEO whose pockets became fatter while others lost their livelihoods, their homes and their life savings.

Today I stand here not just to call out this injustice but to celebrate the spirit of Ontarians. They are showing us the way. They are choosing local farmers. They are seeking out independent businesses. They are demanding better. As a government, we should be listening. We need policies to protect consumers, not corporations. We need legislation that enforces price transparency, we need investigations into predator-pricing practices, and we need to make sure that the consequences of Donald Trump's tariffs don't solely fall on the shoulders of everyday families.

Speaker, I want to take a moment to talk about how this fight is playing out right in my own riding of St. Catharines. Residents know the value of supporting local. We know the small-business owners who pour their hearts into their shops and their services. When Ontario takes a stand against unfair trade practices and price gouging, it's not just a headline; it becomes personal. It's about protecting our neighbours, our friends and our local economy.

We must demand that big box stores start being transparent, that proper labelling of goods is a priority and that consumers aren't purposefully misled into buying products that they don't want to spend their hard-earned money on just so corporations can make a big buck.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: We are serious on this side of the House about strengthening Ontario. We need to build a more resilient economy. That's what this motion is that we've presented today, because that means buying Ontario—it means making Ontario, it means building Ontario—together. And again, this motion is just one piece of that, but it gives our small businesses an edge. It keeps our dollars local, and it builds economic strength from the ground up.

Cette motion donne aux familles le pouvoir de choisir des produits fabriqués en Ontario et au Canada à l'épicerie et le droit de savoir quand un détaillant à grande surface augmente le prix des produits dont elles dépendent.

It gives us an opportunity to address rising costs for Ontarians. It gives us an opportunity to provide some transparency when you go to the grocery store. But it's also about something much deeper that I think we can all relate to right now, something that every Ontarian understands, and that is Canadian pride.

We are proud of what we grow here, every one of us. You heard that today, when people spoke about the pride in the products that are made: the vegetables and fruits that are grown in our communities. What we make here, we are proud of; what we build with our own hands.

We also believe that fairness matters; that workers deserve respect; that when someone walks into their grocery store, they should have the right to know how far their dollar is going to go and the power to choose a product that is made right here at home. It's going to support local jobs, local workers, farmers and their communities.

I would say this: I had a few people mention, "Why 2%," when we talked about controlling that and giving information about a price increase. Some people said, "Is that too low?" Well, I'd say this: If a big box store—if a Galen Weston, or a Walmart CEO—thinks it's too much trouble to label a 2% jump, they probably know it's a price hike that people aren't going to like. This is not about micromanaging every shift in cost. It's about trust. It's about giving families a heads-up when something changes suddenly. It's about letting them decide what's right for their budget, because if a store can label a sale, they can sure label a spike.

If we can put a maple leaf on the front of a jar, we can have the backs of the people that are buying it. So let's make it easier. Let's make it easier to allow people to choose local. Let's make it easier for people to choose Ontario. And let's make it easier to be proud of what we stand for, as Ontarians and as Canadians. Let's pass this motion and let's get to work.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): MPP Stiles has moved opposition day motion number 1. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I hear 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 nays have it.

Call in the members. There will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1434 to 1444.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): MPP Stiles has moved opposition day motion number 1.

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

Ayes

Armstrong, Teresa J.
Begum, Doly
Bell, Jessica

Gilmour, Alexa
Glover, Chris
Hsu, Ted

Shaw, Sandy
Smyth, Stephanie
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)

Blais, Stephen
Bourgouin, Guy
Cerjanec, Rob
Collard, Lucille
Fairclough, Lee
Fife, Catherine
Fraser, John
Gates, Wayne
Gélinas, France

Lennox, Robin
Mamakwa, Sol
McCrimmon, Karen
McKenney, Catherine
McMahon, Mary-Margaret
Pasma, Chandra
Rakocevic, Tom
Sattler, Peggy
Shamji, Adil

Stiles, Marit
Tabuns, Peter
Tsao, Jonathan
Vanthof, John
Vaugeois, Lise
Watt, Tyler
West, Jamie
Wong-Tam, Kristyn

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): All those opposed to the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Allsopp, Tyler
Anand, Deepak
Babikian, Aris
Bailey, Robert
Bethlenfalvy, Peter
Bouma, Will
Calandra, Paul
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon
Cho, Stan
Ciriello, Monica
Clark, Steve
Coe, Lorne
Cooper, Michelle
Crawford, Stephen
Cuzzetto, Rudy
Darouze, George
Denault, Billy
Dixon, Jess
Dowie, Andrew
Downey, Doug
Dunlop, Jill
Fedeli, Victor
Firin, Mohamed

Flack, Rob
Gualtieri, Silvia
Hamid, Zee
Hardeman, Ernie
Harris, Mike
Holland, Kevin
Jones, Sylvia
Kanapathi, Logan
Kerzner, Michael S.
Khanjin, Andrea
Kusendova-Bashta, Natalia
Learidi, Anthony
Lecce, Stephen
Lumsden, Neil
McCarthy, Todd J.
McGregor, Graham
Mulroney, Caroline
Oosterhoff, Sam
Pang, Billy
Parsa, Michael
Pierre, Natalie
Pinsonneault, Steve
Pirie, George

Quinn, Nolan
Racinsky, Joseph
Rae, Matthew
Rickford, Greg
Riddell, Brian
Rosenberg, Bill
Sabawy, Sheref
Sandhu, Amarjot
Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Saunderson, Brian
Scott, Chris
Scott, Laurie
Smith, Dave
Smith, David
Smith, Laura
Surma, Kinga
Thanigasalam, Vijay
Thompson, Lisa M.
Tibollo, Michael A.
Vickers, Paul
Wai, Daisy
Williams, Charmaine A.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day): The ayes are 35; the nays are 68.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negated.

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Mr. Steve Clark: Point of order: I seek the unanimous consent of the House to move a motion without notice regarding the membership of standing committees.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): The government House leader is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to move a motion without notice regarding the membership of standing committees. Agreed? Agreed.

I return to the government House leader.

Mr. Steve Clark: I move that notwithstanding standing order 115(a), the following changes be made to the membership of the following committees:

On the Standing Committee on Government Agencies, MPP McMahon replace MPP Watt, and MPP Smyth and MPP Rae be added; and

On the Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy, MPP Watt replace MPP McMahon.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): The government House leader has moved that notwithstanding standing order 115(a), the following changes be made to the membership of the following committees—

Interjection: Dispense.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Dispense? Agreed.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PROTECT ONTARIO THROUGH FREE TRADE WITHIN CANADA ACT, 2025

LOI DE 2025 POUR PROTÉGER L'ONTARIO EN FAVORISANT LE LIBRE-ÉCHANGE AU CANADA

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 30, 2025, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 2, An Act to enact the Buy Ontario, Buy Canadian Day Act, 2025 and the Ontario Free Trade and Mobility Act, 2025 and to amend various other Acts / Projet de loi 2, Loi édictant la Loi de 2025 sur le Jour « Achetons ontarien, achetons canadien » et la Loi ontarienne de 2025 sur le libre-échange et la mobilité et modifiant diverses autres lois.

1450

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): I recognize the member from Ottawa West–Nepean.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Thank you, Speaker.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Order.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: When we adjourned this morning, I was speaking about the important of health and safety measures to protect workers and how—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): We're going to stop the clock. We're going to let everyone out of the chamber so we can hear the member speak.

I recognize the member from Ottawa West–Nepean.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Thank you, Speaker.

When I left off this morning, I was talking about the importance of worker health and safety and protecting the health of every worker, ensuring that everybody comes home at the end of the day, and that protecting workers isn't just about saving jobs and making sure that people have job opportunities, it is making sure that they can be healthy and safe while at work and that they remain healthy and safe long after. It also means that we have an opportunity to protect consumers as well.

The concern that workers have raised about this legislation is that if we only talk about harmonization, we're not talking about harmonization at what level, we're not actually talking about making sure that these safety standards across provinces are going to be set at a standard

that will protect all workers. There's the risk that it will be set at the lowest common denominator so that we are now allowing workers to be in less safe work situations, that we are allowing standards for consumers to be lowered. So it's incredibly important that we approach this from the standard that quality standards should be at the highest possible level. We're not just talking about standardization; we are talking about raising the bar for every province, for every worker, for every consumer.

Unfortunately, this bill says that we're going to remove these barriers, but it's enabling legislation; we don't have any details on what that's actually going to look like. All of that is going to come in the regulations, which we see constantly from this government. They table legislation that says they're going to do X, but the bill doesn't contain any details on how they're going to do X. People are just supposed to trust them.

I know, as the education shadow minister, I've seen numerous examples, like Bill 98, where the government said they were going to exercise greater oversight of school boards, and then, down the road, suddenly that meant now they're going to remove trustees for missing a single meeting—a standard which, if it was applied to the Premier of this province, he would have lost his job long ago. The government didn't tell anybody that that was the goal of the legislation, and I don't know that Ontarians would have supported that legislation if they had known that was the goal.

We also saw it with the cyber security bill. The government said it's incredibly important to protect the privacy and the data of our students to keep them safe online, but they didn't provide a single detail about what that would actually look like, or any kind of commitment to providing the funding for school boards and schools to actually implement them. So forgive me if I don't feel a lot of trust that the government is actually going to approach this standardization through consultation with careful thought given to these details, like how are we going to protect workers and how are we going to protect consumers. So I would like to see added to this bill a commitment that we are going to raise the bar for everybody in Canada.

I just want to share the thoughts of some of the workers. This is from CUPE in their briefing on this bill: "Under mutual recognition, businesses located in a lower-standard jurisdiction could potentially face lower costs, which could help them win procurement contracts in higher-standard jurisdictions. For example, if a business located in a jurisdiction with lower worker safety standards bids on a contract in a jurisdiction with higher standards, they could undercut local businesses. This puts pressure on the higher-standard jurisdiction to lower their standards so that local businesses aren't competing on an unfair playing field. This dynamic puts workers and public safety at risk."

As you see, Speaker, workers themselves are worried that this is going to become a race to the bottom. We can't allow that to happen. It needs to be a lifting of all workers to the top, not to the bottom.

There are also concerns that have been raised by workers about job titles and what that means when we are

increasing labour mobility and engaging in mutual recognition because job titles may look similar, but the jobs aren't always the same.

