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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 23 April 2024

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 23 avril 2024

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Next we'll have a moment of silence for inner thought and personal reflection.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S FUTURES ACT, 2024

LOI DE 2024 VISANT À SOUTENIR L'AVENIR DES ENFANTS

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 22, 2024, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 188, An Act to amend the Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017 and various other Acts / *Projet de loi 188, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2017 sur les services à l'enfance, à la jeunesse et à la famille et diverses autres lois.*

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): When we last debated Bill 188, the member for Ottawa Centre had the floor. He still has some time, if he chooses to use it.

Mr. Joel Harden: I'll begin with a brief reflection on how this ended yesterday. This was a very emotional debate for me. I did not want to draw attention to myself in debate, but the issue of child protection is an urgent one.

I want to reiterate my thanks to the great Cindy Blackstock from the First Nations Caring society and Irwin Elman, who served the province with distinction for many years, for providing with me with the information to know my province a little bit better and to know my city of Ottawa a little bit better.

We all have those moments, I think, in this place where we reckon with the fact that the decisions we make have incredible gravity, particularly for people at risk.

I also want to note for the record a remarkable story running today in the Ottawa Citizen. It talks about the fact that thanks to a precedent in law known as the Gladue precedent, there's a young man—young; the gentleman is 46 years of age—who has remade his life. Randy Kakegamick has remade his life thanks to a Gladue ruling. A Gladue ruling, if you're not familiar, Speaker, is a way for Indigenous people who are caught up in our incarceration system as a result of lived trauma and behaviours negative to themselves and to the community—they're given a new chance on life. I want to salute Sofia Donato and Ali Adwan, two Carleton University journalism

students who wrote about Randy's life and who suggest to us that there's a different way for us to reorient our child protection system so people are given the opportunities that we all deserve. I'm mindful of the fact, too, as I say that, that this, particularly, is a matter that the member for Kiiwetinoong has brought into this House a number of times—the fact that there remains a double standard in the funding of child welfare agencies. Child welfare agencies, particularly as they function on-reserve, represent the latest form of colonialism that we have to reckon with, the fact that there are many children right now, as I speak these words, who are not being given the opportunities that many of us take for granted in our society.

I also want to say that, insofar as this bill is a step towards allowing people who have interacted with child protection to speak their truth, I want to salute the government for that; I want to salute the minister responsible for that.

I want to salute, in particular, Jane, working as Minister Parsa's chief of staff, who herself, through lived experience, has walked this road and has decided to take the power available to her to push rights for people who have interacted with child protection and to have those stories guide our decisions. I think that's a remarkable choice. I think it's a terrific choice.

What I would implore this government to reckon with is the fact that Ontario, as a jurisdiction in our country, still ranks last on a per capita basis in how much we fund the children's aid societies and child protection services; that we still are not doing enough to help, particularly, kids with disabilities, kids who interact with the criminal justice system, kids with violent behaviours, kids who come from families inherent with violence, who fall into a different category that is too often forgotten.

I'll end—again, with the benefit of a little bit of time, and less charged with the emotion I had yesterday—to talk about David Roman, who we lost on February 19, 2019, when his life was taken by another youth at a Barrie for-profit group home. I want to reflect on the tragedy of not just David and the loss of David's life; I want to reflect on the fact that Jordan Calver, the 23-year-old foster person assigned to that home, was given absolutely inadequate training to manage the behaviours in this group home.

Speaker, if you can believe it, Mr. Calver was hired over coffee in Barrie, was promised that all of the youth who were going to be admitted into this group home would not be exhibiting untoward, extremely violent behaviours. And that is absolutely not what happened.

David Roman's parents are suing those responsible. Mr. Calver has a lawsuit before the province because of

what he was put through. But none of that will ever bring David back. I salute anyone's opportunity to find redress in court if they have been harmed. But none of it will bring David back.

What would bring people who are walking in David's shoes right now—keep them in our province and keep them safe, is more funding towards non-profit, properly resourced child protection workers and real homes.

The foster families that exist all over this province, who do great good every single day—those homes deserve to have the resources they need. I believe every single person who puts themselves forward to welcome someone into their home, to include them in their family, to give them a second shot at life, as one of the members said in debate yesterday afternoon from his experience—these are people performing some of the most exceptional modes of citizenship I can think about.

But I feel we are failing, quite frankly—and it has been remarkable for me to discover in debate—particularly Indigenous youth, Indigenous families, but also those who are put into situations that are unnecessarily harmful and violent.

So while I salute the government's work to make sure people who have interacted with child protection can tell their stories, and I salute, in particular, those like Jane inside the minister's office who have driven that change, I want to make sure that the province is putting the resources necessary to make sure we do not have tragedies continue in our child protection system.

I thank you for the opportunity to participate in the debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We'll now have questions to the member for Ottawa Centre.

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: Thank you to the member from Ottawa Centre for that passionate speech. You shared your personal story, and you also shared your friend's story with us yesterday. Thank you for that.

This bill, the Supporting Children's Futures Act, 2024, is all about protecting the children and youth in our great province. I know we not only have a legal responsibility; we have a moral responsibility to protect children and youth in our custody.

My question to the member—the higher rate of compliance would mean that young people in out-of-home care receive a consistently higher quality of care that is safe, supportive and responsive to their needs. Does the member oppose support stronger oversight and accountability for those providing care for Ontario's most vulnerable young people in this province?

Mr. Joel Harden: I thank the member for his questions and his kind words.

Of course, we support, on this side of the House, more accountability and serious consequences for people who would harm children in our child protection system.

But I would invite a response from any of the members opposite, in this opportunity for debate: Why is it that we have a for-profit motivation in the child protection system? That is the question I've heard the member from

Kiiwetinoong ask—and the member from Windsor West, and the member for Hamilton Mountain.

I believe, frankly, we are setting ourselves up for more tragedies if we allow for-profit operators to shortchange children, to harm children. And we now have incredible amounts of disturbing evidence that suggests it's continuing to happen.

0910

While I agree with the member's question and I agree with what he's seeking to do, if we don't change the motivation of some of these homes in the system, we're going to have more problems, and I invite reflection on that now.

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

Mr. Jeff Burch: I'd like to ask my friend from Ottawa Centre what is really missing in this act. There are so many things that could have been done to make life better in Ottawa Centre and across Ontario. What's really missing that could have been addressed in this plan?

Mr. Joel Harden: Yesterday, I spoke about Amy Owen, who took her own life on April 17, 2017, in an Ottawa group home. She was relocated from her home at Poplar Hill First Nation. When I think about what could have been added to this bill to give Amy a shred of hope—it was services, it was support. She begged for help repeatedly. That's what the APTN investigative journalism has uncovered in Amy's tragic story. She begged repeatedly for help, but we were not there to help her.

I want to reflect on the fact that it is 2024 and we have a child protection system that continues to fail kids—particularly Indigenous kids—in need.

To the member's question: We need to stop failing those children, and we need to make sure there are preventive resources ahead of time, so every community in this province has the capacity for people to heal. More punitive measures are not going to solve that problem.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Questions?

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you to the member for Ottawa Centre for your presentation. I want to raise some concerns that the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies raised. They talked about how, while this bill does something to improve people while they are in care, there's nothing in the bill that addresses why children end up in care in the first place.

Can you speak to what you've heard from stakeholders or from your own experience in your riding about what we can do keep kids safe and loved in their families, in their homes?

Mr. Joel Harden: Thank you to the member for University–Rosedale for the question.

When I consider what Cindy Blackstock has said about this from an Indigenous perspective, it involves us doing right by our reconciliation treaty obligations. We're failing those, too. Insofar as there are purposeful measures done by the federal government to this day that continue to underfund child protection in communities and allow people opportunities to heal—I believe that is a major failure that not only our province but the federal government has to share.

I would also say that in a context where one out of every seven kids is going to school hungry; in a context where so many people, as the member knows very well because she has spoken about it many times, cannot find housing, particularly supportive housing to go to when you're trying to flee a context of violence—that is also a situation in which our housing policy impacts our ability to help children who are most vulnerable.

We need to do a lot more to make sure people can feel safe.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Questions?

Mrs. Robin Martin: Thank you to the member opposite for his statement this morning.

Yesterday afternoon, we heard in the Legislature from the member for Hamilton Mountain, who said that this legislation has taken a number of steps in the right direction, that this area has been neglected for years, and that we are doing good things in the legislation.

With that, I want to ask if you thought new enforcement tools proposed in the bill and more information about the track record of service providers with a history of non-compliance posted on the government's website is a good step in the right direction, if you would support that, and if you want to tell us about any other parts of the bill that you think are worth supporting and a step in the right direction.

Mr. Joel Harden: Thank you for the question from the member for Eglinton–Lawrence.

One of the things that I particularly support in this bill, given the work that was done by the chief of staff to the minister from lived experience, is the fact that folks who have interacted with the child protection system can now feel absolutely no penalty to speak their truth. It's remarkable, when you think about it from a legal perspective, that we're asking people who have interacted with the child protection system to sign away their charter rights of expression. That is a remarkable thing, and I commend the minister and I commend this bill and I commend his chief of staff for bringing that forward, because it was unconscionable that that was allowed to happen in this province.

Do I support harsher penalties and more oversight of agencies falling afoul of our rules and regulations? Absolutely. But what I would like—listening to the advice I've received for the debate—is for us to be harder on the preventive end. When I heard the member for Kitchener Centre, who worked as a social worker before she came into this place, that's what she said—she said that social workers are leaving the child protection system on the non-profit and public side because of what they're seeing and because of the lack of compensation and support.

So there's a lot we can do on the preventive side, in my opinion—to answer the member's question—to make sure that those tragedies don't happen and to make sure that people don't fall down the hole of neglect that, sadly, exists in our child protection system.

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

MPP Lise Vaugeois: First of all, I want to thank my colleague for his words, and I also want to thank him for pointing out that for-profit has no place in the child welfare system. It's a poor motive for providing the really important help.

I'd just like to mention Feathers of Hope, a program that Irwin Elman had in northwestern Ontario. This was where Indigenous kids who had been in care had a safe place to come together and talk with each other, and they also presented to the leadership of the community and told us their stories. It was extremely important.

Can you tell us anything else that a child welfare advocate would bring if we were to have that position again?

Mr. Joel Harden: I want to thank the member for Thunder Bay–Superior North for giving me the opportunity to underline the fact that something very positive the government could do to support this bill is to bring back an independent child care advocate in this province, as we had for many years. Feathers of Hope and other initiatives like that allowed youth the opportunity to speak in their own voice to heal—and I think you're right; that is the most powerful thing.

Sometimes we can be penny-wise and pound foolish in politics. Sometimes we can think we are saving money on the front end, but we don't realize all the things we are losing as a consequence of eliminating the office of the child advocate, which we have done.

So while I am happy with a lot of the thrust of this bill and what it does positively to make sure that the resources are given to the youth who need the help, bringing back the office of the child advocate and bringing resources right to the community so youth could speak their own truth to heal is critically important.

I thank you for the question.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions? I recognize the member for Brampton North.

Mr. Graham McGregor: Good morning, Madam Speaker. It's great to see you this morning.

Thank you to the member opposite for the speech earlier today.

My question is around some professionals in Ontario—teachers, physicians, social workers—who have an ongoing duty to directly report a child suspected to be in need of protection, which includes children who may have been harmed or neglected by their parents or caregiver. This bill proposes adding early childhood educators to that list of professions that should be reporting this when they suspect it. Does the member agree with that, and is that a good change being put forward?

Mr. Joel Harden: Yes, absolutely. That is an obligation that everybody who interacts with children and youth takes very seriously. My own partner is a psychiatrist. This is something that everybody should take seriously. We have to remember that the province is the parent for youth interacting with the child protection system. We're the guardians. We're the ones who have to make sure the resources go where they need. So, yes, the ECEs, as a

result of this legislation, will have an obligation, but ultimately, it's us—we have the obligation.

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

Mr. John Fraser: It's a pleasure to speak to Bill 188, the Supporting Children's Futures Act.

It's always hard to follow my colleague from Ottawa Centre, and I'm sorry that I missed his debate yesterday.

I want to start with a little story. My dad worked with the Family Court in Ottawa in the 1960s, when I was growing up. He was what they called a probation officer. He was involved a lot with children in care and families struggling and children in trouble with the law. When I was about two years old, my mom and my dad decided that they would take up residence—that they would be the residential caregivers—in what was called the juvenile detention centre, which is now Eugene Forsey Park on Bronson Avenue. So I always like to say I was in the youth detention centre when I was two.

I remember the stories that my dad told me about the children in care and children who had run into trouble because they had no parent, they had no guardian. They were on their own, and they were at risk. When he talked about his career—he worked in criminal justice and parole—he spoke very fondly of the work that he did with families then and with children without parents, wards of the crown, and how important that work was. It was formative for me in understanding that there were children in the world who didn't have parents like I did, didn't have a family like I did. I was very lucky. In coming here, I keep that in my mind.

0920

This bill is a good bill. I commend the minister for bringing it forward. Everything in here is supportable. I do want to raise a couple of things, though, that I think are important for us to remember.

First of all, my colleague from Ottawa Centre mentioned for-profit homes and for-profit agencies operating in this sphere.

We've had an experience with increasing regulations and laws and fines around long-term care—for-profit long-term care and not-for-profit. And we've seen what our experience is when we impose higher fines, when we impose stiffer penalties. They're often not enforced. And that's not just—I'm not saying about the other side; I'm saying about all of us, about governments of all stripes.

We put forward these things that are a signal of our intent as to how important the care of a child who is in care, or a mom and dad who are in care in a long-term-care home—we put these things forward, and they're important; they're an expression of how strongly we believe people need to be treated. The problem is on the enforcement end—and again, this is all of us, all governments. We don't do the job. It doesn't get done. I'm not saying they're empty promises because it's a desire that we have to do the right thing, but we don't go far enough. And then the next problem with the enforcement is, we don't put enough to prevent the things that we're not enforcing; we don't put enough resources towards it.

My colleague from Ottawa Centre, again, mentioned that social workers in the not-for-profit and public sector are not paid very well. This is really important work. These children in care are at great risk, and all of us here are responsible for them. We make the laws. We fund the services. We're all responsible for them. So we all need to do a better job, and the government of the day, right now, has to say, "We put these things forward. We're going to make sure that they work. We're going to make sure that there's enough there to stop the situations" like my colleague from Ottawa Centre mentioned that happened, that are so tragic. It's really important that we do it.

The second thing I want to mention, because I think this is really important, is that in 2007, the province of Ontario established the office of the child advocate. When you hear "child advocate," you think they are advocating for all children. Well, yes. But do you know who they were really there for? They were really there for children who didn't have anyone else to speak for them; children who didn't have anyone else. That's what the office of the independent child advocate did. The government at the time thought it was wise to axe the child advocate.

Interjection.

Mr. John Fraser: Well, I'm sure. I guess you can probably give the Premier a call and ask him about that, because that's what happened. They axed it.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Please direct your comments through the Chair.

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you.

Mr. Graham McGregor: You've been here long enough to know that.

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

Interjections.

Mr. John Fraser: Speaker, I'd like to speak through you, but there's this noise in the corner over here that's very, very distracting.

I know it's hard to hear, folks, but there's a remedy. You can fix it. It's not broken forever. Here's the reality: We don't like criticism. I don't like the criticism I'm hearing right now. Nobody likes to be criticized. No one likes somebody shining a light on us coming up short. But do you want to know what, folks? All governments are going to come up short when it comes to this. We'll never do enough, ever, ever, ever.

So we need people like an independent child advocate to speak up for children who don't have a voice, and that's their only job—not the rest of government. And kudos to the Ombudsman's office for taking it on, but we need somebody whose job it is just to do that, nothing else. That's why it was established. That's why it was important. And that's why it would be a really good thing, as my colleague from Ottawa Centre said, to re-establish an independent child advocate. I think we could all agree on it. Yes, we're going to hear some things we don't want to hear. We're going to hear some things that will make us uncomfortable—not just the government, but all of us. We need that. We need that because those children don't have a voice.

The measures in this bill to make sure that children have the language of their choice in terms of being communicated to—that's great. That's really important. But what about hearing their voice? How do we hear their voice? We only will be able to hear their voice if we actually are intentional about ensuring that they have one, and that they have an independent one, and it's one that reports to all of us.

I think what happened with axing the Child Advocate was something that was done in haste. You got rid of the Environmental Commissioner and anyone else who, at the time, would say something that would tell the government what they didn't really want to hear or anybody else to hear.

It's healthy to have critics. It's healthy to have people who shine a light on things. It only makes us better.

I am going to support this bill. We're going to support it. It's a good bill.

Two things that the government needs to remember: All these new penalties, all these new laws don't mean anything if we don't enforce it, if we don't put money behind it, if we don't put money behind preventing the things that are happening from happening, if we don't pay social workers enough, if we don't ensure that there's enough support—I don't want to use the word “supervision.” We don't supervise our children growing up, as parents. I don't know what the right word to use is. Here's the reality: Children in care—we're their parents. We're responsible for them. So if we're going to put this law forward, we better put something behind it, all of us.

Number two: Children in care across this province need an independent voice. They need an independent child advocate because they don't have a voice. I shouldn't say they don't have a voice. They have a voice, but they're not heard. They need somebody whose only job is to say, “Here's what's happening over here. Here's what's happening to kids who are in our care. And here's what needs to be done.” We may not like what they say. We may not like what we see. But it will only work if we force ourselves to listen and see those things that need to be fixed, even though they make us feel uncomfortable and coming up short.

I'm happy to take any questions.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): It is now time for questions.

Mr. Lorne Coe: I'm pleased to rise and ask a question of the member of Ottawa South.

One of the features of this legislation is that it creates new tools to ensure compliance, which will apply in every licensed out-of-home care setting. The new tools include orders to return funds, administrative monetary penalties and increased fines to ensure that it simply will not be possible to make a profit by providing poor care to children.

0930

To my question, though, to the member from Ottawa South—Bill 188 proposes to entrench rights for youth overall. How are they doing that—the past relied on the Ombudsman Act. This particular legislation now would

put that right within the Child, Youth and Family Services Act to remove any lack of clarity on the rights youth have with respect to the Ombudsman—

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

Mr. John Fraser: I thank you for the question.

As I said, we'll be supporting this bill.

There was something you said that kind of stuck in my head, and that's that people can't make a profit from delivering poor care to children. Well, I'm not sure getting a profit in caring for children who are wards of the crown is something that we should be encouraging or doing—and again, that's all of us. I'm not trying to point a finger over there. Governments have done that—started to do that. I think we have to not do that anymore and ensure that we're working with people who aren't making a profit, or we're delivering the services ourselves.

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

Mr. Joel Harden: To my friend from Ottawa South, thank you for the remarks.

I'm wondering if, in this question and answer, we can brainstorm about other ways in which we can encourage people to become foster families, to encourage the creation of non-profit, safe homes for kids interacting with the child protection system.

Just as a thought exercise, I think about our great pension plans that exist in the province of Ontario and the fact that they need more contributors to survive, and that these huge pension plans—be they OMERS or HOOPP or teachers—need more contributors. So instead of having a for-profit element to the child protection system and thinking of incentivizing people to get involved on the basis of a money-making enterprise, what if we told foster families that they could be part of an established pension and benefits program maintained by the province of Ontario? What if we brought that to Indigenous communities so people who made that sacrifice of opening up their family homes could enjoy a dignified retirement, thanks to their service, and the province had their back? That's a way in which we can reward people who do this kind of caring profession. I'm wondering what the member thought.

Mr. John Fraser: I think that's a very thoughtful and interesting idea. People need support. One of the things when you're raising a family is—people look to have a pension. You work hard raising other children, often, on top of your own children. It's a lot of work, and people do it out of love, but sometimes it becomes too hard. So, yes, I think that's an idea that's worth exploring. I think that's very thoughtful. I hadn't thought of that. Maybe that's something that somebody on the other side can raise—and whether they think that's a good idea or not.

