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Mercredi
22 octobre 2025

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ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 22 October 2025

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 22 octobre 2025

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUILDING A MORE COMPETITIVE
ECONOMY ACT, 2025

LOI DE 2025 VISANT À BÂTIR
UNE ÉCONOMIE PLUS
CONCURRENTIELLE

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 21, 2025, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

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

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member for Toronto–Danforth.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thank you, Speaker. I want to start off by saying that I'll be sharing my lead time today with the members from Oshawa and from Nickel Belt.

I will be mostly speaking to the environmental sections of this bill, but I do want to say that I find it extraordinary that this government is going to be removing photo radar. I mean, you've got to be kidding me, seriously. Just because your ministers and their limo drivers are getting speeding tickets for going through school zones is no reason to bring in this legislation. Seriously, you should be protecting kids.

I had a demonstration at one of the schools in my riding on Monday—William Burgess, a great school. A lot of parents were out; a lot of kids were out. They could not understand for the life of them why a safety measure for children going to school that's endorsed by police chiefs in Ontario, that's endorsed by the Hospital for Sick Children, is being ruled out. I guess there's an embarrassment at the cabinet table when you show up and you've got speeding tickets you've got to pay, but that shouldn't be the reason for changing this law.

I also want to note that in this bill, the work of the government with its Bill 5 with regard to endangered species is being continued. I can see no reason on earth why we would support the expansion of the activities of Bill 5 and the ongoing threat to endangered species, so I would urge people, on the basis of those two points alone, to reject this bill.

The title of the bill, Building a More Competitive Economy Act—which includes getting rid of photo radar, so that's kind of weird. While the title suggests economic progress, the first schedule makes changes to the Clean Water Act, 2006, that I think should concern everyone in Ontario who values safe drinking water. The changes are being promoted as simply technical, that they're being used to balance the need for development against the need for safety, with an assurance from the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks that, in fact, safety will be protected.

But I have to say to you, Speaker, that when you play with clean water, you are playing Russian roulette with people's lives. Remember, the Clean Water Act came into being because in May 2000, the town of Walkerton experienced a tragedy that shook this province. Seven people died and more than 2,300 fell ill due to E. coli contamination in the municipal water system. Of the people who fell ill, most recovered, but many had ongoing, life-changing damage.

So when you deal with water safety, you have to recognize that you are playing with very serious matters. In that case, the contamination was caused by manure runoff following heavy rains and the failure of the water treatment monitoring and notification systems.

The Walkerton Inquiry, led by Justice Dennis O'Connor, produced 121 recommendations to prevent such a disaster from ever happening again. And one of the most significant outcomes of that inquiry was the Clean Water Act, passed in 2006. It established source protection plans, empowered conservation authorities and mandated ministerial oversight to ensure the safety of municipal drinking water systems. It was a landmark piece of legislation to protect public health. It was a piece of legislation that we needed, clearly, and a piece of legislation that, in Ontario, has generally been recognized as one that is critical to defend if we want to make sure we don't have a repeat of the Walkerton experience.

But now, with Bill 56, this government is proposing changes that further undermine those protections. And I say further because the government has already, in the past, since it came into power in 2018, put through two bills that undermine the Ontario Clean Water Act.

Schedule 1 introduces amendments, as I said, that are argued to be technical but can have far reaching consequences. For example, if the minister fails to respond to proposed amendments to source protection plans within 120 days, those amendments are deemed approved. I think that removes a critical layer of oversight and accountability.

Everyone in this building knows that schedules are disrupted, events happen and ministers and governments get sidetracked. And the idea that because some other event came along and a minister or a minister's office was not able to keep track of a critical issue like this it would automatically result in an approval is not acceptable. It does not make sense.

The bill allows the minister to prescribe the wording of policies in source protection plans, which has the potential to weaken local protections. It limits the types of policies that can be included for activities deemed significant threats to drinking water. This is not streamlining—it's stripping away the very safeguards that were put in place to prevent another Walkerton.

The Canadian Environmental Law Association, which has followed this issue now for over 20 years, has been very vocal in its criticism of the government's approach to the Clean Water Act. In a June 2023 posting, they warned, "Two recent enactments, Bills 97 and 23 ... seem to go out of their way to undermine existing laws, policies and agencies created to prevent threats to drinking water following the Walkerton tragedy." This bill before us just follows in those footsteps. This bill continues that undermining of the clean water protections that we realized needed to be put in place when their lack led to deaths and widespread illness.

Bill 97 allowed ministerial zoning orders to override significant threat policies under the Clean Water Act. Seriously? How many Walkertons does it take before you think, "We have to be serious about protecting water at a very high level because the consequences are quite literally deadly"?

Bill 23 undermines the role of conservation authorities, allowing development on lands that could be deemed hazardous and wetlands, and removing pollution as a consideration in permit decisions. These changes erode the ability of conservation authorities to protect watersheds and drinking water resources.

I actually was here in 2006. I had just been elected in a by-election that year and got to sit on the committee that travelled around Ontario and actually got to talk to the people who developed the act. I had my criticisms. But their whole argument to us at the time was that if you want to ensure that water is clean and safe, you have to have defence in depth. You can't just rely on that last step of putting a small amount of chlorine into the water to kill bacteria. You have to make sure that the source of the water is protected. You have to make sure that the inspection systems are in place, that you have enforcement, that you have a variety of steps that protect the public. Unfortunately, that is something that seems to be lost on this government.

0910

Canadian Environmental Law Association's April 2025 analysis highlights the ongoing gaps in Ontario's drinking water protection regime. A recent report by the Auditor General found that over three million Ontarians rely on non-municipal drinking water systems, yet the province lacks effective oversight of those systems. That is some-

thing that we criticized back in 2006. We were told, "Well, that will be taken care of." It never was taken care of.

This government has an opportunity, with this bill, to actually strengthen the Clean Water Act. It's not doing that; it's weakening it. The report from the Auditor General said the government did not have in place systems to oversee all non-municipal drinking water systems and ensure compliance with legislation and regulations, educate private well users about the risks of untreated water, and identify and manage health risks related to those non-municipal drinking water systems.

The Auditor General emphasized that this is not just a policy gap; it is a real and present health threat. The ministries of the environment and health, along with local public health units, accepted the 17 recommendations. But as the Canadian Environmental Law Association points out, acceptance alone is not enough. The government must commit to timelines, and implementation must follow swiftly and decisively.

I want to say, Speaker, I went to the Auditor General's report and looked at the recommendations. I have to say, the Auditor General—who does a pretty thorough job; we've been lucky we've had good, competent, capable Auditor Generals who have dug into things pretty deeply—at no point said that the laws that were in place were impeding development. That was not the concern that came forward. The recommendations include, "We recommend that MECP"—the Ministry of the Environment Conservation and Parks—"explore ways to enhance its reporting to the public on all advice provided by the advisory council on drinking water quality and testing standards."

There are recommendations to the Ministry of Health as well. I'm just going to deal with the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks. They recommended that the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks:

"—implement measures and efficiencies to further increase the rate of MECP inspections of non-municipal drinking water systems; and

"—set and meet formal inspection policies and targets for non-municipal drinking water systems that it regulates."

The Auditor General recommended that the MECP:

"—create outreach materials outlining exemption requirements and information about the risks of supplying and consuming untreated drinking water, and deliver them to owners, operators and users of drinking-water systems with treatment exemptions; and

"—assess whether any regulatory amendments are needed to minimize the risks of not treating drinking water on the basis of periodic bacterial testing."

They are recommending that the MECP:

"—develop and implement a plan to clear the backlog of submitted well records by inputting the outstanding information into the wells database;

"—develop and implement new processes to flag missing or inaccurate information in well records to improve the reliability and accuracy of MECP's information on wells; and

“—develop and implement an IT system that enables MECP staff to manage and track information on wells in an effective, reliable and timely manner.”

Man—a few more: “We recommend that MECP explore and implement options, such as education, to increase the number of properly decommissioned abandoned wells,” and that the MECP:

“—complete an updated feasibility assessment of potential measures to increase source water protections for non-municipal drinking-water supplies; and

“—based on the outcome of the assessment, consider whether any measures are suitable for implementation, and consult with the public on any policy proposals.”

I note that the Auditor General at no point said, “Hey, you’ve got too much duplication in the system. This is holding up development. This bill, this legislation, which may be good for protecting human health, seems to be making it difficult to build new homes.” No, that is not what was said by the Auditor General. So I have to ask, where is this coming from?

The argument made by the minister yesterday—and I listened to him and I reread Hansard—was that duplication in the system and long timelines meant that it was very difficult to actually put in place new drinking-water systems in a timely way or put in place drinking-water systems so that development could proceed. Frankly, I have my doubts about that.

Very interestingly, in July, CBC reported that the Minister of the Environment for Ontario and the Alberta environment minister wrote to the federal environment minister asking her to move away from legislation that they say would “delay project development and undermine competitiveness.” That legislation was introducing a bill that would enshrine clean-drinking-water rights in law. So the minister was going to the feds and saying, “Hey, you’re going to enshrine the right to clean drinking water. That interferes with development.” You’ve got to be kidding me. The reality is that’s ensuring that people across Ontario—and certainly First Nations, who have been most deprived of access to clean drinking water—should be sacrificed, that their interests should be set aside.

I’m sure that the minister was not freelancing. I can’t imagine that the minister would write a letter to the federal government saying, “Back off on clean water legislation,” without having the Premier backing that minister to the hilt. It would not happen. So any argument that we should trust the government that they will protect clean water in this legislation does not fit with the facts, does not fit with the reality that this government opposed action at the federal level to ensure that everyone was protected and everyone had the opportunity to get clean water on a regular basis.

In a meeting with First Nations after that incident, the Premier said, “Everyone deserves fresh drinking water,” and yet at the same time we have this legislation coming forward to undermine that provision of fresh, clean drinking water. I mean, we’ve already seen with Bill 5 the threat—not just a threat; the initiative—to implement special economic zones where provincial laws can be

suspended in toto in a particular area to facilitate an economic activity. Certainly we need economic activity—people need jobs, and people in this province need to have our economy grow—but setting aside our laws in order to do that makes no sense. We saw the consequences in Walkerton of not actually having regulations in place that protect people’s lives and well-being.

The Canadian Environmental Law Association warns that the legislative changes before this one were setting the stage for Walkerton 2.0. The erosion of environmental protections, the marginalization of vulnerable communities and the prioritization of development over public health are deeply troubling.

The Clean Water Act was a promise, an initiative, that we wouldn’t allow our drinking water to be compromised in the future. Bill 56 breaks that promise. I don’t see how people can support this bill, if for no other reason than just because of its undermining of clean water protections. We need to stand with those communities that are at risk, and we need to ensure that the province makes it very clear that protecting public health and the environment are the highest priorities. People should not have their lives put at risk.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): I recognize the member from Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you, Speaker. It is my pleasure to talk to the three schedules in the bill that have to do with health care.

I listened attentively yesterday when the Minister of Health was talking about those same schedules in the bill that have to do with health care. Basically, she went through what her government is doing to improve health care: lots of focus on the private, for-profit new CT scan and MRI clinics; lots about the new private, for-profit surgical suites that will be funded by this government to do hip and knee surgery. She explained that the change that the regulations do to the Regulated Health Professions Act are so that basically Ontario will become the first province where a list of 16 of the 26 colleges that exist—26 health professions in Ontario are regulated by a college. Out of those 26 colleges, 16 of them that are mentioned in the legislation will basically—if you are registered to practise in any part of Canada, we will recognize your registration here in Ontario.

0920

She talks about how you would get an eligibility certificate within two days and that the police checks and the other checks that usually get done before somebody is allowed to come in would be done after the two days, but then if something is found, the licence could be withdrawn. She talks about less requirements in looking to make sure that there’s no active disciplinary action taken by colleges in other provinces and that they have malpractice insurance.

The problem with all of this, Speaker, is that none of this is in the bill. All that the bill says is that it enacts legislation so that regulations could be made at a time that I’m guessing would be soon, but that is for anybody to guess.

The minister spent a lot of time saying how many new nurses had registered since they were in power etc.—what they have done. But let me tell you a little bit about what could be done to make sure that the 2.5 million Ontarians who don't have access to a family doctor or nurse practitioners—what we could do so that people don't have to wait so long in an emergency room to be able to be seen, to be able to be referred to a specialist for a hip or a knee surgery or any other type of medical treatment that has been diagnosed, a plan of treatment has been set by a physician and a referral has been done.

The first thing I would tell you for the 2.5 million Ontarians that don't have access to primary care is, fund the existing interdisciplinary teams that exist in Ontario. We have 75 community health centres. Every single one of those community health centres has thousands of patients on their wait-list that they would be willing to take right here, right now, if only the government would fund them. The community health centre sector has not seen budget increases to allow them to bring in new practitioners for a long time. They have not seen budget increases to be able to keep pace with inflation for the last 12 years. That's when the Liberals were there and for the last eight years when the Conservative government was there. If the interdisciplinary community teams that exist—community health centres, Aboriginal health access centres, nurse practitioner-led clinics, community-governed family health teams—cannot recruit and retain a stable workforce because they don't get the financing to do this, then the 2.5 million continues to grow.

The Ontario Medical Association was at Queen's Park on Monday. They are forecasting a doubling of this: five million people in Ontario that would not have access to primary care. Do you know what it means to not have access to primary care? That means—the cancer society is here today in room 228, if anybody is interested. The Cancer Society is telling us, "How do we see the huge, huge improvement that we have seen in cancer care? We see this because of early detection." We see this because you have a relationship with a primary care provider who does the test, who, if something is going on—you start to have a sore back. Is it because prostate cancer is starting? This is their job. This is what they do. They diagnose early. But if you don't have this relationship with a primary care provider, if you don't have a nurse practitioner or a family physician to relate to, then none of this is available. You will be diagnosed in an emergency room with a whole bunch of people around you with no privacy with stage 4 cancer. This is awful. This is not the Ontario health care system that we want.

So why is it that there's a solution right here, right there: the 25 nurse practitioner-led clinics. Same thing: I have a few of them in my riding. The one located in Capreol has been asking for budget increases for 12 years. Even in northern Ontario, we have underemployed nurse practitioners. We have underemployed midwives. But the government doesn't fund any positions for them; therefore, the nurse practitioner-led clinic, the community health centre, the family health team and the Aboriginal health access

centre are not able to hire those people. They try the best they can to do fundraising, to redirect money that was coming to try to keep them on. But the Capreol Nurse Practitioner-Led Clinic had to let go of their nurse practitioner because they kept hoping that the government would fund them, but they did not. If you live in Capreol, the nurse practitioner-led clinic is your only point of access. There is no other physician. There is no other access to care; it's the nurse practitioner-led clinic.

To make things worse, we had a very nice family physician in Hanmer—which is about a 35-, 30-minute drive—who passed away suddenly, leaving behind a huge roster. He looked after close to 5,000 people. Well, we just have an extra 5,000 people who don't have access to primary care anymore. The nurse practitioner-led clinic would be more than happy to take them on. There's a nurse practitioner who's willing to come and work there, and they have no money to hire them. It doesn't matter how many times they wrote, how many times I brought a letter to the Minister of Health. Listen, a nurse practitioner's pay is not that high. You would make a huge difference. Nope, there's no money.

If we look at midwives, midwives are one of the professions in schedule 8, that we will now welcome midwives from all—if you are registered in another province, we will welcome you in Ontario. Welcome you to what? The midwifery practice? I've been asking for more money to bring in more midwives. All of them turn away pregnant women every single week because they haven't got the staff to do so. There are midwives who would love nothing more than to join a midwifery practice. There are midwifery practices that would love nothing more than to have more midwives join their team. But the government has not increased the budget for midwifery since they took power in 2018. There hasn't been an opportunity for any of those clinics to hire new midwives, yet the demand is there.

I can tell you that anybody who gets care from midwifery loves it. They do evaluations of quality of services, and they just rate them through the roof. People just love their services. They follow the family. They follow the baby after the baby is born. They do home visits. They will respect the choice of the mother. If they are close enough to a hospital, you could have a home birth. My neighbour did that and it was a wonderful experience. You can go to their clinic or you can be followed in hospital. It was a bit of a battle to get the hospital to welcome midwives, but we do now. We have midwives even in northern Ontario, where I live, looking for jobs.

So here we are, making it easier for 16 different health professionals to come to Ontario. I don't know if you're interested in me naming them all, but basically, physicians, nurses, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, speech-language pathologists, chiropodists—anyway, the list is there; it's in the bill, if you're interested. Come to Ontario to do what, to work in private, for-profit clinics? Because the non-for-profit community health centres, midwifery practices, nurse practitioner health clinics, Aboriginal health access centres, family health teams,

community-governed family health teams—none of them have received any money to hire anybody new.

0930

Then people turn their sights towards hospitals: “Oh, they will come and work in our hospitals.” Did you know, Speaker, that the letter from the Minister of Health to our hospitals is telling them that they should look, for the next three years, to find economies of scale to balance their budgets?

First of all, the law says that a hospital cannot have a deficit budget. It is in law. Hospitals have to balance their budgets. They cannot do deficits. Although it is in law, more than half of the hospitals in Ontario had a deficit last year, and the government signed off that, “It’s okay that you’ve made a deficit because the law said you are not allowed.”

So we know that all of those hospitals are facing deficits—and we’re talking millions of dollars, tens of millions and hundreds of millions of dollars in deficit. What did the government say? The government said, “For the next three years, you should look at efficiencies to balance your budget.”

The request for efficiencies was made by the Liberal government when they were in power, and the efficiencies that could be done, my friends, have been done. They have been implemented. Our hospitals are some of the most efficient in all of our country. If you look at the length of stays, if you look at costs per procedure—it doesn’t matter what metrics you look at, our hospitals are the most efficient that exist in our country.

But as more and more people don’t have access to primary care—the 2.5 million without access continues to increase. As more of those people end up being diagnosed late in an emergency room and then needing expensive treatments that wouldn’t have been needed had they been diagnosed sooner, they end up being admitted into our hospitals. Then the costs continue to go up.

Think of a hospital as a bit of the net of last resort. If mental health and addictions fails you, if primary care fails you, if any type of palliative care fails you, you end up in the hospital. This is part of medicare. Medicare is basically: hospital care will be free; physician care will be free. Our hospitals are there as our net of last resort. Well, this net is overfull.

More than half of our hospitals are facing deficits, and what does the government say will be the solution? To make sure that it doesn’t matter where you work in Canada, you can come to Ontario. But you can come to Ontario to do what? Who has the money to hire them? It’s the private, for-profit clinics.

We’re doing all of this so that the private, for-profit clinics have access to people in the health care system that are interested to go into the private, for-profit, because this is the priority of this government. This is the only part of our health care system that sees exponential growth.

Where we did not have a for-profit hip and knee surgery—don’t get me wrong; we have some really cool—you go to the London hospital, they have this community-based hip and knee surgery just across the street from the

hospital. It is same-day surgery. They go through a lot of patients, but they’re run by the hospital. If something goes wrong, you are automatically admitted because every surgeon, every nurse, every physiotherapist who works in that surgical centre works for the hospital.

If something goes wrong, they admit you directly. They continue to care for you. So is the model of having community day surgery a bad model? No, absolutely not. It already exists in Ontario, but it exists within our existing not-for-profit-delivery health care system.

Hospitals have already done this. But not this government. This government is not funding our hospital that sits with—I can tell you that the hospital closest to where I live, Health Sciences North, has a brand new operating room that the taxpayers paid for, that they built, that has never been used—never been used. We will pay facility fees to private, for-profit clinics to reimburse them for the millions of dollars it takes to build a surgical suite, but we won’t pay our hospital. We won’t give our hospital the budget so that they can open operating rooms that already exist, that are already there, with surgeons that would love nothing more than to see more patients, if only the pay-per procedures were not capped. I can just about guarantee you that pay-per procedures for hip and knees in those private clinics will be way higher than what we get up north.

None of this makes any sense. I thought fiscal responsibility was kind of why we are here as MPPs, to make sure that taxpayers’ money is used wisely. Well, none of that is wise.

I see that time is running. I want to take a minute to put onto the record a letter that the Canadian Medical Association sent to our Minister of Health to reconsider the new residency policy:

“The Canadian Medical Association and the College of Family Physicians of Canada are adding their voices”—because many, many have already done it—“to the growing number of organizations urging the Ontario government to re-evaluate the recently announced requirements for international medical graduates ... seeking residency positions in Ontario. This policy disqualified international medical graduates seeking residency positions in Ontario. This policy disqualifies IMGs who did not go to high school in Ontario from applying in the first round for residency training.

“With the academic year already under way and the application window halfway through, international medical graduates have already initiated the process for this match at significant expense and time commitment. These applicants are already Canadian citizens or permanent residents residing in Canada and often working in health care. At a time when every effort is being made to attract more family physicians, the abrupt policy change for IMGs will destabilize family medicine programs in Ontario. The government is urged to postpone this ill-timed policy.

“Removing barriers and obstacles to increase Canada’s supplies of doctors remains a top priority with an estimated 6.5 million patients without a family doctor”—

2.5 million in Ontario. “We continue to call on governments to streamline the process to graduate the next generation of doctors.

“Ontario has been at the forefront of key solutions to help meet the needs of patients, supporting team-based care, recognizing out-of-province licensure for physicians and other health professionals....

“With this solution mindset, we call on the Ontario government to reassess these restrictive measures until further consultation can properly take place, and an appropriate evaluation of the unintended consequences can be completed.”

The minister addressed this in her speech yesterday, saying that the fact that a medical resident has done two years of high school in Ontario should give them priority over other international medical graduates. Speaker, tell me, have you ever thought of asking your family physician, “How many years of high school did you do in Ontario?” Nobody asks this. Nobody cares—nobody. We want our physicians to be knowledgeable. With the system we have in place now, we get the best and the brightest. We get a lot of people to apply; we get to pick the best and the brightest. It doesn’t matter where they went to high school. It matters that they are a Canadian citizen with a medical degree who wants to do their placement in Ontario. And it pays off. Ontario has some of the best health care providers, in part because of the selection process. So to say you will have to have done two years of high school in Canada in order to qualify for the first round—I don’t know who dreamed that up, but put a big X on this. It is discriminatory, it’s not going to help solve any of the problems, and anybody in health care is telling you that you’re going in the wrong direction.

0940

I see that my time is almost up. The schedules in the bill, as I said, are to open the door so that Ontario can welcome 16 different regulated health professions into Ontario. The process will be quick and most of the checking will come afterward. But none of this is in the bill. All the bill says is that it gives permission to make regulations. I won’t have a chance to talk about the regulations, so is there a little bit of worry about this? Yes, absolutely. Our college makes sure that everybody that has a licence is qualified. I want to make sure that this trust relationship stays in place.

I thank you, Speaker, and will let the rest of my time go to my colleague.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): I recognize the member from Oshawa.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I’m glad to stand in this House as the official opposition critic for infrastructure and transportation and to speak to Bill 56, which is the so-called Building a More Competitive Economy Act. The basis of my debate today is going to be the changes in schedule 5, changes to the Highway Traffic Act.

The bill before us is an omnibus bill that has 11 different schedules. It makes changes to all sorts of acts. My colleagues have spoken about some of them: the Clean Water Act, the Ontario Heritage Act, the Endangered

Species Act and many regulated health professionals and other acts. But as I said, it also makes changes to the Highway Traffic Act. So for the folks who have been quite interested in the speed camera conversation, this is that conversation. This is the bill that attacks safety cameras in our community and bans the use of automated speed enforcement.

Speaker, here is what is happening in schedule 5, as shared with us in the bill. Automated speed enforcement systems are currently authorized under the Highway Traffic Act and its regulations. These systems operate as municipal programs and rely on a legislative framework for owner liability for speeding offences, allowing tickets to be issued to vehicle owners rather than to drivers. These are the speed cameras that, when folks get the ticket, it goes to the owner of the vehicle, not necessarily the driver.

This schedule repeals that framework. It would end the use of automated speed enforcement systems across Ontario. Owner liability for speeding offences would also end. Municipalities would no longer be able to operate automated speed enforcement programs, and speed enforcement would revert to traditional methods, with police officers issuing charges to drivers.

If the repeal results in the early termination of the contract between a municipality and a vendor or supplier of automated speed enforcement equipment, municipal liability is limited, it says.

It also grants the minister the opportunity to install signs if the municipality doesn’t do it fast enough. But we can get into that.

In this schedule of the bill, it gives the minister the power to order municipalities to install signs in school zones. School zones ought to already have signs, but I would say that a sign is not an appropriate substitute for speed enforcement. It can be an additional tool. I was discussing it with my colleague earlier. They’ve got signs in their riding, and it makes a difference. But why would we be removing a useful tool when we’re talking about safety and, specifically in school zones and community safety areas, the safety of children?

The government talks about speed bumps, roundabouts, flashing lights. All of these things are good ideas—but in addition to, not instead of. Safer is better.

So how did we get here? This government brought in automated speed enforcement—I remember that—back in 2019. This government gave municipalities the ability to make decisions for themselves about whether or not to utilize this tool, automated speed enforcement, in their jurisdictions, in their municipalities. Any municipal or regional council that went ahead with this heard from constituents, and they continue to. They’ve been refining and fine-tuning and always improving, because if they don’t, they’re going to hear about it from their constituents.

But here we have the Premier of this fine province reaching again into municipalities, because he is the boss of them, it would seem. This is another most recent example of provincial overreach, because even though the Premier brought it in, now the Premier is taking it out. Why? I don’t know. Ostensibly, as a favour—I’m not sure

who has asked. The Premier calls them a cash grab, which is nonsense, and we'll hear more about that.