For example, here in Ontario, we have registered practical nurses, and they have a much higher scope of practice than licensed practical nurses in other provinces. So are we going to allow these LPNs to come in now and practise as RPNs, or are we going to expect that they meet the same standards as an RPN? Because it makes a big difference to the people of Ontario as to what kind of care they're receiving and what kind of accountability there is for that care. So I would encourage the government to engage in these conversations with workers, with regulatory bodies, to make sure that we're doing everything we can to, yes, promote labour mobility but also to make sure we are protecting workers and we are protecting the people of Ontario.

This morning, Speaker, I promised I was going to come back to the issue of comparative advantage. Here is an area where I think we need to think carefully about what labour mobility actually means for our province because, yes, labour mobility means that we can bring workers here to Ontario and that they will be able to practise with fewer barriers. It also means that there are fewer barriers to our workers going to other provinces.

When you look at the context in Ontario, we do not have a comparative advantage to other provinces, Speaker. We have an incredibly high cost of housing and high cost of living, so why would workers who have in-demand skills come to work in Ontario, where they can't afford a home, where they may not be able to afford food, where their children won't be able to go to a high-quality school because education funding has been cut and the resources aren't there to support their kids?

I hear from people in Ottawa all the time that their children are moving away from the city in order to be able to afford housing, and in many cases, it's to an area outside of Ottawa where the housing prices are more affordable, but in some cases it's to other provinces. This is something that we might see more of under these labour mobility provisions, Speaker.

I think there's an opportunity here. We know we need to address the affordable housing crisis and we know we need to protect and create jobs in Ontario. If we actually invested in building deeply affordable housing, there would be new jobs in the skilled trades, new jobs for the building trades in Ontario, while we would also be meeting the needs of our Ontario residents and creating a comparative advantage for our province compared to other provinces.

The same is true of education. We have a school repair backlog that we know is at least \$16 billion. The government hasn't told us now in five or six years how much it's increased under their tenure, so we don't know what it actually is, but we know that there are billions of dollars in needed repairs to our schools. We could get workers working on addressing those repairs and building safe and healthy schools.

Again, it creates jobs, it creates opportunities for our economy, but it also makes our province more desirable to other workers, who will want to come here because our schools will be safe and healthy and provide a high-quality education for their children.

Child care is another area, Speaker, where we do not have a comparative advantage because people cannot find a child care spot and they are paying way too much for their spot. We haven't seen this government make the kinds of investments that would actually ensure everybody can find an affordable spot. I'm still hearing from parents that the moment they find out they're expecting, they're signing their child up for child care. Why would a worker want to come to Ontario and experience that kind of panic and anxiety about who's going to care for their children once they go back to work?

It's also another opportunity to create jobs. There are opportunities here, Speaker, to address multiple crises with a solution that gets people working, gives them high-quality jobs and also provides people in Ontario with the support and the services that they need.

Finally, the last element of this bill that I'm going to address, Speaker, is that the bill proclaims the last Friday of June each year as Buy Ontario, Buy Canadian Day, and that's not bad. We know that people in Ontario want to buy Ontario. They want to support Canadian-made products right now. They are demonstrating that every single day, but I don't think a single day accomplishes that, Speaker.

The government just voted against a motion that would have required big box stores to clearly label when a product is Canadian or made in Ontario, and that would actually be helping people to buy Ontario, buy Canadian—not a single Friday in June where we might talk about it.

1500

This is also a government that does not lead by example—because they are talking about buy Ontario, buy Canadian, and yet their own procurement is coming from big American companies—or not even just American but international companies, like this big deal with Therme at Ontario Place, where they are paying \$2.2 billion for a foreign spa company to come and set up shop at Ontario Place, which could have been redeveloped by Ontario companies with a design that actually met the needs and desires of people in Ontario.

We've seen them create a deal with Staples so that now, instead of going to a local small business to get their driver's licence or health card renewed, people are going to an American chain to get that work done.

We've seen them replace supports for social services; they've given the oversight of that to a large American company, so now profits are being diverted to the United States instead of going to the supports for people.

I think there's a lot more that this government could and should do to actually promote buying Ontarian and buying Canadian.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Laurie Scott): Questions?

Ms. Laura Smith: Thank you very much for the information. I appreciate her concerns about her community, as

does anybody in this room. But I was going to point out that under one of the policies in this bill, under the labour mobility section, it will allow workers who are registered in other Canadian jurisdictions to work as of right. This designation will really help so many workers—professional engineers, manufacturing, equipment operators—who really faced a lot of red tape prior to this, and make it easier. I heard from countless individuals who own businesses in my riding of Thornhill, and they can't get the people because of the red tape.

So I guess my point is, this legislation will obviously reduce the regulatory burden on our workers and our businesses. Has the member opposite decided to support this bill on that policy? Because that will definitely make it easier for those individuals in getting those workers.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Thank you to the member for the question. I mean, it's interesting to hear the member talking about red tape being the biggest barrier to companies getting workers when we just heard the government say during debate on our opposition motion that transparency to Ontario consumers is a form of red tape. I get really worried under those circumstances.

But also, if the government is truly worried about businesses being able to attract workers, then surely they are worried about the lack of affordable housing, about the lack of funding for our education system, because people do not want to relocate to Ontario if they can't afford to buy a home, if they can't afford to feed their family here. I would hope that if the government is truly interested in supporting local businesses, to find skilled workers, that they would actually address those reasons why skilled workers are leaving the province.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Laurie Scott): Questions?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Thank you to the member from Ottawa West–Nepean for your thoughtful remarks.

I'm also worried about the effects on labour and a lowering of standards. You were talking about competitive advantages, and if we have a higher standard in Ontario, that becomes a competitive disadvantage. So if we're going to have a good, even playing field across the country, we need to have the highest standard so that workers are truly protected.

You were also mentioning work going to the States. I don't know if people know, but Red Seal certification has been moved to the United States. You can only get your Red Seal certification in Canada by being tested in the United States.

I just wanted to really ask you to clarify again what risk there is to workers with a lowering of standards if that's not a priority for the government.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Thank you to my colleague from Thunder Bay–Superior North for such an excellent question. As I mentioned, earlier this week we celebrated the Day of Mourning, when we remember workers who died or were injured in the workplace. In 2023, there were 1,507 fatalities at workplaces in Canada. None of us want to see that happen. Everybody should come home safely at the end of the day.

What we need to be doing is paying more attention to health and safety, investing more in it, and not creating this race to the bottom, where health and safety are not even afterthoughts, but they're seen as a disadvantage and so they're being peeled away. We need to make sure that workers have the conditions they need to be safe at work, and also that consumers know that the products they consume, no matter where they are made, will be safe. So I want to see a lifting of all standards in Canada, not a race to the bottom.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Laurie Scott): Questions?

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I want to thank the member for Ottawa West–Nepean.

I'd like to explore that comment that was just made, because the goal of Bill 2 is standardization across the country.

To the member opposite: What provinces have standards that are too weak to be acceptable to your side?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I think we all have things to learn from each other about safety standards. The context is obviously different in every province.

I gave the example this morning about how trucking on the long, flat stretches of the Prairies is very different than trucking in northern Ontario, with hills, and with roads that aren't well maintained, because this government leaves it up to underfunded municipalities to maintain the roads. And that's different from trucking in the Rockies and Alberta and BC.

We need to make sure that regardless of what the standards are, they will protect all workers in all scenarios instead of only protecting workers in one scenario. I think that is something that workers deserve to expect from their governments. One reason why we keep seeing a high number of workplace fatalities and injuries is because governments aren't doing enough to protect workers. I think that should be the commitment that we all bring—that, yes, we want to reduce barriers; yes, we want mobility, but workers have to be at the table, and workers deserve to know that their safety will be protected by the government.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Laurie Scott): The member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore, I believe, I missed before—so please go ahead.

Ms. Lee Fairclough: Thank you very much, Speaker.

Thank you to the member from Ottawa West–Nepean for your comments today. I'm actually going to speak in a minute on some similar issues, and I think one of the most important is, some of our very basic foundations that we think need to be in place to actually attract people to come here may be missing.

I'm just wondering if you could speak, more generally, a little bit on that issue and if we're going to have—I'm very supportive of interprovincial trade, no question. But in our context, what else needs to happen if this bill is going to be successful?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Thank you to the member for a great question.

When I talk to people in Ottawa West–Nepean about what they need, there are some basics that top the list.

They need access to a decent place to live, that they can actually afford. They need to be able to afford food and to be able to pay the bills on top of that. They need a good school for their children to attend—one that actually meets their needs. They need to have a family doctor and access to health care within the community. They need a hospital where the wait times are not 12 to 16 hours before they can be seen. They need affordable child care, so they know that their child will be well looked after while they're at work but that it won't break the family budget for years to come.

These are all things that make our communities desirable places to live when we have them, and they're all challenges that make it much harder for people to get by in Ontario—and to start looking at other jurisdictions—if we don't have them. If the government wants to give us a competitive advantage and make us a place where people want to come, then I urge them to invest in those areas.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Laurie Scott): Questions?

Ms. Catherine Fife: The procurement is obviously part of the solution here, and Bill 2 addresses some components of that. However, there are sometimes unintended consequences when legislation is drafted. In this instance, under the mutual recognition, businesses located in lower-standard jurisdictions could potentially face lower costs, which makes them, unfairly, more competitive, thereby putting our businesses and our local small and medium-sized enterprises at a disadvantage.

We're obviously going to try to make this bill stronger at committee, if it gets to committee.

What does the member from Ottawa West–Nepean say to the government in prioritizing our businesses, our entrepreneurs and our workers going forward?

1510

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Thank you to the member from Waterloo for that excellent question. When I speak with employers, when I speak with small businesses in Ottawa West–Nepean I know they want to be great employers. I know they want to protect the health and safety of their workers. They want to ensure that they have the best possible working conditions. We don't want to create a race to the bottom for them, where they feel like they can't compete if they are actually taking care of their workers, if they are actually thinking about the community in which they are located. We need to make sure that our businesses are able to provide that support and attention, that respect for workers' rights that I know they want to give.

That's why it's incredibly important that, rather than allowing us to focus on mutual recognition that creates a race to the bottom, we are actually focused on harmonizing at the highest possible level, that we are ensuring that all of our workers are looked after, that we are not putting our businesses at a disadvantage and that we are ensuring that workers and businesses in other provinces are also achieving the goals that I'm sure they want to achieve as well, which is that every worker comes home safely at the end of the day and that every person knows they are getting a high-quality and safe product when they purchase something at a Canadian business.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Laurie Scott): Further debate?