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

Mr. Brian Riddell: I'd like to commend your parents for what they did. It's wonderful to hear something like that.

This bill proposes a modern and flexible suite of tools that will empower the ministry inspectors to improve

compliance rates among licensed providers of out-of-home care to children and youth. A high rate of compliance would mean that young people in out-of-home care receive a consistent, high quality of care that is safe, supportive and responsive to their needs.

Does the member opposite support stronger oversight and accountability for those providing care for Ontario's most vulnerable young people?

Mr. John Fraser: Yes, I do; I just want to add in more prevention and enforcement.

I thank you for the question and your kind words.

I want to say something about my mom. My dad would not be there all day, so my mom was there. There was a cook, but she had three children under three. At the same time, there were a whole bunch of children who required care and required a parent—like a parent and someone there who was in residence. I sometimes romanticize it, but I'm sure, for my mom, with three kids under three, it was sometimes a lot to handle. I'm glad they did it.

Again, in coming here, there are a lot of things that we have to remember. That's why the child advocate is important. We need to remember we have these children who are wards of the crown—that's us, folks. That's our job, so we have to strive to do better all the time. And as I said earlier, we'll always come up short.

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

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Thank you to the member from Ottawa South.

I also want to thank the member from Ottawa Centre for your words earlier.

I want to put out a problem that I've encountered. I don't know whether you can answer this or not. I'm aware of a family who was raising kind of an adopted niece—so it was sort of family. The niece got in trouble eventually, as a teenager, and needed addiction services, but the only way the family could get access to those services was to make her a ward of the crown. They could not access those services as the family who was actually caring for her. I'm wondering if you can speak to that, or perhaps this is something that could be discussed when this goes to committee.

Mr. John Fraser: Those are really terrible, awful situations that people find themselves in, and they've found themselves in it for a long time—as long as I've been working in this business, 25 years. We haven't fixed that yet.

We have to do more to give families the support with regard to mental health and addictions. Again, it's something we'll come up short in.

Yes, it's heartbreaking when you think that you turn any child over just simply because you couldn't give them what they needed.

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

Mrs. Robin Martin: Thank you to the member from Ottawa South for his comments.

I appreciate the fact that you said it's a good bill and you'll be supporting the bill. We don't have enough of the support that I would like to see coming from the other side

of the Legislature on some of our bills, so I'm glad you like this one and you're going to work with us.

In that regard, I think that the bill proposes a number of things that are very useful. One is that any appeals of the Licence Appeal Tribunal to the Divisional Court will not automatically result in a stay of decision. The Divisional Court would need to be satisfied that a stay would not pose a risk to the health, safety and welfare of a child. I would imagine the member agrees that the welfare of children and youth must always come first when considering matters of administrative fairness for service providers. I know you said that the money has to be there to make this a reality. But I do think some of these changes, like this one, can also make things better. That's what we do here in the Legislature—improve the legislation. Would you agree?

Mr. John Fraser: I know it's important to improve the legislation, and it's important to establish how seriously we take the care of children whose care we're charged with. That's why it's a good bill.

The point I was trying to make about it—and it wouldn't force me to vote against the bill—is that there are things that are missing in terms of the support that we need to prevent and to enforce. That's not pointing a finger. It has been the constant problem with governments, not just in here, but across this country. That's what my point is. We need to do better at that.

And it really would be good for all of us, no matter what side we sit on, to have an independent child advocate. Those children need a voice. Their voices are really hard to hear.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): We have time for further debate.

Mr. Brian Saunderson: It's a pleasure to join the debate on this important legislation this morning, on behalf of the residents of Simcoe-Grey.

Bill 188 is titled Supporting Children's Futures Act. I ask this House, what can be more important to our collective future than the well-being of our children? This question encompasses all children, including those at risk of abuse and neglect—in fact, probably particularly those children. It is said that a society can be judged by how it treats the most vulnerable, and I think we can all agree that our children at risk are among our most vulnerable. I appreciate the comments that I have heard from both my colleagues from Ottawa and their support for this legislation. It is an ongoing and evolving sector, and this legislation is part of this government's effort to continue to improve our services for our most vulnerable.

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Protection services are mandated under the Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017, and these services are provided by children's aid societies.

Licensed out-of-home care refers to the provision of care to a young person in a home or setting that is away from the home of their parent or guardian.

Children and youth are placed into out-of-home care for a range of reasons in addition to child protection concerns, including being in conflict with the law, human traffick-

ing, complex special needs or mental health and/or addiction treatment needs.

Care may be provided in foster homes, children's residences or staff-model homes. Most children placed in out-of-home care are cared for in foster care.

Children's aid societies are also responsible for Ontario's public adoption system, adoption planning, recruiting adoptive parents, training, matching, facilitative adoption placements and providing supports. Private and intercountry adoptions are managed by licensees under the CYFSA of the Intercountry Adoption Act.

Over 7,000 children and youth in care in Ontario are served by 424 licence holders, and 301 group homes serve approximately 1,680 children, and 4,038 foster homes serve approximately 5,700 children.

Speaker, our government has undertaken a comprehensive redesign of the child welfare system in Ontario, and we did this because every child and youth deserves a decent start in life and a safe and stable home, regardless of their circumstances. Through the redesign, this government has introduced new initiatives to improve the quality of care in out-of-home settings which include:

- developing a new framework for what out-of-home care looks like;

- increasing and enhancing oversight and accountability for out-of-home care;

- supporting that oversight by adding 20 new positions across the province to support the management, inspection and oversight of out-of-home care for children and youth; and

- launching the Ready, Set, Go program, which provides youth in the care of children's aid societies with the life skills they need, starting at 13, and financial support when they leave care, up to the age of 23, so that they can focus on post-secondary education, including the skilled trades, or pursuing employment.

In addition, we've implemented these initiatives after consulting widely in the community and with these service providers to better serve children and youth and understand their needs; and bolstering customary care arrangements to focus on family-based options, like kinship and foster care, to ensure children, youth and families have a strong voice in decisions about their care.

We have worked extensively on improving the quality of the child welfare data to establish a baseline of common measures across children's aid societies that can be reported publicly. We all know that data is important to measuring our evolution and our progress, and what gets measured gets accomplished. And along with that, we have developed an outcomes-based performance measurement framework.

Speaker, we have also updated the Child, Youth and Family Services Act to better protect youth in care from human trafficking. Through those changes, we have made the role of children's aid societies clear so they can intervene in situations where a child is a victim of sex trafficking or is at risk of being trafficked—and we know this is an ever-present and ever-growing trend. We have allowed child protection workers and police to remove 16-

and 17-year-old victims of child sex trafficking, to voluntarily access protective measures and supportive resources. And we have increased penalties for traffickers who interfere with or harbour children who are subject to an order of supervision or care by a children's aid society. These changes have strengthened children's aid societies' ability to intervene in child sex trafficking, made the role of societies in these cases more clear, and promoted consistent responses across the province.

With the Supporting Children's Futures Act, we are continuing this hard work to build on what our government has achieved, and moving forward towards an Ontario where no one is left behind.

Speaker, as part of the development of Bill 188, this government consulted across the child welfare sector to develop the measures contained in this bill. Ministry staff held over 30 virtual engagements with various stakeholder groups, including youth with lived experience. We have also engaged stakeholders through the Ontario Regulatory Registry, where we received over 35 written submissions on the proposed changes.

As a result of this consultation process, Bill 188, at its core, is about protecting children and youth in Ontario's care today, through new measures for safety, service, oversight, accountability and privacy, and providing better opportunities for children and youth who are in care in Ontario today to thrive as the adults of tomorrow, as they grow.

Speaker, if passed, this bill will protect children and youth in care and provide them with a better future by strengthening oversight and enforcement tools for out-of-home care, protecting privacy of youth formerly in care, and updating the Child, Youth and Family Services Act with lessons learned since it became law. The proposed changes in this bill will improve safety and independence for children and youth in care and assist them in moving on from care. In the short term, these measures will ensure safer and more consistent services for children and youth who need to live away from home. In the longer term, these measures will ensure these children and youth will be better prepared for adulthood and for success in their lives.

We are strengthening oversight for a number of critical reasons. To make sure applicants are fit to provide quality care, this bill proposes a more thorough application process and new powers to refuse a licence on several grounds, most importantly in the public interest. To ensure all children and youth in care receive safe, high-quality services, this bill proposes to increase accountability for all operators. This includes requiring inspectors to take certain actions when they find non-compliance.

In addition, we are introducing a better range of penalties, including compliance orders, administrative monetary penalties, and enhanced charges with larger fines.

All members of this House have seen the shocking instances where some providers have failed to provide high-quality care. And our government has been very clear that there is no room in our province for these bad actors who do not operate in compliance with the law.

As a result, this bill proposes new, high impact enforcement tools to root out bad actors, such as:

- an order for funding to be returned where a licensee has failed to use funds in accordance with the terms of service agreement for a child;

- an order for new management for an out-of-home care setting; and

- restraining orders which would restrain individuals employed or otherwise engaged by the licensee to provide direct care to or supervise a child or a young person in a children's residence where there are reasonable grounds to believe that there's an imminent threat to the health, safety and welfare of any child or young person by that care setting.

We've also introduced a new type of order, compliance orders, which would instruct the licensee to do something or refrain from doing something to achieve compliance.

We are creating new provincial offences for people in the sector who violate a youth's rights to be free from corporal punishment, physical and mechanical restraints, and detention.

And we are enhancing the penalties for provincial offences under the act to fines of up to \$250,000, imposing imprisonment for a term not more than one year, or both; and for a corporation convicted of offence, fines of up to \$250,000. We are also introducing new administrative monetary penalties of up to \$100,000.

Bill 188 proposes a number of important procedural changes to existing processes which include the following:

- for inspectors to follow certain steps when they find instances of non-compliance during inspections;

- for inspectors to conduct an investigation with a warrant when there's reason to believe an offence has been committed;

- changes to the appeal process for licensing decisions, conditions, suspensions and revocations, and ensuring that any appeals of these decisions will not automatically result in a stay of the decision; and

- changes to the appeal process to require the applicant or licensee to file more information with the ministry, to clarify what constitutes evidence before the tribunal, and to clarify the orders that the tribunal can make following an appeal.

These changes are crucial new tools to uphold service providers to the high standard of care that our children and youth deserve and our government expects. These new and enhanced penalties give ministry inspectors a more responsive and useful range of tools to use when they find a service provider that isn't consistently complying with the requirements and providing the best care for their wards. The offences are new. The fines are new or enhanced. The amounts are raised by orders of magnitude sufficient to deter service providers from thinking they can profit by providing poor or dangerous care.

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Speaker, this act also strengthens the privacy of the individual children and youth. To protect the privacy of the children and youth once they leave care, this bill restricts access to records held by the children's aid

societies about a child or youth once they are no longer in care. These changes aim to enhance the privacy of children and youth with a history in the child welfare system by restricting access by others to their child welfare records, through regulations to be developed.

This bill will also enable adults with a history of child protection involvement to publicly identify themselves and speak about their experiences.

These are important changes. It is important that children who grow up in these types of environments have the same rights as others to talk about their past, to talk about their experiences and to move forward in their lives. This change clarifies an ambiguity in the CYFSA that permitted the interpretation that former children and youth in care were breaching their own privacy by talking publicly about their past experiences in care. This clarification aims to better protect the privacy of adults who were former children and youth in care by restricting access to their records by others, while permitting them to speak freely about their lived experience, as can any of us in this House. This clarification gives former children and youth in care the same right to speak about their childhood as everyone else.

Through Bill 188, we are also updating the Child, Youth and Family Services Act to make it clear and consistent across the sector. Bill 188 proposes to establish clear and consistent practices in the Child, Youth and Family Services Act through a number of new measures. This bill has provisions that will permit information-sharing between children's aid societies, the College of Early Childhood Educators and the Ontario College of Teachers, to enable timely action when there is an allegation of a risk to children involving a teacher or an early childhood educator. This information-sharing would support investigations or hearings by the professional colleges.

Speaker, this change will also expand the current list of professionals who can receive personal information from children's aid societies, beyond regulated child professions, social workers and social service workers, to include teachers and ECEs.

If passed, this bill will clarify that ECEs are a profession with a duty to report children in need of protections. Currently, under our system, only ECEs working in designated roles have an explicit duty to report. This change will also mean that ECEs who fail to report a child in need of protection may be subject to penalties, like the other professionals who have this obligation.

The bill will also enable the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers to share information about its members with bodies that govern other professions and with others such as children's aid societies. Currently, the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers is not permitted to inform other parties that an investigation against a member is under way unless the member consents or until the investigation concludes. The college itself has requested this change, to be more consistent with other health professionals whose professional colleges are able to disclose information in a timely manner to reduce or eliminate the risk of harm.

Another important aspect of Bill 188 is to clarify the circumstances when children and youth must be informed about their rights to complain to the office of the Ombudsman. Currently, the Ombudsman Act guides how and when children and youth in care are informed about the office and the role of the Ombudsman. Currently, service providers rely on the CYFSA and not the Ombudsman Act to determine their responsibility to children and youth in care, and this creates a gap so that not all service providers, let alone children and youth, are aware of their right to contact the Ombudsman. We believe that by clarifying these obligations in the CYFSA in Bill 188, we are ensuring that all licensees will be aware of their obligations and able to utilize them if necessary.

Bill 188 will enhance transparency in reporting by allowing sector workers to file enabling offence declarations, to ensure that everyone who needs to provide a police record check as a condition of their employment is able to notify their employer if there is any change in their record between the required updates.

Speaker, there are also a number of actions that are not in this bill but that are contained in recently filed regulation changes. Our government has been clear that Bill 188 is an important step in the child welfare design process. That is why, in tandem with introducing this bill, we filed two regulations—namely, O. Reg 155 and O. Reg 156—that will come into force on January 1, 2025, containing a number of new measures, including the following:

- mandating information-sharing between children's aid societies and the ministry about specific health and safety risks to children in licensed out-of-home care settings;

- requiring information-sharing between different children's aid societies, as needed, to support service planning of children placed by one children's aid society into the jurisdiction of another;

- requiring children's aid societies to visit children in their care placed in out-of-home care more frequently, so every 30 days instead of every 90 days;

- requiring unannounced in-person visits by children's aid societies in certain circumstances; for example, if a visit cannot be scheduled because the society was unable to contact the child or the caregivers, or if there are concerns related to the well-being of the child; and

- clarifying and enhancing rules prohibiting certain methods of discipline in licensed settings, like rules prohibiting the use of derogatory or racist language directed at or even used in the presence of the child;

- requiring licensees, their staff, and others to report to the ministry where there are reasonable grounds to suspect the use of prohibited methods of discipline in a licensed setting;

- requiring that licensees ensure that staff and foster parents providing out-of-home care do so in accordance with the licensee's program description set out in their application;

- enhancing rules for record-keeping of financial arrangements with respect to the provision of licensed out-of-home care for the child;

- requiring bedrooms in children's residences to have doors, to provide a reasonable degree of privacy;

- requiring bedrooms in a foster care home to have a physical or visual barrier, to provide foster care children with reasonable privacy;

- providing clarity in cases where there is a conflict between the regulations applicable to licensees and recommendations made by the local medical officer of health;

- enhancing rules on financial reporting to be prepared by licensees;

- clarifying the rules governing the use of physical and mechanical restraints by foster parents; and

- adding new provisions to set out offences for contravention of rules specific to the use of physical and mechanical restraints, prohibited methods of discipline and intervention that may be used in licensed out-of-home care settings, and nutrition and food to be made available to residents in licensed children's residences.

Speaker, these are all changes that are part of our evolution ensuring that all children in this province have the best start to set them up for a successful and prosperous future—and from the conversations we've had this morning, we all can agree that is of critical importance.

I'd like to end my comments today with a quotation from Diana Frances, a former foster child who wrote to express her support for this legislation: "I am writing to express my support of Bill 188: supporting the futures of children and youth act, that is currently before the Ontario government. Speaking from my life experience, I believe with all my heart that these improvements to the safety, well-being and privacy of children and youth in care are of vital importance. Many important changes have been made to the system since I was adopted, given up again at 13 and placed with another family as a ward of the province. However, more issues need to be updated and amended as our social structure changes and social media poses new risks to privacy and safety."

I want to thank Diana for sharing her lived experience. It's part of the evolution, and this government is committed to—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): It is now time for questions.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you to the member opposite for your presentation.

I would like to draw attention to some feedback that the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies gave on this bill. While the overall intent of the bill is certainly supportable and there are some wise changes here, the society raised the issue of how we stop children from ending up in this situation in the first place.

What steps is this government looking at taking to ensure that children don't need to end up in care?

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Mr. Brian Saunderson: Thank you to the member opposite for the question.

As we heard in earlier discussion, from the member for Ottawa Centre, these types of issues become very difficult. We know that parenting is not an easy thing and there are many stressors—mental health, addictions, financial—

that often compromise families' abilities to care for their child, so this government is working on supports, through mental health funding in our schools, working on funding other support services.

But ultimately, in the case where a child needs protection and needs to be put in foster care, this legislation is designed to ensure that we have a fulsome and robust system.

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

Mr. Lorne Coe: In this legislation, we're proposing changes that would, if passed, further restrict access to the child protection records of children and youth formerly involved in the child welfare system.

Could the member from Simcoe—Grey—through you, Speaker—provide more detail about those proposed changes, please?

Mr. Brian Saunderson: I want to thank my colleague for the question.

This is a very critical piece of this legislation. It is enhancing protections of privacy for children who grew up in foster care, while at the same time permitting them the freedom to speak about their lived experience in the system, which is a critical part—and it's a right that all of us enjoy. So at the same time, we're increasing the protections to make sure that only those who are authorized have access to records in specific circumstances, while allowing the individual to speak about their lived experience in the system.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I thank the member for his presentation.

Like my colleague said, it is very important to keep people out of the care system in the first place.

The member referred to investments in mental health care as a way of keeping children safe and in a situation where they can stay at home.

Could you tell us what scale of funds are being invested and what results have been seen from the work that you've done to this point?

Mr. Brian Saunderson: I thank the member for the question.

I would refer back to the comments of Diana Frances, who was talking about changes in our society through social media and other pressures.

We know in this House that things like human trafficking and sexual exploitation are growing concerns. This government passed all-House legislation to make sure that those suffering, who have been exploited and have been trafficked, are able to have debt released so that they are no longer controlled by the offender, and we have expanded the Victims' Bill of Rights to allow those to pursue their traffickers. And we are working, through a number of mechanisms, through the Associate Minister of Mental Health, through the Minister of Education, to ensure that there are supports to help those who are at risk deal with their issues, before having to be transitioned into this system.

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

Ms. Patrice Barnes: Thank you to the member for the presentation.

I think the point of this bill is that the health, safety and well-being of children is paramount whether they're in care or not. It's crucial that as a Legislature and a society, we do everything in our power to ensure that's the case. This bill proposes to take many steps towards that goal.

Could the member please expand on what regulations are currently in place to ensure those who work with children at risk are qualified to do so?

Mr. Brian Saunderson: Thank you very much to the member for Ajax for her question.

As I indicated, in parallel with this legislation, we have introduced two new regulations, O. Reg. 155 and O. Reg. 156, that are enhancing these protections and making sure that we are putting in place better application processes to vet those who are applying to be foster parents, that we are better monitoring their actions. And through enhanced inspection procedures through this bill, if passed, we will be making sure that we're inspecting homes every 30 days, as opposed to every 90, and that we continue to work to monitor.

As has been indicated, while putting these kinds of provisions in place is a good start, without the corollary of enforcement to make sure that people abide by those new measures—we have enhanced penalties significantly to make sure that youth are protected and served properly.

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

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Thank you for the presentation.

There is an overrepresentation of Indigenous children in the child welfare system in Ontario, but also across Canada.