Speaker, I've been trying to figure out who this benefits. It would seem that at least 20 government ministers have gotten significant tickets from speed cameras, so I'm going to guess that they put their hands up that they would like to not have that happen again.

This is from a Global News article entitled "Won't Happen Again: Minister Pledges No More Speeding Ontario Cabinet Vehicles":

It said, "Ontario's transportation minister has promised vehicles assigned to Doug Ford's cabinet ministers won't be caught speeding again, after municipal cameras slapped them with more than \$3,300 in fines."

It went on to say, "Vehicles registered to cabinet ministers were snapped speeding by cameras 23 times over the past three years, including one travelling at 70 km/h in a 40 zone...."

"The documents obtained by Global News do not disclose which ministers the vehicles were assigned to."

It's so interesting; the Minister of Transportation has said it won't happen again. Yes, that's right. It won't happen again. Do you know why? Because they're ripping out the cameras that caught them. So maybe that's part of the reason.

Speaker, I want to talk about how responsible municipalities have been implementing—despite the way the Premier has been making this sound, calling it a cash grab.

Here's one example you can look at—but any of the 37 municipalities have online information about it. This is from the region of Durham; I live there: "Automated speed enforcement (ASE) is a modern tool used to help enforce speed limits in school zones and community safety zones—places where kids tend to walk, run, bike and play!" They list all of the locations where permanent automated speed enforcement cameras are now. So they have all of the locations. They have listed the intersections where the mobile automated speed enforcement cameras are while they're getting that feedback in data, before they become permanent. It's all right there. This supports Durham Vision Zero. All of us will be meeting with Good Roads. We know that Vision Zero—the vision is to have zero fatalities, safe roads. This is part of that. They are very accountable and explain it in the "frequently asked questions" on this website for the region. It is very clear. It explains what it is: "an automated system that uses a camera and a speed measurement device to enforce speed limits and help make roads safer for all road users." They break it down. There's nobody hiding in the bushes with a speed camera set up. This is not "gotcha" enforcement; this is, if you speed, there's a consequence. It's not a tax. It's a fine for breaking the law.

So let's continue to have safe roads and accountable roads.

The retired chiefs of police—there's a letter here that they wrote: "In a letter to the Premier and his ministers ... retired chiefs of police from Peel, Halton, Niagara, Ottawa and beyond argued the cameras ... are 'highly effective at

changing dangerous driving behaviours and reducing collisions and serious injuries at problem locations."

They said, "The results are clear: When drivers know that automated speed enforcement cameras are in place, they slow down.... This means fewer tickets, lower costs, and safer roads for everyone."

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They go on to say, "Automated speed cameras reduce speeding, injury and death, allowing police to divert resources to focus on criminal activities plaguing Ontario communities such as auto theft and intimate partner violence."

Former police executives have said that there are lots of priorities for police to focus on, and having them sit outside of a school zone in, as the government called it, the traditional method—is that the best use of police resources?

I'll tell you that the municipalities are very concerned about what will become a significant increase to policing costs in order to cover those safety zones. We all know that police do a remarkable job in our communities, and all of us have a list of things that are going wrong in our communities. They have said here that it frees them up to do other things—something to consider.

This has been a really interesting issue for all of us in our inboxes. I'm hearing from all sorts of folks about this issue. And this isn't just a click-and-add-your-name lobby email. This is people sitting down, taking the time out of their day and writing thoughtful letters on this issue—many, many, many. I know the government members are getting them too. So I would like to share the voices from my community and from some neighbouring communities about the importance of having safe roads and why this ban on speed cameras is a bad idea.

Carol from Oshawa wrote, "My mother and I would like to ask you to oppose the law Premier Ford is proposing to eliminate speed cameras across the province. We live near Durham College and Ontario Tech University, and see cars exceeding the speed limits every day on Taunton Road and Simcoe Street. Since the Simcoe Street speed cameras were installed, speeding on Simcoe Street North near those campuses has dropped noticeably. Please don't let Premier Ford take away this system that is protecting students and others in Oshawa every day." Thank you, Carol.

Elizabeth writes, "I'm writing to urge you and the provincial government to protect the lives of children and pedestrians by reversing the ban on speed cameras.

"Police chiefs and hospitals agree that speed cameras save lives. Speed cameras reduce speeding, decrease collisions, and make our streets safer...."

"If drivers don't break the law, they don't get fined. Why should the government allow reckless drivers to put children at risk on their way to school?" Great question, Elizabeth.

Carolyn writes, "I am writing to you to express my objection to the proposed legislation calling for a ban of the use of municipal speed cameras.

“The use of automated speed cameras helps keep pedestrians, cyclists, and children safe across Ontario....

“I am asking you to stop the ban of the use of municipal speed cameras and ensure that speed cameras remain available as a critical safety measure to protect Ontario communities.” Good point, Carolyn.

Vaidehee writes to me and says, “I have worked for a speed camera vendor for more than one year now and know, for a fact, that the programs are effective at reducing speeding and changing driver behaviour. I am proud to be a part of the program that created safer streets in the community where I live. Most other residents agree that the cameras are a good thing.”

He goes on to say, “I think it would be a mistake to ban the use of speed cameras, we should instead improve the programs. One improvement to the program would be minimum speed enforcement thresholds. The company I work for is known for implementing fair programs and recommends against ticketing anything under 11 kmph over the speed limit.” Okay—thoughtful input. Thank you.

Josh is actually from Ottawa Centre, but Josh has written:

“Speed cameras are not just enforcement tools—they are proven traffic calming measures that save lives. Numerous studies have shown that ASE cameras significantly reduce speeding, especially in school zones and residential areas. These reductions translate directly into safer streets for pedestrians, cyclists and drivers alike. Importantly, the fines collected from speed cameras are reinvested into traffic safety initiatives. This ensures that those who violate the law contribute to the cost of making our streets safer, rather than placing the financial burden on law-abiding taxpayers.”

Josh goes on to say, “If signage were truly effective on its own, posted speed limits would already be sufficient. The reality is that many drivers ignore signs unless there is a meaningful consequence, which ASE cameras provide.” Thank you, Josh.

Ronald wrote to me and said, “I write to express my concern and disappointment that there is even a consideration to legislating the removal of traffic cameras and do so on several grounds.

“First, the decision should rightly be that of the local municipalities, not of the provincial government.” Fair point, Ronald.

Ronald says, “Second, all research indicates that they are effective in reducing speeds. Is that not what we want?”

He goes on to say, “The only individuals that these cameras impact negatively are those who speed, in other words, those who break the law. Everyone who operates a motor vehicle should be able to read signs and adjust their speed accordingly. To fail to do so is to tacitly accept whatever consequence there might be, including incurring a fine. This is not a ‘cash grab’ on the part of the municipality; it is a cash handout on the part of the driver.” Yes, good point. Thanks, Ronald. And the last thing he says that I’ll add is, “The only ones opposed to the cameras seem to

be those who wish to speed. That should tell us something.” Yes, Ronald, it should.

Edward wrote to me from his iPhone, one line—and I can only imagine, Edward might have been listening to this on the news or saw a headline, but just took a moment on his phone to send one line: “I support the use of speed cameras in general and particularly in school zones.” Thanks, Edward.

By the way, these aren’t people I know. These are just people who have realized this is not the right course of action for this government and they are just motivated to share.

Mary says, “Why would anyone object to a proven way to improve road safety?”

“If you don’t speed, you don’t pay. Taxpayers aren’t losing anything, but they may have safer roads for their children.

“Let’s give demerit points instead of fines, if the objection is the cost of a fine.” There’s one idea. But this government isn’t willing to consider ideas.

Here is another one from Anna: “As a long-time resident of Oshawa, I would like to express my support for the municipal speed camera program(s).... It is without a doubt that speed cameras placed around the Durham region have made our roads safer and provide an otherwise missing incentive for speeding drivers to slow down, especially in community safety zones....

“I was shocked to hear Premier Ford’s announcement today regarding municipal speed camera programs and the misleading ways in which he framed the functionality and efficacy of these programs.... They enable places like Oshawa to collect lawful fines, which are not otherwise possible to collect due to the varied demands placed on our policing services. It is ridiculous, in my opinion, that any elected official at any level of governance would oppose the enforcement of clearly understood laws, which are long-standing and necessary for public safety. The claims made by Premier Ford, namely that the program is unsalvageable and ineffective, are specious at best. To argue that drivers should not be fined for speeding because they aren’t going ‘fast enough’ would be laughable if it were not such a serious breach of his responsibility to maintain public safety.” Thank you, Anna.

And James wrote to me from Scarborough. James has said, “I work in the transit and transportation industry. I’m a motorist who drives very large vehicles, normal cars, motorcycles and I also enjoy my bicycle. I live near several schools that are close to busy roads that seem to be used as raceways at times. Daily, I see drivers speeding, using electronics, passing where it’s not permitted, running red lights and stop signs, all without any repercussions.

“I feel that these cameras play a role as one of the tools that can be used to deter excessive speeding. While having a police officer constantly monitoring the roads would be ideal, it’s something that just doesn’t seem feasible in the current environment. Other alternatives to limit speed, such as speed bumps and other traffic calming measures, cost more to implement, create slowdowns for emergency

vehicles, cause problems for snow removal and simply don't work for multilane situations. The suggestions that large signs or lights will have the same effect as the cameras is laughable." James has so much good stuff to say.

Speaker, we all received an open letter from John Creelman, who is the mayor of Mono. He has been a very vocal safety advocate for years. I've appreciated his thoughtful comments on a number of issues relating to transportation. But his open letter is based on—he said, "The following thoughts are informed by 34 years in public life, 15 years of which was as a justice of the peace, serving six years of those ... as a regional senior justice of the peace."

He lays out pages and pages of very thoughtful input, but I am going to just pick a couple: "Do not scrap a technology that works. It slows traffic down. Studies worldwide are conclusive about this. Over 20% of roadway fatalities can be attributed to speeding. The faster vehicles travel the more likely there will be serious injuries or death...."

"Think about the implications of cancelling contracts between ASE providers and municipalities entered into in good faith."

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Speaker, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario is opposed. Those are folks that the Premier normally has good conversations with, that the ministers generally have good relationships with. But they have said, "AMO is disappointed the Premier is taking steps to ban municipal ASE. There is strong evidence showing that ASE cameras work. People slow down, making our roads safer and protecting all of us—especially kids.... ASE also frees up police to focus on high-priority crime, which is what Ontarians want. Speeders—not taxpayers—pay the cost. If there's an issue of fairness or how the cameras are used, municipalities with AMO can work together with the province to address it.... We are also concerned about continued provincial overreach. This should be a local decision. Municipalities are an accountable, elected order of government." Hear, hear.

In the joint school board and trustee association statement on automated speed enforcement cameras in school safety zones, they have said, "As leaders representing Ontario's four publicly funded school board associations, we are united in our concern about the province's proposal to eliminate automated speed enforcement cameras (ASE) in school safety zones...."

"We share the concerns raised by municipal councils, community leaders, public health experts, and law enforcement organizations about the potential loss of this important safety tool...."

"Slowing drivers down around schools reduces the risk of tragedy and keeps students and their families safer."

"We call on the provincial government to improve and refine ASE, not eliminate it.... Our children deserve the strongest protections we can provide."

Parents across the province are rallying, calling this a horrible piece of legislation. This is some strange vendetta that the Premier has against speed cameras. I don't know whether it is because so many ministers got tickets. I don't

know whether it's because a friend doesn't like them. It is a wrong-headed move that makes our roads more unsafe.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Questions?

Mr. Stephen Blais: I appreciate the debate from my friends over here. I sat on Ottawa city council right as this government was creating the rules for automated speed enforcement, and I chaired the committee that passed our Vision Zero plan and had automated speed enforcement in community safety zones and in school zones as an important part of that plan, so this an issue that I care a lot about.

As the member quite rightly pointed out, it was this government that defined where automated speed enforcement could go, and it can go in community safety zones. What they didn't do is tell municipalities what a community safety zone should be. They gave municipalities carte blanche to designate any road they want as a community safety zone, and that is what has created many of the problems that we're facing today.

So my question to my friend is, given that the rules around these devices were created by this government and now they're going to undo the work that they did—in Orléans, en français, we call that "le flip, le flop." I'm wondering if there is a word that comes to mind for you when this kind of back and forth happens.

Ms. Jennifer French: If en français, c'est « le flip, le flop », en anglais, c'est « flip-flop ».

I appreciate you taking us back in time. I remember, because I was serving here, in 2019 hearing from community members concerned about how this would happen. I have been very impressed with the regional municipality of Durham that has laid it out over time, that has pulled the data in, without issuing tickets, to figure out how best to curb the bad behaviour, the speeding, and how to make our roads safer.

One of the things from their website they say is, "All ASE devices are signed ahead of the device to promote transparency. The goal of this program is to slow drivers down through our most vulnerable areas, namely school zones and community safety zones, and improve safety."

All of our municipalities are hearing from community members to fine-tune this. There is room for improvement. We should not be abolishing something that works.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Mr. Joseph Racinsky: I was listening very carefully to the speech from the member from Nickel Belt regarding health care. Now, the old system of Ontario's health care professionals was failing. Qualified workers were stuck in limbo, waiting months to get certified, while hospitals and clinics faced staffing shortages. In this bill, we're fixing that.

Our government is cutting red tape, delivering results with bold reforms that put patients first. It seems that the opposition would rather cling to outdated rules that slow down care and leave communities underserved. Does the member's community not need optometrists, denturists, dentists, occupational therapists? Why doesn't the oppos-

ition support this bill to bring those professionals to Ontario?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have nothing but respect for all regulated health professionals, and I understand what the government is trying to do. It's something that has been desired for people in Canada for a long time, so that if you are recognized as a regulated health professional in one province, you would have the right to practise in another province. The spirit of it is something good, something that health professionals have wanted for a long time, but the details—none of this is in the bill. All that the bill says is, "We will look into it." It allows you to make regulations to make that happen.

So there are ways that I would 100% support, but there are ways where—hmm, maybe not so much. I'm a physiotherapist. I can speak about physiotherapy in other provinces. Some of them do not learn how to use ultrasound. So it's the regulation that makes me worried, and none of the regulations are available.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

MPP Robin Lennox: My question is for my colleague from Nickel Belt. In this bill, there are changes to the regulations so that midwives can come from other provinces, but what we're hearing from the midwifery community is that we are actively losing Ontario-trained midwives to provinces like BC because we're not compensating them adequately and we're not providing job opportunities. What would a meaningful change be that would actually increase the health care workforce in Ontario, which this bill will not accomplish?

M^{me} France Gélinas: The member from Hamilton Centre is absolutely right. We have trained midwives, even in northern Ontario, that cannot find jobs. Why? Because the midwifery clinics that exist have not seen a base budget increase since this government took power. They don't have competitive salaries, and they're not able to add midwives to their practices.

What would help? Fund the midwifery practices that exist. Give them cost-of-living increases so that their salaries stay competitive. The recruitment and retention of health professionals is just as important as making sure that it doesn't matter if you're a midwife in Quebec—they don't have midwives—if you're a midwife in Manitoba, you can come to Ontario. But if there are no jobs for you and the jobs don't pay, we're no further ahead than where we are now.

But let me say, people love midwives, and they provide top-quality care. Thank you for what you do.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Questions?

Ms. Laura Smith: I listened intently to the members across in their statements. I know the member from Nickel Belt might be very interested in this, but we are in a global race right now to secure critical minerals and attract investments. The Minister of Energy and Mines has told all of us that it's going to be 15 years before we can get a mine ready, and one of the works in this bill cuts the review times by 50%. This is a direct response to inter-

national competition and a chance to lead not just the country but the world in clean energy development.

Does the member support this streamlined approach to building mines faster, or will they continue to defend the fragmented system that costs Ontario billions in lost investments and jobs?

M^{me} France Gélinas: There are more mines in my riding than in most other ridings. There are more abandoned mines in Nickel Belt than anywhere else in Ontario. Do we know mining? Yes, absolutely. We know how to mine in a way that is respectful of First Nations, respectful of the environment, respectful of workers.

But do you know what? There's a new mine that opened across the street from Gogama. It took 15—no, it took 12 years before they could pour their first gold. There are homes across the street in Gogama that the government owns—homes that are worth at the most \$200,000. For the last 15 years, the government has not been able to put those homes that they own up for sale.

You're asking the mining industry to do things shorter, how about you start to do your own work faster? How about you put the houses up for sale in Gogama and in Foleyet and all over so that workers have a place to stay? They want to buy those houses. Our taxes paid to maintain those houses for the last 15 years, and you have not put them up for sale.

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If you want mining, you need workers. If you have workers, you need a place to live. There are houses that the government owns that need to go up for sale now.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Questions?

Mr. Andrew Dowie: A question for the opposition—actually, I was listening intently to the member from Toronto—Danforth earlier speaking about some concerns about the changes to the Clean Water Act. I know, coming off of 18 years working for a municipal public works department, there are a lot of routine decisions that really are troublesome. We can be efficient. We can make decisions and reduce the risk by taking action more quickly if empowered to make those decisions. The changes proposed in Bill 56 actually allow us as public works staff to make those decisions and get to a cleaner environment far quicker. They reduce delays, support new housing development and infrastructure expansion and really maintain strong oversight because practitioners are licensed with a complaints process.

So I wanted to just check to see if the reforms really are something felt to be problematic given that we do have a lot of checks and balances in the system by licensed professionals working in the system.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate the question from the member. It's a serious question, not a frivolous one.

I have to say, Speaker, that I don't have a lot of confidence in this government when it comes to protecting water quality. I know the argument that you're making, but I would actually want to see a much better case put out by the government before I would accept that they are presenting this in good faith. As you're well aware, we've already had two bills from this government undermining

water quality protection. I don't see in this bill or in this government's current attitude or approach one that gives me confidence that the changes they make will actually make sure that water quality is protected.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

TABLING OF SESSIONAL PAPERS

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I beg to inform the House that the following documents were tabled:

—the 2025 post-event report for the 44th Ontario provincial general election from the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer of Ontario; and

—the Election Returns with Statistics from the Records (2023 and 2024 By-Elections and 2025 General Election) from the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer of Ontario.

WEARING OF PINS

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member for Essex on a point of order.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: Madam Speaker, if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to allow members to wear yellow daffodil pins in recognition of those who have been affected by cancer.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The member for Essex is seeking unanimous consent to wear yellow daffodil pins. Agreed? Agreed.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

RUN FOR THEIR LIVES

Ms. Laura Smith: For almost two years now, every single week, in the rain, in the snow and even in minus 20 degrees, members of the Thornhill community gather for Run for Their Lives at the Promenade mall. This grass-roots movement with over 184 chapters across the world called for the release of the hostages held by Hamas after October 7 and for peace.

Like Forrest Gump, they believed if someone started, others would join in—and they did. Week after week, they were praying for strangers who had come to feel like family. It was such a powerful movement that came together to show support for those enduring such unimaginable hardship. They reaffirmed our commitment to justice and freedom.

In Thornhill, that spirit was led by Michelle and Mark Factor, who are here today, who never wavered in their convictions and carried on. They did it for humanity and to express hope, even when the world did not.

Michelle's passion was very infectious, bringing organizations like Canadian Women Against Antisemitism and StandWithUs Canada, all sharing in one wish: to see the hostages released and for peace.

Less than a couple of weeks ago, Michelle organized the last run, day 737, and the group was so elated. They had so much hope the impending release was happening.

Peace might be within reach. We could finally breathe a little easier, and we could also hope for a situation where we face less hate.

Thank you, Michelle and Mark.

RARE DISEASES

M^{me} France Gélinas: Today, I reintroduce my bill to implement a rare disease strategy for Ontario in collaboration with Dr. Robin Lennox, the MPP for Hamilton Centre.

Imagine living with chest pain for decades. You can't work to support your family. Your doctor can't determine the cause of your pain, but understands that you are sick, that you need care. But there's no one that can diagnose you, your illness or suggest effective treatment. Your physical and mental health suffers. You have no answers, just pain, disappointment and frustration. This is the reality of way too many people living with rare disease, but it doesn't have to be like that.

Eight years ago, the Rare Disease Working Group submitted their report, a group right here in Ontario. It contained 19 recommendations to the Ministry of Health. Those recommendations have been sitting on a shelf, and it's time that Ontario acted. Patients with rare diseases need solutions, and they need them now.

Rare diseases impact nearly one in 12 Canadians; 1.3 million Ontarians are dealing with a rare disease. From disease prevention, to diagnosis, to treatment, every step is difficult, leaving way too many people facing debilitating impacts on their own.

If passed, this bill will help improve early diagnosis, screening and treatment, including access to existing as well as new and emerging medication for people living with rare disease. Let's get this done.

SMALL BUSINESS WEEK

MPP Andrea Hazell: Madam Speaker, this week is Small Business Week in Ontario, a moment to recognize the small businesses who kept our economy moving. However, instead of a celebration, we face another devastating setback for countless small businesses across the province.

As someone who has had the privilege of visiting small businesses from my riding of Scarborough–Guildwood to Mississauga, Brampton, Hamilton and up north, I've heard first-hand their heart-wrenching stories of struggles. Many of these small businesses are still burdened by debts from the pandemic, desperately trying to catch a break. Now they are grappling with the fallout from the US tariff war, leaving them feeling frustrated, hurt and ignored by this government.

In Ontario, over 407,000 small businesses employ one to 99 employees, more than half of all small businesses in Canada. Last year alone, they created 126,700 new jobs, the largest increase in the country. Yet, despite these achievements, this government has failed to provide meaningful support.

Cutting taxes for small businesses is the top priority for the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. They have supported that. Last year, my colleague MPP Bowman introduced the Cutting Taxes on Small Businesses Act to provide critical relief of up to \$18,000 to those struggling to recover from COVID, but this government voted it down.

RIDING OF SCARBOROUGH CENTRE

Mr. David Smith: Over the past several months, I've had the privilege of connecting with residents and organizations across Scarborough Centre: attending several school graduation ceremonies, celebrating accomplishments of our young people working towards a bright future. I also participated by taking part in school week engagement, visiting schools, students, educators and future school leaders.

As the community celebrates Diwali, I had the privilege of visiting several temples and community organizations, extending greetings and sharing in the spirit of light, unity and hope. I also distributed Diwali cards across Scarborough Centre to mark this joyous occasion.

This year, Ontario will celebrate the first ever Skilled Trades Week. I was honoured to introduce the bill that established this important week recognizing 144 skilled trades that keep our province moving.

October is also Small Business Month. I have been visiting local entrepreneurs and family-owned stores across Scarborough, hearing first-hand about their challenges and successes.

Finally, the Scarborough subway extension continues to progress, bringing vital transit options to our growing community.

1020

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

MPP Wayne Gates: Time and time again, we have seen this government give handouts and favours to their friends, their donors, failed candidates, and well-connected insiders. We've seen it from the greenbelt to Ontario Place. And now the labour minister is using the Skills Development Fund as a slush fund.

In Niagara, for seven years now, this government has interfered in local democracy. It started in 2018, when the Premier cancelled Niagara's first-ever direct election of a regional chair. They have appointed failed candidates, including my former opponent in the last election, to boards and agencies they do not have the qualifications for.

And now, after the tragic passing of Mr. Jim Bradley, we're once again waiting to see if the Premier will pick and choose the next regional chair.

To quote the editor-in-chief of the St. Catharines Standard, "It does feel like Ford wants municipalities to be provincially appointed boards or commissions whose members sit at the pleasure of the rulers at Queen's Park."

Meanwhile, housing targets remain unmet. Local infrastructure is struggling. Front-line services suffer.

Speaker, it's time to end this meddling. Niagara doesn't belong to Premier Doug Ford. It's time to stop the giveaways and handouts to failed candidates, donors and friends. It's time to respect local democracy and decision-making in Niagara and across the province of Ontario once and for all.

GRAHAM ROWAT

Mr. Dave Smith: I'd like to start off by quoting Vladimir Guerrero Jr.: "Daaa Yankees lose!"

I realize that the Blue Jays have just defeated the Seattle Mariners and are headed to the World Series, so you're probably wondering why I am starting off with the Yankees.

Well, my riding of Peterborough-Kawartha was well represented at the ALDS between the Toronto Blue Jays and the New York Yankees. For game 3 in New York, the national anthem was sung by Peterborough's own Graham Rowat.

Graham grew up in Peterborough and attended Confederation public school, Queen Mary Public School, and he graduated high school from PCVS.

Graham now lives in New Jersey with his wife and works on Broadway as a performer.

In speaking with him afterwards, he let me know that the confidence he gained from singing at school and being involved in the arts program at PCVS is really what led him to Broadway.

If you've been to Broadway, you may have seen him in *White Christmas* or *1776*. But locally, here in Toronto, you may also have seen him at the Princess of Wales Theatre as part of *Beauty and the Beast*.

Although the Jays didn't win game 3, Graham did Peterborough and all of Canada proud on national TV in both Canada and the United States.

Congratulations, Graham, and go, Jays, go!

BAND GALLERY

MPP Alexa Gilmour: Speaker, my riding of Parkdale-High Park is home to many vibrant cultural institutions, but few shine as brightly as BAND Gallery, directed by Claudia Pensa Bowen and Joséphine Denis of the Black Artists' Networks in Dialogue.

BAND is more than a gallery. As one of Canada's only Black-owned, Black-focused professional art spaces, it has nurtured the next generation of creators, offering mentorship, exhibitions and cross-cultural exchanges that help emerging artists thrive, even as we see the funding to arts be cut back.

Now BAND is reimagining its Victorian-era home at 19 Brock Avenue into a visionary hub for Black cultural expression. The redevelopment includes a fully accessible gallery, studio space, shop, and a pollinator garden, where neighbours can come to connect and create. And up on the third floor, you'll find a library that preserves the stories,

the scholarship, the artistic brilliance of the African diaspora.