Ms. Lee Fairclough: Thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity to comment on the Protect Ontario Through Free Trade Within Canada Act, 2025. My riding of Etobicoke–Lakeshore is home to many trade-exposed industries. Like many Canadians, I and our Liberal caucus are supportive of the need to open up trade within our own country. Our need to respond to tariff threats in creative and nimble ways is very clear. I think that the recent results of the federal election have demonstrated that Canadians are looking to their governments to ensure we're acting in ways that will unite us and develop new opportunity domestically and with trade partners other than the US.

According to the FAO's report today, the Ontario economy is likely to fall into recession, with GDP growth averaging just 0.6% in 2025 versus the FAO's initial forecast of 1.7% growth without tariffs. Ontario's GDP will permanently be reduced by 1.8% or more than \$20 billion, versus a no-tariff scenario, and with very significant job loss. People want us to act in pragmatic ways that are going to mitigate this potential harm to our economy and give assurances to families and businesses.

As we examine this bill, our job is to ensure that we examine the unintended consequence of new laws and how we adjust or respond to risk to support our people and communities in that transition. There are three points that I want us to consider. One is outflow from Ontario, rather than inflow, of key human resources and businesses. The second is the likelihood of reciprocity with other provinces and, given Bill 5, will Ontario play fair? The third is action and transparency on results.

The current context matters and, unfortunately, given the current state of housing, health care and our education system, I fear that we are far more vulnerable to the negative consequences of interprovincial trade than we should be. For example, in the years I spent working through the pandemic as the president of St. Mary's General Hospital when Bill 124 was in place, I witnessed first-hand the loss of human resources to burnout and the frustration of no pay increases. Many left the profession, and we are still recovering from that time. While I was there the community made a clear case that the state of the hospital was impacting the likelihood that businesses would settle in our community. Businesses want to know that health care and education will be there for workers and families.

On a larger scale, this is my fear for our economy: We don't have the strong foundation we need to draw businesses to Ontario, to keep people working in Ontario and, fundamentally, to keep people healthy. That doesn't mean that we don't move forward, as I believe in facing challenges head-on, but we need to keep our eyes wide open to just how much more vulnerable we are and act quickly to reduce that vulnerability.

That leads me to my first concern on this. We can't assume this bill will result only in people making decisions to come to Ontario. Outflow of our key workforce in

health care, trades, education and small/large businesses could just as easily happen.

To illustrate, I think back to the conversations I've had with constituents the last few weeks and through the election period. It was a frequent conversation, particularly with young professionals, that they were thinking of leaving Ontario and moving elsewhere in Canada. They want home ownership, as they're preparing to start a family, that simply isn't attainable. Housing starts are the lowest they've been in a very long time and the cost of new housing is unattainable for most. They want predictability in their rent, which no longer exists, given the skyrocketing increases, and for every affordable housing unit we build, we lose 14.

I've got two teenage boys, and two of their friends' families recently made the choice to move out west. I said to them, "Why did they do that?" They said that they simply find it too costly to live here. Others would cite the fact that they're concerned that it's just simply impossible to get access to reliable primary care or long waits for needed surgery, specialist care and that our public schools are failing. People are simply tired of waiting and tolerating. It was striking, the numbers of times these reasons for leaving Ontario came up.

When they raised these frustrations, I'd actually say to them, "Can I ask, what do you do for a living?" Many were young professionals: nurses, doctors, teachers, young people with MBAs working in consulting, small business owners, people working in trades—exactly the kind of workers we are all trying to keep here in Ontario. We need them to help our economy, to keep people healthy and to contribute. So we are vulnerable for their reasons, and all matter, both to attract companies to lay roots but also for us to retain the workforce.

Again, using health care as an example, this bill will allow for 16 more regulated health professionals to practise in Ontario while they wait for registration with provincial regulatory colleges for a six-month window. This actually has great potential to help us in Ontario, but, boy, will it create a challenge for the outflow as well. And if they decide to leave Ontario in search of more affordable housing—or, frankly, if they see governments that want to see a public health care system successful, rather than feeling like they have one that doesn't want it to be successful and is weakening it.

We need to simultaneously be making sure these basic foundations are strengthened, and part of what protects our sovereignty is that we hold on to what makes us Canadian, our core values and ensuring that people are cared for. We lose that, and we're losing what we stand for as a nation. These foundations can't be ignored or displaced because of tariffs; in fact, they have to be seen by the province as our core competitive advantage.

The second issue is reciprocity. There is a big "if" with this bill, and that is the likelihood of reciprocity with other provinces. Given Bill 5, will Ontario play fair, or will they invoke exceptions for special economic zones? To date, this is looking somewhat promising, with now five provinces bringing forward similar bills and the federal

government seems committed to helping it happen. However, it gives our businesses little certainty today. It seems to also provide an out for this government to place blame on others if it doesn't come to fruition. We've had an MOU before with Saskatchewan, with little results to show for it.

The bill also creates a special day of recognition; however, it gives little support to small businesses beyond this performative proclamation. For example, in my riding, I have the second-largest number of craft breweries in Ontario. There are significant differences in tax rates between different provinces that if we don't adjust will actually disadvantage us in the market, where we are strong, and give more advantage to those in other provinces. Yes, remove the interprovincial tariff, but if there are inequities on tax rates on goods within the province, again, we've got a competitive challenge.

Lastly, action and transparency on results: When we pass this bill, it's going to be really important to know if it's working. What will be the plan to measure and be transparent about the impact, both positive and negative, on our economy? How will the government report back to the public? If we're facing the potential of recession, how will we have the courage to know whether the bill is helping it get better or get worse. And what's a reasonable time frame to expect that improvement? Can we be clear on the targets in that regard?

This government has a track record of pointing to a law or decision and boasting that the job is done. I only need to use the sharp decline over seven years in access to family doctors as an example. Left unchecked and unmonitored, it quickly got worse. Could we add to this bill some level of accountability that we will monitor and check in? Recognizing this impacts many parts of government and sectors, will the Premier primarily be responsible? As we move to implementation, should we know who that single point of accountability will be?

1520

In conclusion, we know that the threat we are facing—we have part of the solution in front of us with this bill that will enable interprovincial trade. We need it to happen, but we also need to keep Ontario competitive as a place that people will want to come, not leave. Businesses will want to come, not leave. And we need to acknowledge the big "if" all of this hangs on, and that is not just to look to blame other governments if it doesn't play out. It needs to be actively managed, and we need to know if it is having the desired effect we want and have the courage to change it if it doesn't.

I will say again that part of what protects our sovereignty is that we hold on to what makes us Canadian: our core values and ensuring people are cared for. These foundations can't be ignored because of tariffs. In fact, they have to be seen by the province as core to our competitive edge in this scenario, so let's be sure we're giving determined focus on the conditions needed for the bill to be successful.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Laurie Scott): Questions?

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I want to thank the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore for her comments today. You

touched upon a lot of important issues, but the one I that I just would like to get a bit more understanding of is mentioning that we shouldn't be the first out of the gate—at least, that's how I interpreted it—about having these initiatives rolling back and adopting the as-of-right restrictions. I'm hoping you might be able to expand on those comments and just say what it is that you're looking for, rather than what the government has proposed here.

Ms. Lee Fairclough: Thank you very much for the question. And no, I don't—maybe you did misinterpret a little bit what I was trying to convey. I think it's good that Ontario has put this bill together and that we are wanting to lead out. I think the challenge is that it all hangs on whether the other provinces going to engage and do the same thing. And so, as we pursue that, how will we make sure that that's successful? I was just pointing out that I think it's going to take some active management. Again, we've had an MOU with Saskatchewan for many years. We don't have too much to show for it in that scenario, just as an example. I think, for me, it's more about how we are actually going to move to implementation on this and making sure we're really, really tracking whether we are getting the results we want. And again, the risk there is that we point to blame everyone else if nobody engages with us.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Laurie Scott): Questions?

Mr. Chris Glover: I want to thank member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore for her comments today. I heard her say that her riding has the second-largest number of craft brewers of any riding in Ontario. I don't know how many that is, but—

Ms. Lee Fairclough: Seven.

Mr. Chris Glover: Oh, I think I've got number one, then. We've got 12, and every one of those craft brewers—there are 12 in my riding—produces really delicious and innovative coolers and drinks, beers. I've tried several, not too many, but several.

Anyway, I want to ask the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore, how can we in this Legislature make sure that our craft breweries across Ontario are supported and get the business that they need to thrive, especially in the wake of the tariff threats?

Ms. Lee Fairclough: Thank you very much for the question. A couple of things really strike me. I met with some of our local brewers the other day, and what strikes me is how much they contribute on product, which I think is 11%, but I think 70% of the jobs in the industry are in these craft breweries, so it's really important that we get that right. I know that they speak about the differences in tax that they face based on volume and how that differs between provinces. I think that's something that's going to have to be adjusted. It's not clear to me whether the solution will only be in the interprovincial tariff relief versus what might need to change in terms of how we apply that within Ontario as well. That to me is just one really good example. I think it would allow for a more competitive edge.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Laurie Scott): Questions?

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I think that the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore made a very good point. She said that Ontario is—if I may paraphrase her, and she'll correct me if I paraphrase incorrectly—offering reciprocity with all provinces in Canada, and that offer is now on the table, and we hope that other provinces take us up on our offer. But if they don't take us up on our offer—she said, “Then what?”, or words to that effect.

I certainly hope that the rest of the provinces in this Confederation will take us up on this offer. I think that if they do take us up on this offer, then they'll have access to a multi-billion-dollar market, a province with millions of consumers. It would be good for all the provinces. I would hope that's the direction that we're heading in. Several people have observed that it ought to have been this way since 1867, and why wasn't it this way?

So I'm just offering my observation upon her comments, and I would invite her, if she chooses to do so, to elaborate on them.

Ms. Lee Fairclough: I think that we're going to have to be very active in how we try to get to those other agreements with other provinces and be sure that they're going to be engaging. For me, it is just about accountability around that. In a way, it's an implementation step. I'm a little concerned, given the track record on other issues, whether that will or will not be the case. And it will just be easy to blame.

So I guess what I'm asking for is just a real commitment to really actively work across the nation and with all provinces to see if we can get to that result.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Laurie Scott): Questions?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I appreciated the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore talking about the broader issues that attract talent to a province like Ontario—that social infrastructure, if you will: a strong health care system, housing, affordability. Bill 2 touches on some of these issues—not specifically, but alludes to them.