The federal government of Canada funds First Nations child and family services on-reserve through Indigenous Services Canada. Indigenous Services Canada requires that First Nations child and family service agencies use provincial-territorial child welfare laws as a condition of funding. I know one of the things that is followed is the 1965 Indian Welfare Agreement.

Are there any plans to update the 1965 welfare agreement?

Mr. Brian Saunderson: I want to thank the member opposite for that question.

We know, in our past, that those situations were not handled well.

And I know that, currently, the Indigenous children's aid societies make their own placement decisions without interference from the province, and that the law requires children's aid societies to place children in safe and culturally appropriate settings.

In response to the question, I can indicate to the member opposite that the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services has indicated that he has been in discussion with chiefs and that they are working on those very issues.

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

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: We know that children and youth involved in the child welfare system have already faced a lot of challenges, well before the time that they interact with the children's aid society. Unfortunately, a lot of these youth often experience worse outcomes as they move through their lives. Our government has put in a year's worth of work to reverse that trend.

My question to the member is, how will these proposed changes actually help our children and youth?

Mr. Brian Saunderson: Thank you very much for that question.

The aspects of this legislation are very far-reaching in terms of—yes, as I indicated—the O. Reg. changes, making sure that the applicants are vetted so that the homes are appropriate and the care that they're going to receive is constantly monitored, and increasing inspections and increasing the number of inspectors across the province. We're also enhancing our fines to make sure that there is punishment and consequences for the bad actors. We've enhanced the penalties significantly, and we've changed the appeal process. So this legislation is doing things right across the spectrum, from vetting applicants, to the care that the child receives while in foster care, as well as making sure that there are enhancements to penalties to punish those bad actors.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): It is now time for further debate.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: *Remarks in Anishininiimowin.* Good morning. It's always an honour to be able to rise in this place to represent the people of Kiiwetinoong, but also the people who do not have a voice, such as children, such as people who do not have an opportunity to be able to say anything in this place.

I want to acknowledge what many of the people who live in Kiiwetinoong, 65% of whom are Indigenous, might think of when you mention the child welfare system. Earlier, I asked a question to the other side, to the member who did their 20 minutes—that there is quite a bit of representation of our children, of our people, in this place.

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I know, when I see this legislation, to me, growing up, but also the teachings that we have—we've always, as First Nations people, as Anishinaabeg, Anishinewuk, had our own laws. Before settlers arrived, as First Nations people, as Anishinewuk, we did not write a lot of things down, but it was through stories; it was through talking to people, that those were our laws. I know that sometimes nowadays we try to create our own laws. And I remember when the minister came to KI last year around February or March, when he became the minister, when he signed off the agreement with the Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug Onaakonikewin. That was a good trip. It was the first time I saw the feds but also the provincial government, the First Nations—where they recognized Indigenous laws, First Nations laws, on how they are going to take care of their own children. They had their own laws. So I think it's important to acknowledge that.

Every day, I talk about the impacts of colonialism, the impacts of oppression, the impacts of racism on Indigen-

ous people. Every day, it's the children who suffer first. I think, when we talk about the First Nations within Ontario, the care system represents the continuation of a history of colonial governments taking our children away, whether to force them to go to Indian residential school or placing them for adoption in mostly non-Indigenous homes.

Speaker, I'd like to remind the House: During the Sixties Scoop, around 16,000 Indigenous children were taken away from their families. They were taken away from the teachings. They were taken away from the ways of life and the ways of being. That is an example of the assimilationist policy that has caused repercussions and intergenerational trauma to this day. I see it. I see it when you see children that go missing.

I remember I was at this chiefs' meeting one time, and there was First Nation leadership from my riding—they were under the child welfare system. She had five children under the age of four. She had no idea where they were—somewhere in Ontario; that's all she knew. As a First Nation leader, she had no idea where those children were, and that should not happen—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I apologize to the member, but we are out of time right now. It is time for members' statements.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

PORCHLIGHT COUNSELLING AND ADDICTION SERVICES

Mr. Brian Riddell: Today, I would like to speak about Porchlight Counselling and Addiction Services. What began in 1940 as a community support group for families who suffered losses during the Second World War has become a beacon of hope for many individuals and families in Cambridge and North Dumfries.

Porchlight Counselling and Addiction Services offers a wide range of support to those young and old in need of help with addictions, family relationships, anxiety and depression. Led by executive director Cameron Dearlove, Porchlight is a safe space where counselling and addiction services are improving the lives of countless people in my riding.

Porchlight has many funding partners to assist in the delivery of its programs, but it still counts on the generosity of donors and successful fundraising events.

This coming Saturday, Cambridge Moves for Mental Health will be held in support of Porchlight. The event will kick off at Cambridge Civic Square, followed by a walk through historic downtown Galt. Those who can't participate can still donate by contacting the centre.

In my role as MPP, I've witnessed first-hand the good work that Porchlight does for Cambridge and North Dumfries, as well as the level of support it has among our residents.

I want to thank Cameron and his team and wish them good luck in raising the \$25,000 goal they have set for this weekend's event.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Mr. Jeff Burch: April is Autism Awareness Month.

According to the Ontario Autism Coalition, there are over 60,000 children waiting for core services. After six years of broken promises, so many children are now aging out of the eligibility requirement for the Ontario Autism Program after receiving no core services.

Just the other week, I spoke to Thorold resident Angelo Dosa, whose autistic son Jonathan, 18 years old, has now aged out of the program. As we sat at Angelo's kitchen table, he told me that Jonathan was diagnosed with low-functioning autism when he was three years old. He has turned 18, is now considered an adult, but cannot care for himself. Angelo says Jonathan is now on Developmental Services Ontario's housing list. The waiting period could be anywhere from two to 10 years.

Speaker, the Ontario Autism Coalition is here at Queen's Park tomorrow. It is my hope that government members will listen and meet with delegates and parents like Angelo to educate themselves on the resources and investments needed to address this crisis. We can do better for Jonathan and his family.

POLICE

Ms. Patrice Barnes: Today, I want to welcome Inspector Shaun Carter and Detective Sergeant Michael Baggio in the audience today.

I would like to take this time to acknowledge the life-saving efforts of Durham regional police and the officers who work in west division.

On January 16, fire and police responded to a fire in a two-storey home in Ajax where three individuals were trapped inside. Officers arrived on scene, scaled the backyard fence and heard a woman calling from the second floor who was holding a three-year-old child. The officers communicated with the mother in a very chaotic situation and encouraged her to drop the child to the officers below. One of these officers was there to catch the toddler amid toxic smoke and flames. Luckily, the child only suffered minor injuries. Unfortunately, the father remains in hospital, and the mother is recovering from her injuries.

This is just one example of the dedicated and heroic actions that our police officers perform day after day.

The Solicitor General and I had the opportunity, with MPP Coe, to visit west division to say thank you to these officers.

I want to give a shout-out to the team: Constable William Woodstock, who caught the child; Constable Josh Brown; Constable Nathan Fulford; Constable Joseph Lang; Constable Jacob Ohara; Constable Hasan Shafiq; Constable Mark Alarcon; Detective Constable Hannah Elkington; and Constable Richard Armstrong. Thank you for all you do every day.

LAND USE PLANNING

Ms. Catherine Fife: I am honoured to rise today to speak about a very important issue that is setting a dangerous precedent here in Ontario: the expropriation of prime farmland in Wilmot township.

1020

Back in March, Wilmot farmers were told of the region's plans to purchase 770 acres of their land. If the landowners refused to sell, they were told that their land would be expropriated.

Remember that Waterloo region's official plan accommodated all anticipated growth in the region until 2051 without significant farmland loss.

This government's current legislation makes it possible for what is happening in Wilmot to happen anywhere in Ontario, with no transparency and no community consultation.

The region is actually, right now, operating under an NDA. There are no answers, no information coming from the regional level of government.

Stewart Snyder, a landowner and farmer says, "Something's not right. We're not just being mistreated as farmers and landowners, but the whole community is being left in the dark about what's going on."

On Friday, the NDP leader and other NDP MPPs, including myself, held a town hall in Wilmot, and almost 500 people attended.

This is very clearly greenbelt 2.0. We the official opposition will get to the bottom of this, just like we did with the greenbelt, and we will continue to fight for farmers in Wilmot.

CHAD BARK

Mr. Brian Saunderson: I rise this morning to salute and pay tribute to a distinguished resident of Simcoe—Grey, Chad Bark, who passed away this month at the age of 99. Chad was a true member of our greatest generation; he was a gentleman, an accomplished athlete, a decorated World War II veteran, a devoted husband and father, and a friend.

Chad; his wife, Lyn; and their four children, Barbara, Susan, John and Don, were family friends and our neighbours in the Toronto neighbourhood that I grew up in.

In 1944, at the age of 18, Chad enlisted, hoping to be a pilot. However, he was deemed ineligible because he was colour-blind, and he joined the army corps. He was shipped to England in the spring of 1944, arriving on May 6, one month before the D-Day invasion.

Chad was assigned to the signal corps and the cipher group, where his job was to create and decipher codes to ensure communications were secure on the front lines.

After celebrating VE day in Manchester, England, he returned home to work in his father's business, marry his sweetheart, Lyn, and raise four children.

A proud Canadian, Chad was a candidate in the 1974 federal election, running as a Progressive Conservative under the leadership of Robert Stanfield—the best Prime

Minister we never had. I am so proud to say that I worked in his campaign, putting up Chad Bark signs. It was my first foray into politics and, clearly, it made an impression. I had the great fortune to reconnect with Chad 48 years later, when campaigning in the last provincial election. He was a constituent living in Alliston, and he returned the favour by campaigning vigorously in his seniors' home, where he organized a meet and greet.

Speaker, my condolences to the Bark family on the passing of this remarkable man.

Farewell and Godspeed, Chad.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Everyone has the right to an affordable home, but in my community, it's harder than ever to find that affordable home. Oshawa has experienced some of the most dramatic rent increases in the province. Between 2014 and 2023, the cost of renting increased by 61%. That's more than Toronto, and nearly four times the government's rent increase guideline.

My office regularly hears from families, students and seniors who are struggling to find safe and suitable housing that fits their budget. The money people used to be able to spend in our community or save for the future is now going towards keeping the roof over their heads.

This affordability crisis has left too many people out in the cold. The region of Durham has reported a 67% increase in homelessness over the past year.

The John Howard Society of Durham Region has worked with our unsheltered neighbours for years. Their director of housing services, Geralda Bray, told the CBC, "We were able to find housing in the past and we were able to house at least some people. But now, we're finding it just so difficult to house people because they can't afford it."

We have to do better. People deserve safe, clean, accessible homes that they can afford. We need public, non-profit, and co-operative housing. We need non-market housing. We need fourplexes and real rent control.

The Ontario NDP is calling on this government to get back to building homes, not just talking.

People in Oshawa want to see government do something real about this housing crisis.

Housing is not a developer wish list. Housing is a human right.

KAWARTHA LAKES DAIRY PRODUCERS ANNUAL BANQUET

Ms. Laurie Scott: I was happy to attend the recent Kawartha Lakes Dairy Producers annual banquet and awards at the Woodville Legion. We got to honour and thank our local farmers for producing such high-quality milk, most of which is delivered directly to Kawartha Dairy, where it is made into their famous product, Kawartha Dairy ice cream, which we've all enjoyed right here in the Legislature and across the province.

Our featured speaker was Kawartha Dairy's general manager, Brian Kerr, who highlighted their plans for continued expansion in Ontario. With 11 stores across the province, the most recent in Burlington, where their first month sales projections were met in just eight days—not surprising. Two more stores will be opening soon, one in Cobourg and one on the Danforth.

Their success is not only about the taste, but the experience shared by generations of families—the best marketing tool you can have.

Kawartha Dairy is in their 87th year, 100% owned by the Crowe family, embodying the legacy of quality and service.

Kawartha Dairy was also named Canada's safest manufacturing employer and Canada's safest employer for young workers in 2023. They've developed extensive training and mentorship programs. They employ 225 full-time staff and provide jobs to 200 students annually.

I'm always proud to be the MPP who represents Kawartha Dairy.

LAND USE PLANNING

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: On Friday, hundreds of residents from all across Waterloo region gathered in Wilmot to speak for farmers, to protect our farmland.

With the Get It Done Act, we are getting it done wrong—disrespect to our farming communities through policies that encourage expropriation, threaten good planning that prevents sprawl, and override regional planning. They threaten our groundwater, making it saltier and threatening the recharge. And it has the speculators circling, making farmland prices explode and threatening the future of this \$50-billion economy.

The 500 people who gathered in Wilmot rallied together in support of our farming community.

GOVERNMENT INVESTMENTS

Ms. Donna Skelly: It is my absolute pleasure to rise today to discuss a recent funding announcement in my riding of Flamborough–Glanbrook.

On April 12, alongside the Minister of Education, I announced that our government is investing over \$31 million in the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board for the new Waterdown Bay Elementary School and an addition to Mount Hope Elementary School. This investment will support the creation of 682 student spaces and 176 licensed child care spaces for my community. Parents and representatives from the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board have been influential throughout the process. They have been strong advocates for our community and demonstrated our need for this funding.

Due to its unlimited potential, Flamborough–Glanbrook is one of the fastest-growing communities right across Ontario. By investing in early learning, we are laying the foundation for the next generation of leaders and innovators to build on this success.

Schools and access to child care are important for Ontario's students and parents. Our students deserve to learn in state-of-the-art, modern facilities.

Mr. Speaker, our government recognizes the importance of getting new schools and expansions to existing schools built as quickly as possible for our growing communities.

PHARMACISTS

Mr. Anthony Leardi: On Sunday, I had the pleasure of going to a brand new cafe in my riding, the King Street Café. It's in Harrow, Ontario, and it's being opened by my constituents Lisa and Geoff. On my way, I got a call from one of my constituent friends who was supposed to meet me there. She said she got pink eye and she couldn't make it. She was going to go see a doctor to get a prescription for her pink eye. I said, "You don't have to do that. You can go straight to a pharmacist." She said, "Are you sure?" I said, "Of course, I'm sure. You don't need a prescription from a doctor for pink eye. Go straight to your pharmacist and get treatment." Well, sure enough, 20 minutes later, that constituent called me back. She said she got her treatment. She was very happy that she didn't have to go to a doctor, and now she is recovering from that very minor ailment.

1030

In fact, in Ontario, you can get treatment for 19 common ailments, including pink eye, diaper rash, insect bites, hay fever and acne. It's all about getting convenient care closer to you, where and when you need it.

That's important for my constituents in Essex county, because we live in a rural area, and we would rather go to the pharmacist than waste a trip to the doctor for something simple like that.

I would like to thank the Minister of Health for introducing this very practical and useful program that makes health care more accessible and easier to get for my constituents in Essex county.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: I'd like to introduce and acknowledge Audrey Lo, a page from my riding, as well as her mom, Nicole, who is visiting today, as well as the grade 5 classes from Maurice Cody public school in my riding.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I'm wishing a warm welcome to a tremendous leader from Windsor-Essex, a true role model for so many in our community and someone who truly keeps on giving back, through and through, through her community leadership. I'd like to welcome Helga Reidel to the chamber today.

Mr. Tom Rakocvic: Today, I'm so proud to welcome my constituent Fikayo Aderoju, recipient of the Ontario volunteer medal for founding his amazing organization, Project Impacting Lives, which has helped countless

individuals and families experiencing homelessness in the GTA and beyond.

Welcome again to Queen's Park, my friend.

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: It is an honour to welcome today's page captain, my daughter Mariam Rasheed. I'm so proud of her and the great work she is doing at Queen's Park.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I want to welcome the Rehman family, who are with us today. Thank you for your leadership with Humanity First. We welcome you to the people's House.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's very important. Today, in this Ontario Legislative Assembly, someone is turning 43. It is the member from Windsor, who worked on my first campaign in 2006. He doesn't look a day older than when he was at Carleton University—

Mr. Andrew Dowie: Ottawa.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: —University of Ottawa. I just made the biggest fatal mistake that anybody could make in the city of Ottawa.

Happy birthday, Andrew Dowie.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I just want to wish all those of the Jewish faith a celebratory beginning of Passover.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Introduction of visitors? That concludes our introduction of visitors.

The Leader of the Opposition has informed me that she wishes to raise a point of order.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I seek unanimous consent that this House acknowledge that the kaffiyeh is a culturally significant clothing item to many in Ontario's Palestinian, Muslim and Arab communities and should neither be considered an expression of a political message nor an accessory likely to cause disorder, and should therefore be permitted to be worn in the House.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Ms. Stiles is seeking the unanimous consent of this House that this House acknowledge that the kaffiyeh is a culturally significant clothing item to many in Ontario's Palestinian, Muslim and Arab communities and should neither be considered an expression of a political message nor an accessory likely to cause disorder, and should therefore be permitted to be worn in the House. Agreed? I heard some noes.

The member for Ottawa South has informed me he has a point of order he wishes to raise.

Mr. John Fraser: I seek unanimous consent that, notwithstanding standing order 100(a)(iv), five minutes be allotted to the independent members as a group to speak during private members' public business today.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Could I please have a copy of the request for unanimous consent?

Mr. Fraser is seeking unanimous consent of the House that, notwithstanding standing order 100(a)(iv), five minutes be allotted to the independent members as a group to speak during private members' public business today. Agreed? I heard a no.

Mr. John Fraser: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Ottawa South, I believe, has a second point of order.

Mr. John Fraser: I seek unanimous consent that, notwithstanding standing order 45(b)(iv), eight minutes be apportioned to the independent members as a group for debate on opposition day motion number 4.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Once again, could I have a copy of the request for unanimous consent?

Mr. Fraser is seeking unanimous consent of the House that, notwithstanding standing order 45(b)(iv), eight minutes be apportioned to the independent members as a group for debate on opposition day motion number 4. Agreed? I heard a no.

It is now time for oral questions.

QUESTION PERIOD

WEARING OF KAFFIYEHS

Ms. Marit Stiles: This question is for the Premier.

Calls and messages are pouring in from all across Ontario from Ontarians who are shocked to learn that people are being prevented from wearing cultural attire in the Legislative Assembly.

After the Premier publicly acknowledged the ban on wearing the kaffiyeh was unnecessarily divisive, we gave him a chance again today to do the right thing and reverse it. Yet again, his Conservative members have said no.

Will the Premier stand behind his words and compel his caucus to support the freedom to wear cultural attire at Queen's Park?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I think the Premier was abundantly clear in how his views were on that.

I will say to the Leader of the Opposition, it is not in the tradition of the Conservative Party to compel its members to do anything. There was a free vote, and members expressed—members on whatever side of the House expressed their opinions on that. So I can assure the member opposite that we will not be compelling our members to do anything. It's not what Progressive Conservatives do. We allow them to represent their communities.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, Ontario is a place where different cultures are celebrated—celebrated. We work to uphold the values of diversity and to understand the pain that communities feel when they are not represented.

We observe truth and reconciliation day to acknowledge the impact of colonial oppression and the erasure of and, at times, criminalization of cultural symbols.

Will the Premier support the freedom of cultural expression and stand with thousands of Ontarians who want to see the reversal of the kaffiyeh ban?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Again, the Leader of the Opposition opposite will know that this is, of course, a decision that was made by the Speaker.

Interruption.

Hon. Paul Calandra: At the same time, Mr. Speaker, I'll continue on.

We have amongst us the most diverse caucus in the history of this province—

Interruption.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): This House stands in recess for 15 minutes.

The House recessed from 1040 to 1055.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Final supplementary.

Ms. Marit Stiles: This morning, I planned to meet with the Arab Canadian Lawyers Association, but as they walked into Queen's Park they were barred from entering this building because of their cultural attire.

In this week alone, the Premier made a public declaration about the need to reverse the kaffiyeh ban, but his members blocked it. He has admitted he thinks his own post-secondary legislation is an overreach, but his minister doubled down and forced him to recant. Question period is just not long enough for me to capture the full list of this Premier's policy reversals and flip-flops.