Through global partnerships and cultural exchanges, BAND is connecting local talent to the world, sharing Canadian Black artistry, bringing new voices home.

In times of scarcity, art is often treated as expendable. BAND reminds us that creativity is essential for our collective future. Their vision ensures that art, history and community will thrive and be accessible to all, right here in Parkdale–High Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I know we are just coming back from a break, but I will remind members—and I'm going to start it right now—that members' statements are 90 seconds. If you go beyond, I will stand and your microphone will go dead, so you will be cut off. So back to 90 seconds.

I recognize the member from Mississauga–Erin Mills.

POLICE

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Three weeks ago, I joined the Peel Regional Police for a ride-along where I saw first-hand the crucial work of Peel police officers, 911 operators and staff. In CSOC, they showed me an important tool: the vulnerable persons registry, VPR. This is a voluntary registry that allows people to register loved ones who may have Alzheimer's, autism or other mental conditions. Police then have the contact details and specific information about how to deal with those individuals, how to assist and how to locate those individuals should they go missing. I suggested that program three years ago, and I am thrilled to see it in action, with more than 1,400 people currently registered.

Speaker, I am also happy to see Toronto police launching a new three-digit, non-emergency phone number. Residents of Toronto can call *877 from a mobile phone and access the non-emergency line of Toronto police. I have long been advocating for this, and if this pilot project goes well, it will save millions of crucial minutes for 911 operators. I hope to see this roll out in other jurisdictions across Ontario.

Speaker, I know that any form of violent crime is too much. That's why we must continue to support men and women in uniform.

I would like to thank the amazing officers at—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member for Algoma–Manitoulin.

SNOWMOBILING

MPP Bill Rosenberg: Madam Speaker, in my riding of Algoma–Manitoulin and across all of northern Ontario, our winters shape how we live, work and enjoy our communities. Snowmobiling is more than just a pastime here; it's a vital part of our northern lifestyle. It brings families together, supports mental and physical well-being and draws visitors from across Ontario and beyond.

Unfortunately, our local clubs, some with histories spanning 40 to 50 years, are being forced to close essential

trail networks. These trails are not just recreation; they are key arteries that connect our communities and fuel regional tourism and excursions. Volunteers have been the backbone of these clubs, dedicating themselves to maintain and groom these trails every year.

The impact is already alarming: Over 500 kilometres of trails have been identified to shut down in Algoma, over 700 kilometres of trails in the Thunder Bay district as well. Not to be forgotten is the economic impact on motels, restaurants, dealerships and local businesses. They rely on this seasonal income to make it through the winter months

While southern Ontario struggles with inadequate snowfalls over the years, the north has been a constant source of open trails, attracting riders from all over Ontario, relying on our trail infrastructure. Let's make sure we provide the support our northern clubs need to stay viable and provide the next generations the opportunity to enjoy the north. Please join me in keeping our northern trails open. Thank you.

CANCER SCREENING

Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady: It's fantastic to be back. It's great to see all of my colleagues from my new vantage point. It's like I'm in the blue-green fold here. I guess teal is a great colour.

But in all seriousness, many of us have just come from the Canadian Cancer Society's reception where we heard from Dr. Anthony Dixon, a husband, a father, a son, a brother and an emergency physician. Anthony is also a cancer survivor. He told us about the cost of cancer: dignity, time, sleep, certainty and money. There are dollars and cents to cancer, a subject my colleague from Niagara Falls and I have been raising the past few years in the Legislature. Anthony was lucky he had the means to pay for a PSA test, a simple blood test that can help detect prostate cancer early, when it is so much easier to treat.

Not everyone is as fortunate. Not so long ago, Anthony treated a man in his ER with severe back pain. After several tests, it was found this man was in the advanced stages in cancer. It was in his bones, spread from undiagnosed prostate cancer. When asked if he had ever had a PSA test, the patient said he couldn't afford one.

Prostate cancer is the third-leading cause of cancer death among Canadian men. It's time we prioritize the men in our lives, because we want them around as long as possible.

1030

Members of this Legislature heard this story this morning, and you all know MPP Gates and I have motions on the table calling on this government to do the right thing: Look at the evidence, given diagnostic tools and tests have changed significantly over the past 10 years. This is not a political issue; it's an issue of saving lives.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Sylvia Jones: First of all, I would like to welcome and introduce a family from my riding. Their daughter Elizabeth is actually the page captain today, and their previous daughter has also served as a page in the Legislative Assembly. So to the Demczur family, wherever you—there you are—thank you, and welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I'm here to welcome to Queen's Park the amazing homelessness advocates, activists and staff to support my Homelessness Ends with Housing Act: Ashley Schuitema from Waterloo Region Community Legal Services; Jennifer Breaton and Liz from YWCA; Eric Philip, Kyra and Ros from Thresholds; also my constit staff Allie and Courtney; of course, my rock, my dad, Brendan Clancy, who is here to watch me today for my PMB; and my son James Fobel, who is a page in our page program. Thanks for coming. Thanks for all you do.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Good morning. October is Islamic Heritage Month. I am so happy to welcome folks from ISNA Canada who are here with us today. We have CEO Fouzan Khan, Ramy Sadek, Michelle Malik, Ali Gilani, Sandleen Azam, Salwa Yaghi, Maisha Majeed, Mahdi Chowdhury and Dalia Mohamed.

ISNA is setting up an Islamic heritage exhibit in room 351 from 12 p.m. to 5 p.m. There is a reception starting at 6. I encourage all members from across the aisle to drop by.

MPP Mohamed Firin: Today I'm pleased to welcome a very special group of young people who are literally learning to build our province brick by brick through the Skills Development Fund at Next Level Masonry Training. I had the pleasure of visiting their training site in Uxbridge, where I saw first-hand the impact of this life-changing program.

These young people represent the future of Ontario's skilled trades. Please join me in welcoming them to Queen's Park. Joining us today are Justin Borg, Julian Shakes, Cihan Demets, Rojay Kid, Robert Pople, Kieran Maloney, Dennis Lauritsen, Andy Lauritsen, Rex Midas and Clinton Hosannah. Thank you.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I'd like to welcome to the House members of my family: my long-suffering spouse Ted Hoyle, my brother-in-law Ed Clayton and my darling little sister Mimi Shaw. Welcome to Queen's Park.

MPP Monica Ciriello: It is my pleasure to welcome my constituency staff from Hamilton Mountain. We have Isaac, Ornina, Prachi, Dusan and Vanessa with us here today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'd like to welcome all of the staff and volunteers from the Canadian Cancer Society, including Andrea Seale, the CEO, as well as volunteers Chantel Bourgeois, Taaha Ijaz, Julie Sheridan, Erica Carvalho and Dr. Anthony Dixon. Thank you for coming to Queen's Park.

Mr. Deepak Anand: I'll take an opportunity to welcome Dr. Akhil Chawla, a medical professional and an entrepre-

neur, along with proud father Anil Chawla. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. David Piccini: It's a pleasure to welcome Manohar, Rajna, Karandeep and Kanwaljit from Gurdwara Guru Nanak Mission Centre here to Queen's Park today.

I also want to extend a warm welcome to Tim, Margaret and Sinead from Youth Employment Services, who are here today and doing incredible work, all of you. Thank you.

Mr. Aris Babikian: I would like to recognize the presence of the organizers of the Latin American Heritage Month reception alongside their community members and members of the diplomatic corps.

There will be a reception today from 12 p.m. to 2 p.m. in rooms 228 and 230 to celebrate Latin American Heritage Month, and I warmly invite all members of this House to join us today. Thank you.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Along with the Canadian Cancer Society, I would also like to welcome the Registered Massage Therapists' Association of Ontario to Queen's Park. Thank you to CEO Michael Feraday for joining us today.

Ms. Lee Fairclough: I'd also like to add my welcome to members here today from the Canadian Cancer Society, particularly previous colleagues Annemarie Edwards and Stuart Edmonds. Thank you.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: I'd also like to extend my warmest welcome to the Canadian Cancer Society, including Hillary Buchan-Terrell, Jasmine Brown, Day Aguilera and the executives who've already been named.

And a very special welcome to the YMCA Academy, an alternative high school in downtown Toronto, as well as Sprucecourt Public School, which is a historic school in Cabbagetown and my alma mater, my first school in Canada. Thank you.

MEMBER'S BIRTHDAY

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): On a point of order, I'd like to recognize the member for London West.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thank you very much, Speaker. I would like to wish our dear colleague, the member for Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, a very happy birthday today.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Happy birthday.

QUESTION PERIOD

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Marit Stiles: My question is for the Premier. Yesterday, the Premier said that he was going to stand by his labour minister, despite the unbelievable mess we have with the SDF. More than half of the recipients of SDF money were donors to the PC Party. The labour minister's donors jumped to the top of the pile of applicants. Companies are clearly donating to the labour minister with the expectation of getting what looks like preferential

treatment from this same minister. And from the looks of it, the minister is obliging them.

To the Premier: Is this in fact acceptable conduct by a minister of your government?

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

Hon. David Piccini: As we've already established, folks are free to donate to whomever they want in Ontario. But I'm glad the member is talking about our Skills Development Fund. We have a number of guests here in the Legislature today who are doing incredible work. Just this morning, we launched and announced yet another round through the pathways program with the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers.

My question to the member opposite is, does she support the incredible work they're doing to embrace women in the trades and break down barriers? Former and current donors of hers were there today, lauding the work we're doing for women in the trades, and it's breaking down incredible barriers. I'll have more to say in the supplementary.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Well, that was interesting. Let's review what we know here, shall we? We know that \$742 million went to applicants that were at the bottom of the pile, while 670 high-scoring applicants were denied. Coincidentally, more than half of the successful applicants had lobbyists in tow, lobbyists that included Kory Teneycke, the Premier's own campaign manager. What about that?

Instead of a program that puts workers first, we are seeing the same the same pay-to-play scheme that we saw under the previous Liberal government before these guys.

To the Premier: Workers who really need this fund are asking, are you going to keep standing by your man?

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

Hon. David Piccini: The answer is yes. Just this morning, all of the partners that were there today from IBEW—Enercare, 240 women in HVAC. We had the Provincial Building and Construction Trades Council there, who have launched an incredible program to get women into the skilled trades. We had A Women's Work, Natasha Ferguson, who is there, who's an incredible role model, dubbed the "first lady of construction." She's breaking down barriers, in particular for racialized women, Speaker. All of them were there—unity of purpose, getting more women into the trades. And the result: a near doubling of the number of women registering for apprenticeships. Those are the results. We're going to keep working hard to get the job done.

1040

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: This is getting pretty old, right? And it's not just the SDF. It turns out that this Minister of Labour was knee-deep in the greenbelt scheme. In fact, the Trillium has obtained a transcript where banned lobbyist Mr. Mutton—some of you may know him as Mr. X—claims under oath that it was the same minister that

tipped him off that the greenbelt was going to be open for business.

Looking at the donations that this minister is getting since he became in charge of that fund, I think he's been sending out signals that he was open for business too.

So does the Premier still stand by his man, or is he going to fix the Skills Development Fund and fire this minister?

Hon. David Piccini: I am so disappointed—not one question about the actual people we are training.

This weekend, parliamentary assistant Sabawy and I joined Newcomer Women's Services. The Sister2Sister program: 1,000 women—newcomer women—supported in project management skills. But you actually have to have projects to manage, and, thanks to this Premier, we're getting those projects: new hospitals, new schools, mining in the north.

Highway 413 and the Bradford Bypass: We took this plan to the people. We elected every member in the area of Brampton because we're building the 413 and the Bradford Bypass. We're training the people who are going to do the work, and we're not going to stop, Speaker.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, that minister should stop hiding behind the women workers of this province and start taking some responsibility.

Yesterday, we heard about 1,200 jobs that are leaving Ingersoll. And once again, the Premier is late to the game. Just this morning, we heard about another 160 jobs that are at risk in Lindsay, jobs that are being shipped across the border to Utah. This government is a jobs disaster. The Premier's wait-and-see approach is not working. The Premier has a playbook that's full of stunts and full of fundraisers, but he has no plan. Does the Premier need to see a "closed" sign on every plant gate to start paying attention?

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

Hon. Victor Fedeli: President Trump's tariffs are putting a chill on business on both sides of the border. Since 2018, over one million new jobs have been created in Ontario. In fact, Speaker, that includes the 87,000 new jobs that were created in the three months before President Trump's tariffs hit, and includes the 8,800 jobs that were created just last month alone.

Why is that happening in Ontario? Because the Premier and our government have lowered the cost of doing business by \$12 billion every year. And that is why companies continue to come here into the province of Ontario and bring employment, bring good jobs to people in all of the cities throughout Ontario. We know that's the approach that works, not the NDP-Liberal approach of higher taxes, more red tape, which has been a continued failure in Ontario.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, they're giving out billions of dollars to companies with absolutely no terms, conditions or strings attached. And then they wonder why the jobs are leaving.

The Premier has done nothing to help these folks. We have the workers in Ingersoll, the workers in Lindsay—no sign that the Premier has stepped in at all before those jobs start leaving the province. The last time GM said that they were shipping away jobs in Ontario, the Premier said the ship had left the dock. Well, we all saw that he was wrong then and he is wrong now. We saved those jobs. Workers in the province of Ontario saved those jobs.

My question to the Premier is, when are you going to be as laser focused on protecting the jobs before they leave this country, as you are on your stunts, on your fundraisers and on your pay-to-play schemes?

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

Hon. Doug Ford: Madam Speaker, I'm speechless right now. Listening to these people that have never, ever run a lemonade stand in their life—they'd bankrupt the lemonade stand, as a matter of fact. They've never made a P&L statement. They've never put a sales and marketing plan together. They've never seen a budget, and down here, they've never seen a budget where they don't want to increase taxes.

Under the NDP and the Liberals, they increased taxes over 46 different times, just constantly digging into companies' pockets. Guess what happened, Madam Speaker: 600,000 jobs left the province. There's over a million more people working today than there was in 2018. We're seeing \$46 billion in investment in the EV sector, \$6 billion in the health sector and another tens of billions in the tech sector.

We have a strong plan. We're going to continue moving forward, creating more opportunities for companies to invest. As I said last time, over 409 companies invested—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Question?

Ms. Marit Stiles: I mean, you've got to be kidding me, Speaker. You've got to be kidding me: 1,200 jobs in Ingersoll, right? Another, what, 160 jobs lost now in Lindsay? Those are families—

Interjection.

Ms. Marit Stiles: You can throw the insults at me, sir, but those are families who don't have a future right now that they can count on because of this Premier's inaction.

We are tired of watching jobs leave this province in droves. There were signs earlier this year this was coming. The Premier should have taken action then. He said he was going to create demand. He said he had a plan, but he did nothing about it. He has failed again.

I want to know from this Premier: Why do jobs have to leave the province for the Premier to start taking action? How many people have to lose their jobs for this Premier to actually do something about it?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Minister of Economic Development.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: It's a good opportunity here to talk about some facts. The fact is, according to StatsCan, On-

tario added 8,800 jobs in September. In fact, 11,800 manufacturing jobs were created in Ontario in September, and on top of that, over 20,000 new manufacturing jobs in the last three months alone. That's directly from StatsCan.

We know that President Trump's tariffs are causing unprecedented uncertainty across the economy, and that's why we put \$30 billion of firepower together to be able to combat those tariffs. Over one million new jobs have been created since the beginning of 2018, and all of that is because of the economic climate that we have created in Ontario. You heard the Premier a minute ago: 409 new foreign companies have landed in Ontario, brought \$40 billion and hired 24,000—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the leader of the third party.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. John Fraser: My question is for the Premier. Has anybody seen the movie Groundhog Day? Kind of what it feels like, eh?

If you stayed up late last night and did your homework, you would have found out that the minister postponed his \$1,000-a-plate fundraiser, so I guess round 6 of the Skills Development Fund is not open yet. What I want to know, though, is, why did that happen? Is it the fact that the minister failed to disclose a conflict of interest that involved his close personal friend? Or was it Leafs tickets? You shouldn't be up against the glass; you should be in the penalty box. This minister should be fired.

So why is the Premier protecting this minister, instead of protecting the workers in Ingersoll, Brampton and Ear Falls?

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

Hon. David Piccini: As with their party's leader's dinner, we're focused on ours, and you're welcome to purchase a ticket.

Speaker, we're focused on protecting workers. That's why, this morning, we were on site protecting workers who will be in the next generation of power plants in this province, power plants that were shuttered under that government: men and women out of work in Pickering, out of work in Oshawa, out of work in communities like mine.

I met a young woman from Cobourg who, thanks to the pathways program, will be working on the new nuclear plant that this minister is investing in. The SMRs that we're selling to the world—Speaker, we're putting those women front and centre in the trades because that's where they belong, and we're working so closely to make it happen.

These folks would rather us be energy-dependent on foreign dictators. We're going to make that clean energy right here in Canada—

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

1050

Mr. John Fraser: If the Premier was really protecting workers in Ingersoll, he wouldn't have said yesterday, "I'm going to read the contract." It's not like we couldn't figure it out. My dog Kealey could figure out what could happen. He should have read the contract. So I can't take him seriously.

But let's get back to the minister. Was it \$27 million that went to bars and nightclubs in downtown Toronto? Was it those with close ties to the PC party who got that? Is it the money that well-connected lobbyists made off the Skills Development Fund, names like Massoudi or Fidani-Diker?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: You literally said you don't care about workers—

Mr. John Fraser: I do care about workers.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Order.

Mr. John Fraser: Those names—is that why you're embarrassed?

So the question really is—well, it's not a question: This minister should be fired. I don't know how many times I have to say this.

What I want to know is, why is this Premier so committed to protecting his Minister of Labour, who is clearly out of order and not committed to protecting the workers of industry—

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

Hon. Doug Ford: If you were so interested in protecting the auto workers, why did you vote against it? Why did you vote against the deal for GM? Why did you vote against the deal for Stellantis? Why did you vote against the deal for Ford? Because you don't give two hoots about the workers.

Where were you with Unifor? You know something, Madam Speaker: I challenge each and every one of you to talk to the leadership at Unifor. Who has been standing beside them? I have been standing beside them. You were nowhere to be found. I was up in Brampton, standing with the workers; you were out fishing all weekend. That's what you do—absolute hypocrisy.

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

Mr. John Fraser: While the Premier was busy at city hall in 2009, or whenever it was, the Ontario Liberals and this party over here voted to bail out the auto industry, and we took a stake in it too. And guess what? On the other side—there are some members that are here—they voted against it. You remember. They remember. You voted against it.

We're not taking lessons from you, sir. We're not going to take any lessons from you.

You should have read the contract. You didn't read it. It's a bunch of—

Interjections.

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

Mr. John Fraser: Other than tough talk and theatrics, what has this Premier done to protect the workers of Ingersoll, Brampton and Ear—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the Premier of Ontario.

Hon. Doug Ford: It's ironic he is saying that when 600,000 workers are leaving the province. They were under attack. They had scandal after scandal after scandal. While he was busy selling \$25,000 plates for your previous Premier, you know the great idea they came up with? "Let's get rid of manufacturing"—their words, not mine. "Let's focus on the service sector"—their words, not mine. We have both. We have the service sector and the manufacturing. We are an economic powerhouse in North America, and we are going to continue.

Long-term care: When he was the PA to long-term care, in 10 years, they built 600 beds. We're building 56,000 homes. You destroyed long-term care. You destroyed every file you touched when you were in government and bankrupted the province.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. John Fraser: My question is back to the Premier. Yesterday, in heckling—we all heckle here; I don't take it personally—the Premier said that I "can't get a real job." I just want the Premier to know that I've been working since I was 15, in grocery stores. I worked full-time since I was 19. I've had a lot of real jobs. I don't take any offence to that; I know that that happens.

But the Premier shouldn't be concerned about me having a real job. I have one. What the Premier should be concerned about are the real jobs that the 700,000 people in Ontario looking for work need—not me; them. That's the problem.

It's clear that this minister should be fired, because when those people out of work see him shovelling money over to donors and insiders and friends, they have a right to be angry because they want a real job, not a Premier that's only going to protect his minister.

When is he going to fire this Minister of Labour?

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

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Madam Speaker, let's take a look at the numbers: What's the economy today under this leader and under this government? It's a \$1.2-trillion economy. And what did we inherit? An economy of \$850 billion going south—and I mean the tail lights of jobs going south of the border to the US. Madam Speaker, we've reversed that trend, creating the conditions for economic growth—close to a million jobs created since we came into power. That's what the economic engine of Ontario, the economic engine of Canada, looks like—something they never saw in 15 years.

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

Mr. John Fraser: Brampton, Ingersoll, Ear Falls.

Premier, I've had real jobs. When my family was younger, I can remember times in between work when I was looking for a job. And I remember a time in the 1970s when my dad was out of work for a year and a half, and I know what that did to our family. I know how our family

felt. I know how my dad felt. I knew what that was like. There are 700,000 people out there who are feeling how my dad felt—looking for work; not being able to know whether he was going to be able to do things he wanted to do for his family.

So I don't know why you don't get this. I don't know why you can't see it. When you have this kind of mismanagement and insider trading and money being shovelled over to people while people are out there trying to just put food on the table, how can you protect somebody who's doing that while they're just out there trying to do it for their family?

I'll ask one more time: Why is this Premier spending more time protecting his Minister of Labour than he is protecting the 700,000 people who are looking for work in this province?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The Premier of Ontario.

Hon. Doug Ford: You know, Madam Speaker, numbers matter. Numbers don't matter to them. Let me tell you the story: In 2018, we walked into a bankrupt company. That's what I tell everyone out there. It was totally bankrupt. The budget was \$150 billion. We raised that budget up to about \$230 billion now. We've seen \$70 billion of investment from manufacturing to auto to the tech sector, as I mentioned earlier. They would've never, ever come.

You jacked up hydro rates the highest in North America. You jacked up taxes the highest in the entire country. You ran up the debt.

What we did: We did the total opposite. We've never raised a tax—never—since we've been in office over seven years. But we've created a million jobs—\$70 billion of investment. My minister right beside me here has 200 companies wanting to invest in Ontario. You vote against it. You vote against the auto deals. You vote against making sure we get mines going. You vote against—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I want to caution the member when he asks his—I want to caution the member around our language.

I recognize the leader of the third party.

Mr. John Fraser: Look, you guys voted against the auto industry in 2009. I don't forget. They don't forget.

Let's ask ourselves this question—just a person out there looking for work. What's the Premier doing to get me a job? Since 2018, is my kid's school any better? No. Do I have better access to health care?

Interjections: No.

Mr. John Fraser: Can I find a family doctor?

Interjections: No.

Mr. John Fraser: Is my kid getting the help they need in school?

Interjections: No.

Mr. John Fraser: Is life any more affordable?

Interjections: No.

Mr. John Fraser: So my question to the Premier is, just what the heck has he been doing since 2018?

Hon. Doug Ford: Madam Speaker, 95% of the people are employed by small businesses. My great minister is working her back off on small businesses. We lowered the

small business tax to 3.2%, the lowest in recent memory—I can't even think. We made sure that we have in-demand jobs. And the in-demand jobs now are what my minister is doing by creating the environment for companies around the world. They come and invest in the Ring of Fire that you can't stand. Both parties do not want to invest in the Ring of Fire. They'd rather see nothing happen.

When it comes to nuclear—I'll never forget. In 2018, I was campaigning—they were closing down Pickering. The thousands of people with good-paying jobs wouldn't have a job right now. They want nothing to do with nuclear. That's the way of the future. Everyone's looking at nuclear. We're going to create tens of thousands of jobs, not just with SMRs. We're building large-scale nuclear—again, tens of thousands of good-paying jobs. You don't want it—

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

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Speaker, yesterday, the London community was rocked by the news that multi-award-winning CAMI in Ingersoll was no longer going to build the BrightDrop system, at a plant that the governments of Ontario and Canada invested billions into.

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Surely, any good business person wouldn't hand over billions without a contract, without strings attached.

Now the Premier is posturing that he'll sue GM for breach of contract.

So my question is simple: Will the Premier show CAMI workers, their families and this House the contract?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The Premier of Ontario.

Hon. Doug Ford: Well, there are more people working in London than there were back in 2018.

I remember going to London for Maple Leaf Foods, and they did a massive expansion. Andriani, the food company from Italy, came there, opening a new plant—new opportunities. At Labatt, they're looking for expansion opportunities, too, to produce cans right here in Ontario, not anywhere else. And the list keeps going on and on and on.

My friend, I recommend that you call the mayor and ask him about what's going on and the opportunities. The new jobs are rolling into London—job after job after job.

You're out of touch because, again, you have never ever run anything in your entire life. You don't even know what a P&L statement looks like. That's the difference between competent leaders here versus totally incompetent people on the other side of the aisle.

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

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Speaker, how did anything that the Premier just say provide any comfort to all of the CAMI workers, all of their families, and all of the small businesses affected by his inaction?

The federal government, through Canada Post, is spending a billion dollars to electrify their fleet. But where are they buying from? The United States.

Make no mistake: CAMI would still be running three shifts strong if the provincial and federal governments actually supported our local workers by buying Ontario-made vehicles.

Real leaders put their money where their mouth is.

My question to the Premier: How many vehicles has the Ontario government purchased from CAMI in Ingersoll?

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

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Let's look back to 2018, when every single auto company here in Ontario was at risk. Under the previous government, supported by the NDP, companies were fleeing Ontario, including our auto companies.

What Premier Ford and our government have done is lowered the cost of business and turned that around. We have literally saved those hundred thousand jobs from leaving, and not only that, but we've added to that by 20,000, 30,000, 40,000 and 50,000 now—new jobs in the auto sector.