I want to give the member an opportunity to talk about what would actually make Ontario a very desirable province to enter into a memorandum of understanding—so that a worker from, say, Manitoba might indeed come to the province of Ontario. And how does that impact the economy and the tariff response?

Ms. Lee Fairclough: Thank you very much for the question.

Again, I live in Ontario, and I love this province. I have worked 27 years in health care in Ontario. I would like to think that there would be so much that people would want to come to Ontario for.

Again, I use the example in health care: We do have some of the best hospitals in the world here doing cutting-edge research and innovation. That would be a good example of something that, when you look at all those workers we want to attract—there might be an appeal in that. But they will only come if the math makes sense for their family; if they feel that they're going to be able to have a good school to send their children to—again, all the basics that they need, including an affordable home or being able to anticipate what rent increases would look

like, that all of that is in place. So I think at an individual level, that's what's critical. And lastly, I think there's another whole set of those for businesses.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Laurie Scott): Questions?

Mr. Matthew Rae: Thank you to my new colleague in this place for her remarks today on Bill 2 and her thoughts on interprovincial trade barriers.

I know it was very promising, a couple of weeks ago now, when Premier Ford and Premier Houston and Premier Holt came together to sign those MOUs.

I did do a little research into the MOUs we have signed with Saskatchewan—not a very sexy thing accomplished, but it did accomplish wide single tires, which is important for transportation across Canada and exchange of those goods.

I was just wondering if the member could expand on her thoughts on how we can continue to see that economic growth across Canada—whether it's with New Brunswick—and how we can potentially encourage some of our less-willing Premier colleagues in the country to join us in this endeavour.

1530

Ms. Lee Fairclough: Thank you very much for the question. Thanks for the example that you've given there; that's good to be aware of.

There's no question that for this to have the kind of impact—this bill is being cited as the potential to have a \$50-billion to \$200-billion impact on our economy, so we're definitely going to have to do much better than that if we're going to be able to do it.

I think, again, all of the issues that we've been talking about, about what is here, the businesses that are here and if they're thriving—and, again, for those other provinces to see a strategic benefit for their businesses and their families to be able to do that.

I think there's a reason it hasn't happened since the start of Confederation, but I also think that now is the time. So I think more than ever before, hopefully there will be some areas that we can come to an agreement on.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Laurie Scott): Further debate?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: I am pleased to rise today to speak about Bill 2, Protect Ontario Through Free Trade Within Canada Act. I am proud to lend my voice to this debate on a matter fundamental to increasing our economic prosperity, enshrining our national sovereignty and safeguarding the Canadian dream for generations of Ontario families to come.

I'm reminded of the throne speech delivered by then-Governor General of Canada Ray Hnatyshyn at the start of the third session of the 34th Parliament in 1991 when he stated, "This session will be a turning point in Canadian history. Let no one doubt the seriousness of the challenges we face as a country." Later in this same speech, the Right Honourable Ray Hnatyshyn would call for the elimination of interprovincial barriers and the creation of a single, integrated Canadian market from coast to coast to coast.

Now, nearly 34 years later, we are gathered to steer the course forward for our province, and we find ourselves at

a critical juncture where our actions will directly shape the future.

For decades, interprovincial trade barriers have held Ontario back, preventing our province and our country from realizing the full potential of participating in a unified, national market. These trade barriers have stifled innovation and they have cost Ontario businesses valuable time and money, all because of outdated rules, redundant regulations and red tape.

Madam Speaker, as you know, my father, the Right Honourable Brian Mulroney, was a champion of free trade. In addition to being the architect of the Canada-United States Free Trade Agreement and, later, the North American Free Trade Agreement, he spent years advocating for the removal of interprovincial trade barriers. He once said, "Free trade is not a gift, it is a responsibility—one that requires us to innovate, to compete and to believe in ourselves as a nation. Free trade is the key to our prosperity."

Now, since the historic signing of the Canada-US Free Trade Agreement in 1988, Canada has cultivated one of the world's most-productive, and most-envied, trade relationships with the United States. Using our own country as a case study, it took roughly 125 years for Canada's GDP to reach \$800 billion, while under free trade and NAFTA, it took us just 25 years to triple it.

L'ALÉNA nous a ouvert les portes des marchés américains et mexicains, stimulant les exportations canadiennes et la croissance économique dans l'ensemble du pays. Ce marché élargi et diversifié a assuré la création d'emplois dans des domaines névralgiques comme le secteur manufacturier, l'agriculture et l'énergie. Ceux-ci sont fondamentaux pour l'économie de l'Ontario. La diminution du coût des biens et services a contribué à la réduction des prix pour les consommateurs. De plus, les chaînes d'approvisionnement ont été renforcées, permettant ainsi aux entreprises canadiennes d'être plus compétitives à l'échelle mondiale. Chemin faisant, notre province est devenue plus intéressante pour les investisseurs étrangers.

With the creation of NAFTA, the economies of Canada, the United States and Mexico, making up just 7% of the world's population, were able to come together to generate 25% of the world's total wealth. By strengthening Canada's balance sheet, we strengthened our sovereignty. However, at the present day, President Trump's tariffs have now undermined this long-standing relationship between our two countries. In this chapter of our relationship with the United States, Canada must look to new markets to ensure our economic prosperity and to protect our country. Madam Speaker, Canada will never be the 51st state.

Our government will leave no stone unturned when it comes to protecting Ontario families, workers and businesses from the impacts of these unwarranted tariffs. To be clear, our government continues to be laser-focused on getting the United States to lift these unjustified, unfair and illegal tariffs immediately.

While Ontario will never start a trade or a tariff war with the United States, we are taking appropriate and

proportional actions to defend Ontario businesses and families. This includes reducing our dependency on the United States and building up an economy that is more self-reliant and Canadian-made than ever before. It makes no sense that Ontario would engage in freer trade with international partners than our own provinces and territories.

Madam Speaker, the resounding and enduring success of my father's government can be applied today, as our country realizes that our first and premier trading partner must be within our own borders. That's why Ontario is taking the bold action required to cut red tape and tear down internal trade barriers so that we can bolster free trade and labour mobility within our country. Our government is leading with the same forward thinking that led Canada to its first and then subsequent free trade agreements with the United States. To be clear, our government is proposing the most ambitious provincial action on interprovincial trade in Canadian history.

L'adoption de ce projet de loi ferait en sorte que l'Ontario deviendrait la première province à éliminer toutes ses exceptions propres dans le cadre de l'Accord de libre-échange canadien. Cette législation nous permettra de poursuivre notre collaboration avec les autres provinces, en vue de la reconnaissance mutuelle des biens et services d'un océan à l'autre.

Si un produit respecte les normes dans une province, il ne devrait pas être soumis à une évaluation réglementaire additionnelle, coûteuse et redondante dans une autre. Nous mettrons donc l'épaule à la roue pour conclure des ententes avec des partenaires réciproques, afin de nous assurer que les biens et services qui correspondent aux normes d'une province soient reconnus réciproquement dans une autre.

Comme mon collègue l'honorable Victor Fedeli l'a illustré, en utilisant l'exemple de l'homologation des vêtements de sécurité à haute visibilité, notre gouvernement travaille à éliminer les redondances qui alourdissent les coûts d'exploitation en Ontario. Est-il utile de rappeler que ces coûts ont un effet dissuasif au niveau des investissements dans notre province? En faisant tomber les barrières interprovinciales inutiles, nous assurerons un véritable libre-échange entre les provinces canadiennes. Nous stimulerons la croissance économique et nous créerons des emplois bien rémunérés.

Through this legislation, our government intends to unlock Canada's economic potential by building our collective workforce and expanding our labour mobility. Let's be clear: Ontario is the largest player in interprovincial trade. We do over \$326 billion in interprovincial trade every year. That's equivalent to 28.5% of our GDP. Since 2018, interprovincial trade has grown by more than \$75 billion. But we know that we can do more to see that number grow, and our legislation, if passed, will unlock new opportunities for Ontario businesses within Canada.

Interprovincial trade barriers can add up to 14.5% to the cost of goods and services that consumers purchase. Removing interprovincial trade barriers will lower costs,

boost productivity, and see Canada's GDP grow by up to \$200 billion annually.

1540

At a time when families across our province are struggling, we simply cannot afford to keep doing business as usual. As the largest player in interprovincial trade, Ontario is leading the country with our legislation, and we hope that more provinces and territories will follow our lead.

I would like to thank all the members for taking time to listen to this debate on the second reading of Bill 2, Protect Ontario Through Free Trade Within Canada Act.

Under this legislation, if passed, we will ensure mutual recognition of goods and services across Canada. We will simplify the process for workers registered in other jurisdictions to work in Ontario and adopt a direct-to-consumer model for beverage alcohol sales between provinces.

I urge all members on both sides of this House to support Bill 2 as our government strives to make history with the most ambitious provincial action on interprovincial trade that Canada has ever seen.

Thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity to continue to speak to this important debate.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Laurie Scott): Questions?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Minister, my question to you regarding Bill 2 is—you didn't address in any way some of the impact that this bill will have, significant impact it will have, on First Nations communities and the duty to consult in this province. The Chiefs of Ontario were very clear that they were not consulted prior to the tabling of this legislation and had to receive the briefing notes in some other way.

So can you explain, if we are to have confidence that this is a government that will take seriously the duty to consult—free, prior and informed consent—in this House, how is it that you have not had the opportunity to speak about it here, you didn't raise it in your speech here and that the Chiefs of Ontario are saying that they weren't previously consulted? It doesn't lend the kind of confidence that we would like to see going forward if this bill is to move forward in a way that provides the economic stability that we're looking for.

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: I'd like to thank the member opposite for the important question.

Obviously, we heard, since the inauguration of President Trump, across this country and across this province, people from across the province have raised their concerns about the impact of tariffs on our communities: rural communities, urban communities, northern and First Nation communities. And we heard that since the inauguration, the talk of tariffs, and then we heard it—indeed, all of us, I think—throughout our election.

We worked very quickly to bring this bill forward. The Premier promised this, and that is what Ontarians expected us to do, is to bring action forward immediately to address the threat of tariffs. As we know, lowering interprovincial trade barriers is a key way to increasing our economic

activity in this province and to help us find new markets, not just with the United States.

But we have a great Minister of Indigenous Affairs and Economic Reconciliation, who is working very closely with the chiefs of the First Nations communities of Ontario, and I know that he's having many conversations with him about all of the bills that we bring forward.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Laurie Scott): Questions?