Ontarians are the ones who are paying the price here.

Is the government caucus losing faith in their Premier, or has the Premier lost faith in his caucus?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Mr. Speaker, I think the Leader of the Opposition shows today why she can never lead the province of Ontario, because what she has chosen to do is to attempt to divide Ontarians.

I come from a caucus that is the most diverse caucus in the history of this province.

I don't take any lessons from the Leader of the Opposition when it comes to how marginalized people feel. I'm an Italian Canadian who, in the 1970s, was spit on for being a "wop." I don't need any lessons from her on what it means to stand up for marginalized people. I do it every single day, and so do the rest of my caucus mates. We bring people together; we don't divide them.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I'm pretty sure we were the ones who weren't divided, but there you go.

LAND USE PLANNING

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, this question is for the Premier.

Ontario's agri-food sector not only feeds us; it adds \$48 billion to Ontario's economy. But to this Premier, rural Ontario is just empty land to punch holes in or pave over, especially when his friends stand to profit.

I asked the Premier three times yesterday why farmers in Wilmot are being threatened with expropriation if they don't hand over their land for some sort of secret industrial development. The Premier didn't answer, and his minister couldn't even bring himself to use the words "farmer" or "farm."

Why is the Premier repeating the mistakes of the greenbelt scandal with this latest attack on Ontario's farmers and prime agricultural farmland?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To reply, the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, we know that farmland is critical to the success of our agri-food industry. That's why we're taking a balanced approach, working with communities to find the right balance.

Just look at what happened in St. Thomas: 1,500 acres of land was assembled with no expropriations. That allowed Volkswagen to announce their gigafactory—3,000 jobs, 30,000 indirect jobs. To get there, we introduced Bill 63, and that was able to change the way municipalities were handling the real estate in their areas. It facilitated Volkswagen coming here. The bill was supported by both parties.

Why are they not supporting us today?

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, I'll point out to the minister that those were willing partners.

There are lots of places in Ontario that would be excellent sites for a new industrial facility. But the Premier wants to put it right in the middle of some of Ontario's most productive farmland. There is no planning study to justify this. There is no agricultural impact assessment. And the Premier has no idea what impact an industrial site will have on groundwater or the surrounding agricultural systems, or how much it's going to cost to run infrastructure out there.

Speaker, with so little information available to the public, can the Premier tell us why this site was chosen over all of the available sites in the province, and who stands to actually benefit?

1100

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, again, I refer back to the deal that was made with Volkswagen—1,500 acres.

Bill 63 was supported by both opposition parties. It's very unclear why they're so dead against advancing today.

Look at Windsor as an example. They made sure their land was assembled, and as a result, NextStar, there, invested \$5 billion in their plant. That's bringing 2,500 good-paying jobs to the Windsor region and tens of thousands of indirect jobs. I flew over Windsor, took a photo of that massive site, landed and toured that plant. There are 1,400 Ontario men and women working inside that plant, to build that plant today. That's the result of being proactive and looking for these lands.

The Premier has asked these municipalities, "Assemble your land, and be part of the success of Ontario."

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: How is it that some people seem to know what's going on here, but the people who are going to lose their livelihood, their farms, aren't given any information? It's outrageous.

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture says that we're losing 319 acres of farmland every day in this province, and here's this government, doubling down with their anti-farmer sentiment and a new land grab in Wilmot—

Interjections.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Oh, yes, it is.

People are tired of this.

The Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario and the Ontario branch of the farmers' union have called the government's decision "shameful" and "short-sighted."

Why does the Premier keep attacking the province's farmers and prime farmland?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Again, we know how critical farmland is, and that's why we are taking a balanced approach.

The members opposite have opposed every economic development in our province at virtually every opportunity they got.

We have tens of billions of dollars of new job-creating investment in our pipeline. The Premier said to municipalities, about a year ago, "Start assembling land in your regions if you want to be in on all of the jobs that are coming to Ontario," and communities all across Ontario are assembling land. We put a template together. Municipalities are eager to get in and list their property, list the development sites that are available. They're hungry for these jobs. They're hungry to assemble shovel-ready sites.

Speaker, we're decades behind our biggest competitor in the US, and for that reason, we have a dedicated team who are taking all of these responses from municipalities.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr. Jeff Burch: Speaker, my question through you, to the Premier, is around his government's flip-flop on the Hazel McCallion Act, an ill-conceived and poorly-thought-out plan by the Premier to dissolve Peel region—a plan that resulted in chaos and an exodus of qualified staff.

Yesterday, taxpayers in Peel region were outraged to learn from the Toronto Star that they're on the hook for a \$1.5-million bill from the Peel transition board for "efficiencies." Local leaders who only met with the four-person board once said it has been a "non-transparent process," and residents are now being forced to pay for the indecisiveness of the province.

Does the Premier feel it is fair for property taxpayers in Peel to pick up a \$1.5-million tab for his poor performance?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I appreciate the question from the member opposite, because it further highlights just how out of touch the NDP are with the priorities of the people of the province of Ontario.

In fact, the councillors and the regional councillors in the area have been kept well-informed. The mayors, of course, in those areas are very supportive of what we are doing, which includes downloading municipal planning to the lower tiers. But the highlight of what the transition team is doing is helping us inform the work that is being done by the parliamentary assistant on governance reform, which I thought the members opposite were in favour of.

What it ultimately wants to accomplish is to ensure that we can do the number one thing that matters to the people of the province of Ontario, and that is build the infrastructure that is needed so that we can build not hundreds of homes, not thousands of homes, but millions of homes across the province of Ontario. I know the member opposite is opposed to that, because in his own area, when they had the opportunity to approve housing, a council stood in the way of it, said no to affordable housing, and he stood quiet and said nothing. But I'll provide an MZO and make sure it happens.

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

Mr. Jeff Burch: Speaker, as reported by the Toronto Star, the board billed the region with two invoices, one for \$858,000 and a second for \$635,000. Councillor Medeiros said that it's unclear who is getting paid and for what. "We don't know how these board members were selected. How much are we paying them? Now they apparently hired consultants. How much are they getting paid, and for what? We don't know anything."

Speaker, through you to the Premier: Will he admit there is nothing efficient about this fiasco, and will his government pick up the tab for hard-working Peel taxpayers so they are not on the hook for his mistakes?

Interjections.

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

Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Mr. Speaker, do you know what Peel taxpayers want? What they're getting. Do you know what they're getting? They're getting a 413 because of the Minister of Transportation. They're getting a brand new hospital because of the hard work of the members of this caucus from Peel region. That's what Brampton is getting and Mississauga is getting—hospitals; they're getting long-term care; they're getting transit and transportation.

Do you know who never delivered any of that, Mr. Speaker? The Liberals and the NDP, who stood in the way of everything to help improve Mississauga, Caledon and Brampton.

So what are we doing? Millions of dollars in infrastructure—we're repairing the infrastructure that was so damaged by the previous government. We're building roads, highways, universities—I forgot about the university campus, the medical school that we're building.

I think we're delivering for Peel. And do you know who's doing it? The members of this caucus from Peel region.

TAXATION

Mr. Stéphane Sarrazin: My question is for the Minister of Energy.

At a time when people in our province continue to face high interest rates and rising cost of living, the federal Liberals plowed ahead with their plan to hike the carbon tax by a staggering 23%. It was a cruel April Fool's joke

to play on Ontarians, but it was one that we will all remember.

The dire effects of the carbon tax are felt by our agriculture and trucking industries. When farmers who grow the food and truckers who transport the food are taxed, these extra costs are passed on to our consumers as they purchase daily necessities.

This is ridiculous. The federal Liberals need to eliminate this tax today.

Can the minister tell the House how the federal carbon tax hurts farmers, truckers and families in Ontario?

Hon. Todd Smith: The minister from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell is right again this morning, and as a matter of fact, it was a cruel joke on April 1—but it was no joke. The federal carbon tax, supported by the queen of the carbon tax, Bonnie Crombie, and her Ontario Liberals, went up by 23%—which, incidentally, is where they're at in the polls, 23%. The worst part of this story is that on April 1 next year, the carbon tax is going up again.

We don't need a carbon tax. We have a plan, as a matter of fact. We're refurbishing the Pickering nuclear station. We are refurbishing Darlington. We're refurbishing Bruce Power. We're building small modular reactors at Darlington.

As a result of all that, last week I was at a great announcement at BWXT in Cambridge with a couple of my colleagues, and the Premier was there later in the day—an \$80-million investment creating over 200 million jobs.

We have 76,000 people working in our nuclear sector in Ontario, and it provides almost 60% of our baseload power every day that is emissions-free.

We don't need a carbon tax. It's time to scrap Justin and Bonnie's tax.

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

Mr. Stéphane Sarrazin: Thank you to the minister for his response.

The escalating fuel costs are burdening individuals and families across every community in Ontario.

With summer quickly approaching, it's not fair that Ontario families have to worry about taking children to sports practices and enjoying road trips.

The people of this province have had enough of the Liberals' fiscal mismanagement. The federal Liberals and their provincial counterparts continue to push forward ideas that cost Ontarians.

Unlike the Liberals, our government remains committed to making life more affordable and protecting people's hard-earned money.

1110

Can the minister tell us more about what our government is doing to counteract the federal carbon tax and bring Ontarians real financial relief?

Hon. Todd Smith: Thanks very much again to the member.

We're doing a lot. We have reduced the cost at the pumps by 10.7 cents a litre until the end of this year. We've brought in One Fare—the minister here is outstanding, saving those who ride transit \$1,600 a year.

We've scrapped the tolls. We've scrapped the licence plate fees.

We are doing everything we can to ensure that life is more affordable for the people of Ontario, but the queen of the carbon tax, Bonnie Crombie, and Justin Trudeau and Jagmeet Singh—the NDP and the Liberals teaming up again to make energy more expensive.

We have a plan. It's called Powering Ontario's Growth. I talked about the nuclear investments we're making.

Last week, I was in Niagara Falls at the Sir Adam Beck facility, announcing a big refurbishment there: 1.7 gigawatts of clean, reliable, affordable water power that's going to power our province for the next 40 to 50 years; new transmission lines that are better connecting the north to the south, to those in Indigenous communities, so those in northern Ontario can participate in our energy sector.

We have a plan. It doesn't include a punitive carbon tax.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Premier.

Speaker, this government's scandals didn't start with the greenbelt. A few years ago, the government was embroiled in controversy when they attempted to get accreditation for a private evangelical school led by the Premier's close friend Charles McVety, who was well known for his anti-LGBTQ and Islamophobic statements. The government even put forward legislation to allow the school to be able to hand out bachelor degrees. Today, that same school is one of the very few private colleges that will get international students under the new cap.

Can the Premier tell us whether McVety's insider connections played a role in his allocation of international study permits?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Speaker, I remind the member opposite that this House and this government turned down that application. But what you're seeing again today is a continued effort by the NDP to divide people.

What we're going to continue to do, on this side of the House, is focus on the things that matter to the people of the province of Ontario: job creation, economic growth, giving people the homes and the housing that they need so that they can prosper, and bringing people together, because that is what we have done since day one.

In 2018, when we assumed office, Ontarians were more divided than ever before. We inherited a province where people were choosing to eat or heat their homes; 300,000 people had lost their jobs. Our budget was out of control. We were the most indebted sub-sovereign government in the history of the entire planet.

We are bringing people together, making investments to create jobs—700,000 people have the dignity of a job who didn't have that before. We'll continue to focus on bringing Ontarians together, leading the country in economic growth so everybody can prosper.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: What divides this province is giving international study permits to a private college whose president is well known for his hateful rhetoric, at a time when this House is planning to dictate anti-hate policies on public campuses.

Speaker, a lawsuit on the matter of McVety's school revealed a recorded call with a Conservative minister who said that he would guide McVety through the process of accreditation and ensure that McVety got where he wanted to go.

We now learn that McVety's school is the beneficiary of another favourable decision by this government.

Again, to the Premier: Was preferential treatment involved in the government's decision about which private colleges would receive international study permits?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: The member knows that we turned down that PEQAB application.

But I think what's more important here is that this government is standing up against anti-hate on campuses across Ontario and ensuring that all students have access to safe campuses across the province.

Mr. Speaker, what I want to talk about and what I think we need to focus on are the huge, historic investments that are being made in post-secondary education—\$903 million to ensure that our institutions have a financial path forward, and ensuring that students are supported along that way.

The bill reflects on the anti-hate measures but also on the mental health supports that are available on our campuses.

We are making investments in additional STEM seats. We are supporting our schools. But I think more importantly, we're not doing it on the backs of students.

Unfortunately, under the Liberal leadership, we saw the highest tuition in all of Canada.

This Premier and this government stood up to support students by decreasing tuition by 10% and ensuring that it was frozen.

TAXATION

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade.

We know that the people of Ontario are finding it difficult to deal with the rising cost of living. That's why our government has taken action to put more money back into people's pockets, through cutting the gas tax and introducing the One Fare program.

Our hope is that all levels of government will join together and be aligned with our approach as a government.

Instead, the federal government is doing the opposite of what our government is doing. The Liberal government is taking more money out of people's pockets because of their federal carbon tax. And yet, Bonnie Crombie and the Liberals who are in this chamber continue to refuse to stand up for the people of Ontario and tell them to scrap the tax.

Minister, can you outline to the House how the carbon tax is hurting the progress we've made for Ontarians?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, when businesses look around the world today, they see these heightened geopolitical tensions, lots and lots of uncertainty all around the world. But when they look at Ontario, they see this sea of tranquility; they see this endless opportunity for hope. They know things have changed now that the Liberals are gone.

Ontario is no longer the high-tax, uncompetitive jurisdiction it once was when the Liberals were in government. We've lowered the cost of doing business, we've reduced red tape, and we've made sure that the conditions are there for businesses to succeed. As a result, companies from around the world have flooded into Ontario to set up shop.

The Liberal carbon tax is an attempt to take us back to those days when the Ontario economy was staggering. We ask that they listen to the workers, listen to the businesses.

Scrap the carbon tax today.

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

Mr. Steve Clark: The Ontario Liberals are exactly the same as the Trudeau Liberals. They both endorse the same high-tax policies that chase jobs and chase businesses out of our province. They're happy to take more money out of the pockets of workers who earned it, and they'll do it at every opportunity that presents itself. That's exactly what they're doing with the federal carbon tax. It's driving up the price of everything. As a result, workers will be left with less money in their pockets. Despite calls from across Canada to scrap the carbon tax, their budget, last week, reaffirmed that they're going to proceed with hiking the tax each and every year.

Can the minister outline and highlight our government's position on taxes and the fact that it's much, much different than the Liberal government approach?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, there is a fundamental difference in our approach and the Liberals' approach. We believe that a dollar left in the pocket of workers who earn it is better than a dollar in the government who taxes it.

For families, more money in their pockets means the opportunity for their kids to enrol in recreational activities; for young people, it means being one step closer to their dream of home ownership; for entrepreneurs, it means more money to scale up their companies and hire more of our trained workers.

The Liberals are ramping up their carbon tax because they think they know how to spend money better than the people who earned it.

Speaker, we're asking the federal Liberals to give the people of Ontario a break and scrap the carbon tax today.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Meegwetch, Speaker. *Remarks in Anishiniimowin.* Good morning.

There is a housing crisis in the north. Kiiwetinoong and other areas need 1,500 housing units to clear the wait-list for affordable housing.

So I ask, why is Ontario putting the federal funding that can help the north with new affordable housing at risk?

1120

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I do appreciate the question from the member opposite, but Ontario is actually not putting the federal funding at risk. What has happened is, the federal government has unilaterally changed its mind on what we should fund.

As the member opposite will know, the National Housing Strategy was a 10-year strategy which was guided by a couple of principles: building additional units and renovating old units. Ontario had a target of 19,000 new units over 10 years. We've hit 11,000 of those 19,000 units. We had a target of 23,000 renovations. Because of the horrific record of the previous Liberal government, we have had to spend an exorbitant amount of money renovating and rehabilitating stock that would otherwise have been taken out of commission. We've done that in co-operation with the service managers, including many of the service managers in the north, and what we have done is renovate, rehabilitate and put back into circulation 123,000 units; that's 426% of our target.

What we won't do, though, is what the federal government is asking us to do right now—unless members agree, of course: to remove the power from our municipal partners and the service managers and direct what should happen in the north and in other parts of the province. We're not there—

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

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Speaker, again, there's a housing crisis in Kiiwetinoong, not only just in urban areas, but also on-reserve. The need for housing is very high across Kiiwetinoong. I have people who are living in canvas tents in the north. The housing supply in the north doesn't meet the demand. As I said, there are 1,500 families waiting for affordable housing, and we cannot continue to play games with the federal government.

Can this government work with the federal partners to ensure that we get the funding needed to address the housing crisis, and that we make sure there is affordable housing in the Kenora district?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of Northern Development and Minister of Indigenous Affairs.

Hon. Greg Rickford: I won't repeat what my friend has said in the previous answer, but I will say this: We are aware that some of the isolated First Nations communities' populations are shrinking. Those folks are moving to towns and cities in the southern part of northern Ontario, the Kenora and Thunder Bay districts respectively.

That's why we recognized that there needed to be an enhancement in our investments in the Indigenous Supportive Housing Program, and to the tune of nearly a 40% increase; that would be \$41.5 million annually. We have really good relationships with administrators on the ground who are trying their best and, frankly, doing well at meeting those demands.

Back to the isolated communities: It's our hope—and I hope it's the same for the member opposite—that by improving economic prosperity in our isolated communities, by thinking about all-season roads and increasing the number of communities that have access to clean, affordable, green electricity, and advancing some resource projects throughout northern Ontario, we will be able to come up with alternative solutions to build affordable housing in isolated communities in northern Ontario. We will have a more equitable sense of economic prosperity for all folks who live in northern Ontario, especially in the isolated communities.

OFFICE OF THE PREMIER

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: The spring budget plans spending \$214 billion of taxpayer money, more than any government in Ontario history. Never has a government spent so much to deliver so little. And why is that? Because this Premier and his government are conducting a gravy train deluxe that delivers taxpayer money to their friends and insiders at the expense of the people of Ontario.

Speaker, who benefits from this budget? It's not our public education system. Teachers spoke about that yesterday at the finance committee, during budget hearings. It's not our public health care system. Doctors spoke about that too, yesterday. In fact, the OMA is so fed up with not being heard by this government about the crisis in family medicine that they are trying to get the government's attention by saying they need to "prepare for the coming apocalypse," all while this Premier spends money hand over fist in the Premier's office on expensive staffers.

My question to the Premier: When will he take control of his own office and stop the gravy train?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of Finance.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Oh, Mr. Speaker, where do I begin? This is incredibly rich.

Clearly in this budget, we have a path to balance, the only major province—and certainly, the federal government does not have a path to balance.

Mr. Speaker, coming from the previous Liberal government—they had 15 years. They racked up their spending. They racked up the debt.

I'm going to ask this House: Did we get more subways from their 15 years? Did we get more hospitals? Did we get more transit? Did we get long-term-care beds built? Did they build the houses? No, they did not, because they wasted taxpayer money.

That's the difference between our government and their government. We're getting it done for the people of Ontario.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Supplementary question.

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: We know the Premier loves to say, "Sorry, folks, I made a mistake." The PCs are even running ads saying so. But the gravy train in the Premier's office is about more than a simple mistake. It's about more than doubling the number of friends and insiders working

for him who make over \$100,000 a year. It's about more than the fact that he has 48 people working for him who make more than the average Ontario household. It's also about the lack of transparency in his budget and his government's reported spending on his office.

While the Premier has spent \$4 million on expensive staff in his office for at least the last three years—\$6.9 million this year—the budget does not show that. The budget has been exactly the same—\$2,432,661. The math just doesn't add up.

My question to the Premier: Where is he hiding the money?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. Order.

The Minister of Finance can reply.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Mr. Speaker, I'm going to do something her party never had the opportunity to do, when they closed 1,600 schools, for example. I'm going to praise this Minister of Education for building more schools faster for the people of Ontario.