Speaker, this government has completely supported the auto sector.

This opposition has voted against every single thing we have done to add jobs in the auto sector—every single job.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Speaker, my colleague from Ottawa South says we are back in school, and I would say with this government it's nursery school. So today, we'll start off with a rhyme:

Eeny, meany, miney, mo
Catch a donor by his toe.
If he hollers, let him go
To the Minister of Labour
For some dough!

This, my friends, should be the new advertisement for the Skills Development Fund, because, obviously, the usual application process is no longer working. The metrics used to be to:

—demonstrate that funding will bolster in-demand target sectors;

—develop a resilient workforce; and

—prove reasonable costs and a clear delivery plan.

And yet, now this government has thrown that all out the window and switched it up with a pay-to-play system that is inappropriate and unfair.

My question to the Premier: Why not come clean with Ontarians and tell them that he has turned the Skills Development Fund into a game?

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

Hon. David Piccini: Speaker, maybe a little less time on rhymes and more time talking to sheet metal workers in Ottawa abandoned by them.

I was just up there—Brent James. They were waiting forever for a Premier to step forward to make investments in new hospitals. That's what this Premier did. You know what that means for Brent James and his members, supported by our Skills Development Fund? Those workers are going to work. They're collecting a paycheque. They're building a new hospital in Ottawa. They're making those critical investments in infrastructure that we're making. They know what they get with them: rhymes, taxes. Eenie, meenie, minie, moe / Tax everyone till they go.

That's what these guys did every day.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member for Beaches–East York.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Speaker, our second rhyme for the morning—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Order.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Nursery schoolers, come on:

Applicant, applicant number nine
Going down the Ontario line
If the gravy train falls off the tracks
Do you want your donation back?

The Ontario government website states, “The Skills Development Fund ... offers funding to organizations for innovative projects that address challenges to hiring, training, or retaining workers ... to drive Ontario's economic growth”—a perfect program to help with our unemployment crisis.

Speaker, organizations all across Ontario rely on this vital resource. The saddening reality is that the Skills Development Fund is an incredibly powerful program with the ability to improve and transform lives, and the Premier and Minister of Labour have completely denigrated it.

My question—

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

Hon. David Piccini: They've fallen so off track with unions it's no wonder they're here supporting this Premier, this Premier with a plan to build hospitals, this Premier with a plan to build new nuclear, with a plan to put thousands of men and women to work to secure our energy future, this Premier with a plan to build public transit. You want to talk about applicant number nine? It all happened under Stephen Blais's time.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I will remind members we do not refer to other members by their first name.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's an interesting morning here.

My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade. Speaker, this world is becoming less stable. Many of our allies are preparing to increase their defence spending. Our NATO partners have pledged to invest up to 3% of their GDP, with Canada

nearing 2% of that target this year. This is a major opportunity for Ontario. From critical minerals to advanced manufacturing and aerospace, our province can supply our allies with the materials and the technology they need.

Ontario's defence sector is already one of the strongest in North America. We already have the workers, the companies and the innovation to meet this global demand. Can the minister share how Ontario's defence and advanced manufacturing sectors are creating good jobs and providing the leadership needed to protect Ontario and the world?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, as a response to President Trump's tariffs, the EU has now announced \$1.3 trillion in defence spending; Germany, \$600 billion in defence spending. So as the world ramps up their defence spending, Ontario is deepening our trade ties with our allies and speeding up to meet their needs.

We are a proven, reliable partner to our NATO allies. We're home here in Ontario to 300 defence companies. We're specialists in combat vehicle production, radar, information collection systems, aircraft fabrication and compound manufacturing. Some 13,000 workers are committed to seeing that that number grows.

Our goal is clear. We want every single piece of defence equipment, every part that we can possibly make here in Ontario, to be made here in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the member for Sarnia–Lambton.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I want to thank the minister for that encouraging update. Ontario has the people, the skills and the manufacturing strength that the global defence companies require. Ontario is home to world-leading producers of aerospace systems, advanced manufacturing and satellite technology. With global tensions rising and countries increasing their defence spending, Ontario's role as a trusted partner will only grow stronger. Our companies and workers are ready to step up and help build what our allies need to stay safe.

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Speaker, can the minister share what he's been hearing directly from Ontario's defence companies and workers about Ontario's growing leadership in this critical sector?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Yesterday, we attended the Best Defence Conference, Canada's premier aerospace and defence conference, in the city of London. Now, we hosted a round table with more than 15 leading companies in the defence sector who are already located here in Ontario. That includes London companies like General Dynamics, others like Babcock and NordSpace and many, many more.

We all agreed on one thing: This is our time. This is a pivotal moment for the province of Ontario to fight for every single piece of defence contracting that's available. Whether it's from Canada or around the world, we want it. From aerospace systems to small arms, satellite technology, leading defence technology and equipment is being built right here in Ontario right now.

Speaker, we are ready to equip our allies all around the world with the best in defence technology, supplies and equipment. With rising geopolitical activity, we know that

Ontario is the stable partner for these companies around the world.

STEEL INDUSTRY

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: To the Premier: Ontario's infrastructure projects should strengthen local communities. Ontario's skilled trades are ready to work, and our steel industry is second to none. Will the Premier guarantee right here, right now, that public dollars will go towards local steel, local materials and local workers in the construction of the Garden City Skyway twinning project? Or will they admit they would rather sell out Ontario jobs to the lowest bidder once again?

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

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: This is the first opportunity I've had to address the House as Acting Minister of Infrastructure. I am filling in for Minister Surma, who just had a beautiful baby girl named Georgia. We congratulate her on that.

But let's talk about history—where we were and where we are. Under the Liberals, supported by the NDP, building necessary infrastructure was ground to a complete halt, damaging our economy and holding back Ontario's true potential.

We are picking up the shattered pieces of the previous government and we're building the Ontario of tomorrow by leveraging a range of innovative delivery models to ensure projects are completed efficiently while maximizing value for taxpayers and supporting Ontario's long-term growth for all.

In order to get shovels in the ground more quickly, we passed the Protect Ontario by Building Faster and Smarter Act in June of this year, the same month Donald Trump doubled steel and aluminum tariffs on our country to 50%. It should come as no surprise in this House that the Liberals and the NDP voted against it—surprise, surprise.

We're going to get it done. We have a mandate. We're going to get it done right.

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

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I want to congratulate mom and baby. I'm glad to hear everyone is healthy.

However, to the Premier: This government has not told us what the twinning project will cost the taxpayers. At the very least, what this will cost the taxpayer is so important. Will this government commit to prioritizing the use of Ontario steel, ensure that local workers in skilled trades are at the heart of this project and that communities benefit from billions being spent in their own backyard?

Once again, this government is selling out Ontario jobs to the lowest foreign bidder and still has the nerve to call it building Ontario.

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

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: I'm happy to take the opportunity to address this. The Garden City Skyway, a

project that the members opposite voted against, is moving forward under the leadership of Premier Ford.

The Ontario Line, the Scarborough subway extension, the Eglinton West extension—every single one of these projects matters, Speaker. Canadian workers are at the helm, and guess what? There are thousands and thousands of jobs, whether it's the Bradford Bypass, whether it's the Ontario Line, whether it's going to be the Garden City Skyway that is going to employ thousands of people in your riding, in your area. And guess what? You stood up and voted against those jobs for your community. Shame on the members opposite for doing that.

Whether it's any of transit projects, any of our subway projects, you have voted against Canadian and—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Question?

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Going back to the Auditor General's report, it says that nearly half a billion SDF dollars were doled out to low-rated applicants without any form of written documentation or rationale provided. It's as if the minister was simply waiving a wand: "You've been a good donor; approved. You've been a good donor; approved."

Well, you know what? The minister has spent a lot of time informing us on how terrific all of these organizations that received the funding are. My question is to the minister: If so many of the transformative organizations were lowly rated, how did they get the platinum treatment? And what exactly was your rating criteria? If there's nothing to hide, why not release it?

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

Hon. David Piccini: Speaker, when given the opportunity, all that these guys have shown us is that they're good to tax people, to tax manufacturing jobs, to tax people out of this province. This Premier has taken a different path. He's bringing in investments. We're making critical investments to infrastructure—cranes up everywhere, putting people to work.

And when it comes to putting people to work, there's a local organization in her riding, Windmill Microlending, doing incredible work. I wish she had taken me up on my invitation to join that SDF, to see the KPIs, to see the metrics that the Auditor General herself acknowledged are strong, but they're not interested in that. They're not interested in that. All they're interested to do is tax Ontarians.

Ontarians made their choice. They voted for a strong PC government that's going to build.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: I guess my invitation got lost in the mail. I know my colleague got an invitation; I didn't. I'm hurt.

Look, let's just bring it back to the matter at hand here. We're not debating about the organizations, whether they're worthy at all. No one is denying that many of these organizations do great work. The issue is you, Minister. That's the issue—

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

MPP Stephanie Smyth: —the inexcusable lack of transparency and accountability.

The Auditor General's report, again, lays out, in black and white: hundreds of millions of dollars distributed without proper oversight, with decisions that appear politically driven—a process that shows blatant disregard for transparency. It also defies belief that while 150 people are losing their jobs at a sawmill that shut down in Ear Falls, we're just learning, this government is handing out hundreds of millions of dollars to its closest friends.

So my question is to the labour minister: If this mess doesn't warrant your resignation, what does? Do the Premier a solid.

Hon. David Piccini: Speaker, all of that is public knowledge. All of the criteria is public. The issue is her: She lost labour. They lost labour unions. They lost the election. They abandoned the workers of this province. They abandoned them when they shuttered Pickering, when they said they were going to close nuclear plants, when they didn't build hospitals, when the pathetic tally of 600 long-term-care beds was the best they could muster.

This Premier is building. He's building hospitals, building new nuclear. They never took the opportunity to dream—to dream big for Ontario workers, to make those investments, to build a better tomorrow for our next generation. They destroyed our apprenticeship system. They destroyed trades in schools.

Every single construction worker in this province knows we've got their back. We'll protect workers. They've got no use for Liberals.

STEEL INDUSTRY

Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady: My question is to the Premier, and it relates to protecting steelworkers; I represent nearly 1,200 of them from Local 8782, who enjoy their great careers at the steel mill in Nanticoke.

In February, the Premier's hand-picked candidate stood outside the plant gate recording a video, telling steelworkers she was going to protect them from tariffs. The steelworkers laughed. They laughed the same way at the Premier, who stands in front of the camera today delivering angry lip service because he has no control over tariffs on steel.

Rather than focus on things he can control, the Premier lashes out at Cleveland-Cliffs's CEO, saying things like, "I got a problem with that guy," or "When he comes prancing through your place, remember he doesn't support you." Or how about, "I look forward to getting a phone call from him ... I'm going to blast him." Speaker, this is not helpful.

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A deal on steel and aluminum is imminent, and my steelworkers want to know if the Premier will stop with this vendetta against Mr. Goncalves and focus on what he can control right here in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Minister of Economic Development.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: We have been under assault by President Trump, and all of this is causing a chill in our business. It's causing difficulties right across Ontario.

But we've put \$30 billion worth of support packages together—\$30 billion—including support in the steel sector. We have the Ontario Together Trade Fund, which is helping any company that's affected specifically by the section 232 steel quotas. We have trade-impacted community programs that are encouraging mayors and economic development officers to apply for that \$40-million fund to assist their specific communities. We have funds, as you've heard from our Minister of Finance: \$100 million that went to Algoma, \$400 million from the federal government.

Speaker, there are tremendous programs available to help all of these companies in these very trying times.

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

Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady: Thank you to the minister opposite. But the reality is we must prepare for the threat of tariffs by repatriating our steel industry and putting a stop to the dumping of foreign steel.

Let me help the Premier and the members opposite understand that, right now, domestic steel products only serve 35% of the Canadian market. What we should be doing is ensuring Ontario recaptures the remaining 65%.

When was the last time the Premier called Stelco's Canadian president, the guy responsible for Canadian steel, the guy responsible for Canadian jobs?

We should focus on what we can control at the provincial level, something like minister's zoning orders, for example. Those are in our wheelhouse. And many of you know there's an application before this government for a city of 40,000 at the Nanticoke industrial park. A city of this size will put the mill and those 1,200 jobs in jeopardy. Steelworkers know this and they are anxious.

Speaker, will Ontario's man of steel, our Premier, be a Superman for Local 8782 and rip apart Empire Homes's request for an MZO at Nanticoke?

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

Hon. Doug Ford: I find it very ironic—and I actually like that MPP.

But let me tell you something about the president of Stelco Canada. I had him in my office ripping him up and down while his CEO, the owner—you know this—is in front of Donald Trump, his best buddy, by the way, telling him, “Close down the steel in Canada.” This is the guy who owns Stelco. Where are you standing up, and all of the employees at Stelco, going after the CEO—I have it in handwriting that he endorsed killing the steel industry in Canada. That's where the CEO of Stelco is.

I'd be out there, and every single employee out there, protesting outside his office down in the US because he's Donald Trump's best buddy. He doesn't give two hoots about Stelco. He doesn't give two hoots about the people in Ontario. I have it in writing numerous times—him standing beside President Trump, his good old buddy, killing jobs in your riding.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Lorne Coe: My question is for the Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development.

Ontario's workers are the backbone of our economy. They build our cars, power our homes and keep our industries moving. But today, Ontario faces real economic threats from abroad. President Donald Trump's tariffs and protectionist policies are aimed directly at key Ontario industries like autos, agriculture and manufacturing. These tariff threats are putting good jobs and family livelihoods at risk. Our government is standing up for our workers and protecting Ontario's economy from these challenges.

Speaker, can the minister explain how our government is helping workers gain new skills, secure better jobs, and strengthen Ontario's economy against these growing international threats?

Hon. David Piccini: I was privileged to join that member the other day for a really momentous announcement at Melly's café in his riding. And why I mention that, Speaker: He asked what we're doing. Well, one of the big things we can do is to support adults with developmental disabilities. We spoke to parents and family members there who are telling us that their loved ones have new-found purpose and dignity tackling employment barriers. And that's what Melly's café and the incredible team at Melly's are doing each and every day, giving those soft skills to those youth and those adults so that they can land jobs. And we heard stories, like from Frankie, who's now working at the LCBO—real stories, real people and real impact.

That's what's happening every day, and I want to thank the member for his incredible leadership. He's been a stalwart for that community, and he deserves all the credit for those incredible investments.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Supplementary?

Mr. Lorne Coe: The minister is right: The Skills Development Fund is changing lives and strengthening Ontario's workforce. We've seen success stories across the province, from mining to manufacturing, and from the skilled trades to new technology. As industries evolve, Ontario must stay ahead of the curve. Our workers deserve every opportunity to learn, grow and, yes, lead.

That's why it's disappointing to see opposition members now criticize the success of this program after spending so much time praising it and asking for support in their own ridings. Frankly, they should know better. They've seen the difference this fund is making in their communities every day.

Can the minister explain how our government is working with employers, unions and training providers to ensure Ontario workers are ready for the jobs of tomorrow?

Hon. David Piccini: Over 700,000 Ontarians have gone through the program, Speaker. We've seen 100,000 people gain employment within 60 days or less thanks to incredible training.

That member and I visited a new purpose-built rental and condominium unit in his region, fighting for meaning-

ful investments. You know, when you're dealing with tough uncertainty in the economic climate, you've got to work hard to attract investment and get shovels in the ground. That's what he's been doing.

We visited that site and we saw a Habitat project that's breaking ground: 40-plus additional units. What was most rewarding was the young men and women who've started their apprenticeships. They spoke to us about an apprenticeship that they've started—an apprenticeship system that was left to decline under the previous Liberal government but, thanks to our government, has seen a doubling of registrants, of women; has seen a record number of youth between the ages of 15 and 24. We have over 110,000 youth in the system, approximately, today. That's what he's fighting for, that next generation building homes for folks in the region of Durham.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Ms. Jessica Bell: My question is to the Premier. Ontarians expect public contracts to build hospitals, schools and transit to go to Ontario companies and Canadian companies first. But under this government's very weak buy-Ontario policy, US-based companies and US companies are still winning these contracts, even though there are qualified Canadian companies who can do the work. I was shocked to learn that a US company received a \$140-million public contract in July 2025 to build part of a Mississauga hospital, taking both profits and jobs offshore and out of Ontario.

My question is this: Why is the Premier letting public dollars go south instead of putting Ontario workers and Ontario businesses first?

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

Hon. Sylvia Jones: I'm incredibly proud of the work that we've been able to do with our hospital partners. Almost \$50 billion is now being spent on new hospitals, on expanded hospitals.

Is the member opposite suggesting that the good people of Mississauga do not need a hospital? Because I can tell you, from speaking to the advocates in my riding and speaking to the colleagues who represent the city of Mississauga, absolutely, we need to get that hospital built.

The NDP's philosophy is exactly why it takes so long to get anything built in the province of Ontario. We will absolutely continue to work and find those Ontario and Canadian manufacturers. It's the work that the Minister of Economic Development does every single day, making sure that individual companies can be re-shored to Ontario to make sure that those opportunities are here. But I am never going to delay a hospital, like obviously the member opposite thinks is okay.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the member from University–Rosedale.

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Ms. Jessica Bell: Deputy Premier, I'll tell you what Ontarians want. They want that Mississauga hospital to be built by Ontario companies and Canadian companies first.

Now the government keeps claiming its procurement restriction policy protects Ontario's jobs, but the truth is, it is full of loopholes. Municipalities are not covered. US firms can still qualify, and enforcement is based on self-reporting. If Quebec and Manitoba can use their procurement laws to prioritize local jobs and local industries without breaking trade rules, why won't this Premier strengthen its own buy Ontario policy?

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

Hon. Stephen Crawford: It's a mouthful, but what's more of a mouthful is hearing what I'm hearing from the opposition actually, Speaker. There's a reason why that party lost almost 200,000 votes in the last election from the previous election. The reason is, they talk a big game, but after every single vote—they vote against Buy Ontario, Buy Canada.

Speaker, they voted against Buy Ontario, Buy Canadian Day legislation that we brought about in the spring session. And guess what, Speaker? In the month of June, when our caucus members were running around the province, meeting companies, promoting Ontario businesses, where were their members? None of them were celebrating Buy Ontario, Buy Canada Day. Not one of them was out there promoting Ontario businesses. And I might also add, they also voted against BOBIA, which is the buy Ontario building initiative. They voted against that.

When it comes to action, Speaker, actions speak louder than words. This government is proud to support Ontario and Canadian businesses. The opposition is all talk, no action.

ADDICTION SERVICES

M^{me} Lucille Collard: The people who live and work in Ottawa's downtown—the residents, small business owners and front-line workers—are exhausted by a crisis that keeps getting worse, with too little support from this government.

Now, during one of his too-rare visits in Ottawa last August, Premier Ford apparently visited the ByWard Market and said it was a disaster. Speaker, unfortunately, I have to agree; it is indeed a crisis. How many times have you heard me stand up here to talk about this? I'm glad the Premier has seen it for himself. However, calling it a disaster is not enough; words are not enough. Real action is actually needed.

I will ask the Premier: After calling it a disaster, will the government listen to the front-line workers dealing with this crisis every day and give social services the funding they need to address it instead of pointing fingers?

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

Hon. Sylvia Jones: I am very pleased to say, and, I must say, I think the member opposite agrees, that the need for these HART hubs in our communities that are experiencing a high prevalence of homelessness—that

access to treatment, that access to primary care, that access to supportive housing is critical.

I think in terms of when we have MPPs, yourself included, who are saying consumption and treatment sites cannot be in neighbourhoods that have schools, daycares, early childhood education centres—we need to make sure that, absolutely, those services are available, but we also need to make sure that they are appropriately placed. And that's why Ottawa's HART hub application was successful. We have seen already initial successes in communities like Sudbury, like Barrie, where people are accessing the services from the HART hubs and getting the help they need and getting the treatment they need.

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

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Speaker, the situation is not getting better. If the Premier truly believes that this situation is a disaster, then he should also admit that the government's response has been a failure. There's far too little that has been done for the importance of this crisis, and the much-touted HART hubs have shown no real efficiency, no measurable results and no relief for the people living this crisis every day. Meanwhile, this government ignores the clear evidence that a housing-first approach is effective at getting and keeping people off the streets and housed.

Again to the Premier: When is this government going to invest in proven solutions, like supportive housing, wraparound mental health care and real front-line addictions support?

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

Hon. Vijay Thanigasalam: We are building a system of care focused on supporting people suffering from addiction on the path to recovery. That's why we are investing \$550 million to expand HART hubs, which offer net new mental health wraparound services, substance use care services and also employment services, Madam Speaker.

The reason is, we believe—this government, this minister, this Premier—in the path to recovery. Unlike the Liberals and NDP, we do not believe in giving free drugs to the most vulnerable people among us. We want to make sure we reclaim their lives and bring them back into the community, back with their families. That's why we are investing \$550 million and increasing the funding for HART hubs by four times, Madam Speaker. We're continuing to make sure we put money into the path to recovery.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: My question is for the Associate Minister of Energy-Intensive Industries. Across the world, we are seeing rising energy costs and instability. President Trump's threats to tear up trade deals and target our industries again have made it clear that Ontario must take control of its own energy future.

Families, businesses, industries all need reliable, affordable, clean power. That means investing in made-in-Ontario solutions that are creating jobs and protecting our economy. The world is turning to hydrogen as a key part of the clean energy transition and Ontario has what it takes to lead.

Speaker, can the associate minister please tell this House what steps our government is taking to advance hydrogen energy right here in Ontario?

Hon. Sam Oosterhoff: I want to thank the member for the Bay of Quinte for that question and for being such a strong advocate for jobs and industry in his community.

We know how important it is to take an all-of-the-above integrated energy approach. That's why our Energy for Generations plan, the first in Canada, lays out an integrated energy vision with a diverse source of energy. That's important because it's supporting local jobs.

One of the key ways that we're going to be supporting a growth in manufacturing and in our clean economy is through the Hydrogen Innovation Fund, a \$30-million fund to encourage businesses to step forward with their best ideas about how we can integrate hydrogen and productivity in our industrial sector.

It's also about our hydrogen interruptible rate pilot, a key pilot program that's going to provide hydrogen producers discounted electricity rates in exchange for reducing consumption during peak periods. We're bringing forward additional plans as well when it comes to building out energy infrastructure for the hydrogen space.

It's all about our plan to build jobs, support the economy and of course grow industry in every corner of this province.

NOTICES OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Pursuant to standing order 36(a), the member for Ottawa South has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to the question given by the Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development regarding the Skills Development Fund. This matter will be debated today following private members' public business.

Pursuant to standing order 36(a), the member for London North Centre has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to the question given by the Premier regarding CAMI automotive, GM Ingersoll. This matter will be debated today following private members' public business.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member for Toronto–St. Paul's on a point of order.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: I just want to correct my record. I said earlier that my colleague and I—or my colleague was invited to a special event with the labour minister. I can confirm factually neither of us were in fact invited.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): There being no further business, this House stands in recess until 3 p.m.
The House recessed from 1138 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Catherine Fife: Earlier today from the Canadian Cancer Society, a resident from my riding, Kirsten Watson, was here. She is a patient advocate with a long history of fighting cancer and has taken her illness and advocacy to a new level.

Also on her way to the chamber is the former MLA Shannon Phillips from Alberta. She represented Lethbridge–West. She was the minister of environment, climate change and parks in the government of Rachel Notley, where she expanded parks and protected areas, and phased out coal-fired electricity. She did leave politics in 2024 and has challenged the system, particularly in Lethbridge, where she was unlawfully surveilled and her records searched by many police officers who disagreed with her policies. The court case and legal proceedings are ongoing, but we welcome her to the province of Ontario and to this beautiful Ontario Legislature.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE POLICY

Mr. Lorne Coe: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Justice Policy on the estimates selected by the standing committee for consideration. Page Alyssa will bring it down to the table.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Christopher Tyrell): Mr. Coe from the Standing Committee on Justice Policy presents the committee's report as follows:

Pursuant to standing order 63, your committee has selected the 2025-26 estimates of the following ministries for consideration: Ministry of the Solicitor General; Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery and Procurement; Ministry of the Attorney General; Ministry of Emergency Preparedness and Response; Ministry of Indigenous Affairs and First Nations Economic Reconciliation; Ministry of Francophone Affairs.

Report presented.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

1955274 ONTARIO INC. ACT, 2025

Mr. David Smith moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr12, An Act to revive 1955274 Ontario Inc.

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

First reading agreed to.

2708634 ONTARIO LTD. ACT, 2025

Ms. Bowman moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr15, An Act to revive 2708634 Ontario Ltd.

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

First reading agreed to.

RARE DISEASE STRATEGY ACT, 2025

LOI DE 2025 SUR LA STRATÉGIE EN MATIÈRE DE MALADIES RARES

Madame Gélinas moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 59, An Act to amend the Health Protection and Promotion Act to implement the recommendations of the Rare Diseases Working Group Report / Projet de loi 59, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la protection et la promotion de la santé pour mettre en oeuvre les recommandations du Rapport du Groupe de travail en matière de maladies rares.

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 you like to explain the bill?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Absolutely. There are over a million people in Ontario who suffer from rare diseases. Oftentimes, the plans and treatments are limited; the access to treatment is limited. But we had a Rare Disease Working Group that worked here in Ontario, that did a report, and they tabled their report on March 10, 2017. So we're asking that the government of Ontario shall, as soon as is practical, implement the recommendations from the Rare Disease Working Group; and that, six months after the day this amendment comes into force and every six months thereafter until all the recommendations set out in the report have been implemented, the government shall post an update on a website of the government of Ontario setting out which recommendations have been implemented and what steps are being taken to implement any remaining recommendations.