M. Anthony Leardi: Quand je pense au libre-échange, je pense nécessairement au nom de Brian Mulroney, qui est le plus grand premier ministre que nous avons jamais eu. Et comme la présidente du Conseil du Trésor a indiqué, le libre-échange a triplé notre production brute domestique, et j'aimerais entendre un peu de commentaires supplémentaires de la part de la ministre au sujet du libre-échange entre les provinces.

L'hon. Caroline Mulroney: Je remercie le membre d'Essex pour sa question.

C'est intéressant, parce que cette question politique du libre-échange, c'est quand même une question qui est assez personnelle pour moi parce que j'ai grandi avec beaucoup de discussions concernant le libre-échange autour de ma table. Et comme tout le monde le sait, l'élection de 1988 a été battue sur le thème du libre-échange parce que les libéraux, depuis longtemps, ont été contre le libre-échange entre le Canada et les États-Unis. Ils disaient que ça allait s'attaquer à la souveraineté du Canada. Heureusement, les Canadiens ont voté de façon majoritaire pour le libre-échange, ce qui a amené à l'accord de libre-échange avec les États-Unis et, bien sûr, l'ALÉNA suite à cela.

Malheureusement, on n'a pas pu s'attaquer durant les années 1980 et 1990 au libre-échange entre les provinces, et c'est pour cela que c'est tellement important que notre province prenne cette étape très importante pour la province avec ce projet de loi.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Laurie Scott): The member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

Ms. Lee Fairclough: Thank you to the President of the Treasury Board for your comments. I'll keep my question brief so I can hear your answer.

I'm interested in your thoughts about what you think needs to be in place to guard against some of the risks that I've identified earlier in this debate about outflow, and secondly, your thoughts on accountability. How are we going to know whether this is working or not? What measures will you be using, for example, to really understand if it is having the effect that we want?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: I thank the member opposite for her question and her remarks earlier. I heard her speak about her concerns about outward migration and about reciprocity.

My answer is that I believe in Ontario. I believe in the workers and businesses here to compete. We are the strongest economy in Canada, in the federation. I believe that we have what it takes to compete. So we should bring the barriers down and I know that we will grow.

In terms of metrics, as President of Treasury Board, those are important—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Laurie Scott): Further debate?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'm very sad that I only have 10 minutes to talk about this bill. We are really in unprecedented times. I just want to start by saying I really appreciated the Minister of Economic Development and Trade taking the time to sit down with me. It was a pleasure to meet some of the staff in that ministry's office.

I do think that we have some shared goals here and I think that the people of this province want to see us working together. They want to see us collaborating. They want to see us exchanging ideas. To that end our leader, the leader of His Majesty's official opposition, has charged us with creating an advisory council on tariff response and economic security. It's my pleasure to chair this council. We are learning a lot. We will be communicating and sharing this information with the government. We certainly hope that the government is interested in receiving that information.

How we got here is also very important, though, how Bill 2 is actually responding to this crisis, because it is that—it is a crisis. It will certainly be a confidence issue for consumers across this province. Businesses right now are trying to navigate uncharted territories and there is an urgency here as well to respond to that.

The one paper that I'm actually referring to is A User's Guide to Restructuring the Global Trading System. This is written by Stephen Miran, who is a senior strategist at Hudson Bay Capital. It basically is the road map as to how we got here.

The United States has a persistent dollar overvaluation. These are decisions that they have made as an economy over a number of years and now they're looking for somebody to pay the price. They are looking for somebody to pay for their mistakes, I would say, Madam Speaker. The overvaluation of the US dollar makes US exports less competitive, the US imports cheaper and it handicaps American manufacturing. So they are looking to reshore and they are looking to reshore quickly, and I would say they are looking to reshore in a very irresponsible manner.

Even this morning, the news that's coming out of the White House—and if you can keep track of it, if you can keep track of what Donald Trump is saying or thinking then you're a better person than me, I can tell you this much. But the US's self-inflicted war on their own economy is impacting our economy and they do not care—let me be very clear about this—they are very prepared to drag us down with them.

The language from the throne speech was very strong. We do need to become a more self-reliant economy. We need to circle the wagons and protect Ontario for sure. Bill 2, Protect Ontario Through Free Trade Within Canada Act, is a very good start in this. There are some issues that we have, of course; our members have articulated some of those concerns. I will say that the leader's advisory council on tariff response and economic security has just sent a letter to the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade and the Minister of Labour just an hour ago highlighting some of the concerns and, really, trying

to safeguard Ontario through this time and mitigate some of the issues that we see with Bill 2.

1550

One of those issues, and one of my colleagues also connected with this, has to do with labour mobility. You see, on this side of the House—and I know we can find some common ground on this—we see health and safety standards for workers as our strength. We see it as something that we should be raising the bar on, and it has taken us a long time to get to this place. I'm thinking in particular of the Dean report and the standards of working at heights. We've learned some hard lessons. We've now got some measures in place in Ontario which keep our workers safe so when they go to work in the morning, they come home at night. These are shared goals that we all have.

But the labour mobility is problematic, and I want to say why it is. It's that we are competing against other provinces. For instance, Manitoba: Manitoba has a public auto insurance program; they have public power; their housing costs are much lower. So when I'm looking at some of the labour mobility issues—and these are problems I want to work on with the government, I just want to say—I think of my son. He is a master electrician. His wife is a nurse. They are gainfully employed in Ontario. They cannot find a house, though. They cannot afford a house. The housing market is so competitive right now that even very successful young people who are trying to live the Ontario dream, the Canadian dream, they cannot find that. They cannot buy a house. So they may now, when we enter a memorandum of understanding—perhaps with Manitoba—they may look at Manitoba as a viable place for them to go to which, of course, as a future grandmother, I want to say gives me great grief. We want to prevent that, we want to keep the talent here, we want to attract the talent to Ontario to address some of those very strategic skill gaps.

I would love to see the government really focus on strengthening that social infrastructure which makes this province so great. We all love Ontario. Ontario, without a doubt, is worth fighting for. But that means having a housing market which is very competitive, which is very fair to those new buyers.

It also means having a strong health care system. Our health care system draws investment and capital into Ontario because people want to go where they will have access to a strong health care system.

Finally, our education system: There is the social infrastructure side of the ledger which we need to strengthen up. Reducing the provincial barriers which have been long-standing and removing those 23 exceptions—I know the minister is very proud of this. When we did meet, the example that was given and shared with me is, Quebec has a certain kind of safety vest, a different kind of colour; Ontario has a different kind of safety colour vest. We shouldn't be putting up hurdles to having workers cross the border and work across provincial lines.

Finally, I just want to say, because this time has gone away too quickly, that this morning, the Financial Account-

ability Office came forward with a very powerful report. I want to say that this report will indicate that we will be moving into a modest recession. Deloitte also said this morning that Q2 and Q3, we are going to see a potential recession. And when you look at the fact that in 2024, the US accounted for 77% of the province's international goods, exports and 60% of its service exports, we have to diversify our exports as a province, without a doubt. We have so much to offer the world. I'm thinking, in particular, of our agrifood business.

Once again, also to cite Manitoba: They just created a grain innovation centre in downtown Winnipeg, because those grains—our farmers are the best in the world. We have the science and the technology and the ambition to actually strengthen other trading partners. I'm not talking about the United States, because, really, we're almost getting divorced right now. We're on a divorce path with the United States, and I want a prenup, is what I want to say to people. So we see potential here. We see potential and opportunity to really invest and strengthen our core values as a province—on health care innovation, the Ontario bioscience sector, on our education and post-secondary sector, on tech.

The fact of the matter is that we see a window here to actually shore up our own sectors, our own industry. But at the end of the day, those auto workers in Windsor and manufacturing in southwestern Ontario—which is very vulnerable to these tariff threats—they want to see us fighting for them. They want to see us working to hold the equipment. Don't let that equipment go to the States.

Let's work. Let's sit down together. Let's develop a tariff relief strategy so that it is not focused on losing the jobs, it's focused on holding the jobs here. This is good for the long-term health of our economy as a province. It is good for workers. And at the end of the day, if those workers are still working, there's also income tax generated to strengthen the very social infrastructure which I started this off with.

So Bill 2—listen, we want it to get to committee. We want to work with the government. We're definitely in it to fight for Ontario. I look forward to the question component, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Laurie Scott): Questions?

Ms. Lee Fairclough: Thank you very much to my fellow member for her comments just now. Again, I think that we probably are sharing similar concerns, particularly about the attractiveness of other provinces for our workers to move to. I just wondered if you could speak a little bit more to how we might think about strengthening the bill but also strengthening the implementation of the bill to help guard against that. Are there other parts of our work as government that need to be factored in?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you very much for the question. The labour mobility piece, which I just touched on in very short time, has presented a challenge for other provinces; Nova Scotia, for instance, where the government had to amend the legislation after it was tabled. This is why they had to do this: Professional regulators iden-

tified unintended consequences that they say risked public safety. This was dealt with at the committee stage.

So we are looking forward to Bill 2 to getting to committee so we can be part of the solution here, so that we can make sure that there are no unintended consequences. In this case, it was the Nova Scotia Veterinary Medical Association that said the bill, as previously written, would open the floodgates to unregulated practice of veterinary medicine in the province.

There is potential here in this legislation, but we have to develop it in a way that is mindful of health and safety and ensuring that we are raising the bar on these standards.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Laurie Scott): Questions?

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I was very interested when the member from Waterloo raised the question of monetary policy, because I think about monetary policy. Obviously, she thinks about monetary policy. That makes two of us. I know there is a former Prime Minister who never thought about monetary policy and said so.

The United States dollar is the world's reserve currency. The member, I think quite correctly, observed that that sometimes inflates the value of that currency, and that the Canadian dollar is the currency for our country and that assists in interprovincial trade. I would simply invite the member to observe whatever she wants to observe about inflated value of currency and how that might affect the issues of reciprocity between provinces or any other factor.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It is interesting that we are so integrated, that our economy is so integrated with the United States. This is one stat I want to share with the House today: By 2033, the United States of America will be paying more interest on their debt than they will on their military. So this why they are so desperate to change the channel on their own economy, is that they have driven their economy and offshored those good jobs. They have not invested in innovation. They are in the midst of a major housing crisis as well, and then you have someone who thinks that he's—well, I'm going to reserve my comments about the President of the United States, but, honestly, a convicted felon is now the leader of the free world. So, we are in very troubling times, which is why the people of Ontario want us to work together.