I'm going to praise this Minister of Housing, who is getting all types of houses built right across the province. I'm going to praise this Minister of Economic Development, who is building economic prosperity right across the province. I'm going to praise this Minister of Health, who is getting more hospitals built and supporting our health care system. And then, I'm going to turn to my right, and I'm going to praise this Minister of Transportation, who is building highways, the 413, and transit right across the province.

But I'm not going to stop there. I'm going to go to the Minister of Energy, who is building nuclear—including Pickering, Darlington and Bruce Power—right across the province; and finally, the Minister of Indigenous Affairs, who is building the Ring of Fire in the Far North and bringing prosperity to the north.

TAXATION

Mr. Will Bouma: My question is for the Minister of Energy. Speaker, access to reliable, affordable and clean energy continues to be a key driver for Ontario's economic growth and electrification.

At the same time, our government is ensuring we are using every tool in our tool box to save Ontario households money, especially during a period when families are struggling as a result of the Liberal carbon tax.

On April 1, Ontarians woke up to the worst April Fool's Day joke, as the federal Liberals hiked the carbon tax by 23%. This is just the next step in their disastrous plan to nearly triple this tax over the course of the next six years, making everything more expensive for everyone in our province.

Can the minister please tell the House how our government is ensuring that Ontarians have access to clean, reliable and emission-free energy, while the opposition wants to take a step backwards and lean on a terrible carbon—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

The Minister of Energy.

1130

Hon. Todd Smith: Mr. Speaker, I can. We have a plan. It's called Powering Ontario's Growth, and it does not include a carbon tax. As a matter of fact, we are completely opposed to a carbon tax, especially the one that went up 23% on April 1, led by Justin Trudeau and Jagmeet Singh and supported by the queen of the carbon tax, Bonnie Crombie.

We are bringing in clean, reliable, affordable and safe nuclear energy by refurbishing the Pickering Nuclear Generating Station, Darlington, Bruce. All of those major component replacements are ahead of schedule and on budget, and they're providing 50% to 60% of our electricity going forward—and not just that: Because of the work that's being done on those refurbishment projects, we are very comfortable in moving Ontario forward as a world leader on small modular reactor development. As a matter of fact, we have the first SMR under construction at the Darlington site right now—something all of us in this Legislature should be very proud of.

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

Mr. Will Bouma: Thank you to the minister for his response.

Unlike the previous Liberal government, which saddled families with sky-high hydro bills, our government is taking a thoughtful approach that keeps costs down for people and businesses and delivers energy security.

I am proud to be part of a government that has been a strong advocate for Ontario's incredible nuclear industry and the skilled tradespeople who work in it.

Speaker, it is disappointing to see the NDP and the Liberals in this Legislature completely neglect Ontario's nuclear industry and, instead, support a carbon tax that burdens families not just in Ontario, but all across this great country.

Unlike the opposition, our government will continue to fight the costly Liberal carbon tax and put more money into people's pockets.

Can the minister please explain how our government is supporting Ontarians and our nuclear industry?

Hon. Todd Smith: Speaker, we won't be introducing a carbon tax.

As a matter of fact, every single Premier in Canada is against Justin Trudeau's carbon tax, including the Liberals and the NDPers.

We won't be bringing in a carbon tax. We're giving people tax breaks, and that has resulted in the explosion that we've seen in new investments in our province—billions and billions of dollars in new investments.

We were talking about housing earlier, and the member from northern Ontario, from Kenora, was talking about the fact that we're allowing northern communities to connect to our electricity grid.

One of the great projects that we have funded and that is almost completed is the Wataynikaneyap power project—1,800 kilometres of transmission line, connecting 16 different fly-in communities to our clean, green, reliable

electricity grid that's going to enable new houses to be built throughout Kiiwetinoong, North Caribou Lake First Nation, Kingfisher Lake First Nation, Pikangikum and all those great communities. And we're moving forward on another project with the folks at Matawa. It doesn't include a carbon tax. We can do it, and we're getting it done.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Joel Harden: My question is to the Premier.

Speaker, I'm sure all of us in this House enjoy the opportunities we get to take a vacation.

Unfortunately, last week, over 500 staff at GO Transit learned that they were not allowed to have vacation for the rest of this year, and why? Because, sadly, the government has not invested in staff appropriately to pay, to finance and to work with the 15% schedule increase they proposed for the GO train that will go through Milton—coincidentally, the place I'm sure this Premier wants to win a by-election.

Metrolinx has a million-dollar CEO. Meanwhile, they have 82 vice-presidents at Metrolinx, and they have a marketing department of over 400 staff. But we aren't hiring enough workers for GO trains, to make sure people can take vacations.

Can the Premier explain to this House if this makes any sense?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Mr. Speaker, what doesn't make sense is the NDP's consistent objection to building public transit. Every step of the way—whether it's the Liberals or the NDP—when we invest in GO Transit, when we invest in GO trains, when we invest in building new lines, what do both the opposition leader and the Liberal Party do? They vote against every single one of them, whether it's building the Hazel McCallion line in Mississauga and Brampton, whether it's building the Ontario Line or the Scarborough subway extension.

We're increasing service on the GO line by over 15%—the largest in over a decade. What do these members do? They stand against that growth in public transit.

We're going to continue to build for this province. We're going to continue to build for the next generations, because we saw what happened for 15 years under the previous Liberal government. They did absolutely nothing. We'll continue to build.

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

Mr. Joel Harden: I feel bad for my friend opposite who has to answer the question in that way, because people on this side of the House know very well why we have the public transit system we do. It's the taxpayers of this province and the transit workers who make sure people can get around.

Meanwhile, while this government is building the paycheques of 82 Metrolinx vice-presidents, 400 marketing staff, this government has nothing to say—not a

word—about the fact that people can't take a vacation for the rest of this year.

So I want to ask my friend opposite, seriously: Can he commit to this House that he personally will look into this matter? Will he flow the funds necessary from the treasury to make sure GO Transit workers can take the vacation they earned—and Metrolinx executives can finally be called to heel on their incredible greed and compensation at the taxpayers' expense?

Interjections.

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

Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Speaker, we appreciate the great work that all of our employees on GO rail, GO Transit—our GO train and bus drivers—do on the service. They are some of the most well-paid individuals, and we appreciate the work that they do every single day, whether it's driving buses, whether it's driving our trains or being ambassadors for public transit.

Could you imagine, whether it be the NDP or whether it be the Liberals, what Ontario would look like if they had their say? We have seen their record on public transit. Every single time we bring a new line or a new investment into this province, what do they say? "Absolutely not." They're not going to build it.

The Scarborough subway extension—the people of Scarborough were ignored for 15 years under that previous government. We're making those investments.

GO rail transit—a 15% increase in service, 300 new weekly trips on that service line. And we have members in this House getting up to object to that investment.

Mr. Speaker, we will continue to build public transit.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: My question is for the Premier.

Last week, the Premier finally admitted that oil and gas greed was raising gas prices in Ontario. He said, "It's disgusting what the oil companies are doing. They're gouging people." Yes, they are.

In 2022 alone, the carbon tax went up two cents a litre, but fossil fuel giants raised their profit alone, per litre, by 18 cents. The same year they made record profits, and the same year their executives gave themselves a 20% pay raise. Unlike the carbon tax, you don't get any of that money back; they get it.

My question: If the Premier really wants to get big oil out of our pockets, will he commit to a credible clean energy plan that benefits all Ontarians, not just the CEO of Enbridge and his million-dollar friends?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Let's unpack that for a minute, Mr. Speaker. What the member is doing is defending a massive increase in the carbon tax. Let's put it all together. The Greens, the NDP and the Liberals want you to pick a carbon tax, which is hurting every single person, not only in the province, but the entire country. The NDP and the

Liberals want to end gas to people's homes, which would cause people—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Hon. Paul Calandra: —cost of construction to skyrocket. That is what they want to do.

And then they doubled down by suggesting that we should put millions of people out of work; billions of dollars of economic activity should go away.

Let's be clear: The oil and gas sector in this country gives us billions of dollars of economic activity. It puts thousands of people to work.

The manufacturing might of Ontario is what powers our oil and gas sector. It is what has given us an advantage. It is what has given us low energy prices. It is what has made our homes affordable.

They can stand up for all of that. We'll stand up for the people of the province.

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

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: Speaker, once again, it's all talk and no climate action from this government. They have spent hours and hours railing about the federal carbon tax instead of doing something, when they know nothing costs us more than the climate chaos that's at our doorstep—\$26 billion this decade alone.

How could they have used their time? They could have come up with a credible climate plan that cuts pollution and puts money back in people's pockets to save on household energy, transportation and food. Instead, they play politics to distract from the fact that they don't have a plan.

1140

Speaker, to the minister: If he's so concerned about cutting costs for Ontarians, what will he do to get Ontario off the greed-powered roller coaster ride of fossil fuel prices?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks.

Hon. Andrea Khanjin: I understand the member opposite's confusion. After all, it was our government that invested \$200 million to help municipalities repair, rehabilitate and expand critical drinking water, waste water, and really prepare for climate change action. But the Liberals, who she sits next to, voted no. Kathleen Wynne even said that her biggest regret as leader was not supporting housing in Ontario—something that our government is doing in a responsible manner.

When it comes to supporting wetlands, we invested \$30 million in the wetlands conservation program, but her Liberal seatmates there beside her voted no.

And when it came to protecting critical waterways, this government is investing good, critical dollars. But again, we have a Liberal Party who voted no and are not getting us the support we need from their federal counterparts.

We expanded parks. We're protecting lands. We're reducing emissions. In fact, in Ontario alone, we reduced emissions by 86%.

TAXATION

Mr. Billy Pang: My question is for the Minister of Finance. The Liberal carbon tax is driving up the cost of everything in our province. It's punishing Ontario families with higher grocery costs, higher fuel costs, higher heating bills and more. The carbon tax queen, Bonnie Crombie, and her minivan caucus haven't seen a tax that they don't like. That's why they keep voting against every cost-saving measure our government has implemented to bring affordability for Ontarians.

Speaker, we know the Liberals will stop at nothing to try to reach into the pockets of workers and families.

Unlike the Liberals, our government will always advocate on behalf of Ontarians and ensure that we are putting more money back into their pockets.

Through you, Speaker: Can the minister please share what our government is doing to make life more affordable for people in Ontario?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance, the member for Oakville.

Mr. Stephen Crawford: Thank you to the great member from Markham–Unionville. The time to scrap the tax is now. We hear it from Ontarians, and we hear it from people all across Canada.

Whether federally or provincially, the Liberal Party continues to be the party of higher taxes. Bonnie Crombie and the Liberals are on a mission to raise taxes and make life more expensive for the people of Ontario, but I can tell you with certainty, Speaker, that this government is not going to let that happen. The Premier and this team are going to keep costs down, create more good-paying jobs and build more infrastructure that keeps our economy growing, and we're going to do that without implementing any new taxes on the people or businesses of Ontario.

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

Mr. Billy Pang: Thank you to the parliamentary assistant to the minister for his response.

There's nothing worse for people and businesses in Ontario than the Liberal carbon tax. It drives up the cost of food. It drives up the cost of filling up gas. It drives up the cost of everything. It drives up the cost of everything.

Under the leadership of the carbon tax queen, Bonnie Crombie, the Liberals in this House would rather have Ontarians pay more in taxes and earn smaller paycheques to feed their families, instead of joining our government in calling for an end to the carbon tax. That's not what their constituents elected them to do.

Can the parliamentary assistant to the minister tell the House how our government is standing up for Ontarians and fighting the Liberal carbon tax?

Mr. Stephen Crawford: That's another great question from the member from Markham–Unionville.

Speaker, just the other week, the federal Liberals released their annual budget, and what struck me the most was that the Prime Minister once again proved to Ontarians—and, indeed, all Canadians—that he has no intention of scrapping the carbon tax. This was a missed oppor-

tunity to join Ontario—and, I might add, other provinces and Premiers from all political stripes—in our fight to keep costs down and make life more affordable for people and businesses right here in Ontario.

But do you know something, Speaker? Here in Ontario, we are not going to stop fighting. We are not going to stop calling on the federal Liberals to eliminate the carbon tax. And we are not going to stop putting money back in the pockets of the people of Ontario.

RETIREMENT HOMES

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Alavida Lifestyles is charging seniors in my riding of Ottawa West–Nepean thousands of dollars in rent and fee increases to retain their housing. A resident at Park Place retirement home has been served a \$27,000 increase for this year. Another resident at the Ravines is being charged \$24,000 more. Seniors on fixed incomes can't pay these kinds of increases, so they are facing the prospect of losing their homes. And yet, the government's response to these seniors so far has been a shrug.

What is the government's plan to protect these seniors against price gouging and eviction?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As you know, of course, we've been working very closely with the minister of seniors. But ultimately, what we're doing across the province of Ontario is ensuring that we rebuild the capacity that was so sorely missing for over a generation, under the Liberals and the NDP.

We have one of the—if not the most successful Minister of Long-Term Care in the history of the province, who is bringing forward thousands of units in every part of the province. Every single time that we have done that, the ironic thing is that they vote against the very same seniors they get up in the House today and say they support. They vote against them.

When the Minister of Long-Term Care brings forward billions of dollars for new homes, they vote against it. When he brings billions of dollars forward for additional care in those homes, they vote against it. When he has brought forward initiatives to increase the food budgets so that—

Interjection.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Yes, they're at the ribbon cuttings, but they come here and vote against it. They ask the questions, but they vote against it.

So I say to the member opposite, if you support seniors, vote in favour of the initiatives that we bring forward.

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

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I doubt even the minister could afford a \$27,000 increase in housing costs—so why won't he take action when it's seniors on pensions?

Seniors in these retirement homes are feeling scared and isolated by Alavida's high-pressure tactics. Some of them are even having trouble eating and sleeping.

And yet, the Minister of Housing told me in a letter that there are no limits on how much a retirement home can charge or how often they can increase the price. In other words, these seniors are being extorted on this government's watch, and it's all perfectly legal. So my question to the government is, why is it still legal?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Mr. Speaker, what we have said from the beginning is that we had to rebuild a province that was so sorely destroyed by the previous Liberal government, supported by the NDP.

I said we had a question earlier today about the National Housing Strategy. Do you know who could help us ensure that we get the billions of dollars that are owed to the province of Ontario? The federal NDP. Do you know how they could do that? By voting against the federal budget or—because I know how important it is that they continue to support their friends, the Liberals in Ottawa—they could insist that the federal government honour its agreement of 2018 with respect to the National Housing Strategy, which will allow us to continue to build thousands of homes for the people of the province of Ontario, in co-operation with our municipal partners, so that we can continue those investments in long-term care, affordable housing, attainable housing. Do the right thing—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. The next question.

TAXATION

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: My question is for the Minister of Indigenous Affairs and Northern Development. The Liberal carbon tax is negatively impacting Ontario businesses and our economy. It's driving up the cost for groceries and fuel across the province, particularly in the north.

Speaker, we know that communities in northern Ontario already pay more at the gas pumps. They should not be forced to deal with more tax hikes.

The independent Liberals and opposition NDP need to listen to northerners and join our government in calling on the federal government to scrap this disastrous carbon tax.

Can the minister please tell the House how the Liberal carbon tax impacts communities in northern—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you. The Minister of Northern Development.

1150

Hon. Greg Rickford: Last week, I reported to this place that there were calmer winds in carbon tax paradise as Jagmeet had reaffirmed and, in fact, embraced the carbon tax. Well, in his second perfidious act in as many weeks, he's now not sure he would bring forward further increases. He said, "I recognize the hardship that it brings to families and businesses." And, of course, mum's the word from the queen of the carbon tax.

These inveterate vacillators aren't fooling any of us.

From Kiiwetinoong to Cochrane, from Sault Ste. Marie to Fort Severn, the message is clear from northern Ontarians: We can't afford this carbon tax. Scrap the tax.

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

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: Thank you to the minister for that response.

Unlike the NDP and Liberals in this Legislature, our government understands the burden the Liberal carbon tax is placing on families and businesses in our province. This costly tax is making everything more expensive for all Ontarians. Rural, remote and northern communities are even more affected by the higher cost of goods and travel.

That's why it is shocking to hear the opposition support the carbon tax. But we won't let their actions stop us from continuing to call on the federal Liberals to eliminate this regressive and punitive tax.

Can the minister share with the House the detrimental effects of the carbon tax on northern businesses?

Hon. Greg Rickford: It's one thing for a carbon tax—and the Prime Minister to think it's climate policy, but Canada is in the bottom five countries, according to the Climate Change Performance Index, so this ain't working. And it's not working for northern Ontarians.

My friend Pascal Fraser from Kapuskasing owns Buma Apartments. This guy talks about every aspect of this business costing more. He relies on fleets of vehicles for various operational needs—increased costs for gas, maintenance, repair, tenant services.

This is embedded in every supply chain imaginable, and in a region of Canada that's more expensive than just about any, we're feeling it the most.

The message is clear: The people of northern Ontario are saying, "Mr. Trudeau, Mr. Singh and Mrs. Crombie: Scrap the carbon tax."

INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING

Mr. Wayne Gates: My question is to the Premier.

Last year, representatives from Niagara region came to Queen's Park with several straightforward asks, one of them being a commitment to funding for the South Niagara Falls Wastewater Solutions project. Although members in the region were able to get that commitment, funding was only guaranteed if the federal government introduced an infrastructure program that would support the cost-sharing structure. The provincial and federal government must each do their part, but the region stated that they must move forward with this critical project now.

This government says they want municipalities to build thousands of more homes and they've given targets, yet we all know when we continue to build, we must ensure municipalities' infrastructure keeps pace. When we build more homes, we have more water waste. Ensuring we have appropriate waste water treatment infrastructure in place in Niagara as it continues to grow is vitally important to our community—

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

The response, the Minister of Infrastructure.

Hon. Kinga Surma: Thank you to the member.

It's good news that our water infrastructure program, the \$825 million which was announced in FES and the

budget—the intake process closed last Friday at midnight. I encouraged municipalities across the province to apply.

For two years, I have been asking the federal government to partner with us so we can support municipalities. They didn't see that as important as we have.

Nonetheless, we would be happy to continue to work with Niagara region. I know that there are probably several applications within the intake, and we will let the MOI staff and officials do their jobs. I certainly hope that we will be working together in the future.

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

The House recessed from 1155 to 1500.

PETITIONS

AIR AND WATER QUALITY

Miss Monique Taylor: It gives me great pleasure to read this petition on behalf of the MPP for Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas and a grassroots—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): You can't read it.

Miss Monique Taylor: It's not—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Summarize it.

Miss Monique Taylor: It's a summary.

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

Miss Monique Taylor: Just for members at home now: It's not reading the petition; it's reading a summary on behalf of the MPP from Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas and the group of ACTION Milton, who are fighting for licence for the proposed Campbellville quarry in Milton.

In under a week, Speaker, there are more than 1,600 petitions which have been signed. People in Milton understand that this government could deny a licence today to extract aggregate and operate an asphalt-concrete processing facility at the Reid quarry in Campbellville.

People in Milton have been waiting for four years for the Premier to keep his promise to make sure the proposed Reid Road Reservoir Quarry doesn't happen. With the town of Milton and the region of Halton confirming by resolution that they are opposed, it is time to permanently protect the subject's lands.

Premier Ford, keep your promise.

I support this petition, will affix my name to it and give it to page Aislyn to bring to the Clerk.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Once again, I'll remind members the new standing order asks to briefly summarize the petition.

ROAD SAFETY

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm glad to present a petition that was sent to me by the Bikers Rights Organization. Gerry Rhodes, the provincial chair, reminded members of the House that they have sent in no fewer than 6,956 signatures in total, but for this particular petition, 985 signatures.

This is in support of the Fairness for Road Users Act. Speaker, you'll remember that's my bill. But this is an important issue for road users and fairness.