People with rare diseases need help, and that would help.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

SMALL BUSINESS WEEK

Hon. Nina Tangri: As Associate Minister of Small Business, it's my honour to rise in the House today to celebrate Small Business Week. I'm standing to recognize the 500,000 small businesses in communities right across Ontario.

From Windsor to Ottawa, Sudbury to Thunder Bay and every city, town and village in between, small businesses play an essential role in every single community. They sponsor youth sports teams. They raise money for local charities. They volunteer time. They are the very fabric

from which Ontario communities are woven. And they are vital to our province's continued success, employing roughly 2.5 million people, creating jobs, driving that innovation and contributing resources to our diverse economy.

This year has not been without its challenges. Many small business owners continue to feel the pressures of higher interest rates, rising costs and global economic uncertainty. We understand that behind every storefront, restaurant and workshop are families working tirelessly to keep their doors open and their employees working. That's why our government remains laser-focused on keeping costs down, cutting red tape and providing targeted supports to help small businesses not only persevere through these headwinds but come out stronger on the other side.

Since day one, our government has supported and championed Ontario's entrepreneurs and small businesses. That's why we're taking decisive action to protect workers, businesses and jobs from the impact of US tariffs and ongoing economic uncertainty, while building a stronger, more resilient and more self-reliant economy. Programs like the \$50-million Ontario Together Trade Fund are helping businesses diversify supply chains and boost trade security. And the \$40-million Trade-Impacted Communities Program supports local industries to find new markets across Canada, driving growth and reducing reliance on vulnerable trade channels.

Our government is making Ontario the most competitive place to create jobs and do business in the G7. That means creating the right supports and incentives for small businesses to thrive. To make starting a business easier, our government launched ontario.ca/business, a one-stop shop for provincial services and supports to help business owners find what they need to grow here at home and in the global marketplace.

1510

We've laid out 10 steps to start a business, how to apply for the permits and licences businesses need, and consolidated the workplace rules and regulations that employers need to follow to be good corporate citizens. We also created a customizable guide. In just minutes, with just a few questions, aspiring entrepreneurs will receive tailored and specific information to make starting their business easy.

To help enhance digital literacy, we're investing an additional \$7.5 million towards the Digitalization Competence Centre that provides coaching, training and grants to help small business owners adopt new technologies that improve their competitiveness. Through the Digitalization Competence Centre, this government is investing \$2.5 million towards the new Retail Modernization Project Grant to help small retailers adapt tools, such as online payment systems, inventory management software, customer relationship management tools, digital marketing platforms, cyber security solutions and artificial intelligence.

We're also strengthening on-the-ground supports through small business enterprise centres that provide advisers and services to guide entrepreneurs at every stage, and it's

paying off. In the past year, Ontario's 47 small business enterprise centres have helped start over 8,000 businesses and expand around 2,700 existing ones, creating almost 16,000 jobs. To assist technology start-ups, there are 17,000 regional innovation centres located across the province delivering specialized assistance that help tech companies start, grow and succeed.

Over the past year, those innovation centres have supported about 4,800 Ontario technology business clients that have created over 6,700 jobs and retained over 37,200 jobs. Initiatives like this build on an estimated \$11.9 billion in cost savings and supports for Ontario businesses in 2025 alone, helping reduce costs, maintain operations and protect jobs.

As the Minister of Small Business, one of my primary objectives is to inspire young people to take up the mantle of entrepreneurship. That's why we've invested a total of \$11 million towards Futurpreneur Canada, with \$2 million announced in the 2025 budget that will support 320 young entrepreneurs launch new businesses with the potential to create well over 1,200 new jobs. Starter Company Plus helps entrepreneurs 18 years and older start, expand and buy a small business by providing training, mentoring and grants of up to \$5,000. Summer Company helps students aged 15 to 29 start and run their own business over the summer months. It offers up to \$3,000 in funding, plus hands-on training and mentoring, that builds skills young people can carry into future careers or ventures.

At the other end of the small business continuum, it's important that this government support business owners who want to buy, sell or pass their business to the next generation. Succession planning is vital to Ontario's economy, as it helps a business continue, securing jobs in the communities that they serve. These businesses, whether a family farm in Prince Edward county or a local convenience store in Sarnia, can leave a lasting impact in their communities when smoothly bought, sold or passed to the next generation.

Our government is actively exploring options within the network of small business enterprise centres to provide support to entrepreneurs looking to sell their businesses or buy a new one. Together, these measures are helping businesses across Ontario start, scale and thrive.

As a government, we want to continue to unleash Ontario's entrepreneurial spirit so that our innovators, risk takers and job creators feel empowered to start and own a business in communities right across our province. We've taken an all-of-government approach to support small businesses across sectors and regions.

Through a wide range of services, programs and tools, our government is ensuring business owners have the tools they need to start and scale their businesses, both at home, across Canada and around the globe.

Ontario's small business owners demonstrate every single day what it means to be dedicated, to dream big and create opportunities. They are the beating heart of communities across our province. And under the leadership of Premier Ford, we are creating the right conditions for businesses to succeed and invest in the province.

Thank you to all of our small businesses for your strength and resiliency and drive to succeed. We wish every Ontario entrepreneur and small business owner a happy Small Business Week.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Response?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: As Ontario's shadow minister for small business, it's an honour for me to rise today to thank, congratulate and recognize the wonderful business people who don't just sell something, who don't just offer a service—they help shape the identity and the fabric of our province.

Small businesses are the economic backbone and heart-beat of our communities. It's an incredible leap of faith for someone to pursue the dream of entrepreneurship. It is not for the faint of heart. Brave people risk their savings—sometimes their own homes—and face personal sacrifices and pressure that can test relationships and endurance alike. A singular vision and unwavering dedication are essential for small business success, and the risks involved are many and complex. But small business owners show up for our communities. They sponsor sports teams. They volunteer. They donate. They are the best of us.

For far too long, though, governments have paid lip service to small businesses while directing the bulk of their investment and attention to large, multinational corporations. Downtown cores, once the dream destination for many small businesses, are now places some avoid. These spaces are the heart and life of our cities and small towns, but they've been overlooked and neglected.

And the failures of the Conservative government are evident in our downtowns all across Ontario. Too many people have been left behind without housing, without support, without a path forward, because of the choices made by this Conservative government. A refusal to build affordable and supportive housing, a failure to invest in mental health and addiction services and a lack of adequate social support have all contributed to what we're seeing on our streets today.

For business owners, the consequences are immediate, and the consequences are difficult. It's incredibly hard to do business when windows are repeatedly broken or when they arrive every morning to difficult and distressing scenes. Many people are in a visible crisis because there aren't enough mental health beds or support. Folks who desperately need our support have nowhere to go, and it's not fair or safe to expect business owners and their staff to handle these complex situations. Families visiting downtowns can feel uncertain, unsure of how to respond, because they're witnessing what is ultimately a failure of systems meant to protect us all.

What we're seeing day after day is heartbreaking, not only because of individuals in crisis but because of the systems that have failed them. These are the scenes of human tragedy unfolding in real time, and they reflect a provincial government that has not met its responsibility to deliver the basics of human rights: health care, affordable housing and support for our most vulnerable neighbours.

Despite the government prioritizing wealthy, multi-nationals and treating the province's treasury like a piggy bank for well-connected insiders, small businesses continue to show up. They continue to fight. They continue to serve our communities with grit, creativity and resilience that inspire us all.

I want to sincerely thank all the local chambers of commerce, small business enterprise centres and business improvement areas, who help foster, support and highlight these wonderful businesses.

To every proud and resilient small business owner, here on the side of the official opposition, we see you, we hear you and we are fighting for the government to implement the solutions you need and you deserve. Because the truth is, it costs far less for the government to house people with full wraparound supports than it does to leave people without shelter and care.

I want to also thank and acknowledge our first responders, many of whom were trained to serve and protect—not to fill the gaps because this government has walked away from its responsibilities. They didn't train to be social workers, yet that's exactly the role they're forced to perform every day because there's nowhere left for people in crisis to turn.

Let's be absolutely clear: Small businesses owners didn't sign up for this either. They're trying to keep their lights on, serve their communities and stay afloat, all while managing the fallout of government inaction.

1520

This is what failure looks like. When a government underfunds mental health care and treats addiction like somebody else's problem, it becomes everyone's problem. And it shows up every day on our main streets, in our downtowns, and on the doorsteps of small businesses.

It's time for this government to stop passing the burden to those who are already stretched thin and start doing their job. No more excuses. No more delays. Until this happens, small businesses and the people who rely on them will continue to bear the weight of problems that require real, systemic solutions.

To this government: Listen to the voices of small businesses. The price of inaction is way too high.

On behalf of His Majesty's official opposition, to all the amazing entrepreneurs across our province, thank you for all you do for our communities.

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: I'm grateful to rise this afternoon to respond to the minister's statement on Small Business Week, on behalf of our Ontario Liberal caucus, who love talking to small businesses in their ridings, as do I. This week was started by the Business Development Bank of Canada over 45 years ago, and it recognizes the businesses that are so vital to our communities.

I want to thank all the entrepreneurs in my riding of Don Valley West and across Ontario for your hard work, your ingenuity, your courage to start and run your own business, and your perseverance.

Speaker, one of the best parts of this job is talking to those small businesses in Don Valley West, to hear the stories of how they started—some as new immigrants;

others who wanted to create something new and amazing for their community.

Recently, we asked our constituents to nominate local small businesses that they love. It has been wonderful to go and talk to those businesses and to thank them for the contribution they make to our community, the jobs they create, and the economic prosperity they generate. I'd like to acknowledge some of those nominated: At Origin Coffee, Bursting Into Life RMT, Charmaine Sweets, Lit coffee, Thair organic beauty, the Paper Moon, and the Nail Studio—just a few. These small businesses love what they do, and they're constantly trying to find more innovative ways to reach out to customers and keep their businesses strong. But it's not easy. US tariffs and supply chain issues are making it harder.

But let's be clear: Small businesses and the entire Ontario economy were hurting under this government long before US tariffs. According to StatsCan, Ontario has averaged 22,300 exits per quarter since the beginning of 2024 and only 19,800 new small businesses. So, under this PC government, there are 2,700 fewer active businesses in Ontario than there were in 2023, and that contributes to the record number of unemployed workers—706,000—in this province.

The reality is, this government is letting small businesses down. Speaker, 17.8% of youth, who often look to small businesses for their first job, are unemployed. We have fewer people starting up small businesses. Ontario is tied for the highest small business tax rate in the country. That's not a record to brag about.

In 2024, Ontario small businesses supported three million jobs and contributed 62.6% of all private sector jobs in the province. But when this government came to office, they inherited an economy where 67% of all private sector jobs came from small businesses.

This government says they support small businesses, but what do they actually do? A 0.3% tax cut—yes, 0.3%. The Liberal government cut the small business tax rate by 50%.

And we have a government that creates a single buy-Ontario day. Every day should be buy-Ontario day.

This government is putting \$75 million into an ad campaign in the US. Instead, how about spending money on Canadian media and asking Ontarians to buy local and support small businesses every day? And of course, they could cut small business taxes.

Speaker, cutting taxes for small businesses once again topped the CFIB's number one priority for the fall legislative session. That's because it's the number one concern for their members, small businesses across this province. In fact, small businesses say they would rather have a tax cut than loans or grants. That's especially important for this government to hear as they consider handing out another \$800 million of taxpayer money in the next rounds of the unfair, not transparent, not accountable Skills Development Fund—becoming known as the special donors fund, might I add.

Last year, I introduced the Cutting Taxes on Small Businesses Act to try to help small businesses still trying

to recover from COVID and reduced consumer demand. Unfortunately, this government voted against it twice. This bill would have provided meaningful tax relief—up to \$17,900—to small businesses who need it now more than ever.

I call on this government to put that tax cut in their fall economic statement and really put their money where their mouth is.

PETITIONS

CHILD CARE

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's my pleasure to present a petition from Emmanuel at Brighton Child Care Centre, Carly Greco and the board of directors there. Essentially, this petition says that Ontario needs a child care system that will strengthen our economy, support families and give every child a strong start. We can do this with a publicly funded salary scale and a minimum wage of \$30 an hour for RECEs to recruit and retain these qualified professionals. It's signed by hundreds of parents from Waterloo.

I just want to say we will never have a national, or even provincial, child care program without early childhood educators that we respect and can recruit into the system and also retain them with a salary grid that honours their expertise, their education and their commitment to early childhood development.

HIGHWAY SAFETY

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Steve Guinard, who is from Dowling in my riding, for these petitions. The petition is called "Make Highway 144 Safe."

Highway 144 is a highway that goes from Sudbury to Timmins, or north. It is completely in my riding. It starts in my riding; it ends in my riding. It's about 350 kilometres long and it is used by many, many mine workers, many, many forestry workers. There are lots of trucks on it, and it is very dangerous. Not a week goes by, winter or summer, that there isn't a collision on Highway 144. Often that will lead to hours, if not a full day, of closure. There is no bypass. There's only one highway. If the highway is closed, the trucks line up on the side of the road for miles and miles and miles.

People want safer roads in summer and winter. They are asking the government of Ontario to organize a round table with representatives from the Ministry of Transportation, the police, the ambulance services, the tow truck operators, the shipping companies, the mining companies, the school bus drivers and other road users to find solutions to this dangerous highway. We need Highway 144. The mining sector needs Highway 144. People who live north of the watershed, Timmins coming to Sudbury: This highway needs to stay open, and right now it is very dangerous.

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

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I have a petition here and I'd like to thank Kevin Honey of Amherstburg, Ontario, for sending in this petition. It's a petition about tariffs, and it talks about Donald Trump's unfair tariffs and how they're causing uncertainty and chaos in the North American auto sector, which is a sector that is very important to my riding and to people that I know.

It also talks about how people both in the United States and in Ontario are very nervous about these tariffs and it encourages the government of Ontario to continue working to get rid of these unfair tariffs and also to take measures to protect both businesses and workers in Ontario from these unfair tariffs.

1530

Of course, I support this petition 100%. I will sign it, and I am going to give it to this fine page here, Tishe, who's going to bring it to the Clerks' table.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: I have a petition to raise social assistance rates. We want everyone to have a good quality of life in Ontario, and I know we're all here because we care about Ontarians. And so, when people receive \$733 for individuals—or on OW, \$1,408—it's far too low, it's below the poverty line, and we need to double it.

That's why I have this petition that I'm submitting, and I'm happy to sign and support it. Hopefully we will do something about it in the future.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I want to thank Dr. Sally Palmer, professor emerita at McMaster University, for her efforts to collect thousands of signatures on petitions that call on the government to raise social assistance rates. I have several more pages of names of people who agree that social assistance rates in Ontario are far too low, well below the poverty line, whether it's Ontario Works or ODSP.

More than 230 social service organizations in the province have called on the Premier and cabinet ministers to double rates for both Ontario Works and ODSP, recognizing that the measures that the government has taken are still leaving people struggling well below the poverty line.

So this petition calls on the Legislative Assembly to double social assistance rates. I couldn't agree more. I've affixed my signature and will send it to the table with page Avery.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Chris Glover: The petition I have here has been signed by hundreds of residents from Wasaga Beach, and

they are upset. The petition is called "Save Our Provincial Parks."

This is the government that ran a campaign promising to create a new provincial park. Less than six months after they won the election, they said that they're actually going to sell off 60% of the beachfront at Wasaga Beach Provincial Park, and they're putting a garbage dump in the French River Provincial Park.

The community is asking the government to keep their promise to expand provincial parks and not to sell off the 60% of the beachfront in Wasaga Beach.

They are also asking the government not to amend the provincial parks act. Their amendment that they've proposed would actually make it easier to sell off other provincial park lands.

There are 10 million Ontarians who visit provincial parks every year. People—all of us, many of us—love our provincial parks, but they do not want them to be sold off. So they are asking the government not to sell it off. They're concerned that this will fall into the same kind of real estate track record of this government where they are leasing or selling public lands to the friends of the Premier, including Ontario Place, the greenbelt, the foundry and the Hearn gas plant.

They have asked the government to immediately stop the sale of the majority of the Wasaga Beach Provincial Park's beachfront lands and not to amend the Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act to make it easier to sell other provincial parks.

I fully support this petition. I will affix my signature and pass it to page Bani to take to the table.

PHARMACARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Carl Jordan from Capreol in my riding for these petitions. They're called "Pharmacare."

Basically, prescription medication is a basic and essential part of our health care system. Unfortunately, the way that it is now, it is leaving a lot of Ontarians facing high costs. Some of the medications could be quite expensive, which means barriers to access, which means people have to make the choice between skipping their medication, putting their health at risk, so that they can pay rent and feed their kids.

You should not have to choose between paying for medication that keeps you healthy or alive and covering everyday necessities. Experts in health care, national studies support a universal, single-payer pharmacare system as the most fair and effective approach. The different drug system that we have in Ontario still leaves a lot of people behind, not able to get the medications they need.

So they petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to implement a universal, publicly-funded pharmacare program to ensure that every Ontarian has access to the medication they need.

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

INTERPROVINCIAL TRADE

MPP Bill Rosenberg: I'd like to talk about trade barriers today. I'd like to present this petition on trade barriers that are costing up to \$2 billion per year towards our economy. These barriers are not only lowering our GDP; they're increasing the cost of goods and services for all Ontario families.

That is why I'm signing this petition to tear down those trade barriers, that we bring mutual recognition through all of Canada, including Ontario, to achieve our full economic potential. The time is now.

I'm willing to sign this petition here today and bring it to the Clerk's desk. Thank you.

YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH

Ms. Catherine Fife: Once again, I'm going to be presenting this petition around social media use among young Ontarians. You will know that I have tabled a motion for us to work on the addictive nature of social media platforms at social policy committee. I think that this is something that we as legislators can and should be working together on.

The petition is quite simple. It calls on the Legislature to review the addictive nature of social media platforms for those under the age of 18. It also asks to clarify the responsibilities of social media companies regarding the moderation of use by youth under age 13, and it's actually asking the government to consider issuing warnings from the Ontario public health units to implement health warnings on social media platforms about the risks of excessive social media use in youth.

I feel that this is actually a pivotal moment for us as lawmakers to review what is actually happening in the bedrooms, in the classrooms, in the basements of homes in Ontario. So many young people saw the murder, for instance, of Charlie Kirk in the United States—no protection from that. Children these days are seeing highly inappropriate sexual content on social media platforms.

This is supposed to be a tough-on-crime, law-and-order kind of government. Do you want to protect youth in the province of Ontario, get better education outcomes, address the mental health crisis in youth? This is the work that we should be doing.

I'm calling on the government: Call this motion to the social policy committee. Let's work on this together. Let's protect youth in the province of Ontario.

I'm going to affix my signature and once again thank Dr. Alison Yeung for her advocacy. This is research-based, evidence-based work that we should be creating laws to protect youth in Ontario.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. John Jordan: I have a petition I'd like to present that reads:

"Whereas President Trump's tariffs are causing uncertainty and chaos in the North American auto sector, and right across the global economy; and

"We have already seen plants temporarily shut down and workers laid off on both sides of the border, as a direct result of the tariffs;

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

"That the government of Ontario:

"—Continue working to get the U.S. to lift these tariffs immediately; and

"—Protect Ontario businesses and workers who are being affected by the U.S.'s unjustified tariffs."

Speaker, I'm going to sign this petition and pass it to page Taylor.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank James Larocque, who is from Val Caron in my riding, for these petitions. They're called, "Invest in Mental Health Services."

Did you know, Speaker, that one in five adults will experience a mental health challenge every single year? Funding for mental health services is inadequate, and emergency mental health services are lacking in many, many areas of our province. The current wait-lists for mental health services in the community are not months long; they are year-long. The current funding is insufficient to meet the growing demand so that the resources are there to meet people's needs.

1540

They petition the Legislative Assembly to prioritize mental health as a core part of health care by investing in much needed services and professionals to ensure accessible and timely care for all Ontarians, so that every mental health agency can recruit and retain a stable workforce by giving them the money to be able to pay their professionals a good salary as well as making sure that they have enough money to meet cost-of-living increases, whether it be WiFi or heating that goes up.

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

ANTI-RACISM ACTIVITIES

Mr. Chris Glover: It's Islamic Heritage Month, and I just wanted to give a shout-out to all of the Muslim community members who contribute so much to our province of Ontario. But at the same time, there is a need to take action on Islamophobia and that's what this petition is about. It's asking the government to take action on Islamophobia because there have been some really horrendous attacks on Muslim Ontarians, including the Afzaal family, who were killed in a terror attack in London, Ontario, in 2021.

These hate crimes need to be addressed. The petition is asking the government to address these through creating a provincial hate crimes accountability unit, dismantling

white supremacist groups, restoring the provincial Anti-Racism Directorate, and giving Ontario schools new tools to help young people understand Islamophobia.

I fully support this petition. I will pass it to page Bella to take to the table.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Point of order, Mr. Cerjanec?

Mr. Rob Cerjanec: I'm seeking unanimous consent for leave to move a motion without notice asking the government to immediately reinstate the cap on ticket resale prices at 50% more than face value.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Mr. Cerjanec is seeking unanimous consent for leave to move a motion without notice asking the government to immediately reinstate the cap on ticket resale prices at 50% more than face value. Agreed? I heard a no.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUILDING A MORE COMPETITIVE ECONOMY ACT, 2025 LOI DE 2025 VISANT À BÂTIR UNE ÉCONOMIE PLUS CONCURRENTIELLE

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

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

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

Interjections.

Mr. Stephen Blais: I thank my colleagues for that rousing applause for my introduction. I'll be sharing my time this afternoon with my friends from Beaches–East York and Ottawa South.

Madam Speaker, despite the applause, I am rising today to speak against the government's plan to ban automated speed enforcement across Ontario, all of which is included in this bill, which, according to the government, is intended to make Ontario more competitive economically. I don't understand how taking speed cameras out of communities and away from school zones and park zones will make our economy more competitive, but that's for the government to describe. They call it "red tape reduction," but we have to be honest: This isn't about red tape or reducing it; it's about rolling back road safety. It's about turning back the clock on a program that has proven to work.

It's important to remind people, and perhaps remind the government, that it was, in fact, their government that created the rules around photo radar in Ontario. They wrote those regulations in 2019 after having been elected. They told cities to use technology and to use that technology responsibly in school zones and in community safety zones. Community safety zones are near parks and playgrounds and schools: That's where we know and we

expect children and families to be walking, to be riding their bike, to be playing.

And now, six years later, they're tearing it all out, just as the evidence shows that it works. That is not leadership, Madam Speaker. I think many of us might consider that to be a case of whiplash.

The government is, in fact, running away from their own success. And why do we know it's been successful? Because there have been studies, Madam Speaker. A peer-reviewed study from the Hospital for Sick Kids here in Toronto and Toronto Metropolitan University showed that school zones and speed enforcement in school zones in Toronto has worked: a 45% drop in speeding vehicles; a 10-kilometre-per-hour reduction in average speeds; an 88% drop in extreme speeding of 20 kilometres an hour or more.

If you think about school zones, at least in Ottawa, most schools have a 40-kilometre sign in front of the school. So if you're going 20 kilometres over, so 60 kilometres or more over in front of a school, you're actually exceeding the speed limit by 50%. That is an enormous speed in front of a school, Madam Speaker, and it shows an 88% drop in that extreme speeding. When cameras were removed, the speeding rates returned to previous levels.

In Ottawa, the results were also clear: High-end speeders also fell dramatically. Overall compliance at some locations quadrupled within three months of deployment.

There have been international studies. There have been at least 35 separate international studies about automated speed enforcement. Across those international studies, average speeds fell by 15%. In some places, it fell by as much as 70%. In addition to speeds coming down, guess what else we saw? Correlating accidents and injuries fell at the same time—anywhere from 14% to 25%.

So it's clear. The science is clear. Slower speeds lead to fewer collisions, lead to fewer injuries. Speed cameras encourage people to drive slower. And if we're driving slower through sensitive areas, near schools, near parks, where kids and families are expected to be walking and playing, that makes our communities safer.

Speaker, you can't debate physics. A pedestrian hit by a car or a truck at 30 kilometres an hour—more often than not, you will survive. At 50 kilometres per hour, that same person is eight times more likely to die. Every five kilometres an hour over can mean the difference between what is a close call and what is a tragedy. That's what this debate is actually about. Not fines, not revenue, not tax grabs; it's about saving lives and the potential to save lives.

Madam Speaker, this government's own Preliminary 2023 Ontario Road Safety Annual Report spells it out pretty clearly. Speeding, according to that report, caused 21.3% of all traffic collision fatalities. Drinking and driving—anyone take a guess? It was 7.5%. Speeding now nearly kills three times as many people as impaired driving. Yet this government's response is to ban the one tool that we have proven to slow people down. It's like banning the breathalyzer test because they think it will make drunk drivers nervous. It's reckless. It's backwards.

It's dangerous and it will make our communities more dangerous.

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Madam Speaker, while we're talking about this government report, I'd like to know where the rest of the numbers are. We are now in the fourth quarter of 2025. The government still hasn't published final data for 2022. We still only have the preliminary report for 2023, and there is no data from this government for 2024. Two and a half years behind the public reporting on critical traffic and speed and road safety-related information—that's not transparency. That is, I think some might argue, concealment.

You can't manage what you refuse to measure. Municipalities can't target enforcement. The police can't plan for their resources. Legislators can't see what's working or what's not. Perhaps that's what they do want, Madam Speaker, because if they don't have the data showing their program works, they can turn a blind eye when the Premier wants to rip it all out.

If road safety was truly a priority, that data, those numbers, would be published every year on time. Instead, we get this fog, because when you hide behind the data, you hide behind the truth, and we know that the truth about speed cameras is they work, and that doesn't fit the government—or perhaps only the Premier's—narrative and point of view.