1600

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Laurie Scott): Questions?

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I want to thank my colleague from Waterloo. On Monday, we all had the opportunity to be able to attend the National Day of Mourning and exercise the thoughts of making sure that the workplace is safer and workplace safety standards are in place.

In this bill, I don't really see where work safety standards will be looked at, or mutual recognition agreements. I did read that workers certified out of province can practice for six months before approval here in Ontario. What measures or steps does the member from Waterloo think should be taken to ensure mutual recognition agreements under this bill do not jeopardize public safety and the Ontario regulations that are already in protocol?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you very much for the question. I just want to say, there is a reason why regulations differ from province to province. I do agree when the new Prime Minister of Canada says we don't need 13 economies; we need one economy. But the mutual recognition is an arrangement where governments agree to accept each other's standards, regulations or laws for goods, labour and services. A challenge with mutual recognition is that it is broad. We have had some stakeholder concerns that harmonization can create an incentive for lower standards because of the competitiveness of the market right now. So, instead of raising up standards and harmonizing up, it's more likely that those harmonization standards will be reduced. So in our letter from the leader's advisory council on tariff response and economic security, we have asked the government to embed the principles of health and welfare and safety into the legislation itself, not in regulation.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Laurie Scott): Questions?

Ms. Lee Fairclough: It's nice to be able to ask another question of my colleague the member from Waterloo. I thought I would ask you a similar question to the previous speaker. I think it's going to be really critical that we are watching how this is working and that there's some level of accountability to the public. There's a lot of trust being put in that we open up interprovincial trade and this is going to help us tremendously. Do you have any thoughts on what should we be doing, what could be built into this to be sure that we're monitoring that it's having the kinds of impacts that we hope to?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thanks again to the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore for that question. The grounding principle here is that we have to acknowledge that this is a very serious issue. The minister this morning described where we are with this tariff crisis as a war, and that we are in a fight. However, the Premier earlier this morning was fairly dismissive of some of the results that we got from the Financial Accountability Officer. So, I think one of the grounding principles is that we have to take this very seriously, that there is an urgency, that the consultation with those stakeholders most affected—for instance, the manufacturing sector—needs to be direct and that the feedback that we hear from those sectors, we need to act on it. So, when you're looking at ensuring that jobs stay here in Ontario, I would rather see an auto worker receive the support through their company to keep that job here, to keep that business here, versus, say, income support if they lose their job.

So I think that we have to agree that keeping the jobs here in Ontario is first and foremost one of the most important things that we can do, and then not give up the equipment. We should be holding these jobs and the equipment here—for instance, in Windsor, where you have workers standing in front of trucks trying to prevent them from going to the United States.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Laurie Scott): Further questions?

Mr. Anthony Leardi: This particular bill has in it some provisions with regard to reciprocity in goods. I think

that's a good thing. I think reciprocity in goods between the provinces is a good thing. I think that not only will Ontario be a winner, but other provinces will win from this too when they choose to do reciprocity with the province of Ontario.

I would invite the member from Waterloo to give us her views on that question.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Listen, Bill 2 is aspirational in nature, right? Removing these provincial barriers—a long-standing issue. If it was an easy job, it would have been done a long time ago.

The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives has quite accurately said the low-hanging fruit on provincial barriers has already been picked, but right now we're just sort of cleaning up and trying to make sure that this is streamlined. I think that we as legislators in this place share in this goal, but we have to be mindful of the risks. We want it to be a win-win. But we also know that Ontario's competitive advantage is its people and its workers, and we also know that they need to be kept safe. That is foremost at our work.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Laurie Scott): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It's my pleasure to spend a few minutes talking about An Act to enact the Buy Ontario, Buy Canadian Day Act, 2025 and the Ontario Free Trade and Mobility Act, 2025 and to amend various other Acts by the Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade.

The act itself has six schedules. The first one I think we can all agree on quite easily—the Buy Ontario, Buy Canadian Day Act. So, the last Friday in June in each year has the Buy Ontario, Buy Canadian Day. I'm looking forward to celebrating the first one. Hopefully we get this done in time for June this year to celebrate.

I would say that in my riding, you can feel how proud people are to be Canadian, to be Ontarian. When Charlie Angus came to Sudbury for an Elbows Up rally, it was a beautiful, beautiful event that drew a lot of people. I think we're all at the point where we know that free trade between the provinces, between the territories and Ontario is something that needs to be looked at.

As you know, Speaker, I have been the health critic for my party for the last 18 years, so I thought that I would focus a little bit on schedule 6, the Ontario Labour Mobility Act, with the view of looking at what that will mean for health care professionals.

Just to give you an idea, in Ontario we have 26 regulated health profession colleges. You think about the college of audiologists; the College of Chiropractors; the College of Chiropractors; the College of Dental Hygienists; the College of Dental Technologists; the Royal College of Dental Surgeons; the College of Denturists; the College of Dietitians; the College of Homeopaths; kinesiologists; massage therapists; medical laboratory technologists; medical radiation and imaging technologists; midwives; naturopaths; nurses; occupational therapists; opticians; optometrists; pharmacists; physicians and surgeons; physiotherapists; chiropractors;

psychologists and behaviour analysts; registered psychotherapists; registered respiratory therapists; audiologists; speech-language pathologists; psychologists and behaviour analysts; registered psychotherapists; registered respiratory therapists; radiologists; speech-language pathologists; traditional Chinese medicine and acupuncturists. **1610**

I wanted to read you the list of regulated health professionals in Ontario because it varies greatly from one province to the next. I won't read you the list from Alberta, but I can tell you that the list from Alberta is way bigger than the list from Ontario. For example, paramedics are recognized as a regulated health profession in Alberta; they are not in Ontario. Pharmacy technicians are recognized as a regulated health profession in Alberta; they are not in Ontario. Podiatrists—we have issues in Ontario. Psychiatric nurses are a registered health profession in Alberta; they are not in Ontario. Same thing with social workers. The list goes on. The reason I wanted to put that on the record is that we've had issues with health professionals' mobility within our country for a very long time.

As you know very well, Speaker, I've been here for a while, and I was there in 2008 and 2009 when we changed the scope of practice of seven different regulated health professions. I will give you the example of physiotherapists because it's a profession that I know very well. Back in December of 2009, we voted in this House in favour of changes to the scope of practice of physiotherapists. Why? Because the scope of practice in other provinces had changed. It was time for Ontario to do the same. Would you know, Speaker, that we are in 2025 and those changes have not been implemented? I'll let you do the math. This is a long time ago. In 2009, we voted that change to the scope of practice of physiotherapists was due. We voted in favour. The bill is there. It became effective nine years later. It was proclaimed into force on April 1, 2018, and on April 30, 2025, it's still not implemented.

Ordering diagnostic imaging, something as simple as an X-ray: A lot of people in my riding and throughout Ontario do not have access to a primary care physician or a nurse practitioner. But that doesn't mean you won't sprain your ankle. That doesn't mean you won't break your hip. That doesn't mean you won't fall and break your wrist or whatever else. They will gain access to physiotherapy. Then the physiotherapist does the assessment, looks at the swelling, looks at the range of motion, looks at the strain, looks at the bleeding etc., and says, "Hmm, I think we're dealing with a fracture here." But to be sure, to diagnose a fracture, you need an X-ray.

If you were to practise in Alberta, in Nova Scotia, in Quebec as a physiotherapist, you would write a referral, send them for an X-ray, they would go get the X-ray taken, come back and you can look at the result that the professional will tell you. But physiotherapists are trained to look at X-rays, and they will be able to adjust the plan of care based on the fact that you're dealing with a fracture or not. Not in Ontario—although we voted that the scope

of practice should be changed way back in 2009. I was there. I voted. You can do this.

So although you don't have a family physician or a nurse practitioner, you now have to try to find a physician someplace who will do the same assessment that's already been done, and then send you for an X-ray. Once you get this X-ray, get sent back to the physician and then the client, the patient, has to go through a rigamarole for this X-ray to finally make it to the physiotherapist.

I'm giving you this example, Speaker, because this is what you deal with when we talk about the Ontario Labour Mobility Act. We talk about things that we know need to be done, some of them we even agree need to be done, we passed laws that say it should be done, and 16 years later, it has not been done. But the reality is still there. Oh, my God, 10 minutes go by really fast, eh? That was one example with the physiotherapist.

I want to give another example with the midwives. Same thing with the midwives: Way back in 2009, the midwives should have been able to prescribe different drugs. For reasons unknown, Ontario decided that we would give them a list of drugs they are allowed to prescribe. The minute that list of drugs comes out, there are five new drugs that do a better job at doing the same thing, but they're not allowed to prescribe them because they're not on the list.

Other provinces don't do this. They let midwives work to their scope of practice and prescribe the drugs that they know will work for their patients, for the babies. But not in Ontario. In Ontario, although we passed a law in 2009 that said that they should work to their full scope, we're in 2025 and the midwives are still asking to be able to prescribe not from a list. The prescribing lists now use broader categories of drugs and substances. They want to permit prescribing of medication and ordering of lab tests to the midwifery scope. Other provinces do this. They let their midwives practice to their scope.

I wanted to put those examples on the record to show that the goodwill is there. Will we actually get this done when we have had 16 years just for those two professions to change things, to make it feasible? We have not done it. This government has been in power for seven years. You know how many times I have gone and seen the Minister of Health to tell her, "What are we waiting for to move on those two?" And nothing has happened.

We have a new bill. I'm a positive person. I'm hopeful things will be different, but I have been here for a long time. Things have not changed in the last 16 years. Fingers crossed, Speaker, that in this next Parliament, we actually follow through on changes that should have been done a long time ago that would enable Ontario labour mobility.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Catherine Fife): The member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore, you have the floor.

Ms. Lee Fairclough: Thank you very much to the member from Nickel Belt for your comments. I certainly can relate to them and have seen some of these things play out in our health system for so many years.

What you've highlighted, in a way, hopefully will be an opportunity with this. But to your point, where we've got

examples of professionals that feel limited in their scope today in Ontario and they see their colleagues practising in other ways across the country, boy, that's a risk that we may lose some of our workforce as we go.

I guess my question really is: We've got some assumptions built into this bill, the potential impacts of it. Here's an example that maybe we need to be paying more closer attention to. Do you have any recommendations of how we're going to think about these potential, very negative consequences of the implementation of this bill?