And so, since I'm not allowed to read any part of it, I'm happy to say that, of course, I support this petition, will affix my signature and send it to the table with page Shiara.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Joel Harden: I actually have a few petitions here that I will briefly summarize and then pass on to the Clerks' table, if that's appropriate.

One is on funding public transit, which is a major priority across Ontario. I want to thank the citizens of the province who signed this and I want to thank them for their support. The other comes from Sally Palmer, professor at McMaster University, around raising social assistance rates. And the last, Speaker, concerns the issue of health care privatization that a number of residents are concerned with.

I want to thank all the citizens for raising this with me and I'll be sending it to the Clerks' table with page Armaan.

MISSING PERSONS

Miss Monique Taylor: I have a petition for a vulnerable persons alert. I have tabled several of these petitions. This petition goes in line with over 90,000 people who have signed online petitions for a Draven Alert; he was a young boy with autism who went missing and died before he was found safely. And over 6,000 people who have signed online petitions for Love's Law—she was an elderly woman, Shirley Love, in my community of Hamilton, who had dementia, went missing and also was found dead in a golf course.

So this is another tool in the tool box for police to be able to use when a vulnerable person goes missing and we hope for them to come home safely.

I wholeheartedly support this petition, will affix my name to it and give it to page Audrey to bring to the Clerk.

OPPOSITION DAY

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms. Marit Stiles: I'd like to move the following:

Whereas everyone has the right to an affordable home; and

Whereas any solution to the housing affordability crisis must include public, non-profit and co-op housing options; and

Whereas successive Liberal and Conservative provincial governments have failed to adequately invest in non-market housing; and

Whereas the government has failed to legalize fourplexes as-of-right, restore rent control, and implement vacancy decontrol to make housing more affordable; and

Whereas the Ontario government is at risk of losing billions of dollars in federal funding due to its failure to deliver an adequate supply of new affordable homes;

Therefore, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario government should get back to building by swiftly and substantially increasing the supply of affordable non-market homes in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Ms. Stiles has moved opposition day number 4. Would the Leader of the Opposition wish to lead off the debate.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I think if there's one thing all of us in this room can agree on, across all political stripes, it's this: We have a massive housing crisis in this province. Where we start to disagree is on how to fix it.

After six years in government, members across the aisle have failed to present the people of this province with a solid action plan on housing. They have failed to inject confidence in people that they are moving in the right direction to get more housing built. But the fact is that this government isn't moving at all. If anything, they only seem to be moving backwards.

The government's housing plan can be summed up with one word: greenbelt. Remember that scheme? Or should we say plan? The plan that the Conservatives had put together to make their insider land speculator friends ultra rich? That plan. The so-called plan that they're under an RCMP criminal investigation for. Ever since then, this government has been flip-flopping and scrambling to come up with yet another so-called plan. They've reversed every single housing policy they've proposed in the past year. That's what happens when you try to ram through policy without proper industry and community consultation. And who's left waiting and frustrated because of this government's failures? The people of Ontario, that's who.

Their housing plan is off to a laughable start. They've built only 1,100 affordable units since 2018, and that's less than 6% of the province's housing target under the National Housing Strategy. With this—I'm going to say it—abysmal record, the Premier has the audacity to present municipalities with even more roadblocks by saying, "No, no. You can't build fourplexes." At a time when we need all solutions and we need all hands on deck, why is this government saying no to options like that? The province also stands to lose—and we've pointed it out so many times on this side of the aisle—billions in federal housing money because of this Premier's unthoughtful comments. Can you trust this government to do the right thing anymore? I know that I can't.

So, yes, while we all agree there's an urgent housing crisis in front of us, Mr. Speaker, let me be clear that the Ontario NDP is the only party here with a unique and ambitious plan to solve this issue. I'm proud of the housing plan that we have developed: a plan that's going to help young people move out of their parents' home and basement; a plan that will help newcomers put down roots as they start a new life; a plan that will help seniors to

downsize; a plan that will help people trying to leave a violent relationship; a plan that will help people living with disabilities and people living with addictions too.

1510

Homes Ontario is the Ontario NDP's plan to get government back to building affordable homes for the people. We've done it in the past, and we need to get back to it again. We're calling for a massive expansion of non-market housing with the aim of at least doubling the current proportion. This would include public, non-market, co-op and transitional homes. To do this, we will offer public land at low-cost financing. To do this right, we're going to do something that this government dislikes to do: We're going to partner with the municipalities every step of the way. And I want to be clear, Speaker, because we are listening. Our plan isn't just to build new homes, but to also look at existing housing and implement a strategy of repair that extends the life of what we already have.

We're also calling for real rent control, an end to exclusionary zoning, and implementing vacancy decontrol. And on this side of the House, we understand that getting access to housing is the very first step to getting so many other problems that are growing in our communities under control. Transitional and supportive housing is absolutely imperative if we want to support people living with addiction. And we also need it to address—guess what? We also need it to address intimate partner violence that is equally an epidemic.

Don't we all remember, when just a few weeks ago at Queen's Park, we were flooded with survivors here asking the government to take them and their concerns seriously? People fleeing harm and violence need to know that supports like transitional housing exist on the other side.

I ask you, Mr. Speaker, is asking for housing asking for too much? The people of this province are tired. They are deflated and they are frustrated at this government's lack of vision. I hear it every single day everywhere I go across this province. As our municipalities are doing the best they can with the roadblocks that the Premier and the housing minister keep throwing at them, they know this is the time to work with municipalities as partners, not complain to the feds about overstepping their bounds and talking to municipalities directly. Honestly, if this government won't do it, I mean, maybe the feds will have to.

With a housing crisis of this scale, we have to find big solutions that can help people find a home they love in the community they want to live in. And while this government wastes time and moves in reverse, we in the Ontario NDP are leading the charge in building the affordable homes that this province needs and deserves. If this government understands how deep the housing crisis is, if they see how stuck and frustrated the people feel, then they will vote yes to our motion today to get government back in the business of building truly affordable homes in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Jessica Bell: I'm proud to be standing up here today to propose and present some of the practical solutions that we have on this side of the House to address the housing crisis and the homelessness crisis.

What is very clear right now is that in Ontario today housing is utterly unaffordable. It is utterly unaffordable. It is extremely difficult to find a place that is affordable for you to rent and it is next to impossible for you to find a place that you can afford to buy. The Conservatives have had five years—really, six—to fix the housing crisis, and they have failed. I know they love to look at the federal government and they look at the Liberals and they say, “Well, you know, they’re the reason why we’re having a housing crisis.” I’m here to tell you very clearly that it is the Conservatives. You are the reason why we have a housing crisis today.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I remind the member to make her comments through the Chair. I recognize the member for University–Rosedale.

Ms. Jessica Bell: I think about Toronto, my riding—I represent University–Rosedale; it’s a Toronto riding. In Toronto, we have easily over 10,000 people who have no home at all. They’re sleeping in encampments. They’re living in ravines. They’re sleeping in shelters. They’re staying at friends’ houses. It’s very difficult for a lot of people.

I think about the wait-list for community housing, for affordable housing, and there are—I just checked; I went to the city of Toronto website this afternoon—85,000 people waiting for an affordable home. Some of them have been waiting for a decade or longer. These are people, these are seniors, these are people who have disabilities, these are single parents. These are people who need help.

We know that up to 50% of people in Ontario are paying unaffordable rent. Now, I have been following very closely what this government has been doing over the last few years on housing, and from my perspective, things have gone from bad to worse. I, quite frankly, think this government doesn’t want the price of rent to go down, because if this government wanted the price of rent to go down, it would have happened, but it doesn’t. It doesn’t.

This government knows full well that more housing will never significantly lower housing prices to affordable levels. This government has put all their eggs in the basket of “Let’s build a whole lot of housing and it’s just going to have a trickle-down effect and maybe it will reduce the price of rent.” It doesn’t. Evidence shows very clearly that it doesn’t.

What we also know, very clearly, is that rent control does not stymie the construction of new purpose rental. I know you like to say that it does, but evidence very clearly shows that it doesn’t.

A new two-bedroom apartment going for \$3,500 a month in Toronto is never going to be affordable for someone on minimum wage. It’s never going to be affordable for a senior on a fixed income. It is never going to be affordable for someone on social assistance. It is never going to be affordable for a student. It is never going to be affordable for an entry level worker who has just moved to Toronto and is looking to start their career. It’s just not. And that’s how much it costs to rent a new vacant two-bedroom apartment in Toronto today.

It shocks me that the federal government is now sending warning letters to the provincial government

saying, “Hey, you’ve fallen so far behind in your affordable housing targets that we’re going to hold back funding for affordable housing and we’re going to hold back funding for infrastructure.” That’s how bad it’s gotten because this government, quite frankly, when it comes to affordable housing, is cheap, cheap, cheap. You don’t want to invest. This government doesn’t want to invest.

And their track record is abysmal; 1,187 affordable homes have been built by this government since 2018, at a time that in Toronto alone we have 85,000 people waiting for affordable housing. You’re doing this much—this much—when we have a crisis that is huge. It’s hard to watch.

I also think about all the projects in my riding, the affordable housing projects in my riding that aren’t proceeding even though these projects are so desperate to go ahead. I think of Scott Mission. Scott Mission is in a riding—the residents’ associations fully support this affordable housing project to be built. The affordable housing project will house men, primarily men, who are chronically homeless. It is a very hard population to house, but Scott Mission has had over 100 years of experience serving that community, this community, and they have been working extremely hard to raise millions of dollars.

They already have the land to build an affordable housing project to deal with the homelessness crisis that we have in our riding. Literally 100 metres away, there’s an encampment—100 metres away there’s an encampment. Scott Mission cannot get their project off the ground because they need assistance from the provincial government and the federal government to make it happen. They need assistance. You are not going to make money off people who have been chronically homeless for 15 years. The private sector is not going to be building homes for these people. We need government investment. It’s not coming, and as a result, communities suffer.

1520

I think about all the people in my riding who are struggling to keep their homes. I’ll give you an example. In the last two weeks, we’ve had a 90-year-old senior; his landlord keeps trying to take him to the LTB again and again and again in order to evict him. I have no idea where this individual is going to go if the landlord is finally successful in evicting this tenant, even though the landlord clearly has no intention of moving into this tiny one-bedroom apartment.

I think about Pat, who’s being threatened with eviction from her home at 145 St. George. She tells me she’s not going, but she has the provincial government and the provincial government’s laws stacked up against her. I’m worried about Pat. I’m worried about her because it’s very easy to evict in Ontario today. I’m concerned.

I am proud that we are here today calling for practical, bold solutions to address the housing crisis. The centre-piece of it is to establish an agency called Homes Ontario which will build thousands of non-market and affordable homes, where much of the initial investment is recouped over time through rent. By providing access to public land, of which the provincial government has so much;

financing; and low-interest loans, Ontario can and should lead the way in building affordable housing and non-market housing.

Because if we do this, if we move forward on this, we can address the homelessness crisis and the encampments that are in nearly every town and city across Ontario. It's not just a Toronto problem; it's in nearly every town and city. If we do this, we can address the affordable housing supply shortages in small towns and rural towns and mid-sized towns across Ontario by partnering with municipalities. We can address the very real backlog of 85,000 people or more who are just looking for an affordable home, a rent-g geared-to-income home that they can live in. And it will also allow us to build homes for newcomers and seniors and young career professionals who really want to find a rental they can afford to build their lives and their careers and their families here.

The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing likes to say that we're going to be bringing Communist Russia to Canada. That's one response. But when you take off your ideological blindfold and you look around, you see that other levels of government are moving forward on this very practical and sensible idea with great success. We need to take those very wise ideas and implement them here in Ontario.

I look to the BC government. The BC government has established BC Builds. They are investing \$1 billion and \$2 billion in financing to build thousands of rental homes on underused public land with the goal of targeting middle-income renters.

I think of the city of Toronto, with their Housing Now program. They are looking at building 15,000 new homes—5,000 of them are affordable—on 22 properties. It is practical. They have the infrastructure. They're near transit.

I think about the federal government. Even the federal government finally—the polls are not going well for them, so finally, they're starting to accept some half-decent housing proposals. They are allocating \$1 billion to the Rapid Housing Stream to provide loans to developers who will build affordable housing, and they are providing \$1.5 billion to support the construction of co-operative housing.

It makes a lot of sense. Other levels of government are doing it, and I believe it is time for Ontario to take that step and, instead of being cheap, invest in non-market and affordable housing so we can address the housing crisis that we have in Ontario today. I urge you to support it because it makes a lot of sense. What this government is doing right now is clearly not working, so start listening to us.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: I'm really pleased to be able to speak on housing today and to speak in support of our motion.

Housing as a commodity or an investment is very problematic. It has cut so many people out. It has created inflated prices. It has allowed the disappearance of affordable housing to short-term rentals. It's kicking seniors out of their homes. Two hundred seniors are losing their homes as we speak. It's pricing seniors in Ottawa out of

the market. It is dire and not how we should be providing housing for people or thinking about housing. So I'm very much in favour of the idea of housing Ontario and, really, the importance of building mixed housing and the importance of having these low-cost loans.

In the case of Thunder Bay, we have two projects: Suomi Koti for seniors. We don't even need public land. They have the land. If low-cost loans had been available, if this government actually had something to support not-for-profit housing, Suomi Koti would already be half built by now. Giwaa On Court is another example of a rebuild of the post office. No need for public land, but they need affordable financing in order to build. It's still on stall. Both of these projects were presented to the government. There's been zero support, and I'm so looking forward to the implementation of our bill because these projects could actually be built, and that would be 104 units available immediately in Thunder Bay.

Co-ops: we have a long history of co-op housing in Thunder Bay. In fact, co-op everything. We've had co-op bakeries, co-op food buying groups. Castlegreen Co-op has been there. It is still there, and it is still a prime place to live; Superior View, newer co-op housing. What is wonderful about this co-op housing is that they are mixed income.

So we have problematic low-income housing that has wound up being a magnet for the gangs coming to the city. But when you are able to move out of there and into a co-op, where you're no longer ghettoized, with many people who can't afford a place to live, then you actually can become part of a community and it really doesn't matter that you don't have a ton of income. Those programs have been very successful, and they have moved people into those safer environments, and we really need that.

I'm thinking of another co-op which is Centre franco-phone de Thunder Bay, another co-op. It's deep-rooted in northwestern Ontario.

Modular housing: There's lots of talk of this, but we have to remember that there are different standards of modular housing. Some of them will keep to the current building code, but there's modular housing available that goes well beyond this and is actually designed for different climates. It's designed not to off-gas so that people with environmental sensitivities can live with it. It is designed to not have mold, a problem that is in many homes on First Nations' communities because they were poorly built and poorly thought-out. So again, there are many, many rich opportunities available to us.

Finally, the idea of fourplexes: Why is this such a frightening notion? I'm quite sure I lived in a fourplex in Toronto. There's lots of them around. There's lots of them in Thunder Bay. This is not a frightening thing. It's not suddenly an eight-storey monster in the middle of nowhere.

I will end my remarks there by saying there are solutions. There have always been solutions if you're not afraid to embrace them. Public land or private land, but affordable financing, and we can get that housing built.

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

Hon. Rob Flack: I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this bill today. As Associate Minister of Housing, I spent the last number of months laser-focused on housing and I look forward to sharing some of my perspectives.

I want to point out, to begin, a few issues that I have with the NDP motion and I'd like this chance to talk about some of the history of housing supply in Ontario.

Our province needs more housing of all types. Our government is investing in building more affordable housing, more supportive housing, and we're cutting red tape to make more market housing get built by community home builders and the not-for-profit sector, not by government.

I've read the NDP motion. Some of it I agree with, particularly the first two lines: "Whereas everyone has the right to an affordable home," I agree; and "Whereas any solution to the housing affordability crisis must include public, non-profit and co-op housing options," as they do today. The rest, frankly, Speaker, I take exception with.

They say to look forward, you must take a look back, and what we can see when we look back is what worked and what didn't work and what we can do to build a better future for housing in Ontario. Everyone agrees that Ontario is in a housing supply crisis, and I emphasize the word "supply." It didn't happen in the last five years. In fact, Speaker, it happened over the last 30 or 35 years, and we must remember that this crisis was created then.

1530

We have had a population explosion in Ontario; I say this often. Since I was in high school, the population of this province has more than doubled. In fact, the small town of Streetsville that I grew up in was about 6,000 people. And when you talk to the member from Mississauga–Streetsville, she will say that all the farms around Streetsville that I grew up working on are now houses. What do we do, Speaker? Tell those folks to go away? I don't think so.

We continue to see a massive housing explosion in this province, and we are doing everything we can—under our power, under our will, under our conviction—to get more homes built.

Looking back, under the leader of the former Bill Davis Progressive Conservatives in Ontario, we built houses that we needed. In fact, Premier Davis set the provincial record for the most housing starts in a single year. Then, in 1990, the world changed. We ended up with a new government, led by Premier Rae.

If you're wondering, Speaker, there's a reason the NDP doesn't talk about their record. The reason is that the NDP experiment did not work. In fact, it failed miserably. The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation has detailed housing data that goes back to 1955. By the time the NDP left office in 1995, Ontario set a record for the lowest—I repeat, the lowest—number of housing starts since 1955, at 35,818.

I want to reiterate that over the last year of the Peterson Liberal government, Ontario had approximately 73,000 housing starts. When the NDP took office, they inherited a good housing situation, and by the time they left, housing

starts were cut in half and the NDP were responsible for creating a housing supply crisis that's continued on since. In essence, we've been playing catch-up since 1995.

When Mike Harris and the PCs won government, they inherited a tough situation. After 2003 and after eight years of steady increases under Premier Harris and Premier Eves, we grew housing starts exponentially. Sadly, in 2003, the last year of our government, we saw housing starts drop. At that time, we'd had the best years since the 1980s, and after 15 years of Liberal government, housing starts waned dramatically. Under the McGuinty-Wynne Liberals, Ontario's housing starts didn't fall off a cliff like they did with the NDP, but they certainly did decline. Over the last decade in office, the Liberals averaged just under 67,700 housing starts per year.

Under this government, Ontario has had the best three years of housing starts since the 1980s. Starting from July 2018 going through the end of 2023, Ontario has averaged 86,500 housing starts per year. That's almost 20,000 more housing starts per year than the Liberals averaged over their last decade in office, and dramatically more than when the NDP were in office in the 1990s.

In 2023, we set a record for the most housing starts on purpose-built rentals in a single year, up 27%. After just over five and a half years of this government, Ontario has already had more housing starts on purpose-built rentals than the Liberals through the last 15 years of their government.

Speaker, the story of housing over the last 35 years has been clear. In 1990, the NDP walked into a good housing situation and failed to get the job done. The Liberals failed to get the job done—

Mr. Wayne Gates: It was a recession.

Hon. Rob Flack: And as always, facts speak for themselves—facts. And as always, we were left to clean up the mess, and we've been cleaning it up ever since.

Look at the situation we have today. We have a housing supply crisis. We've had more people coming to this province than we've had housing starts. We're facing economic headwinds. Affordability is the big issue facing all Ontarians and all Canadians. For every one of our constituents, that's the number one issue. The global economy is sluggish, yet we're still growing housing starts.

Years of high inflation have caused high interest rates, which, combined with the CMHC stress test, make it very difficult for first-time homebuyers. And let us not forget the lovely carbon tax. It raises costs on every component of every home. The carbon tax on fuel raises the cost to deliver everything, from the concrete used for a foundation to the shingles on the roof. It's prohibitive. It's terrible. It's wrong.

In spite of these challenges, as I have said, Ontario has had the best three years of housing starts since the 1980s. In 2023, Ontario had just under 19,000 housing starts on purpose-built rentals. This year, our finance minister put forward an infrastructure budget that invests billions in housing-enabling infrastructure like water and waste water systems that create more places and more opportunities where homes can be built. Infrastructure need, frankly, is

the biggest constraint we have on getting more homes built faster, and this government is doing something about it. We're investing in the future of home building in Ontario.