Now, when we deployed photo radar as part of our Vision Zero program in Ottawa, we took a very responsible approach. I was the chair of the transportation committee at the time when we launched that road safety action plan. It was a serious, data-driven effort to cut fatal and major injury collisions by 20% by 2024 and to reach Vision Zero by 2035.

At the time, in that first year, we invested \$31 million. We installed cameras where they mattered: near schools and near parks and busy places where kids and families would be known to be walking and playing. The results spoke for themselves. As I mentioned earlier, compliance jumped from 57% to 81% over the three years of the program. That's not a punishment. That's not a tax grab. That is progress. That is progress on making our neighbourhoods and our communities safer.

It's easy to think that neighbourhoods and communities are just roads and houses and the things that you see but, really, what we're talking about is the people: our neighbours, our family members, our kids, our parents. That's who we are trying to make safer by ensuring that our roads are safer and that vehicles travel the posted speed limit.

In Ottawa, every dollar in fines from automated speed enforcement went directly into road safety programs. It helped fund crossing guards. It helped pay for new signals for pedestrian crosswalks. It helped pay for better lighting. It helped pay for safer intersections. It helped pay for building the roundabouts the Premier is talking about. It helped pay to physically change roads and sidewalks and the internal workings of communities to make it safer so that the amount of speeding would actually go down over

time because of those physical changes and, again, we could make pedestrians and cyclists and motorists safer while travelling through our communities. It has saved lives, and it pays for itself.

Photo radar isn't just safer; it's smarter, and it is cheaper. In Ottawa, CTV News reported that the public service has shown that every new photo radar camera is about \$72,000 to design and install. That's a one-time investment for a device that works 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It never calls in sick. It never draws a pension. We never have to buy it a squad car.

Compare that to traditional law enforcement. It costs \$15,450 to train a new police officer at the Ontario Police College. We pay police very well in our province—easily into the six figures. Plus, we buy them a car. We have gas, we have insurance, we have the body armour, we have the body camera, we have their weapon, we have the radio—every piece of kit to put into police hands to make them safe so that they can enforce the law. It's an expensive business.

We need those officers on our streets. We need more officers on our streets, but we need them chasing violent offenders. We need them chasing drug traffickers and organized crime. We don't need them sitting in a squad car catching late parents trying to get to work as they drop their kids off to school. These are good people, honest people having a temporary lapse in judgment. We should have police focus on the real bad guys. Because they are expensive and they are well trained, let's put them to use where they will make the biggest and most important difference in our community.

Photo radar is efficient, and it is cost-effective. So let's let the police catch the bad guys, and let's let technology correct bad habits. That's a smart policy. That's modern policing. That's just plain common sense. But instead of expanding that program that has proven to be effective, that is a point of common sense, this government wants to destroy it.

They say that they're fighting cash grabs, but what they forget to mention is that the only people paying are the people breaking the law. Instead, they're asking all Ontarians to use the very limited tax capacity that the province and municipalities have—to use our collective money instead. So instead of asking people who are actually the ones causing the danger to pay for it, they want all of us to join together and pay for it, to subsidize the people who are breaking the law. That's not a cash grab. Photo radar is a life-saving investment, but I guess as we've come to learn, the government doesn't see it that way.

You can't tell parents and their kids that they're safer because you banned one thing slowly. They're not going to be safer simply because you make some physical changes to the roadway. It has to be backed up with proper enforcement, and that's what photo radar helps us do.

I think it's also important to note: As the government lectures everyone about what is what is a cash grab and lectures people about following the rules, we have to look at what's been happening within their own ranks. We've

all seen recent reporting. At least one cabinet-assigned vehicle was recorded driving more than 50 kilometres an hour over the posted speed limit on 12 separate occasions on a highway where the speed limit was 100 kilometres an hour. That is, if I understand the law correctly, stunt driving. One ministerial vehicle was caught stunt driving at least 12 times.

One of those ministerial-assigned vehicles was clocked at 162. I don't know how far behind schedule these ministers are, but if you've got to go 162, I think you need to get a new scheduling assistant, because clearly you're not pacing your day properly.

While cabinet vehicles are being flagged for stunt driving, the government was preparing this legislation to ban the very technology that helps us catch stunt drivers and catch people who are speeding and make our communities more dangerous. That is a complete lack of judgment on the government's behalf. That is hypocritical, to say the very least.

If a regular Ontarian, if my neighbour Gord, got caught going 162 on Highway 174 or the 417, he would lose his licence on the spot. His car would get towed. But when it's a minister's car, we get redacted reports and we get a shrug. We get, "We'll do better next time."

This is the core of the problem. This is the core of the problem around this particular issue, but I think we're starting to see that it's really at the core of the problem with the government. They tell everyone else to obey the rules, but when it comes to themselves, they like to exempt themselves. They like to avoid the consequences of rule-breaking. In fact, the Premier said he actually tells people, "Don't break the rules; we're just going to change them so they no longer apply." That is very, very convenient, and I guess that fits with what we're debating here: The government gets caught red-handed with speed cameras, and now they're changing the rules to take speed cameras out of the equation. It fits the Premier's *modus operandi* pretty well. Well, that's not accountability; that is a degree of arrogance that is really on par with what we're seeing south of the border.

1600

So I think, I hope—I think my hope in this is being challenged by this legislation, but I hope that we can agree that every child has the right to walk to and from school safely, every Ontarian has the right to come home safely at the end of the day. That, I hope, should be a moral baseline of what we do and how we approach traffic safety. And when we have a tool that makes that more likely, that literally saves lives, I think we have a duty to strengthen that tool, not to scrap it. You don't ban what works; you build on it, you make it better. If there are little problems with it, you fix those problems and you move on; you don't throw the baby out with the bathwater.

Real leadership doesn't hide numbers. Real leadership doesn't bury safety changes in an omnibus bill purportedly intended to help and build a more competitive economy. It doesn't confuse common sense with red tape. Real leadership publishes data, it owns the results and it doubles down on programs and initiatives that save lives. That's what we

did in Ottawa, that's what other municipalities have done and others are still further ready to do. But that's unfortunately what this government refuses to do.

So here is what we should do instead: We should keep photo radar. We should fix the problems in the cases of overreach, and we should expand it where it's proven to work.

We should mandate that every dollar in fines goes directly into road safety improvements, like the ones the Premier has been talking about.

We should publish road safety reports within 12 months of the year end, not three years later.

We should give municipalities flexibility, and we need to put people over politics at the centre of our transportation, and certainly our transportation safety policy.

Madam Speaker, it's about common sense. It's about the child who is walking to school, the senior who is crossing the street, the cyclist who is returning home from work as it's getting dark. Every one of those people deserves a government that values evidence over optics, that values safety over slogans and lives over talking points.

This aspect of the bill isn't about cutting bureaucracy. This is not about cutting red tape. Taking out speed cameras is not in any way going to make our economy better or faster or better able to respond to the threats from Donald Trump and the Americans. This is simply about cutting corners on safety. Ontario doesn't need less enforcement. It needs smarter enforcement. It needs transparency and data and courage. Until the government delivers on that, what are we doing here?

So I want to stand with every parent, every police officer and every municipal leader who wants to keep the cameras, who wants to slow down traffic and wants to keep saving lives.

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

Mr. John Fraser: I'm pleased to be standing up to talk about Bill 56 today, because I won't have to talk about skills development for a few minutes.

I was thinking today about road safety, and I remember my dad teaching me to drive, which was pretty close to half a century ago—but things haven't changed. What my dad used to say is that a green light is not a guarantee of immortality, which means there might be someone running through a red, so always be aware. That's why we have red-light cameras, which aren't being removed today—same technology, probably less of a risk than speeding. We're taking speed cameras, automated speed enforcement cameras away. But we're keeping red-light cameras—probably less likelihood, by the stats, of causing death, just because of how often it happens, than speeding. Speeding kills.

The other reason this is important, and no one is really talking about it, is that when you're doing 10 or 15 miles an hour over the speed limit—we have these things in our car, and we know we have problems with distraction. So when you combine these two things together—which are both wrong and you both get big fines for—it's dangerous.

Automated speed enforcement cameras are about protecting; they're about keeping our kids safe. That's why we have them. They keep other people safe. Roads are not just for cars and drivers. They're for moms and dads, sons and daughters, grandmothers and grandfathers. They're for pedestrians. They're for people on bikes. So I do not understand, when our primary job in this place—and I hear it from the Premier all the time, and other ministers—is public safety. Violent crime—public safety is not just about violent crime. Our roads kill more people than anything else. Public safety is on our roads. So why in God's name would we take out a tool that's getting people to drive slower and saving lives?

I'll just talk about my riding.

Heron Road—Marie-Curie school on one side; a seniors' centre on the other side. It's a four-laner. It's a highway. There's a camera there. People drive slow now. It's safer for the kids.

Smyth Road—Vincent Massey Public School, Hillcrest High School, La Cité collégiale, all within a block—another four-laner, another highway. People drive slower now.

Alta Vista Drive: It's not a highway; a two-laner, 40 clicks—St. Pat's high school, Ridgemont High School, Charles H. Hulse. People drive slower there right now. Three schools—thousands of kids in what I have described.

Walkley Road—Marius-Barbeau—a four-lane highway. People drive slower there right now. You can see it.

When Ontario's chiefs of police, the people we trust to lead the forces that protect the people we represent, say to the Premier, "Don't do it, Premier," why does the Premier do it? I wish he would stand here and explain that to all of us in question period.

No one likes getting a ticket. But I know people who have gotten tickets, and they understand now, and they say, "I want to keep the cameras." It's not just moms and dads. I'm not trying to jam you all up. I know you hear this. I know that you care; you wouldn't be here, otherwise. You know, because there are people in your community—and they're not crazy people. They're not people who are far on the left or far on the right or out there in the streets. They're people who are saying, "Don't do it." Why are you doing this? You hear it. I know you hear it. It's not just us over here hearing it; it can't be. It's not because all the people in our ridings who are like—and then we're making a big deal of it. People are talking about it, folks. They're scratching their heads—reasonable, thoughtful people who aren't political. Many of them have families.

SickKids hospital did a study; my colleague described it. SickKids—not the people who are there to protect public safety, but the people who are there to take care of our kids, to take care of our kids when they get hurt, who are concerned about the safety of our kids. When they come out and say, "Give all this information," and they say, "Don't do it," why does the Premier do it? Tell me why. I hope that someone will stand up with the question and give that explanation, because I can't figure it out.

1610

It doesn't make any sense to me why, when you've got those two groups, one protecting us, all of us—and they're in charge of road safety; the leadership is saying, "Don't do it." And when the people who spend their lives caring for our kids—preventing injury, thinking about that, wanting to make lives better for children—say, "Don't do it," and when our educators say, "Don't do it," why is the Premier doing it?

I'm not putting it on all of you, but you all are going to wear it. That's what's going to happen. You know it. I hope you're talking about it in caucus. I hope you're telling the Premier just exactly what people are saying. It's not easy, guys. You know, there's always a top person; they make a decision. I need to—I don't understand. Help us understand why actually making streets safer, slowing down cars, reducing the risk—because these things add a lot of risk and we know what happens with distracted driving; there's a lot of stuff on our dashboard right now—why this is so important. Why is this what we're talking about? Why are we talking about making our streets and the places around our schools less safe than they already are? The Premier's job in this place, as a leader, is to protect public safety. He's not protecting public safety right now. He's reducing that protection, and it's wrong. We all know it; you all know it.

Maybe people don't like getting a ticket, but the people I've talked to who have gotten it—reasonable, rational, non-political people who get tickets—they go, "I understand. Keep them."

There's been a ton of vandalism. You see them cutting down signs here in Toronto. It's not happening in Ottawa. I wonder if the Premier is reacting to that. Maybe if the Premier didn't have to do the Premier's job, he would be taking them down too. But you know what? He's doing exactly the same thing, just in a different way. He's using his power to do something that makes our streets less safe—less safe for our kids, less safe for our moms and dads, less safe for our grandparents, less safe for everybody.

I only want to say two more things about this bill. Thanks for listening, those of you who were. There are two changes in here around clean water. What I would like to understand here from the government is how that's actually going to protect source water and not weaken what we already have.

The second one is in relation to the changes around pharmacy. I'm just trying to understand two things. (1) What has generated the need for doing this? Is there a demand? Is there a shortage? (2) If a person who is acting as a pharmacist—try to understand what their duties are as a pharmacist, because this what it says: They're allowed to practise pharmacy without being a member of the Ontario college. There's nothing around how long that can go on for or whether there's any time restrictions, from what I can see. What happens when there's a complaint? You have a college. Again, the college of physicians or the college of pharmacy are there to protect people. I want to make sure that we're not making it harder to protect people

because we're not requiring, at some point, to be part of the Ontario college, or that there is a fairly effective mechanism, so that when you have a situation where someone is not a member of the college and they're practising here and something doesn't go right, the person who that affects has a relatively easy or direct way to address the complaint that they may have.

I thank everybody for their time.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): I recognize the member from Beaches–East York.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: I'm here to follow my colleagues and speak about Bill 56, the Building a More Competitive Economy Act, 2025. Interesting name. This government has been known to come up with names that are very unclear and vague so the average Joe won't know what is hidden in there.

I'm going to talk to you about a few schedules on this bill: schedule 1, the Clean Water Act, 2006; I'll save the best for last, schedule 5, Highway Traffic Act—when I say “best,” I mean most egregious; schedule 9, Species Conservation Act, 2025; and schedule 11.

All right. We'll talk about the environment first. We know that this government does not have a good track record on the environment. We know you can't mention the words “climate change,” “climate emergency.” You've killed many bills that would build a more sustainable, greener Ontario, including green jobs that you say you want to create, more jobs for Ontarians. The environmental community does not have a lot of faith or trust in this government.

So, of course, naturally, their antennae go up when they see things like schedule 1, the Clean Water Act, 2006, and the fact that it removes all regulatory power from the Lieutenant Governor in Council to the minister. There's just so much extraordinary power being given to ministers. They're probably sweating at night and don't sleep because of all of this extra power.

If we're looking at section 22 within schedule 1, it's like a catch-all, actually, for standardized policies and actions. You're not thinking of how water is so important regionally and thinking about watersheds.

Again, we've talked about this government and their marks in science class and whether they passed science, biology, when we talk about the Endangered Species Act that I will get to it later, but what about geography and water? We know the way it interacts with community: Water is all local.

So when you're dealing with source water protection, the framework follows 121 recommendations made in the Walkerton inquiry. Source water protection plans contain a series of locally developed policies that, as they are implemented, protect existing and future sources of municipal drinking water. We know how important drinking water is. I think we learned the hard way on that in Ontario. So why mess with that? I don't know who over there thinks they're an expert in this to make changes.

Section 34 is about deadlines. It provides that “if the minister does not exercise an option set out in subsection 29(1) or (2), as the case may be, within 120 days after the

source protection authority submits proposed amendments under subsection 34(4), or within the prescribed period, the proposed amendments are deemed to be approved.”

Look, I'm all for deadlines and hard deadlines are generally good, but because of your track record and people losing faith, this absolutely could be misused as an approval mechanism, instead of allowing for proper due process which can take more than 120 days for significant reviews.

1620

Section 30: Public awareness is a good thing. However, awareness comes after the approval, so it's kind of backwards. It doesn't generally allow for repeals if necessary or desired by the public.

Back to schedule 1: What's proposed is the repeal of existing 43 of the act, combined with its proposed sections 22 and 42. They're designed to partially grandfather existing activities that threaten the safety of drinking water, as long as they are currently permitted through prescribed instruments: conservation authority permits, aggregate permits etc. We know how you treated conservation authorities. I'm not sure you see the value in them. You cut off most of their powers. So here we go again with a lack of respect for water, really.

Right now, section 43(1) allows for the source water protection committee to force existing activities to stop or to prescribe how they must change. That is because it requires that the body that issued a prescribed instrument—for example, the EPA or CAA permit—before the source water protection plan came into effect and would amend the permit etc., to conform to the source water protection plan the committee creates, including a plan which prohibits the activity altogether. Bill 56 would remove that requirement—I don't know why we would be doing that—and it would also remove the requirement to amend existing permits to comply and replace 42.1, which applies the new source water protection plan only to request for new or amended permits for a periodic review on a timeline prescribed by the minister. There are no requirements to immediately modify the permit.

Another prominent concern of this bill is that Bill 56 would essentially require that the source water protection plan, the SWPP, delegate any decision over what restrictions must be applied to new activities permitted by a prescribed instrument to the body authorized to issue that specific instrument. So unless the SWPP prohibits an activity outright, Bill 56 would seem to limit the power of the source water protection plan to directly prescribe restrictions, other than outright prohibitions for activities permitted through prescribed instruments, even when it's a new permit being issued. Just as with the grandfathered permits, this delegation to the main issuing body creates serious risk because a lot of the expertise and familiarity with the specific source of water in question rests with the source-water-protection committee, and because the issuing bodies for permits may have conflicting mandates, it can reduce source water protection to just one of the many factors. That's it for water.

We're going to schedule 9: Species Conservation Act. Okay, this is Groundhog Day and giving me nightmares of Bill 5. We know how that ended up. The changes for the bill's stated purpose from providing "for the protection and conservation of species" is being changed to "for the protection and conservation of species at risk." So obviously you don't care about all species, just species at risk. And we know how you feel about that because the Committee on the Status of Species at Risk in Ontario, COSSARO, you have shown no respect for, through Bill 5. They are experts in their field with years and years of experience and knowledge and you are not. Now you're allowing the minister to decide which species at risk are classified by COSSARO through Bill 5. And who's now accountable if a species is excluded from that list and then suffers dramatic loss? You're coming up with this Species Conservation Act that you just pulled out of a hat at a birthday party, I guess, and we know the Species Conservation Act only protects the species where it sleeps and where it lays its eggs, and nothing in between. So unless the Blanding's turtle can, I don't know, parachute from its home to where it's going to lay its eggs or use Harry Potter floo powder, it doesn't make sense. And I really question your science teachers, or maybe your attendance in science class.

Last night, you could have come to the—Ontario Nature was here. They had a fantastic reception. They had some species at risk. They had a spotted turtle, they had a Blanding's turtle, and unfortunately, the minister couldn't come. It would have been the perfect spot to speak to key stakeholders. They're not the enemy. They're trying to preserve biodiversity in this province. I think many of you over there care about nature or green spaces. You've maybe been to a park once or twice. Maybe you have a cottage on a lake, probably, or you've been invited to one, with a friend of yours who might have received some skills development funding? Who knows? But it's just not making any sense, your grasp of how nature works.

Actually, this government seems to be following the United States. For a government who is so anti-tariffs, as we all are, and anti the leader down south to us—you speak about it all the time—you're following the United States in your lead when it comes to slashing environmental protections.

Red tape efficiencies: I'm all for that. I'm a doer; I'm a worker bee; I'm a get-'er-done girl. But not when it's compromising due process and putting things at risk and ridding our laws in our province of protections. It's actual tunnel vision, and autocratic decisions like in the US, giving way too many extraordinary powers to the ministers and bypassing permits and assessments. We're elected as members of provincial Parliament. We're not emperors or empresses or czars. There are rules and regulations, and the law should apply to you.

Also, there's a fear that the bogus Species-Conservation-Act-related changes to the fish and wildlife act, the freedom-of-information act, the Kawartha Highlands act and the Lake Simcoe Protection Act, and it will all dilute these protections.

So that is the environment. And now we'll go over to saving the best—worst, I guess; worst, I should say—worst part of the bill to last.

Schedule 5, the Highway Traffic Act, which my colleagues have spoken about, removing speed cameras: Where's the logic in that? Where is the logic? We'll first start about the continued meddling in municipal affairs. Many—some of you—people in this chamber were municipal councillors, reeves, mayors. It's great to have that experience and that, but we're MPPs and the middle P is "provincial," just for the record. So why we repeatedly meddle in municipalities is beyond me, because we have enough to do to clean up this province, provincially. So let's stay in our lane, okay?

The Premier and I were at Toronto city hall together, working pretty well together on some issues. But we're not there anymore. So leave Toronto city hall—Toronto city councillors, the mayor—leave the mayors and municipally elected politicians to their own affairs and let's deal with our affairs. Let's stop meddling and wasting time, money and energy on that.

1630

And this whole talk about, oh, other traffic calming measures: Give me a break, honestly. They're already there. We're already doing that. Personally, speed bumps, they work for a hot minute, really. What works? Roundabouts work, actually. It's tricky to do when you don't have a lot of land in a city like Toronto, downtown—believe me; I wanted to put some in—but what works are speed cameras. It's proven. So I just don't know why this government keeps trying to destroy things that are working well instead of fixing things that are not. It's speed cameras today and—what is it? Is it crosswalks tomorrow? Crosswalks, well, they kind of hold people up. They hold up traffic and whatnot, hold up cars, so who knows what it will be with this government.

You have, as my colleagues have mentioned, the report from SickKids hospital. I might remind you that it's a globally renowned children's hospital. I don't think they could have any better of a reputation than they have worldwide. So, when SickKids hospital is telling you that speed cameras work and they help prevent injuries and they significantly reduce speeding in Toronto school zones where our most vulnerable population commutes, plays—and I'm sure if you don't have children yourself, you have nieces or nephews, neighbours, godchildren or even the pages. Look at the pages. Think of them. We want them to be safe around their schools. So, why would we mess with something that works, has been proven over and over and over again to work? So you've got SickKids telling you that.

Then this government claims they're friends of the police—a lot of support there—and then you have the Ontario police chiefs, and they are voicing their support for speed cameras. They've come out there. They've been on the news, the radio, and they're telling you they work, so leave them. And what are you doing? You're trying to ignore them. You're trying to ignore the hospital, SickKids, and you're trying to ignore the police chiefs.

I wonder how many schools are in your ridings and if you've been out to them recently. Have you spoken to the parent councils? Because you just wait until the parent councils get going on this, and the kids, actually, get going on this, and not just around schools, but around seniors' homes. Any vulnerable population, any pedestrian, has the right to walk safely on our streets.

I actually was down at Toronto city hall the other day. I was down there for extended producer responsibility—trash, recycling that's coming down the pipe. That's another topic. But I was down there and there just happened to be on the agenda randomly the automatic speed enforcement topic. You should have heard the councillors, right, left and centre. It's not a partisan issue. In fact, one of the furthest-right councillors, from Etobicoke, voted to keep them. So, I'm not sure where you're getting this idea from.

You have the big-city mayors and the chair, Burlington mayor, Marianne Meed Ward. She's been all over the news. She has actually challenged and encouraged the Premier to come on a talk with her and debate her, and that hasn't happened. The Burlington mayor, big-city mayors, along with many, many other mayors all over Ontario are against the removal of the speed cameras. So, I don't know, don't you want to work together with your mayors instead of just scrapping a problem that you think is a problem? It's not a problem. But instead of that, why not work to tweak it if you feel it needs tweaking? I mean, I think it's working fabulously, and lives are being saved.

As I said, you have councillors from all over political leanings. You have Councillor Mike Colle—he used to be here with you. He called the decision to scrap the cameras “gut-wrenching” and predicted it would put children and other vulnerable road users at risk. And he called it “a real dark day.” Actually, I was there; I think he was ready to swear about this.

And you have Councillor Fletcher rejecting the claims that the speed bumps are a better alternative to cameras. We know that is absolute bogus. She says the Premier “needs to do his homework”—and not just his science homework, his traffic homework. And Councillor Stephen Holyday—again, backing speed cameras.

I would encourage you to speak to your mayors, your councillors, your parent councils, because we know the difference between an injury and a fatality is about 10 kilometres. When I was on city council, we lowered the speed limits—I was proud of that—on residential streets in the Toronto-East York area to 30 kilometres. Families were happy about that. So was I and so were the other members of council who passed it. That's our job, to protect Ontarians. That's why we're here. So why would we put them at risk? Honestly, guys, none of us want that on our heads. We do not want anyone injured. It's already crazy enough out there on the streets. Why make it worse?

One thing we haven't talked about is jobs. You pride yourself on jobs. You're talking about that. Oh, you're creating all these jobs—even though you're not creating it in the green economy, that's for sure. And we have how many people unemployed in Ontario already?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's 800,000.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: It's 800,000. How many people do you think work at the city of Toronto in transportation services? There are like 100 jobs, right? So what's going to happen with the speed camera stuff? Are you just going to redeploy them to put in bumps everywhere, speed bumps? That's not going to work.

We have to leave the speed cameras there. We have to leave them in school zones. We want to keep Ontarians safe. And here's the thing: You call it a cash grab—oh, my God, that phrase is just absolutely bonkers. A cash grab? It's not a cash grab. Here's the point: If you don't want to pay the fine and you don't want to pay the money, don't speed. It's as simple as that—cause and effect; natural repercussions.

So let's get together and let's work on things, fixing the things that are broken in Ontario and not destroying or meddling with the things that are working well.

1640

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Mr. Billy Pang: We know that the opposition have a track record of punishing Ontarians by raising taxes and all cash-grab measures to achieve their ideology.

I googled from different directions to find what are the good measures to calm traffic down: speed bumps, humps and tables; traffic circles; neck-downs, chokers; narrow roads; raised intersections, change of road texture; direction changes. A speed cam never showed.

While the member of the opposition keeps saying that I don't understand, I believe the ideology of the member blocks him from looking into the real-time solution. They would rather punish Ontarians.

We support municipalities to build traffic-calming measures. So will the opposition put down their ideology to support our—

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Response?

Mr. Stephen Blais: If that member and this government consider traffic fines as a cash grab, I'd like to ask them why they increased traffic fines in their last version of a traffic safety bill—I believe it was called the MOMS Act—and they increased traffic fines for certain speeding-related penalties.