M^{me} France Gélinas: You're right that as much as I try to be an optimist and think positively, this bill could also open the door to a massive exodus of some of our health care professionals that will see the opportunity to work to full scope. You go to school because you want to help people. You learn how to prescribe X-rays. You learn how to prescribe medication. But you come to a province where you're not allowed to do that? It's kind of hard to attract people to Ontario when they could go elsewhere, where they can afford a house, where they can work to full scope, to what they learned in university, in school.

Does it make me worry? Yes, it makes me worry. Because the more you talk about labour mobility—the labour mobility is not only to bring people into Ontario; it's also for health care professionals and all trades and all workers from Ontario who will now see opportunity out of Ontario, and that worries me.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question? I recognize the member from Windsor West.

1620

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Hamilton West.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Listen, I'm good with Windsor. Windsor is good to us.

Merci. À la députée de Nickel Belt, merci pour vos paroles cet après-midi, votre discours. Chaque fois que vous prenez parole, j'apprends quelque chose de nouveau. Merci beaucoup pour ça.

Je voudrais retourner à ce projet de loi, l'annexe 1. C'est à propos du jour « Achetons ontarien, achetons canadien ». Cet après-midi l'opposition officielle avait débattu notre projet de loi qui avait le but d'assurer que les gens, quand ils veulent acheter des produits qui viennent de l'Ontario, du Canada, qu'il y aurait l'étiquette qui fait certain que ce sont des produits vraiment de l'Ontario.

Pourquoi est-ce que vous pensez que le gouvernement a voté contre ça quand il y a quelque chose dans ce projet de loi qui a le même but?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Je dois dire que c'est une très bonne question. Lorsque l'on parle—et je parle aux députés de tous les partis—on dit qu'on veut travailler ensemble. On doit travailler ensemble. On fait face à un obstacle comme on n'a jamais vu de notre vie, de notre génération, et c'est en mettant nos efforts ensemble qu'on va réussir.

Aujourd'hui, ma chef a mis de l'avant une motion assez simple : d'identifier les produits qui viennent de l'Ontario, qui viennent du Canada. Il y a beaucoup de produits qui

sont déjà identifiés, mais là on en ferait une loi que ça doit être fait, et le gouvernement a voté contre.

C'est difficile à comprendre que l'annexe 1 du projet de loi déclare que le dernier vendredi de juin sera la journée « Achetons ontarien, achetons canadien », sauf que, lorsque vous allez au magasin, vous n'avez aucune façon de savoir si ça vient du Canada ou de l'Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Mr. Matthew Rae: Thank you to my colleague from Nickelback—Nickel Belt; my apologies. It's late in the day, everyone. It has been a long day—for her remarks on Bill 2 and interprovincial trade. I was just wondering if the member could elaborate on how we could bring more of our Premier's colleagues across all aisles—Premier Holt and Premier Houston were here a couple of weeks ago—ensuring that we really do continue to build Canada and Ontario by extension, and the massive potential that this has for the people of Ontario.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ontario does hold massive potential. I come from Nickel Belt, where most of the mines are. People think Sudbury has all the mines—no. Except for Copper Cliff, all the mines are in my riding. We have rare earths; we have rare minerals. We have potential to do so, so much more in Sudbury, in Nickel Belt, in Ontario. The possibilities are there.

We are facing a threat. I agree with what was said this morning that an economic war is a war. It will hurt people. It will hurt the economy. But we have to stick together to get through this. Ontario has a very well-educated workforce. Ontario has potential that nobody else has to be able to come through this economic war on the good side. But let's make sure that we support one another through this, because in a war, people get hurt.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thank you to my colleague for offering her thoughts on Bill 2. Several of the members from the official opposition who have spoken to this bill today have highlighted the fact that, on Monday of this week, we observed the National Day of Mourning for workers who are killed, injured or made ill on the job. They shared concerns that this bill could result in a watering down of workplace protection regulations.

I wondered if the member is also concerned about that possibility, and if she would like to share those concerns with the House today.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I attended the ceremony for the day of mourning on Monday. The day of mourning was started in Sudbury. Why? Because every year an average of four miners went underground and never came up. For years and years and years, we have lists of hundreds of people, hard-working miners, who went underground and never came up—they came up in body bags. That motivated us to bring the day of mourning.

It's not the case anymore. Why? Because in Sudbury, Ontario—Nickel Belt—we know how to mine in a way that is respectful of workers, that is safe for workers, that is safe for the environment, that is respectful of the First

Nations. But we are one of the only places on Earth that does that. We do that in a way that allows Vale to make billions of dollars. There hasn't been a death underground since 2021—really proud of this. Before this, it was 2017. That's way better than four, five, six men every single year who came back in body bags.

I don't want to go back to what mining was before. I want to move forward in a way that protects workers, respects workers, respects the environment and respects First Nations.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

M. Anthony Leardi: La députée a parlé au sujet des professions qui sont gouvernées par les provinces, de la difficulté entre les provinces d'avoir des professions et de la mobilité entre des professions à cause du fait que ces professions sont gouvernées par les provinces. J'invite la députée d'en parler un peu plus.

M^{me} France Gélinas: J'ai donné des exemples. On sait qu'il y a 28 professions en Ontario qui sont reconnues. Dans d'autres provinces, il y en a beaucoup plus. Dans les autres provinces, il y a un peu moins.

L'idée, c'est vraiment : comment on fait pour s'assurer qu'une personne—j'ai donné l'exemple d'une physiothérapeute—une physiothérapeute qui pratique en Ontario n'a pas le droit de pratiquer de la même façon que si elle était en Alberta ou si elle était au Nouveau-Brunswick ou si elle était au Québec. Ça, ce sont des règlements internes qui doivent être regardés. Le plus vite, le mieux ce sera.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Further debate?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: I'm honoured to be able to speak to Bill 2, Protect Ontario Through Free Trade Within Canada Act, 2025.

We know that this bill creates a framework for the government to make regulations on matters concerning interprovincial trade, specifically on mutual recognition, direct-to-consumer alcohol sales with other provinces and labour mobility. While we want to work together to navigate this tariff threat, we do have very serious concerns that the measures are broad and far-reaching and could create unintended consequences of reduced labour rights.

There's room to harmonize with other provinces, but there is a real risk that it will become a race to the bottom, and it has been discussed many times today about how that happens. If we have higher standards here, then businesses will go somewhere else or hire from another jurisdiction where the standards are lower and the costs, then, can be lower, and we don't want to see that happening.

The most important factors shaping labour mobility in Canada, as we know, are the availability of affordable housing for working people; high-quality, flexible child care; strong access to public services; and supports for people to move or change jobs.

I really want to spend my time, though, talking about worker safety and how important it is. Now, the member from Waterloo talked about the importance of embedding worker health and safety regulations into the bill itself and

not leaving it to regulations, and that's really critical. Protecting Ontario also means protecting Ontario workers. We don't actually have a terrific record of protecting Ontario workers.

1630

For example, during the pandemic, those people who were working retail, they were actually the most vulnerable, and they were not protected. They got a little bump up in wages. People in health care wound up getting sick, also. They were not well protected. Of course, when the pandemic was over, those low wages went down again.

What we saw was that big box stores, of course, got well supported throughout the pandemic, whereas the small businesses were forced to shut down. Again, all of these things have impacts on the people who are working. Those small businesses, for example, that provide really important jobs in our communities, they were left behind. There has been a pattern of protecting the biggest and largest businesses, really at the expense of smaller businesses and at the expense of workers.

I was also at the day of mourning this week. It's always interesting who comes and who doesn't come. Certainly, there are people I have never seen show up at a day of mourning. But if you want to learn something about the effects of workplace accidents, go to a day of mourning and talk to people, and you will find out their very, very negative experiences of abandonment from the WSIB.

We know the WSIB does reasonably well with short-term injuries, but for people with permanent injuries, it's a disaster. We know that 49% of people with permanent injuries acquired through the workplace, whether through an accident or through poisoning, through breathing in toxic fumes or toxic dust, in the case of the McIntyre Powder—we know that 49% of them are living in poverty. These are people that had good jobs and have nothing. And of course, they will hit 65, and if they had anything from the WSIB, it's going to be even less. I will come back to those specific amounts.

I want to try to make this real. A year or so ago, a young man came to work, actually with the NDP. He was very excited, so full of energy and talent. He had an accident on the staircase, had a concussion, was in hospital for a week. I actually don't know what happened to him afterwards, but I do know that his life was changed utterly on that day. I know that many of us, those who knew about it, you feel that in your gut. You really feel that, because you saw this person on one day, and the next day, they were gone, and their life was on a very different trajectory from that day on.

That's what happens. We think that we are immune. It's a protective thing that humans have, to think it's not going to happen to us, but I have met so many workers who from one day to the next were fit, strong and healthy, and then their life has changed. And then they spend years fighting with the WSIB, with the WSIB saying, "No, we don't accept your doctor's report. We are going to have a doctor that just reads it on a piece of paper—never meets you—and is going to say, 'Meh.' No, you're faking it. This is not serious."

I can tell you, go to a day of mourning and talk to people, because you will hear one tragedy after another. I call them tragedies because it's already enough to have your life totally changed through a serious injury or not being able to breathe knowing that you got cancer because of your workplace. It changes your life utterly. And then to have to fight and fight and fight to get even recognition that something has happened to you—let alone the financial supports that you are promised and that you are denied. Those people also wind up with mental health problems because of their experience with WSIB.

Now, I've only got a few minutes, so I want to make sure that people understand this. WSIB is paid for by business. It's a business expense; it's supposed to go into a pool to support workers made injured or ill on the job. It's not supposed to be a slush fund or a savings account, and yet this government keeps saying that there is this huge surplus and they're giving that money as a payroll relief to employers—like payroll tax relief—as if there were no victims; that that money didn't actually belong elsewhere to serve those workers.

When I think of injured workers, I think of workers, right? Workers and injured workers: This is the same category. Except that we tend to hive off injured workers and say, "No, we don't have to think about them because they're not here in the room with us, so it's okay that they're having really hard lives because they're not in front of us. And what the heck? WSIB says they have a surplus, so let's give it back and not look after those workers." That is criminal.