Now, let's examine fourplexes. The motion calls for legalizing fourplexes as of right. This government has moved to three as of right, and we trust local mayors and councils to make their own decisions for their own communities. Today, any municipality can build fourplexes—anyone can. One size doesn't fit all. As I believe my colleagues already know, fourplexes as of right have already been adopted by many cities throughout the province. However, the fact remains that while housing starts have grown, building fourplexes has not been part of our housing growth in spite of that option existing in large cities or communities across the province.

Speaker, as the Associate Minister of Housing, I was honoured to be able to go to communities like Sarnia, which beat their housing target by 250%, and Chatham-Kent, which beat their housing target by 500%. All of these cities I visited very, very much appreciated their well-earned recognition from the Building Faster Fund, which is a three-year program, as you know. If you didn't get it this year, you can earn it next year or the year after. When it comes to building new housing, these communities are getting it done, and, as part of the Building Faster Fund, they're receiving additional funds for housing-enabling infrastructure so they can build even more homes, whatever type of house it is in the housing continuum.

Chatham-Kent and Sarnia, again, as examples, also allow fourplexes selectively. They are allowed in some communities where they make sense, and they aren't allowed to be built in communities that they don't make sense in. Let them decide. These cities don't need to be told what to do by the NDP, the party with the worst housing record in the history of Ontario. These communities are getting homes built.

We've travelled from Thunder Bay to St. Catharines, from Sarnia to Ottawa and all points in between. What was the common denominator? Municipalities created a good environment for success, an environment where more homes were built faster. The opposition is acting as if they think that as-of-right fourplexes are a magic bullet to solve the housing crisis. They are wrong. Based on what we've seen, based on the evidence from municipalities that chose to do so, that is not the case.

We've talked about successes like Chatham-Kent and Sarnia, communities that far exceeded their local housing targets. Perhaps we should also talk about a few failures. One of the biggest failures when it comes to building new housing is Bonnie Crombie's record. I should note to the opposition that Bonnie Crombie implemented fourplexes as of right in Mississauga. Did this get housing built? No, it didn't. Bonnie Crombie had one of the worst records for building housing of anyone in the province of Ontario. She accepted housing targets. She boasted that they would not only be met but they would be exceeded by those in her municipality.

I should note that the province of Ontario set housing targets for 2023 and we hit 99% of that target in that year.

Now, outside of the city of Mississauga, we exceeded our targets by 104% in the rest of the province, so no lessons needed there when it comes to the carbon tax and how Bonnie Crombie has failed this province in terms of getting more homes built faster.

Affordable housing: This government recognizes the need to get more housing built of all types, wherever you are in the housing continuum. That's why we've invested in more supportive and affordable housing than any previous government. We've increased funding for homelessness prevention programs. In my riding alone, in London alone, it went up 62% and switched to a more stable, multi-year funding model that is working and I know is very much appreciated by our municipal partners. That helps our local service managers deliver programs more effectively, again suiting the needs of their particular municipality.

I want to give a shout-out to our not-for-profit stakeholders, whether it's Indwell, Habitat for Humanity, the Good Shepherd or Ontario's housing co-operative system, just to name a few. They're all doing a magnificent job, and we will continue to support them and give them the tools they need to get more housing built.

We've also removed development charges for affordable housing, and we've lowered them for purpose-built rentals. We've also removed the HST from purpose-built rentals in conjunction with the federal government. These changes have had an impact, and we'll see the results for years to come.

1540

This January in Scarborough, the largest co-operative housing project in the history of Ontario was announced at 2444 Eglinton East. Just down the street across the corner, also in January, Atria Development broke ground on 1,600 new purpose-built rental units near Scarborough Town Centre.

Ontario is building more housing of all types faster than any government in the history of this province. Market housing and non-market housing are getting built. Do we need to get more housing built? Absolutely. We are putting the tools in place to get that done.

This part is important, and I think we talk about it regularly when we're in this Legislature. It's clear that we need more places to build homes and more people to build them. That's why, in this year's budget, we put a heavy emphasis on investing in housing-enabling infrastructure, and the budget is building the infrastructure we need to get more homes built.

That's also why this government is working for workers. I would also like to point out that we're training more people to enter the skilled trades than ever before. Last year, there was a record 27,319 apprenticeship registrations because our government is working for workers. We need more people to build homes, and we've taken action to promote the skilled trades and get more people trained. Training more people to get more homes built is a key part of this government's plan to get more homes built faster.

But I can't help but notice that the skilled trades aren't even mentioned anywhere in the NDP motion. In fact, when the NDP released their housing platform in October 2023, a simple word search revealed that there was no mention of training, no mention of workers and no mention of the skilled trades. In October 2023, the NDP housing plan had 14 mentions of "Homes Ontario," the name of the new bureaucracy they want to create. That will really get homes built.

Much like the motion they put forward today, the official NDP housing plan had zero mentions of labour, zero mentions of the trades, zero mentions of training, zero mentions of jobs and zero mentions of workers. There's only one party in this Legislature that's working for workers, and that's this side of the House. I'm proud that this party is making workers a key part of their plan to get more housing built. That is the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario.

I advise members of this House to vote against this motion. The motion also calls on the government to force fourplexes into communities that choose to take a different direction. The Liberal and NDP plan does not do anything to build new homes faster in Ontario. I encourage members to support a housing plan that is actually getting it done when it comes to building new housing.

In conclusion, in summary, we have a population explosion, a crisis that we've not seen in 30-plus years. We're getting homes built and getting them faster, housing and all parts of the housing continuum. Fourplexes are not a magic bullet; they can be a tool for some communities if they choose to do so. At the end of the day, we're creating the environment for community home builders, for the not-for-profits and for our municipal partners to create the environment to get the job done.

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: I was going to start my debate off one way, but I think in fairness, seeing as the member just spoke about Bob Rae—who has been a Liberal for 47 years of his life, I just wanted to say—but you didn't mention anything about the Premier of Ontario, Mike Harris. I'm going to look at the Speaker because she knows exactly what I'm talking about.

During when he was in power, they closed schools. They closed 26 hospitals. And you know what else he did? You remember this because you were a reporter. They laid off 6,000 nurses—no mention of that by that member over there. It was a surprise. Then, it even went further.

I'm looking at the Speaker because that's what I'm supposed to do, talk through the Speaker. I knew her before she became a big shot here in the Legislature and an MPP, and she's sitting as the Speaker. You know what? During that Harris time, do you know what we had? We had rallies in 11 cities in Ontario: London, Windsor, Niagara. But you know the best one was when they were wrapping it up. Do you know who led it? It was led by the NDP and what? The unions. The unions and the NDP, just like that, just like we are today.

Interjections.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Yes, I think that deserves a round of applause because it's important.

But you know what happened? I want to look at the Speaker when I say this, because there's a reason why I'm looking at you. The last one was in Hamilton. I'm not going to talk out of school here, but I think the Speaker gives me permission to say she was in Hamilton. She was a really good reporter with the paper in Hamilton. Some 110,000 people were at that rally—110,000. Do you remember that? And why were they there? Because they were attacking our schools. They were attacking our hospitals. They were attacking workers. As a matter of fact, it was under Harris. I remember this.

I'll tell you a quick story. This is a true story. I wasn't an MPP back then; I was just a president of a local union. It was Mike Harris who cut social assistance to people and told them, "Well, what you can do is you can have bologna sandwiches." Do you remember that? Well, do you know what I did as president of the local union, because I'm a nice guy? At that time—I'm a good friend of his now; I don't mind saying it now—the MPP was Bart Maves, who I ran against twice in Niagara; I beat him both times. I was kind enough to him. I took him a box of bologna sandwiches and I put them in his downtown office. I remember doing that, and he was so mad at me for years—true story. So when you bring up about what Rae did or what somebody else did, you have to look at your own house.

And I want to say to my Conservative friends: I look over there and there's only a few over there—as a matter of fact, I don't think there's anybody there, maybe one that I see, who was there for the 15 years that you were the official opposition. Remember that? You guys don't talk about that—never—and what you guys voted down. But I'll get off that. I wasn't going to talk about that, but seeing he raised it, that kind of opened up the door for me.

And I want to say for the Speaker, thank you for participating in those rallies, because you made a difference, and you know that.

I'm going to start to talk about a couple of other things I just heard about: 85,000 people here in Toronto are on a wait-list for affordable housing. That's a little surprising, that; although when I go down to the Blue Jays games, which I love to do—because I don't drink or smoke or anything, I've got to have some entertainment. I like to go to the Blue Jays game, or I go to a Leafs game. You see the people who are homeless, who are on the streets of Toronto. Well, here's the reason why: 85,000 can't afford to pay their rent or to have a home.

I don't know how long my leaders here are going to give me to speak, but some of the reasons are that you brought in a bill in 2019—and I'm not going to disagree with you; there have been corporations that have built high-rises for rental. And guess what? We just found out, just the other day, that to get a one-bedroom apartment in Toronto in a high-rise that's owned by these corporations, it's between \$3,200 and \$4,000. Think about that.

So when we come here and my leader brings a motion forward and talks about what we have to do so people can

have a home to live in—I have a daughter who lives in my house. I’m sure some of you guys may have that same situation. I love my daughter; she can live in my house as long as she wants. But that’s an issue. But it’s because of 2019 and not putting controls on the rent. That’s what has caused some of our crisis.

And then—how much time have I got, Monique? Help me out here.

Miss Monique Taylor: Two minutes.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Two minutes? Okay.

I want to make sure that I talk about the greenbelt, because I want to be clear—and I have been clear in this House. I stand up here, and I’ll say it over and over again: I agree that we need \$1.5-million homes. I agree with that. Our party—

Interjection: Whoa, whoa.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Oh, I’m sorry—1.5 million. That’s why I have my caucus here. I agree with that. What I don’t agree with is wanting to build it on the greenbelt, and our party stood up to that. Now what we have is we have new bills now that are going after our prime farmland. I’m going to beg you guys over there: Think again, because if you’re a country or a province that can’t feed your own, you’re going to be in trouble.

I always thought COVID would smarten everybody up. Remember when COVID hit? We didn’t have masks. We didn’t have PPE. We didn’t have anything. We had to rely on the Americans or China or wherever you could get it from. I always said, “Why aren’t we making sure that we can get that here?” Well, it’s the same thing with prime farmland: 319 acres lost every single day. One of our members down here says it all the time, from up north. He talks about that all the time. Why do we allow that to happen? So we agree you should be building 1.5 million homes; we don’t agree it should be done on the greenbelt, and we certainly don’t believe that we should be losing prime farmland.

I just want to talk real quick on my own riding, because this is important, because I believe it’s in your riding and it’s in your riding. I even think it’s in the housing minister’s riding, and even my good friend there over in the corner. I think it’s in your riding too. But in my riding, our stock of affordable housing is horrible. It’s absolutely horrible. In Niagara, the wait times almost seem like they’re fake. You wouldn’t even believe it if you said it: 20 years. Think about this: In Fort Erie, the wait time for affordable housing is 20 years.

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And then, you look at the Falls, where we all talk about tourism and it’s a great place to come. Come on down to the Falls anytime you want. You guys come and visit. You never invite me to go out for a sandwich or anything when you guys come to the Falls. You should. I’d love to go with you and show you the Falls, show you the wine industry. It’s a great place. It’s 21 years in Niagara Falls—that’s how long the wait time is for affordable housing.

In Niagara-on-the-Lake, another great place—I know some of you guys have been down to Niagara-on-the-Lake. You love the wine. You love the Shaw Festival. You

love Queen Street. You love everything about it. It’s 16 years in Niagara-on-the-Lake for affordable housing.

And I’ll talk real quick because I’ve got to wrap this up. I’ve got lots more to say. I wish I had an hour because the most important thing, I believe, is the environment—protecting our environment when it comes to our water and our air quality. But there’s nothing more important than housing, and I can tell you, I have four employees, they’re all unionized. We are the only party—when he talks about unions, I challenge him to show me the union that they belong to, their staff.

My staff belongs to a union. They get paid fair wages with fair benefits and with a pension. I don’t even have a pension here, just for the record, and you know what? They’re even struggling to buy a home when they’re making that kind of money.

We’re doing something wrong in the province when our kids and our grandkids can’t afford to buy a home, can’t afford to pay their rent, and they’re living in our basements or part of our homes. It’s wrong. We’ve got to do better in the province of Ontario, and I believe this motion helps resolve that issue. Thank you very much for listening to me, Speaker.

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

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I appreciate the opportunity to join the debate this afternoon on opposition day motion number 4. I want to thank the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the Associate Minister of Housing and the parliamentary assistant from Perth–Wellington for all their work to help our partners build more homes, including Bill 185, which I spoke about just last week.

Together with the investments we’re making in infrastructure, like water, sewage and roads, including \$1.8 billion in the 2024 budget, Ontario is on track to build at least 1.5 million homes by 2031, including 120,000 in Mississauga.

As the minister said, over the last three years Ontario has had the most housing starts in the last 30 years. Under the former Liberal government there was an average of fewer than 68,000 housing starts each year. Since our government was elected in 2018, there has been an average of 87,000 starts. That is an increase of about 20,000 homes in a year.

Last year, our goal was 110,000 new homes. Ontario created over 109,000—99% of our target. But, of course, we all recognize that more needs to be done. The NDP motion today proposes legislating fourplexes, restoring rent control, implementing vacancy decontrol and a substantial increase in the number of non-market homes. Speaker, I’d like to touch on a few of these points today.

Firstly, Speaker, as the minister said, fourplexes are already legal. In fact, fourplexes are already allowed as of right, without any extra approvals, in the city of Mississauga. Many members have seen the video of Bonnie Crombie fearmongering about the Housing Affordability Task Force and showing fourplexes as giant orange boxes in residential neighbourhoods. But, Speaker, in the end, Mayor Crombie used her strong-mayor powers that this

government provided in Bill 3 to allow fourplexes as of right. Fourplexes are also available as of right in Toronto and over 20 cities across the province, with a total population of about eight million people—roughly half the population of this province.

Speaker, listening to the debate about fourplexes here in Queen's Park, or in Ottawa, we might think this is the solution to the housing crisis, but the fact is, less than 70 fourplexes were built in Toronto last year, and in many other cities like Vaughan or Richmond Hill, not even one was built. That's why Toronto city councillor, Gord Perks, a former NDP candidate—and certainly not a supporter of this government—said that fourplexes will never create affordable housing and the government should focus their efforts on areas that actually do.

Speaker, I agree with this. As the minister said, our municipal partners have told us that housing-enabling infrastructure is what they need most. That's why our 2024 budget includes a new billion-dollar Municipal Housing Infrastructure Program and \$825 million for the Housing-Enabling Water Systems Fund. We made this announcement in Lakeview at the Arthur Kennedy water treatment plant, where an expansion will support tens of thousands of new homes along Mississauga's waterfront, including Brightwater and the new Lakeview Village. The infrastructure funding is giving municipalities the support they need to get shovels in the ground to build the housing that Ontario needs. As the minister said, we're committed to working in partnership with municipalities, not micro-managing or taking a top-down, "Queen's Park knows best" approach.

Next, Speaker, the NDP motion asks the government to restore rent control on new units built since 2018. The minister already said this, but I want to reiterate: It was the NDP government of Bob Rae that ended rent control for new purpose-built rental homes back in 1992, when the Leader of the Opposition was an NDP staff member. At the time, there was a shortage of rental housing, and Dave Cooke, who was the NDP Minister of Housing, said that this change "will provide for some additional flexibility for the private sector and will result in new rental units ... being built across the province." Again, Speaker, this was the NDP Minister of Housing on June 24, 1991. This wasn't a loophole; it was a deliberate policy. And though the Mike Harris government extended the policy in 1997, it was deliberate NDP policy.

So, just to be clear, in 43 elections, over 157 years, Ontario has voted for only one NDP government, in 1990, and this one NDP government also created exemptions for rent control for exactly the same reason we're doing today: to encourage the construction of new purpose-built rental homes. And this is exactly what the policy is doing, together with other changes like the HST exemption and reducing development charges in Bill 23.

Last year, there were about 19,000 purpose-built rental housing starts in Ontario, the most in the history of this province, up from 15,000 in 2022, an increase of over 27%. At the same time, the vast majority of rental units remain under rent control, and the government has held the

2024 rent increase guideline to 2.5%, which is below inflation and the lowest in Canada—even lower than the 3.5% increase allowed under the NDP government in British Columbia.

Next, Speaker, the NDP motion says the government has failed to implement vacancy decontrol, but this policy was implemented almost 30 years ago. In fairness, the NDP housing plan says they would scrap, not implement, vacancy decontrol, which is maybe what the Leader of the Opposition meant to say.

Lastly, Speaker, the NDP motion calls for a substantial increase in the number of non-market houses. I certainly agree that there's a role for non-market housing. We're making the largest investment in the homelessness program in the history of Ontario, including \$700 million each year for homeless shelters, supportive housing and other programs.

In my community of Mississauga-Lakeshore, we're supporting the expansion of Armagh House for victims of domestic violence and abuse, and we're investing \$24 million to help build 219 affordable homes in Lakeview, including 68 units at Indwell's Lakeshore Lofts for people with disabilities.

But the NDP housing plan calls for 250,000 non-market units. As my friend from Essex said, if we assume the cost is \$500,000 each, this would cost the province about \$125 billion, over 60% of the entire provincial budget. And that's for only 250,000 homes, when we need 1.5 million homes. Non-market housing is an important part of the housing mix, but some of my friends in the NDP take it so far and argue it's the solution to the housing crisis.

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Speaker, I mentioned Bob Rae earlier. Ontario's one NDP Premier wrote that he left the party in 2002 because they opposed the Third Way and they "sat on their hands" when people like Tony Blair praised the advantages of free markets.

In my community, Lakeview Village Partners are building 1,600 affordable units at no cost to taxpayers. I know Liberal leader Bonnie Crombie is still livid about this, and she's promising local ratepayer groups that she would cut the number of affordable units in half, but I hope the NDP will join us and support this important project in Lakeview.

Speaker, again, I want to thank the minister and all members for being here this afternoon for the debate on opposition day motion number 4.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'm so pleased to join in the debate on the official opposition's motion today. I think that all of us in this House understand that without stable housing, without a strategy to address the precariousness of housing, we will not reach our potential. This is what housing provides to people in Ontario.

I'm going to go through a couple of stats here because it's important for the government to have their eyes wide open on this situation on housing and homelessness. In fact, this government has refocused their energy on

addressing homelessness, and homelessness is a crisis. Homelessness are encampments.

We just met, the leader and I, on Friday with the social development centre, and they described what they're seeing in encampments as criminal purgatory. It's where people are not seen; they are not heard; they are the great unwashed. We do not want to acknowledge their humanity.

The normalization of these encampments is a very dark point for us in Canada and in Ontario. We all should agree that people should not be living in tents in the winter on a corner, in a park. It's almost like this government is content, if you will, that they're there and they're not over here. We had a really honest and emotional conversation about the loss of dignity for people in this province. We have to talk about "these people" because they are our people; they are our citizens. They should not be treated like second-class citizens in the province of Ontario.

Now, the government, though, has really been playing a little bit of a shell game with the money on housing, I have to say. We have proposed some solutions here. One of them—it was really interesting. It's always interesting how many times a member on that side can say, "Bonnie Crombie, queen of the carbon tax." They're very consistent in that regard. But I have to say, what's happening with the commentary around fourplexes—now, the government should remember that it was less than two years ago that they made threeplexes a right of way, not right of way but right of—what is it?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: As of right.

Ms. Catherine Fife: As of right. Sorry. I never think "right" obviously because I'm on the left.