I'd also like to ask the member if he knows how much a roundabout costs. A recent roundabout built in Orléans, a two-lane road into a four-lane road at the corner in front of a school—\$10 million for one roundabout. Do you know how Ottawa is paying for that \$10-million roundabout? From the fines that are collected from the people speeding that are forcing the roundabout to be built. So you can ask all of Ontarians to pay for that, or you can ask for the offenders to pay for that. I would ask the offenders pay the cost of their offence.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Sometimes this place really defies logic. I mean, I feel like this is a Monty Python skit right now.

For the love of humanity, people are breaking the law. They're choosing their rights as a driver over the rights of pedestrians and community members. They are breaking the law; they're getting a fine. Where's the tough-on-law and tough-on-crime government that goes out to the Home Depot parking lot and chases down an alleged shoplifter—vigilante justice—here? Where is the outrage for children and for community members who are being hit by cars? Honestly, why the flip-flopping on this? I mean, I understand that nothing comes out of your mouths unless you've polled on it.

But I want to say: The jail system and the justice system is broken, but do you think that this is why this government does not want to throw people in jail or at least fine them when they're putting their rights as drivers over the rights of people that are in our communities?

Mr. Stephen Blais: This is, of course, another example of tough talk and weak action. This is a staple of this government. They want to talk tough; they want to look tough on fighting crime. The Premier wants to put on his cape and go get shoplifters at Home Depot, but what he doesn't want to do is actually ensure that people who are breaking the law every day pay the consequences for their actions.

Consequences for actions should be a Conservative ideological point of view. It's astonishing to me that this government would ask all Ontarians to pay for traffic-calming measures that are forced upon communities by a small group of people who speed and speed excessively, instead of asking those people who speed and speed excessively to pay for them.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Ms. Lee Fairclough: Thank you to all three of the speakers today. My question is for the member from Orléans. You outlined a number of studies. It's pretty compelling. Cameras work to reduce speeds. We see less injury, and we see less accidents. I know in my own riding, with the two cameras in Mimico near schools, we've seen a reduction in a matter of months in the number of people speeding.

My question to you is, when we've got such compelling evidence, why would we possibly consider supporting a bill or even writing a bill such as this?

Mr. Stephen Blais: It's baffling to me. I am aware of the speed camera—I think it's in Etobicoke or somewhere in Toronto—that keeps getting cut down or otherwise vandalized because it's catching so many people who are speeding. I understand the Premier comes from Etobicoke and several ministerial vehicles were caught speeding. I'm not sure if there is a correlation between those two things, but there seems to be a correlation between the interpretation from people that cutting down that camera is showing their discontent.

I would ask the government, the Premier and the people from Etobicoke and Toronto, if the city of Toronto were to take the Premier's advice and install a whole bunch of speed bumps on that stretch of road—because it's not just one speed bump, Madam Speaker. You have to install

three, four, five, six, seven speed bumps to actually slow down traffic. If speed bumps get installed on that strip of road, what kind of protests in Etobicoke, on his home turf, does the Premier expect to find?

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Mr. Joseph Racinsky: As members are aware, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business recently gave our government an A-minus when it comes to reducing red tape and reducing our regulatory burden, which is the highest in our province's history and a significant upgrade from the C that they awarded to the previous Liberal government, which was one of the lowest in our province's history. Ontario is actually now recognized as one of the top three provinces in Canada when it comes to our efforts in reducing red tape.

Can the members of the Liberal Party break from their past, cut red tape and join our government, join the Canadian Federation of Independent Business in reducing red tape and supporting this bill?

Mr. Stephen Blais: What our party and our caucus have done to support small businesses is to propose a massive cut in small business taxes so that small businesses and the entrepreneurs who run them can save money. They can save that money and pocket it for the profitability of the business. They can use that savings to hire our kids or other neighbours in part-time work. They can use those savings to expand and fortify their business.

That is a proposal that our caucus and our finance critic put forward. That is a proposal that every single member of the government voted against. They voted against a small business tax cut because they are the high-tax Tories, Madam Speaker, and we are the tax-cutting Liberals.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: My question is for the member from Orléans. We know it's going to cost municipalities an enormous amount of money to remove all of these speed cameras that were really the inspiration of the Conservatives in the first place, but I'm also interested in the problems for EMS vehicles that arise out of speed bump after speed bump after speed bump. Now only does it slow them down from getting to where they need to be, but I believe it also damages their vehicles. Can you speak to that, please?

Mr. Stephen Blais: As we debated earlier today and last evening, we heard that seconds count in an emergency. That was related to the AED bill and the labour bill. Seconds do count in an emergency. If the police, fire and ambulance are slowing down not to go over one speed bump but, as I said, four or five or six in a row, that is going to delay response times, and we're delaying response times to schools in sensitive areas and neighbourhoods.

But you're right, it will cause problems for people's suspensions. The Premier's friends who drive and apparently like to drive really fast through our neighbourhoods are going to have huge repair bills from all that suspension damage done to their cars and trucks. I expect

that when the city of Toronto puts speed bumps on all these roads and all the Premier's friends start having to go get big repair bills at body shops for their suspensions and other damage, maybe the Premier will have a program to rip out speed bumps too. It's hard to know. He does like to flip-flop, so I guess we'll see.

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

1650

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: It is an honour to rise in the House today to speak in strong support of the Building a More Competitive Economy Act, introduced by the Minister of Red Tape Reduction. I'm going to split the time with my colleague and PA from Wellington-Halton Hills. Thank you for your great work on this bill.

I want to thank the minister—the wonderful Minister Khanjin—for the leadership and the vision, as well as the dedicated team at the ministry who have worked tirelessly to bring this legislation forward. I would also like to acknowledge my colleague the member for Wellington-Halton Hills, whose collaboration and commitment have been invaluable throughout this process.

Our common effort to cut unnecessary red tape and focus on outcomes continues to make a real difference for the people of Ontario. We are living in a time of global uncertainty, with individuals, businesses, hospitals and entire communities facing immense challenges.

This bill is about protecting Ontario, removing outdated, unnecessary and frustrating red tape that stands in the way of progress. It is about getting qualified health professionals in the hospitals, neighbourhood clinics and our communities faster and building the critical infrastructure we all rely on sooner, without adding to the cost of living for Ontario families.

As a parliamentary assistant to the minister, I have had the opportunity to engage directly with so many professionals, including doctors, foreign-trained doctors, foreign-trained nurses, IMGs—international medical graduates—and all sorts of people, and to engage directly with the families and also local leaders from across our province. And what I hear, time and time again, is simple: Common-sense reforms are needed. They are needed now.

Let me start with one of the most impactful changes in this legislation: the expansion of Ontario's as-of-right initiative. We know Ontario's health care system has been under incredible pressure. Staffing shortages have left hospitals short-handed and patients waiting too long for care, and yet thousands of qualified professionals across Canada are ready to serve but, until now, have been blocked by outdated restrictions, rules and bureaucracy.

This is an important bill. This bill will fill the gap in the system without compromising patient care. We are expanding as of right to 16 additional health professions, including physiotherapists, psychologists, pharmacists and so on, so that health-regulated professionals in good standing elsewhere in Canada can begin practising here in Ontario without first jumping through months of—or maybe it's a year—duplicating red tape and bureaucracy.

In my own riding, recently, I met one of the internationally trained graduate doctors. I met many during my career for the last 20 years, hundreds and hundreds of foreign-trained people. I recently met this one—it's very interesting—an internationally trained doctor who trained in Central America and completed her residency in the United States. She told me that she would love to return home to Ontario, because it's a community and she has family here, but the licensing barriers here are so difficult. She simply couldn't afford to wait months, or even years, to complete the process and get the licence done to get into practice.

This bill will give professionals like her a way forward—skilled, qualified people ready to serve, no longer held back by red tape and bureaucracy. It has also strengthened interprovincial mobility, making it easier to attract more health professionals into Ontario. That means more doctors, more nurses and specialists where we desperately need them most.

This is red tape reduction in action—common sense changes delivering real results.

Madam Speaker, since being elected—our Premier, our minister, and our government—we have continuously advocated for fixing this broken system and establishing a faster, fairer pathway for these professionals to practise in our great province.

Let me be clear: These changes are not a free-for-all. They are backed by strong public protection requirements, oversight from regulatory colleges, and a clear focus on safety and accountability.

We have also continued to support locally trained professionals through programs like the Ontario Learn and Stay Grant, which gives students financial help when they commit to working in underserved communities after graduation.

Together, this reform tackles the workforce crisis with agency and action, not with excuses.

Speed cameras—another key element members have talked about for hours and hours. I don't want to go into that in too much detail. I was a Markham councillor. We found solutions, not with speed cameras but with so many other things.

Another key element in this bill is the removal of automated speed enforcement cameras. What started as a public safety tool has, in many cases, become nothing more than a revenue-generation machine for municipalities.

Let me be clear: Our government is committed to road safety, especially in school zones. We have strengthened the penalties for street racing, impaired driving, dangerous driving, and unsafe driving through legislation like the Safer Roads and Communities Act. But speed cameras that issue thousands of tickets without reducing the actual speeding are not improving safety. That's what we call a cash grab, plain and simple.

In my riding, Markham-Thornhill, our office recently received a call from seniors, law-abiding citizens. Seniors are not speeding people. Seniors are very responsible people. The husband, the lady—his wife called me. She

received a speeding ticket from a municipal camera for more than a couple hundred dollars. She wasn't disputing the fact—she just couldn't understand why, as a senior on a fixed income, there was no room for discretion or compassion. She asked, "How can this be fair? Isn't the point to stop speeding, not to punish seniors with limited means, weeks after the fact?" She is absolutely right.

This legislation will ban the use of ASE cameras where they are clearly being used as revenue tools, not safety solutions. Instead, we will support municipalities with real-time preventive, traffic-calming measures like speed bumps, flashing signs, raised crosswalks and curb extensions to slow drivers down before they break the law. We've done it; it is working in so many municipalities, including my municipality, Markham. This is about using common sense and protecting people's pocketbooks. A speed bump will slow drivers down right away. A ticket in the mail three weeks later doesn't help a child cross the street safely today.

Madam Speaker, let me be clear: We are not abandoning safety; we are improving it, and we are doing it while protecting the taxpayers, standing up for seniors, and putting the focus on preventive measures that actually keep communities safe.

This bill shows our government's commitment to cutting red tape and putting people first, whether it is recruiting health care professionals faster or improving traffic safety without unfair costs to families and so many residents in Ontario. We are making it easier for skilled professionals to serve where they're needed, and standing up for taxpayers.

I am proud to support this legislation. I'm proud to be part of a team delivering real results for Ontarians. I urge all members of this House to do the same thing.

1700

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): I recognize the member from Wellington–Halton Hills.

Mr. Joseph Racinsky: It's always a privilege to rise in this House, and especially a privilege today to rise in support of the Building a More Competitive Economy Act, 2025, and to speak on behalf of Minister Andrea Khanjin, Ontario's Minister of Red Tape Reduction.

Before I begin, I also want to thank my colleague the incredible member for Markham–Thornhill for all of his efforts in in reducing red tape, specifically with his passion in health care, which is of course a really important part of this piece of legislation.

I want to recognize the unwavering leadership of Premier Doug Ford, whose vision and determination as Captain Canada continues to protect Ontario and stand up for Ontario. Under Premier Ford, our government has made it clear: We are here to serve the people, not the bureaucracy. Government regulation should help people, not slow them down.

The global economy is shifting rapidly. Tariffs, inflation and supply chain disruptions have created uncertainty for businesses and workers alike. There is a freeze on business globally right now, but Ontario, under Premier Ford's leadership, has met these challenges head-on. Since

2018, our government has eliminated over 14,000 unnecessary regulations, introduced 16 red tape reduction packages and saved businesses and families \$1.2 billion and 1.8 million hours annually. To protect Ontario, every dollar counts. Every minute matters.

Not only that, but Ontario has the lowest regulatory burden in Canada per capita and is among the top-two provinces leading the nation for our work to eliminate red tape. This means faster services with less paperwork. These are not just statistics; they represent real time and money back in taxpayers' pockets.

This legislation is built on a simple but powerful principle: When Ontario's businesses succeed, Ontario succeeds. All of the services we depend on—education, health care, social services—without a strong economy, we wouldn't be able to invest in these things.

The act, if passed, will cut duplication, reduce costs and streamline rules that hinder growth. We are modernizing permitting systems, speeding up approvals and aligning processes across ministries. These changes mean less time spent on paperwork and more time creating jobs and driving innovation.

Recently, I was able to host a red tape reduction round table in my riding focused on agriculture. Whether it was the dairy farmers or the grain farmers, a common theme that I heard was that they want to spend more time out in the fields caring for their animals, caring for their crops, and not in their offices doing paperwork. From manufacturers in Halton Hills to farmers in Wellington county, this legislation helps businesses across Ontario compete globally and spend more time growing their businesses instead of doing unnecessary paperwork.

Premier Ford's leadership has made Ontario a beacon for investment and opportunity. Competitiveness begins with people. That's why this legislation continues our work to strengthen labour mobility.

With as-of-right recognition, expanding labour mobility for skilled workers from across Canada can begin working in Ontario faster. The result: We will be able to build the critical infrastructure we all need and depend on. Protecting Ontario means protecting the people who build our province by removing the barriers that slow them down—no more delays, no more red tape. If you're qualified to work in another province, you're qualified to work here.

We are proposing to expand the as-of-right framework in health care to include 16 additional regulated health professions. This is a game-changer for our public health care system. If passed, we will allow more Canadian registered health professionals in good standing to work in Ontario immediately. Expanding this model in health care will allow more nurses, pharmacists and other registered professionals to serve the people of Ontario better.

This bill also proposes automatic recognition, a first-in-Canada approach that will automatically recognize Canadian registered nurses' and physicians' credentials. By cutting this red tape, our government is making health care more accessible by getting health care professionals to start working faster. These reforms reflect Premier Ford's

commitment to unlocking the full potential of Ontario's workforce.

One of the biggest challenges that businesses face is navigating outdated and unpredictable approval timelines. This legislation modernizes Ontario's permitting framework to create faster, clearer and more reliable processes for major projects. The Ministry of Red Tape Reduction will undertake a whole-of-government review of all 332 economic development permits to simplify processes and speed up approval for timelines. Using innovative tools like code of practice, permit by rule and using a shot clock, we will either eliminate or transform at least 35% of these permits.

Unlike previous governments, we are committed to reducing red tape, not adding to it. Let me be clear: We are cutting delays, not corners. This review and transformation will not compromise public health, safety or the environment. This is how we protect Ontario: By getting rid of red tape to enhance our competitiveness, secure new investment and strengthen our position as a leading jurisdiction to do business in the G7.

The philosophy is simple: A fast and predictable regulatory environment will help lower risk for businesses, attract investment and job creation for nation-building projects and create economic growth in strategic sectors like critical minerals, forestry and energy. This streamlining of the permits and approvals will be buttressed with new digital permitting applications, to improve business experience.

As I said a moment ago, Speaker, we are taking a whole-of-government approach to this review. We are leaving no stone left unturned. Beginning with the mining sector, our government will build a centralized and digital system to get permits businesses need through a centralized, one-window portal. This helps to ensure that housing, manufacturing and infrastructure projects can move ahead without years of delay, while maintaining Ontario's gold-standard protections for health, safety and the environment.

Premier Ford understands that good policy doesn't have to be slow policy. That's important; let me repeat that: Premier Ford understands that good policy doesn't have to be slow policy. We are raising expectations for government performance and accountability. This is what my residents expect in Wellington-Halton Hills: a high bar for government.

Ontario is leading the way in innovation, advanced manufacturing and clean technology. Through special economic zones, expanded buy-Ontario initiatives, and strategic investments in critical minerals, we are building a resilient, self-reliant economy. Premier Ford's leadership ensures Ontario remains competitive in the face of global pressures and positions our province as a powerhouse for the industries of tomorrow.

Speaker, we are facing unprecedented times of competition. Like I mentioned earlier, we are having a freeze on investment around the world, and we need to be ready, when that investment is unleashed, so that Ontario is the

spot to invest. We need to be the most competitive place to invest in all of the G7.

These reforms are already making a difference. Farmers are receiving faster approvals, manufacturers are hiring more workers and small business owners are spending less time on paperwork and more time growing their businesses.

Just this week, I visited S Fab in my riding, where they produce filters for the generators that are attached to data centres. It's manufacturing, major manufacturing, and over 100 employees already in the plant in Georgetown. People are investing in Ontario and building things in Ontario. These are real wins for real people, and they're the result of our government cutting needless red tape and delivering results.

Speaker, the Building a More Competitive Economy Act is more than legislation; it's a blueprint for Ontario's future, one that streamlines government, looks for efficiencies and ensures that government actually works for people out there in the real world. Under Premier Ford and Minister Khanjin, our government is driving investment, creating jobs and restoring confidence in Ontario's economic leadership.

This bill is not deregulation; it is modernization at its best. We're cutting red tape, not corners; we're building a province that leads, not lags; and we're ensuring that Ontario works better for people and smarter for business, because a stronger, more competitive economy means a stronger Ontario for everyone.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

1710

Ms. Peggy Sattler: It's interesting that within the contents of this so-called economic development bill, the clause that has caught everyone's attention is about speed cameras. And I have to say that last week, the city of London unanimously voted to support the AMO resolution that was submitted by mayors from municipalities: Burlington, Hamilton, Waterloo, Cambridge, Guelph, Brantford, Chatham-Kent and others. That resolution calls on the province to halt its plan to remove speed cameras. It notes that in London, there are seven speed cameras deployed in school zones, and those cameras have resulted in an average decrease in speed between five and seven kilometres per hour.

So my question is, why is the Premier ignoring calls from the mayor of London and mayors of cities across this province to allow municipalities to continue with automated speed enforcement?

Mr. Joseph Racinsky: Thank you to the member from London for that question.

Speed cameras were supposed to make our roads safer, but instead they've become ticket traps, sending fines weeks after the fact, doing little to stop dangerous driving in the moment. In my personal riding of Halton Hills, we had a camera and that one camera, in one month, issues 9,000 fines. Speaker, those are people who sped. The camera did nothing to stop them from speeding. The only thing that camera did was make them poorer.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Ms. Laura Smith: Thank you for the member's remarks. I was interested in his comments about as-of-right. I was just recently at a round table and they talked about accessibility and getting people into the jobs faster, especially in another province. Recognizing that labour mobility reform allows professionals from other provinces to begin working here within 10 days, we're kind of filing down the barriers and delivering a workforce in Ontario.

How would you say that these mobility reforms are going to be a game-changer for Ontario?

Mr. Joseph Racinsky: Well, thank you to the member from Thornhill for that fantastic question.

Labour mobility is so critical for our province. This is the best province to live and work in. We have people coming from all across the country, all across the world, to be here in our fantastic province. If those people are qualified, if they're qualified from the places that they're coming from under the regulations that are in the colleges, they should be allowed to get right to work.

We have so many communities that are in need of professionals. This bill will allow those people to not languish on wait-lists, waiting for the applications to be approved. This will get that done faster so they can get working right away.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I was interested in the conversations about how Ontario will welcome health professionals from any other provinces to come. I'm interested to hear our community health centre, nurse practitioner-led clinic, family health teams, Aboriginal health access centre—none of them have seen budget increases. None of them are able to hire. Same thing with our hospitals, which have to make do with their budget for the next three years.

Do you think that those new professionals coming in will all be hired by the private, for-profit clinics that your government wants to open?

Mr. Joseph Racinsky: Like I said—and, Speaker, thank you to the member for that question—our government is focused on getting those people to work right away across the province. We need them working in the north, we need them working in rural areas like mine and this bill and these changes is focused on getting them to work as soon as possible.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Mr. Ted Hsu: My question to the member from Wellington-Halton Hills concerns schedule 10, which he mentioned in his speech. That is a schedule which allows the government to loosen the requirements for people to use certain professional titles.

I want to ask him about psychologists and whether the government has any plans to intervene in the proposal by the college that regulates psychologists to loosen the requirements to practise as a psychologist in Ontario and, in particular, not requiring a PhD and reducing the number of certain exams and certain years of experience. Does the

government—maybe through this legislation; I don't know, but perhaps the member can tell me—plan to make an intervention in this issue?

Mr. Joseph Racinsky: Thank you to the member for that question. I just want to remind the Legislature again of the Liberal record of failing when it comes to red tape: compliance hit \$33,000 per business, per year, the highest amount in Canada. They had a legacy of overregulation: a total of \$15 billion in annual regulatory costs, twice as much as any other province.

Under the current system, professionals with doctorate degrees are fined or suspended for misusing the title of “doctor,” even when they're peers in other fields. So the minister, under this legislation, can now exempt qualified professionals from title restrictions. This ends unfair enforcement and respects earned credentials.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Mr. Brian Riddell: People in my riding are very concerned about today's competitive economic landscape and how crucial it is for us to continue to cut unnecessary red tape wherever possible because it's burdening individuals and businesses in Ontario. While the previous Liberal-NDP coalition government layered on endless regulation and stifled growth, our government is taking bold, decisive action to foster business growth and save people and businesses time and money.

Can the member please outline how our government's red tape reduction efforts are delivering results for the people and businesses of Ontario?

And I would just like to mention the great job you're doing in your riding. You're filling big shoes.

Mr. Joseph Racinsky: Thank you to the member for Cambridge for that question, and thank you for your leadership in standing up for your constituents and ensuring that, again, government works for them and that we're not bogging down individuals and businesses in unnecessary red tape.

We have done so much for red tape as a government—again, \$1.2 billion saved by reducing red tape; 1.8 million hours. That means we've got more money in people's pockets so that they can manage their daily expenses, save and reinvest in the economy. Businesses can use these savings to expand, innovate and create more jobs. We're going to continue, through this legislation and beyond, making it easier and more affordable for people and businesses in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): I recognize the member from Spadina-Fort York.

Mr. Chris Glover: Thank you for the comments today. When I sit in this House, many times, I think about how the decisions we make here are life-and-death decisions. In 2013, I was a school board trustee, and on the very first day of school that year—and many of you will remember this—there was a child, a 14-year-old girl, who was killed on the way to school.

The evidence has shown—SickKids did a study, and it showed that speed cameras reduce speeding in school zones by 45%. The danger of passing the legislation as it

stands would be to remove speed cameras, and that reduction in speeding can potentially imperil a child's life.

So my question is to the members and, really, to all of the government members: Please don't support that part of the bill. Will you remove that section of the bill about removing speed cameras in order to protect our kids in Ontario?

Mr. Joseph Racinsky: Thank you to the member for that question. The answer is no. We are going to stand up for the taxpayers of this province. Again, as I mentioned earlier, we want to stop speeding at the point of entry and have a system that effectively removes speeding.

1720

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): I recognize the member from Scarborough Southwest.

Ms. Doly Begum: Speaker, I thought a lot about what I wanted to share and how I wanted to start debating here this afternoon, because there are a lot of things that I wanted to say. And this bill touches on a few topics that are very important to my constituents. It's always an honour to rise and speak for the good people of Scarborough Southwest who elected me to represent this riding.

Growing up in Scarborough, I didn't ever imagine I would be standing here, because I had a childhood that was very difficult. My father was not able to work. My mom and my dad worked really hard to get by and there were days where we couldn't really make ends meet.

The reason behind that was because, just a year after we immigrated to Canada, my father was in a car accident. And by that, I mean he was a pedestrian who was hit by a vehicle. Actually, that vehicle could not stop. It resulted in him getting hit where he was actually thrown to another vehicle which then dragged to another vehicle. There were three vehicles that were involved. It was a cold, cold night in the middle of winter. The cars were speeding—the common factor, they were speeding.

My father ended up in St. Michael's Hospital. He spent quite a few years in St. Michael's Hospital and then in rehab from his brain surgery because parts of his skull were broken. There was concrete that was actually stuck inside. His hips had to be put back together. He could not eat for days. He was on liquid diet, and that was even difficult. And then he was in a wheelchair for a long time. I've seen my mom push that wheelchair. We were in an apartment, and it was difficult because you would go up the ramp and we were young and we could not help as much. I just saw this young woman, a young mother, trying to make ends meet and make sure that her husband was able to get back up.

Today my father is able to walk, thank God—and to the entire amazing team at St. Michael's Hospital, the wonderful team at Toronto Rehab and all the PSWs, the nurses, every single person who worked so hard to help him get back up. It was a long journey for us. There were times I would come home and my dad would say, "I'm so sorry I couldn't pick you up from the station" or "I can't drive you." He would be really emotional about it because he can't drive.

Right after his accident, we found out that when you have surgery on the right side of your brain, the left side of your body is impacted. So because of that, the left side of his brain does not take in any information, which means that he's numb from different parts of his left side, but it also means that his left vision is completely gone. When he walks, he sees half. Therefore, he's legally blind, so he can't drive. That accident destroyed his future, but it also destroyed the life that we could have had as a family.

Over the years, I have spoken with so many families who have faced similar, sometimes worse circumstances because their family members or they themselves faced a car accident like that. The single most important factor when it comes to pedestrian safety is speed. When we lower speed in our communities, especially in safety zones, in school zones, it means we make those roads, those communities, those neighbourhoods, safe for everybody. It means that we give families like mine and like many others that opportunity.

I've shared stories of family members, of folks in my riding who have been in these situations. I think it's the fourth anniversary this month, actually, if I'm not mistaken, of the death of Nadia Mozumder, who died in front of her school by a distracted driver.