Let me tell you: In 1998, WSIB rates for loss of income and for pension were cut. That was because it was, supposedly, an unfunded liability at the WSIB. And those workers were promised that the rates would be restored when that unfunded liability was gone. That was in 1998. We are in 2025. The unfunded liability is long gone, because we've seen the government give back \$6.5 billion over several years to employers. Okay, so what's happened to the workers? Why haven't those rates been restored to where they should be—where they were promised to be? And instead the money is going elsewhere and those workers, particularly those with permanent injuries, are left behind and are fighting for scraps at the table.

That is why, first of all, we cannot afford to compromise on health and safety in this legislation. We have to be looking at the highest possible standard. We have to make sure that that standard goes across the country, and that we don't wind up watering it down to become more competitive, because that's the danger—that those rules will be watered down. And frankly, we already know that if something bad happens to you in your workplace, you have a very good chance of having your life ruined, shattered; you're forgotten. You've actually lost all your friends—the people that you worked with. You've lost your social life, your work life, your sense of who you believe yourself to be, and you are now on the sidelines with doctors' appointments, hospital appointments, physiotherapy—whatever you're able to access, with or

without support from the WSIB, which you should be getting.

I have to tell you: I know far too many who have lost their homes; they've lost their families because the crisis is so deep that the relationships don't survive—and who become homeless. This should not happen to anyone. It certainly shouldn't be happening to Ontario workers who have built this province.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Mr. Chris Glover: I want to thank my colleague from Thunder Bay for her comments today, and I appreciate your passion for workers, especially after Injured Workers Day, just yesterday.

This is one of the things with Bill 2: We've got to look at making everything succinct across all the different provinces. But WSIB is a real issue, because my understanding is that the majority of injured workers actually live in poverty—some live in destitution, some are homeless, and I've met people who are homeless, who are injured workers.

What should this government be doing to fix this situation so that an injury at work is not a ticket to destitution?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: I think that there are a number of factors that contribute to this. One of them is experience rating. When the WSIB—it used to be the Workmen's Compensation Board—was formed, it was collective liability. But at some point this was changed to a kind of individual liability. So they've got this experience rating, which is an incentive to repress claims—to not actually report claims. We know that there are thousands that are not being reported.

I would say that we need to get rid of that experience rating because if you don't report that any accidents took place and you deny that they took place, then you're going to get more of a refund, which—the refunds shouldn't be happening in the first place. So I would get rid of that, and then I would also be focusing on the needs of workers. The Workers' Compensation Board, when it was put together in 1914, was intended to support a worker for the duration of the injury, for as long as it lasts, in a non-adversarial system in which the family would not be harmed and the society would not be paying, as it is now when workers go on ODSP.

1640

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Mr. John Jordan: Labour mobility has already proved successful in our health care system. It's one of the ways that we've been bringing in health care professions and having them very quickly practise their profession in Ontario. So that's already proven to be a success. We've also increased the scope of our nurse practitioners, our pharmacists, our paramedics, which also makes it attractive for people to work in Ontario.

This bill extends that to workers who are trained and registered from other provinces to work in Ontario. My question to the member opposite is: Does the member

believe that Canadian workers should have the right to work wherever in Canada they so choose?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: It's an interesting question. Obviously, you want them to have the right to work wherever they choose, but let's also be clear that we want to make sure that a certification in a particular skilled trade, for example, is equivalent in another place so that a worker is not put in a position to be actually working at something that they do not yet have the skills for or that another worker who has invested more time and money into getting higher skills is not being undercut by not actually guaranteeing that those skills and training are equivalent. So I do think that that is an issue.

Obviously, it's great if people can move across provinces. I must say that in terms of nurse practitioners, it's great to see the scope of practice extended, but we also know that we're actually losing nurse practitioners to other provinces and up until recently to the United States because the pay is better elsewhere than in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): I recognize the member from Hamilton West.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I want to thank the member very much for bringing up the workers' day of mourning. It's an important, important occasion.

In Hamilton, we celebrated workers' day of mourning, and we had the sad occasion to have the family of Nabil El Ahmed. He was a city worker in the city of Hamilton that was killed on the job. He worked on the road crew and he was hit by a car, died at the scene. It was very difficult to hear from his family. They're still in mourning and in grief. The family said that Nabil loved his work and took pride in keeping his city clean and safe like it was his own backyard, and that he was the kind of man who would work hours clearing snow for the city and then come home to get out his own machine and help all of his neighbours. He will be very much missed by the city, by his co-workers, and certainly by his family.

I think that it's important that we recognize this day and that we also recognize, as you had, the shortcomings of WSIB when it comes to not only supporting injured workers but families and the children of families who have lost their loved one, who struggle with family income, struggle with their ability to go to university, to get on with their lives. We need to make sure the WSIB is strengthened and that people like—

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Response.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Yes, I think many of us heard about that accident. Again, it's shattering when you can put a face and a name to something that has happened. It stops being a statistic, and we realize people's vulnerability.

I'd like to respond to your question about support for families, because that certainly can be a struggle. Now, there's supposed to be support for children, but do you know where there isn't support? For parents. I worked with a family whose son was killed on the highway in a trucking accident. He didn't have children, but you can imagine that his parents had kind of expected that at some

point, as they got older, he was going to be able to support them to some degree. But WSIB does not consider family, unless it's children or a direct spouse, to be worthy of support. So I do think that needs to be looked at more carefully.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Ms. Laura Smith: I want to thank the member for their statement.

I also want to change the dial and get their position on direct-to-consumer sales. Obviously, when businesses thrive, then the people on the jobs can be employed, actually—or they have an opportunity to be employed.

One of the things that I have in my community—and there are a few of them—is a distillery that finds it easier to sell to Europe than to Canada. This bill will eliminate a lot of the red tape in selling within Ontario with the direct-to-consumer sales, which will provide employment and a better position for this amazing distillery.

I'm just wondering what the member thinks about this kind of breaking down of the barriers so that they can sell to different provinces without the red tape.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: I think that's a fairly obvious question and answer—that it is a good thing.

Sometimes I get a little confused by the terminology, “direct-to-consumer selling.” Is that what you said? When a brewery has a pub right on its premises, it's direct-to-consumer selling. So I'm thinking, is it—really, what we're talking about is across the provincial barriers, to sell in other provinces. We could debate the nomenclature later. I may be misunderstanding it.

Certainly, we want to make it easier for companies to sell their product across the country.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

M^{me} France Gélinas: The first part of the bill, schedule 1, talks about the Buy Ontario, Buy Canadian Day Act: “the last Friday of June in each year as Buy Ontario, Buy Canadian Day.” Do you figure that this is a good idea?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: It's not a bad idea to have a day. I just wonder why we don't have 365 days with a commitment to Buy Ontario and Buy Canadian—that's why I find, actually, the whole idea puzzling. It's a little bit entertaining to have one day set aside when we're all committed to buying Canadian and buying Ontario—we know that people are ready, are committed. What they want to see is their government following through with procurement contracts that Buy Ontario, Buy Canadian—for example, sending Red Seal certification down to the United States. Why on earth are we doing that?

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Further debate?

Hon. Paul Calandra: It is, of course, a pleasure to rise in this debate. It's my first time speaking in the House, so I'll just thank my constituents for sending me back here. I know all of my colleagues on the other side are equally grateful to my constituents for sending me back, as well.

I would just say this: It would appear that despite all of the debate back and forth, which has been very good

debate, frankly—it would appear that all sides of the House seem at least accepting of the fact that this needs to go to committee and that, overriding its support of the initiative. And I think that is actually very good news for the people of the province of Ontario.

The President of the Treasury Board spoke quickly about her father, former Prime Minister Mulroney, and the impact that he had with respect to free trade. I think she probably deliberately didn't really talk about how just how important that was to Canada and how important that was globally. Back in 1985, when Prime Minister Mulroney started talking about free trade with the United States, nobody thought that a country, then, of 25 million would be able to compete with the world's largest economy of some 320 million people at the time. They thought that we would be overwhelmed. They thought we would eventually just become a branch of the United States. But the exact opposite thing happened. What we showed them is exactly what Prime Minister Mulroney and President Reagan knew at the time: that when you begin to break down barriers to trade, what you build is one of the most powerful economic zones. It would be something that the rest of the world wanted to copy.

1650

Now, I know we're all talking about President Trump, blah, blah, blah. I say, who cares? Look, we're strong. We're going to do what we have to do. We are going to continue to grow a strong Ontario, a strong Canada, and we will defeat the rhetoric that comes out of the United States because that's just what Canadians do. But we have to do that from a position of strength, and that is what this bill allows us to do.

But let's not forget that as challenged as Canada was at that time, the United States was equally challenged back in the 1980s. They were an economy that was struggling just as much as Canada was. Coming out of the 1970s, the Rust Belt of the United States, their economy was struggling. They needed us as much as we needed them, and it was free trade that allowed our two economies and our two countries to prosper to the point where we grew and millions and millions of people on both sides of the border were able to prosper from it. But what it also led to was a global turning of the page. Globally, people wanted to begin to trade.

Now, some will say the European economic union did that, but no. Ostensibly, it was free trade between Canada and the United States that led the revolution of free trade worldwide, that allowed economies to open up and to prosper, Madam Speaker, and that is what this bill allows us to do. It finally recognizes and completes the vision that was started by Prime Minister Mulroney and talked about by so many Premiers and other Prime Ministers. It allows us to complete that vision—Ontario acting unilaterally, always the most important part of the federation, the biggest province and the largest economy. It is up to us show that leadership, and that's what this bill allows us to do.

Again, I just quickly thank all my colleagues. I know it seems that while there are some differences of opinion,

ultimately, we want to see this get to committee so that there can be additional debate and discussion on the bill. So I thank my colleagues for that.

I think there's no point in me going on any longer, and so, with that, Madam Speaker, I move that the question now be put.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Mr. Calandra has moved that the question be now put. There have been over nine hours of debate. I'm satisfied that there has been sufficient debate to allow this question to be put to the House.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

Interjection: On division.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Carried on division.

On April 17, 2025, Mr. Fedeli moved second reading of Bill 2, An Act to enact the Buy Ontario, Buy Canadian Day Act, 2025 and the Ontario Free Trade and Mobility Act, 2025 and to amend various other Acts.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

Interjection: No.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): I hear a no.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Madam Speaker, I move that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): The bill is referred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

Orders of the day?

Mr. Anthony Leardi: No further business.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): There is no further business. The House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1655.

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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	
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Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Chris (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	
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Tangri, Hon. / L'hon. Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	Associate Minister of Small Business / Ministre associée des Petites Entreprises

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Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Associate Attorney General / Procureur général associé
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Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	
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Wong-Tam, Kristyn (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	