Speaker, today, as I debate Bill 56, I want to focus on this schedule, schedule 5, because there are three things I want this government to listen very carefully. First is that speed is the single most important factor when it comes to creating safer roads, safer communities. The fact that this government wants to completely eliminate speed cameras and take away the autonomy from the municipalities to even implement—in school zones—it just sounds absurd, sounds so ridiculous and it sounds so uninformed. I would hope that constituents who are—and I'm sure constituents in their ridings are speaking to them, and I really hope that they listen to those stories of constituents in their ridings, the people that they represent. Because when someone tells you—when data, when research tells you that speed is the single most important factor in terms of pedestrian safety and we have so many accidents and serious injuries if not deaths in our communities, and you want to completely—you don't even want to have a debate about it. You don't want to have a real conversation. And if you're actually serious about this and say, "You know what? Let's understand where we need to have speed cameras, and maybe this area, we don't need it"—they don't even want to have that conversation, Speaker. They just want to completely eliminate it. To me, that doesn't sound like a very intelligent, well-informed way of making policies.

I came to this space and I'm doing this job because I care for my community, and I hope that everyone else who got elected, who are here, are doing it for the same reasons. We want to create safe communities and, right now, safety is one of the biggest issues that we're facing in all of our different neighbourhoods, but especially in Scarborough. As someone who represents Scarborough Southwest, I'm just flabbergasted. It's mind-boggling to see the government completely wanting to eradicate—complete ban. They

don't even want to understand what goes on in school zones.

And there is a measure in the bill that says the minister is going to go and put up signs. What's the sign going to say? "Don't speed"? "Slow down"? And what other measures are you going to have? Put in speed bumps? Do you know what that does for emergency vehicles? Are we going to have buses and ambulances and fire trucks having roller-coaster rides now? Not only are you making it more dangerous, but you're actually making it more difficult for emergency vehicles.

The second thing I want to highlight when it comes to data is that studies have shown that there is a 45% reduction in speed just in Toronto—which includes Scarborough—because of speed cameras. So just looking at what speed cameras have done within my community, within the city of Toronto—there has been a 45% reduction. That's a huge number when it comes to the reduction of speed in our neighbourhoods.

The third thing I want this government to focus on, to understand, is that when it comes to excessive speeding in driving—which is actually going, let's say, 20 kilometres over the speed limit; we have seen that, and we have seen the government speak very strongly against stunt driving, against speeding in some cases. I've listened to the former Minister of Transportation talk about it. I've listened to the Premier talk about it. Do you know that data actually shows that there is an 88%—88%—drop in excessive speeding because of speed cameras?

And there are people who hate speed cameras who will tell you that they have gotten a ticket and they have now learned to be better. They will get to those areas—let's say near a school, near a library or near a child care, for example; those neighbourhoods, those safety areas—and they will slow down, because they remember and they don't want to get a ticket.

1730

So, those numbers that we are hearing and the numbers that the Conservative members will give you—you can ask every single one of those individuals who has gotten a ticket, and they will tell you that they have learned to be better, especially where they got that ticket, because they did not get a repeated ticket in the same area, because they learned to be better. So if we are actually trying to create safe roads, I hope they will take away these three factors and do better.

When I shared my father's accident—guess where it was? It was in front of a library. Right in front of a library. Right now, there is there is a light there. It happened after my father's accident. That red light was put up after my father's accident. If that light was there before, maybe my father would not have gotten into that accident.

So these measures that come into place, that we have in place right now, were there for a reason. Sometimes, sadly, they were there too late for some families, for some people. But that means it's not too late for others. That means it will protect others in our communities.

I really hope that members opposite, members of the government, will reconsider and come back to the table.

We can work out different ways to make a different design. There are different ideas that people have in terms of—I had students come into my office and talk about road design and intersection design, talk about speed cameras and how we can make safer roads by really focusing on these individual factors and where they go. If we are serious about making our roads safer, and if you want to listen to your constituents, then I hope you'll come back to the table and do better.

With that, I want to share a few of the notes that I received from constituents. First, I'll start off with constituents from Scarborough Southwest, but I know you're from Scarborough–Guildwood, Speaker, and there are other members from the Conservative government here from the other ridings of Scarborough. Today, I actually compiled here notes that are from across Scarborough, because some of those constituents from other areas in Scarborough, who are represented by Conservative government members, have not heard back. So what they did was they started c.c.-ing us in those emails or forwarding those emails to us.

I want to share what those constituents have written to me about this schedule in Bill 56. First, I want to start with an email I got from Margaret. She said:

"Dear Ms. Begum,

"Again, please tell Doug Ford"—the Premier—"to mind his own business. Let the city of Toronto do what is best for Toronto. Keep the speed cameras. They work. If it generates money for the city, so be it. Speeders can pay for breaking the law. Doug Ford"—the Premier—"says it is a cash grab. Parking tickets also make money for the city and he seems okay with that. Illegal parking doesn't cause harm. Speeding does."

She actually goes on, but I want to share a few others. I want to share the next one from Alison. She says,

"Dear ... MPP Begum,

"I am a resident of Scarborough Southwest and I am writing to express my strong support for the continued use of automated speed enforcement (ASE) cameras within our municipality/province and to voice my opposition to the proposed provincial ban on the program. The automated speed enforcement program is a critical component of our local road safety strategy. Data from municipalities across Ontario demonstrates that ASE is not merely a 'cash grab' but a proven public safety measure. These cameras are strategically placed in community safety zones and near schools—areas where our most vulnerable residents, especially children, are present. Studies have shown ASE significantly reduces average speeds and improves speed limit compliance, directly contributing to a decrease in severe collisions and injuries. To remove this effective tool would be a step backward in our commitment to Vision Zero and safer streets.

"Furthermore, decisions regarding localized traffic enforcement are best made at the municipal level. Our local council and staff are best equipped to identify dangerous corridors and implement targeted solutions like ASE. Over 700 municipal speed cameras have been installed across 40 municipalities since 2019, showing

widespread local commitment. Overriding these local decisions represents an unnecessary overreach that hinders the ability of local governments to protect their residents.

"I urge you to consider the documented public safety benefits of the ASE program and listen to the concerns of the municipal associations and police organizations that support its continuation. I ask that you publicly advocate for keeping ASE, particularly in school zones, and support municipalities' right to utilize effective, data-driven safety tools to protect our communities. This effort is especially important in Scarborough, an area that has seen more than its share of deadly driving incidents due to speeding.

"Thank you for your attention to this ... matter...."

The next one is from Scarborough Centre. It's about the government's decision to remove speed cameras:

"Dear Premier Ford,

"I'm writing to urge you and the provincial government to protect the lives of children and pedestrians by reversing the ban on speed cameras.

"Police chiefs and hospitals agree that speed cameras save lives. Speed cameras reduce speeding, decrease collisions, and make our streets safer.

"You have dismissed speed cameras as a 'cash grab,' but if drivers don't break the law, they don't get fined. Why would the government allow reckless drivers to put children at risk on their way to school?

"I strongly urge you to reverse this ban on speed cameras and continue enforcing speed limits. We must make our streets safer—especially for those who are most vulnerable.

"Sincerely,

"Natalie ... Lisa ... Vivian ... Rebecca."

There are approximately 40 other emails sent to other MPPs in Scarborough, Speaker.

Another email says:

"Please please please

"Doug Ford"—the Premier—"is wrong!!! Photo radar speed cameras are not a cash grab. They do force people to slow down.

"The people complaining most are the same ones who keep getting speed tickets because they can't slow down."

If someone is breaking the law, they get a penalty for it. That's what these speed cameras do. And just to make sure that members opposite understand, within the city of Toronto—different municipalities have different thresholds, but within our community in Scarborough, for example, the average rate in terms of where the ticket is given is about 11 kilometres over the limit. If we're talking about a school zone and someone goes 11 kilometres per hour over the speed limit, do you think it's okay? Do you think that's okay to do within the school area? I'm sure everyone here will say no, and therefore they should be punished for breaking the law.

Speaker, I'm running out of time, unfortunately. This bill covers quite a few other sections that I hope I get an opportunity later on—maybe within the next stages of this bill—to speak to, particularly the health care section. But this is an omnibus bill which somehow just slides the

speed camera ban in here as well, which is very unfortunate.

And so, I hope that the government will reconsider this ban and come back to the table, because there are different ways you can implement. You can talk to municipalities and let municipalities do their job as well. Because they have the data, and when you have research that shows there is an 88% reduction in speed, for example, you don't have to look anywhere else. You can just look at the research; look at the facts.

Those who are complaining—I want you to go back and ask them whether they have gone back to the same area and went 11 or 20 kilometres over the speed limit. Because if they are being a dangerous driver, then they should be punished. There are too many people in our province who have suffered serious injuries, if not death. And we need to do better to make our communities, our roads, our neighbourhoods safer, especially when it comes to school zones and other safety areas.

1740

I thank you, Speaker, for this opportunity to share my remarks on this bill, and I hope I have an opportunity again to talk about some of the other schedules.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Mr. Stephen Blais: Thank you for the debate tonight. Thank you for sharing the story of your father. It's quite a harrowing experience that he had to go through. You very eloquently talked about the impact to him, obviously, physically and the impact it had on your family and the life that he wanted to lead, and the amazing medical treatments and post-medical treatment that he received to get back to being able to live life.

I'm wondering, based on your experience, if you can talk for a moment about the amount of taxpayer dollars spent in the hospital and medical system, and afterwards, to support your father and your family as a result of this speeding-related accident, compared to the relatively small cost of installing and maintaining a photo radar system in that particular neighbourhood.

Ms. Doly Begum: Thank you to the member from Orléans for that question.

There are big consequences. We're talking about consequences to our health care system—big costs to that—as well as the municipalities that have contracts, for example, now for these speed cameras as well. At the end of the day, it's the taxpayers who are on the hook. It's the taxpayers who are suffering, losing. If someone gets into an accident—the impact on their family, the cost to their family, the impact on our health care system, and on top of that, what it does to the provincial coffers. But all we see from this government is a waste of taxpayer dollars and disrespect for taxpayers.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Ms. Laura Smith: I listened to the member quite intently on a number of subjects, but one of the subjects that I think is so key in this bill is reviewing over 300 permits to eliminate duplication and accelerate proposals for

housing and infrastructure and economic development. These permits are holding things back, and we need to be able to accelerate things. These changes will help so many projects happen and reduce costs for businesses and municipalities. We're hearing this over and over again. The previous government had a long time to fix these problems, but it never got done. That's what we're trying to do with this bill.

Does the opposition support our efforts to streamline this approval process and reduce the red tape, or will they defend an outdated process that has held Ontario businesses back for decades?

Ms. Doly Begum: Thank you for that question. I think the question actually goes back to what we have seen with this government, with a lot of your bills in this House—because you bring these omnibus bills, where there are parts that we agree with and there are parts that we disagree with.

When it comes to supporting housing, supporting businesses, of course we want to make sure that we do not have duplicates. Of course we want to make sure that we eliminate red tape.

What I just was talking about over the last 20 minutes, sharing my own story—I think that actually creates red tape. When we talk about a bill that's trying to do some of the good things but then actually brings in something that, I think, creates red tape—because if you have dangerous roads, to me, that's red tape. You're not really creating safer communities.

It makes it difficult to support a bill that is an omnibus bill, which brings in a lot of problematic things as well.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Again, I want to say to MPP Begum, thank you for the courage to share this story—because this is what this is: stories that affect people's lives.

I want to share in this House two stories of young people who were killed: Jayne Hounslow, an eight-year-old girl who was struck and killed outside her school—her family said, “Jayne was a beautiful soul who loved and cared for people more than anyone we have known”—and 11-year-old Jude Strickland, who was struck and killed walking home from school in my riding. His family said that he was a “loyal and adventurous young man whose smile would lift your spirit.”

These losses have left a hole in the hearts of these families that will never heal. I don't understand a Premier whose primary goal is not to protect the life of young children. This should be the ultimate goal of any government, and I don't understand why this Premier is walking away from that and not listening to these stories of the tragedy that has struck these families that will go on forever.

How does it make you feel when you hear this?

Ms. Doly Begum: Thank you to the member from Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas for her remarks because it allows me to actually share what Amanda wrote to me. It's very similar to what you have shared, the

individuals, the families and the devastating story in your riding as well.

What Amanda wrote was—and I want to share, Speaker, very briefly:

“I'm very concerned about Doug Ford's plan to outlaw speed cameras in Ontario. It does not make any sense to me. The Hospital for Sick Children and various police departments have the statistics to prove that speed cameras work in reducing speed, reducing accidents and reducing the severity of injury to pedestrians struck by vehicles.

“I also do not understand why Ford continues to waste money. My money! I am a taxpayer! The speed cameras cost us taxpayers money. They can be adjusted and the penalties can be adjusted. For all we know we may be on the hook for breaking the contract early with the speed camera manufacturing company. If Ford wants to implement speed bumps and ‘roundabouts’ this will cost more money”—

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): I recognize the member from Toronto—St. Paul's.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the member also for sharing her story. Too many times, we hear of tragic accidents and what it takes to rehabilitate and come back. Obviously, emergency services were a big part in saving your father and for many lives going forward.

You touched on a really important point that we heard from emergency workers, and that is about speed bumps replacing these cameras. Admittedly, I have fallen victim to those cameras a few times, and each time, I deserved it, I paid the fine and I learned. I eventually learned where they are and I adjusted my behaviour. I'm sure many of you have figured that out as well. We all don't have to pay that fine; that's our choice.

My question is, how concerned are you about emergency response times with this supposed solution of speed bumps instead of the cameras?

Ms. Doly Begum: Thank you very much to the member for this question because it really goes to the heart of the bad planning and process for policies by this government. It's like the jokes people make about coming up with policies on a napkin and how they don't really think about what the impacts will be.

This is what we're seeing, because like I said, for emergency vehicles, those fire trucks, those ambulances, even buses, it will be like a roller coaster ride. It will be extremely difficult, which means they will have to slow down when they could be speeding because they are going to a hospital. They're answering an emergency call, which is okay for them to do. You actually have a measure that works, whereas the speed bumps will not.

Not only that, it actually damages vehicles. If you go out in your communities and talk to your constituents, nobody likes speed bumps. They're costly. It will cost our municipalities, which means it will cost all of us, our taxpayers, and it's not—

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Mr. Billy Pang: I don't know when they were aware that they can only look into cash-grabbing policies. There are a lot of policies that can slow down the traffic in real time, not after the fact, not three weeks later.

I want to ask the member. The question is, when they can understand that we want to slow down the traffic to protect people, children, whoever they are—that we want to protect Ontarians in real time, not after the fact, not three weeks later. That's our bill. We want to remove the red tape and support and protect Ontarians. When will they be really aware about our intention and support our bill?

Ms. Doly Begum: My friend, I've got some numbers for you, because I guess you missed the beginning of my speech. I'll tell you what speed cameras have done in our community, here in this city: a reduction of speed by 45% because of speed cameras. That's a real result of ASE. The real-time result is a 45% decrease. When it comes to excessive speed, there is a reduction of 88%.

1750

So, my friend, I'm not really sure where you're getting your numbers from because if you have other good measures for slowing down speed, I'm happy to listen. We're all ears. But you don't have those—

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

Mr. Adil Shamji: It gives me great pleasure to rise in this esteemed chamber amongst my friends and colleagues here to discuss and debate Bill 56, a piece of legislation that seems hastily and lazily conceived. It's one that proposes to focus on creating a competitive economy—if that is what the short title is intended to make us believe—but which in fact may well have the impact of creating drastic consequences for public safety and imperil the lives of children. Of course, if we cannot start by protecting our health and safety, we cannot work towards creating the competitive economy that this legislation purports to be preoccupied with establishing.

For a government that has literally branded itself as being committed to protecting Ontario, it has actually taken a remarkable number of steps to undermine our province. Under this government, for example, we've seen crime skyrocket in the form of increased thefts, break-and-enters, violent crime. And this government has really had nothing to say on that matter except to point a finger to the federal government and repeatedly scream “bail reform.”

This government has caused housing to plummet. We are now the only province in our Confederation in which we have declining housing starts—and not even single-digit housing declines; double-digit. The last CMHC numbers said that housing starts have declined by 23%. How is that for protecting Ontario?

This is a government under which health care has profoundly deteriorated. We have hospitals across the province that are posting millions upon millions of dollars in deficits—again, a government that purports to be protecting Ontarians.

And then, of course, the guy, i.e., the Premier, who is our self-proclaimed saviour against Donald Trump—who is the cause of all of our woes, if we are to believe him—

is also the same guy who said about Donald Trump: “On election day, was I happy this guy won? One hundred per cent I was.” Truth is indeed stranger than fiction under this Premier and this government.

For a government that proclaims that it wants to protect Ontario, it is obvious to all of us on this side of the House that the only part of Ontario that this Premier wants to protect is his Minister of Labour and his countless donors to the Skills Development Fund, who have received hundreds of millions of dollars despite submitting low-scoring applications. But I won't go on about the Skills Development Fund because I'm going to leave that for question period tomorrow.

Instead, the focus of my remarks will be around this government's failed efforts to manage safety and look after children around schools, and also to discuss, to some degree, this government's efforts to address health human resource shortages.

Now, I must admit, for those of us who watch carefully, and those who watch at home, it's been pretty obvious that this Premier has a thinly veiled contempt for students, educators and public education. Whether it is worsening underfunding of our schools to the tune of billions of dollars, the evisceration of public colleges and universities, the firing of thousands of educators, it always seems as though education is one of this government's last priorities. And that perspective is certainly reinforced by this legislation because now the Premier has turned his focus to the question of physical safety around schools.

This legislation introduces a truly poorly conceived proposal to eliminate speed cameras under the auspices of saving taxpayer money. Now, I certainly can agree—and my colleagues here in the Ontario Liberal caucus can certainly agree—that being respectful of and saving taxpayer dollars is of paramount importance, but words don't match the actions of this government. This is the same government that is okay with patients paying for medically necessary care when they go to nurse practitioner clinics; the same government that's okay with patients paying for take-home cancer drugs and PSA tests; the same government that won't reduce the small business corporate tax rates, that won't eliminate the HST for homebuyers of primary residences, that won't eliminate the HST on home heating and electricity. The cost of everything in this province has gone up under this Premier's watch.

Even if this government was serious about reducing cost to taxpayers, the question of whether we should have speed cameras is not one about cost; it's one about safety. We know that speed is dangerous and that automated speed enforcement is a tried, tested and proven way to protect children and their families.

Allow me to illustrate why the dangerous speed is so dangerous. At elevated speeds, there is reduced stopping distance, drivers have a narrower field of view and therefore can't see things that may be running across the road at the last minute and drivers have reduced reaction time. So, take this for example: A car that is driving at 30 kilometres an hour requires 12 metres to stop. At 50

kilometres an hour, it requires 27 metres to stop. And at 70 kilometres an hour, it requires 45 metres to stop. It is of paramount importance that we implement tried, tested and evidence-based strategies to reduce speed and therefore reduce braking distances. At 30 kilometres an hour, if a car strikes a child, that child still has a 95% chance of survival. If the speed goes up by a mere 10 kilometres an hour, that survival rate goes down to 60%. If it goes to 50 kilometres an hour, the survival rate is somewhere between 20% and 30%. And at 60, it is almost certain that they will die.

We have learned from the literature. You know, my colleague across the aisle was saying, “Just google it.” Real policy isn’t made by going on Google. It’s done by consulting experts and looking at the literature. The literature published by TMU and SickKids makes it very clear that automated speed enforcement causes speeding to plummet by 45%. The number of people that are travelling 20 kilometres over the limit fell by 87%. And notably, if those cameras were turned back off, the rates of speeding went right back up again. And so, the evidence—not Google, the evidence—makes it clear that speed enforcement is effective.

But you know what? We can also talk to other experts who are out there, ones who have real experience, not the guys who are, you know, armchair quarterbacks on Google. Let’s talk to the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police. They said, “Employing ASE tools”—automated speed enforcement, so you don’t have to google it—“has been

proven to reduce speeding, change driver behaviour and make our roads safer for everyone....” They emphasized that “these tools are especially deployed in school zones”—

Interjection.

Mr. Adil Shamji: It’s hard to hear the Minister of Education talk about arrogance in light of everything that he says and the ridiculous legislation that he influenced, but back to the Association of Chiefs of Police.

They emphasized that “these tools are especially deployed in school zones and community safety zones, where slowing down saves lives and prevents serious injuries.” They further went on to specifically note, “Ontario’s police leaders view” automated speed enforcement “not as a revenue tool, but as a traffic safety tool. Its purpose is deterrence and prevention—helping to change driver behaviour and reduce collisions. By complementing traditional police enforcement, ASE also frees up police resources to focus on other pressing public safety priorities.” In other words, ASE helps the police protect Ontario, something that minister is not capable of doing.

So let’s not just listen—

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Orders of the day—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Order in the House.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

Report continues in volume B.

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Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Waterloo	
Firin, Mohamed (PC)	York South—Weston / York-Sud— Weston	
Flack, Hon. / L'hon. Rob (PC)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Premier / Premier ministre Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Leader, Third Party / Chef du troisième parti
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Première Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn (PC)	Newmarket—Aurora	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gilmour, Alexa (NDP)	Parkdale—High Park	
Glover, Chris (NDP)	Spadina—Fort York	
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Grewal, Hardeep Singh (PC)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	
Gualtieri, Silvia (PC)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	
Hamid, Hon. / L'hon. Zee (PC)	Milton	Associate Solicitor General for Auto Theft and Bail Reform / Solliciteur général associé responsable de la Lutte contre le vol d'automobiles et de la Réforme relative aux mises en liberté sous caution
Hardeman, Hon. / L'hon. Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Hon. / L'hon. Mike (PC)	Kitchener—Conestoga	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Hazell, Andrea (LIB)	Scarborough—Guildwood	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Holland, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin (PC)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	Associate Minister of Forestry and Forest Products / Ministre associé des Forêts et des Produits forestiers
Hsu, Ted (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin—Caledon	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health / Ministre de la Santé
Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Trevor (PC)	Chatham-Kent—Leamington	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et de l'Agroentreprise
Jordan, John (PC)	Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston	
Kanapathi, Logan (PC)	Markham—Thornhill	
Kernaghan, Terence (NDP)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	
Kerzner, Hon. / L'hon. Michael S. (PC)	York Centre / York-Centre	Solicitor General / Solliciteur général
Khanjin, Hon. / L'hon. Andrea (PC)	Barrie—Innisfil	Minister of Red Tape Reduction / Ministre de la Réduction des formalités administratives
Kusendova-Bashta, Hon. / L'hon. Natalia (PC)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga- Centre	Minister of Long-Term Care / Ministre des Soins de longue durée
Leardi, Anthony (PC)	Essex	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Lecce, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)	King—Vaughan	Minister of Energy and Mines / Ministre de l'Énergie et des Mines
Lennox, Robin (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	
Lumsden, Hon. / L'hon. Neil (PC)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	Minister of Sport / Ministre du Sport
Mamakwa, Sol (NDP)	Kiiwetinoong	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
McCarthy, Hon. / L'hon. Todd J. (PC)	Durham	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs
McCrimmon, Karen (LIB)	Kanata—Carleton	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
McGregor, Hon. / L'hon. Graham (PC)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism / Ministre des Affaires civiles et du Multiculturalisme
McKenney, Catherine (NDP)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
McMahon, Mary-Margaret (LIB)	Beaches—East York	
Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)	York—Simcoe	President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor
Oosterhoff, Hon. / L'hon. Sam (PC)	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones Associate Minister of Energy-Intensive Industries / Ministre associé des Industries à forte consommation d'énergie
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	
Parsa, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (PC)	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires
Pasma, Chandra (NDP)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	Deputy House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Piccini, Hon. / L'hon. David (PC)	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de l'Immigration, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences
Pierre, Natalie (PC)	Burlington	
Pinsonneault, Steve (PC)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	
Pirie, Hon. / L'hon. George (PC)	Timmins	Minister of Northern Economic Development and Growth / Ministre du Développement et de la croissance économique du Nord
Quinn, Hon. / L'hon. Nolan (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	Minister of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security / Ministre des Collèges et Universités, de l'Excellence en recherche et de la Sécurité
Racinsky, Joseph (PC)	Wellington—Halton Hills	
Rae, Matthew (PC)	Perth—Wellington	
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Indigenous Affairs and First Nations Economic Reconciliation / Ministre des Affaires autochtones et de la Réconciliation économique avec les Premières Nations Minister Responsible for Ring of Fire Economic and Community Partnerships / Ministre responsable des Partenariats économiques et communautaires pour le développement du Cercle de feu
Riddell, Brian (PC)	Cambridge	
Rosenberg, Bill (PC)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Sarrazin, Stéphane (PC)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Saunderson, Brian (PC)	Simcoe—Grey	
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Chris (IND)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Scott, Hon. / L'hon. Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	
Shamji, Adil (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Skelly, Hon. / L'hon. Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	Speaker / Présidente de l'Assemblée législative
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, David (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Graydon (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre associé des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Smith, Laura (PC)	Thornhill	
Smyth, Stephanie (LIB)	Toronto—St. Paul's	
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Tangri, Hon. / L'hon. Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	Associate Minister of Small Business / Ministre associée des Petites Entreprises

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Thanigasalam, Hon. / L'hon. Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associé délégué à la Santé mentale et à la Lutte contre les dépendances
Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Rural Affairs / Ministre des Affaires rurales
Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Associate Attorney General / Procureur général associé
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	Deputy Speaker / Vice-Présidente Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Tsao, Jonathan (LIB)	Don Valley North / Don Valley-Nord	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Vaugeois, Lise (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
Vickers, Paul (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	
Watt, Tyler (LIB)	Nepean	
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
Williams, Hon. / L'hon. Charmaine A. (PC)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity / Ministre associée des Perspectives sociales et économiques pour les femmes
Wong-Tam, Kristyn (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	