It was less than two years ago that this government made threeplexes as of right. Now it's the fourplex—this is the line in the sand, right? This is the line in the sand where this government has said, "Oh, forget it." What do you do with a Premier who says that we can't have these eight-storey fourplexes? What do you do with that, Madam Speaker? Because this is what the Premier has said, "We can't have four-storey, six-storey or eight-story fourplexes." Everybody in this House should fully understand that fourplexes are either two storeys, sometimes they're three storeys, but for some reason this government has said, "Nope, we're drawing the line in the sand. The threeplexes are as good as you're going to get, Ontario." Maybe they aren't the whole solution, but they are definitely part of the solution, and we need all of these tools to address the homelessness and housing crisis in Ontario.

It's important, if you track the money—and I'm the finance critic, so I like to do so. In 2018-19, Ontario spent a total of \$1.1 billion on its housing programs. The breakdown is really interesting: \$397 million was on homelessness, \$693 million was on community housing and \$7.8 million on Indigenous housing. My good friend from Kiiwetinoong, this is a familiar story that you've heard before. In 2024, the province was planning on spending \$1.4 billion, but \$707 million on homelessness and only \$215 million on community housing. And \$422

million was from the National Housing Strategy with the federal government, who are obviously in a point of tension right now with this provincial government, because they want to bypass the provincial government and get money right into those communities.

I will say, they are putting some pressure on this government. Why would you not come together in the face of this housing crisis when money is on the table? We need the resources in the community. This ideological game is such a dangerous place in politics, in my view.

Just to recap, the government has lowered spending on community housing by 70%. For the love of humanity, how do you solve a housing crisis by reducing the funding on community housing? How do you do that? It seems like you're content to see those encampments. You're content to spend some more money on the crisis of that moment but not the solution of the moment. This is so short-sighted. To be fair, it's exactly what the Liberals did.

Timmins Mayor Michelle Boileau states that in northern Ontario, local towns "have seen an increase to homelessness prevention dollars while either seeing status quo or most recently a decrease to community housing funding."

It is an exercise in futility to acknowledge that homelessness is a crisis, that those problems are complex and require strategic investment, strategic resources and talent and yet not have the solution around community housing, which is supportive housing.

Tim Richter from the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness said that "when Ontario is spending less on housing, they're going to end up spending more on homelessness...."

This is exactly what's happening in Ontario right now. It defies all logic for a government that says that 1.5 million homes need to be built. Right now, the homes that are being built, as my colleague from Niagara has pointed out, are unaffordable homes. It is not the solution. The financialization of our housing sector is killing this province. It absolutely is.

I'll just summarize by saying that in Waterloo region, the number of people who are experiencing chronic homelessness has grown by 129%, but this is going to triple in 2028. This is a community, quite honestly, that does have wealth. We have a very strong religious and social fabric in our region that has really been trying to lift people up, but that net has holes in it. It is frayed; it is tired. There's no mending it. We need a new strategy.

That is why the official opposition has brought forward some recommendations here to the government. It sounds like they're not open to the suggestions; you're not open to the learning part of this. But I have to tell you, when we met with The Working Centre, Joe and Stephanie Mancini, this past Friday, they have described what's happening to people who are the most vulnerable in Ontario as beyond cruel.

We need to solve the housing crisis. Please contemplate other options, because your plan, the PC plan, is not working.

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

Mr. Trevor Jones: I'm honoured to stand today to discuss one of the more important problems currently facing people in every community across Ontario: access to housing. Our government understands that people across Ontario need a wide range of housing options at various price points to best reflect their needs at every stage in life. Industry experts, economists, home builders, and countless financial and market professionals have offered solutions about what can and must be done to solve this problem. Our government is listening and we're taking action. We know that government bureaucracy doesn't build homes, which is why our government is choosing to reduce red tape and create the environment for our community home builders to increase Ontario's housing supply.

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When examining the roots of the situation we're facing in Ontario with respect to housing, similarities can be drawn across many jurisdictions—across Canadian provinces, American states and even globally, as many countries are struggling with similar challenges. Ontario is certainly not immune from global forces.

I have heard from people in my riding and have listened to media pundits discuss the factors exacerbating the housing crises affecting communities across Ontario, Canada and North America. Rising building costs remain a challenge for builders. Interest rates on mortgages remain a major challenge for potential homebuyers and for people renewing their mortgages. One common denominator I've heard directly from home builders, from existing and prospective homebuyers and from renters remains a lack of housing supply.

With a little luck, at any time of day you can tune in to Newstalk 1010 here in Toronto, or AM 800 back in my hometown of Chatham-Kent-Leamington, and probably hear a live radio personality and their guests discuss this very situation at various times throughout any day. I'd agree with some of them that the current housing dilemma involves a constellation of deep and complex factors involving local and global market conditions, population growth, current lending rates and the consequences from policy decisions made many years ago that resulted in diminished supply relative to our population growth, especially the net growth experienced here in Ontario because of years of sustained and positive immigration levels.

The main issue driving this prolonged period of record immigration was that communities weren't building homes at the same rate equal to the families and individuals who needed all forms of housing. Home builders have long identified challenges with slow, arduous local planning processes, outdated rules and the NIMBYism that unnecessarily delayed important projects that can contribute to the very housing solutions Ontario has been seeking.

To continue to grow our economy and fill the wide range of available jobs now and in the future, we need to

attract and retain these hard-working, entrepreneurial, industrious, skilled and motivated people who want to build a life for themselves and their families here in Ontario. To this point, Ontario stands apart from the broader cross-section of other jurisdictions experiencing similar housing pressures. The reason? Since 2018, Ontario has cultivated a climate and nurtured the conditions to attract record investments and create unprecedented opportunities for now and for the future.

In spite of these pressures, setbacks and delays the world experienced during the pandemic, Ontario's economy recovered quickly. Led by Premier Ford, it's on a course to lead all jurisdictions across North America in terms of investment in the next generation of meaningful, well-paying jobs.

In response to this housing supply crisis, our government has adopted an all-of-government approach to tackle this very difficult situation, emphasizing collaboration between both municipal and federal levels of government to facilitate the environment needed for community builders to construct homes more efficiently. With a goal of building 1.5 million homes by 2031, it requires partnership with Ontario's elected mayors and councillors, because municipalities know their communities best. They understand where it makes sense to build and where it just makes sense not to.

Under the leadership of this Premier, we're working together in supporting municipalities by giving them the tools they need to build more homes faster and tackle the affordability crisis that's pricing too many people, especially young families and newcomers, out of the dream of home ownership.

We have set ambitious housing targets and we're holding municipalities accountable while rewarding them for successes with our \$1.2-billion Building Faster Fund, designed to help municipalities pay for critical housing and community-related enabling infrastructure needed to accommodate growth, such as site servicing and building new roads. The Building Faster Fund includes \$120 million that's being reserved for small, rural and northern municipalities, to help build housing-enabling infrastructure and prioritize projects that speed up the increase of housing supply.

In partnership with municipalities, Ontario will continue to work hard to unlock housing opportunities and support growing communities. The province continues to call on our federal government to pay its fair share and help fund housing-enabling infrastructure investments and support vibrant, growing communities.

Municipal infrastructure is vital to fostering Ontario's economic prosperity and enhancing quality of life. The crucial funding will power municipalities to sustain the province's expansion by maintaining essential systems, like water and sewer networks, and facilitating connectivity to roads and bridges.

My riding of Chatham-Kent-Leamington is expansive. It follows the shores of beautiful Lake Erie. Chatham-Kent is home to the Thames campus of St. Clair College. It is still largely rural and made up of several smaller municipi-

palities, like the former city of Chatham, Comber, Tilbury, Wheatley, Blenheim, Merlin, Ridgeway and Highgate, all amalgamated to form the current municipality.

Just consider the network of legacy infrastructure in a community like Chatham-Kent: several different water and waste water treatment plants, hundreds of kilometres of underground pipe and an extensive network of municipal roads. Chatham-Kent possesses one of the highest concentrations of bridges and drains anywhere in the province, with watersheds that include Lake St. Clair, Lake Erie and the Thames River.

Nevertheless, Chatham-Kent identified an opportunity to seize the moment to attract families and grow. Despite targeting to build 81 new homes last year, Chatham-Kent broke ground on 522 new housing units.

Interjection.

Mr. Trevor Jones: I thank you.

For their efforts, the municipality received \$440,000 to contribute to much-needed infrastructure for exceeding its 2023 provincial housing target. The Associate Minister of Housing was on hand to present one of the very first cheques from the Building Faster Fund to our mayor, Mayor Darrin Canniff, to council and to our team.

Chatham-Kent home builders are getting homes built. Local officials in Chatham-Kent can choose when and where fourplexes work for their community. Mayor and council are continuing to streamline processes. This NDP motion seeks to remove the ability of our local leaders to make decisions about their own home communities.

Furthermore, elements of this motion are misleading. Fourplexes do not need to be legalized. Several cities have them already, including right here in Toronto. Communities like Chatham-Kent are getting a wide range of homes built, and as such, I think it's best to let people in Chatham-Kent and elsewhere make their own decisions. We don't need an ineffective policy forced upon them by the member from Davenport.

Let's talk of Leamington, my home community. Leamington is one of Canada's southernmost communities, nestled along the shores of Lake Erie in Essex county. Its temperate climate makes it attractive for retirees and its close proximity to the US uniquely positions it as an ideal destination for automotive investment, food processing and advanced businesses to support the area's traditional field and orchard crops, along with the highest concentration of greenhouses anywhere in North America. This industry employs thousands of local and international agricultural workers. These ideal conditions continue to attract investment, but further highlight the need for a wide range of diverse housing to accommodate a growing and vibrant population.

Recent work by our municipal officials concluded that strategic investments in water and waste water infrastructure alone could unlock the potential for 8,000 new homes in a community of roughly 30,000 people. Housing-enabling water infrastructure, like that proposed by this government for projects like water, water treatment, waste water and road building, remains a top priority, with the

potential to double the population of this little town in less than two decades.

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The case study to unlock the potential in Leamington is precisely what our Premier has heard from areas across Ontario. This is why we're investing \$1.8 billion in new housing-enabling infrastructure, so communities like mine can get shovels in the ground and build the 1.5 million homes we need by 2031.

The funding includes \$1 billion for new municipal housing infrastructure and \$625 million more for housing-enabling water systems funds. The new \$1-billion Municipal Housing Infrastructure Program will support core infrastructure projects that help enable housing for growing and developing communities, for roads and water infrastructure. We've heard it loud and clear, and we're taking action.

Ontario is quadrupling its investment from \$200 million to over \$825 million over three years to expand housing-enabling water systems. This will help municipalities repair, rehabilitate and expand drinking water, waste water and stormwater infrastructure to build more homes now.

By growing our investments, we're helping create an environment that's conducive to building housing and having our sectors across Ontario thrive. Our substantial investments in this infrastructure are the pathway we need to bolster home construction while concurrently easing regulatory constraints and burdens on developers. The dual approach aims to stimulate a diverse array of housing options, ultimately augmenting the housing supply and to achieve market stability.

Members in this Legislature who want to truly support housing must work together to create good policy to allow home builders to build a wide range of homes across Ontario. I strongly recommend that members keep doing what's working and get away from things and policies and motions like this that do not.

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

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I'm very pleased to rise on this NDP motion today calling on the government to support deeply affordable and not-for-profit housing in Ontario because people in Ontario are desperate. We have a very serious housing crisis, and I am really seeing it in my riding of Ottawa West-Nepean. Unfortunately, the budget and the government's recent housing bill contain nothing to address affordable housing, even though that's what my constituents most desperately need.

According to rentals.ca, the average rent in Ottawa for a one-bedroom apartment is \$2,038 in March. That's a year-over-year increase of 9.1%. Just to put this in context, if you are a minimum wage worker working 40 hours a week in Ontario, your rent is taking up 75% of your income, and you have only that other 25% to spend on groceries—which are also increasing—and every other expense that you have. If you are on ODSP, that rent is 155% of your income. If you are on Ontario Works, it is 278% of your income.

So when I door-knock in apartment buildings in Ottawa West–Nepean, the number one thing people are telling me is that they cannot afford to pay their rent and buy groceries and pay all of their other bills. In fact, I spoke to someone recently who said rent takes up all of his income, and he is depending on this legacy his parents left him, which he's spending now every single month just to be able to buy food and stay out of the food bank.

My constituents can't afford what they have, but they also can't afford to move because the rents are going up so quickly. Just to give you an example, I had some constituents who came to me because of a situation in a CLV apartment in Britannia where another tenant was harassing people, so there was quick turnover in this unit. In the space of six months with three tenants, the rent went from \$1,400 a month to \$1,900 a month to \$2,600 a month. That is a \$1,200 a month increase in the space of six months.

The problem is that when we are allowing landlords to jack up the rents like this, it creates an incentive for landlords to get tenants out. I've had a constituent, Judy, who has had two illegal evictions, being told that the landlord was going to move in so she had to move out. This happened in 2019, when she was paying \$1,500 a month. The landlord turned around and rented the unit for \$500 a month more, rather than moving in. This year, it happened again: She was paying \$1,750 a month in rent, and the landlord turned around and rented it out for \$450 a month more. So Judy has two Landlord and Tenant Board applications to protest these unfair evictions, which aren't progressing at all because the Landlord and Tenant Board is broken, and she is now paying \$1,915 a month, which is a 27% increase in her rent, all because of the illegal actions of these landlords.

We're also seeing landlords use above-guideline rent increases to put pressure on tenants to move out. In fact, ACORN just obtained data for the last five years through a freedom-of-information request which was reported on by the CBC, which shows that 20 companies in Ontario were responsible for over half of the AGI requests in Ontario in just the first eight months of 2022. They actually have all the data going back to 2017 on AGI applications to the Landlord and Tenant Board, and they show that in Ottawa West–Nepean, in that time period, there were 128 AGI applications, which accounted for 3% of all the AGI applications during that time period, even though my riding does not have 3% of all the residences in Ontario.

We're seeing the same names appear on that list over and over again. It is the large corporate landlords like Minto and Homestead and Accora. At eight properties in my riding, the landlord applied for an AGI every single year during that time period that they could, and I'm hearing from constituents that these AGIs are being approved even when they're being submitted for minor repairs—like, they put some paint in the hallway, and now an AGI is approved. Meanwhile, at other buildings, major repairs aren't getting done even though the AGI is being approved by the landlord.

I've heard from Rosa in Ottawa West–Nepean, whose rent went up 5.5% this year. She told me, "I simply can't

afford this. Things were tight before but now I feel stricken with fear of what will happen. I work very hard every day and I feel stuck in a bad situation." She concluded, "To be blunt, I'm desperate."

These corporate landlords are not using AGIs in order to pay for these renovations and repairs. They are using them to maximize profits and to push tenants out. That is an important reason why we need to enable and empower not-for-profit and community home building and not-for-profit landlords within our rental market in Ontario, so that the actual goal is to deliver affordable housing to people and not to maximize dividends for shareholders.

We have great community housing and not-for-profit home builders in Ottawa, like Ottawa Community Housing, Nepean community housing and the Ottawa Community Land Trust. They are ready and willing to do the work—they are doing good work already—but they need support from this government in order to provide that kind of housing for even more people.

There are 10,000 people on the centralized wait-list for affordable housing in Ottawa, and I spoke to one constituent who has been on that wait-list for 12 years. She has given up hope that she is ever going to get an affordable home in Ottawa.

This motion calls on the government of Ontario to get back into the business of building affordable housing by swiftly and substantially increasing the supply of affordable and non-market homes. The NDP has put forward a proposal which calls on the government to provide the funding for these not-for-profit and community landlords to build this housing and make it affordable. If we don't invest in the not-for-profit part of our market, we are never going to be able to provide affordable housing at this spectrum of the market where people need deeply affordable housing—in fact, we're never going to see affordable housing at all because, in the last six years, the government has only had 1,184 affordable homes built. That's just not going to cut it when we've got 10,000 people on the wait-list for affordable housing in Ottawa alone.

So I'm deeply disappointed to hear that the government members are speaking about not supporting this motion, that they don't seem to understand the scale and the depth of the crisis in Ontario, that they don't understand what is needed to address it and make sure that people actually have an affordable place to live and get to feed their families as well. And so I hope that the government members will reconsider and support this motion this afternoon.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further debate? I recognize the member for Brampton North.

Interjections.

Mr. Graham McGregor: Thank you, colleagues. Hopefully I'll get a bit more applause than that by the end of the speech, but I wouldn't hold your breath.

1630

It's an honour to rise today, on behalf of Ontarians and Canadians, certainly millennials, new Canadians, and also seniors that are simply priced out of the market and that's even if they can find somewhere to live. The housing

supply crisis is a problem that has been decades in the making, and it's been something that our government has been tasked with fixing since we got elected, and certainly something I've been tasked with tackling since I got elected in 2022.

I want to give some context to the members across about our housing need. You know, in the mid-1980s, the average home in the GTA was \$102,000. You fast-forward that, with inflation, everything around, and in today's dollars it's around \$286,000. That same home, as a GTA average is actually over a million dollars now, including in my community in Brampton, which is a community that used to have people come live in Brampton because they couldn't find an affordable home—or to find an affordable home. Now, they can't even afford to live in Brampton.

What we've seen with this government—there's no government in history that has done more to build homes, certainly not the previous Liberal government for 15 years, which was backed by the NDP, certainly not the NDP government under Bob Rae.

I want to talk a little bit about what we've done, not just in Brampton but also all across Ontario, where we've done things like remove maximum heights in major transit station areas around transit—the idea that you can build big towers, build lots of density when people can get on transit to get to work. I think it makes a lot of sense.

We've looked at sensible solutions around expanding urban settlement areas so that, if there are places where we can't build homes yet, let's think of what we can do to build homes in that place. That's something that members opposite from the Liberals and the NDP have consistently voted against every single time.

You know, some of the things that we've done include reducing taxes on rentals, so we've reduced the HST on purpose-built rentals, we've eliminated that entirely with the help of the federal government.

We also got rid of development charges on non-profit affordable housing, and we've reduced it on rental housing as well. And that's the approach of our government, led by our Premier. That's the approach that our government has taken to address the housing crisis, and we've seen, in the last three years, more homes built over the last three years than we've seen in decades across Ontario.

Our plan is to build 1.5 million homes across the province by 2031, and our plan to build the homes Ontarians need is working, but we also recognize that there is more that needs to be done. That's why we're working with municipalities and partners to reduce the roadblocks, cut red tape and get Ontario building.

Ongoing economic headwinds and high interest rates are affecting home building across the country. Ontario's not immune to that, which is why we're taking action to cut red tape, support municipalities and build more housing faster, improving the quality of life and creating strong communities for everyone from students to families to people in need. We're helping our partners to build more housing so that residents can finally get a home that they can afford and realize that Canadian dream.

In order to reach our goal of building at least 1.5 million homes by 2031, we're focused on removing red tape in the process of home building. Something that we've heard consistently time and time and again is the cost of delays, where every month a delay on a project can add, you know, \$4,000—almost \$4,000—on the cost of a unit. And that was a few years ago, so with inflation it's probably higher, quite frankly, now, than it was then.

If you look at that over 12 months of delay, that's a lot of money. That's almost \$40,000 just on one unit—that one year of delay can cost on a unit. So reducing red tape is important. We want to build capacity and certainty around municipal planning approvals and we're making investments in housing-enabling infrastructure.

I'll note we just tabled a budget. Our finance minister tabled a budget with \$1.8 billion for housing-enabling infrastructure: one of the funds around water, \$825 million; and another billion dollars that we'll be rolling out. And members opposite voted against that, that same budget. They voted against housing-enabling infrastructure, which we know, and we've heard from municipalities, is going to help us get shovels in the ground to get homes built.

They talk about fourplexes as of right. I would ask, under NDP or Liberal governments, or the Liberal governments that they propped up, where was the zoning that was permissible for fourplexes as of right? Because under this government we've seen Toronto, Hamilton, Kitchener, St. Catharines and Burlington all pass laws to make fourplexes as of right across their municipalities. We did that by working with municipalities, not by forcing them to take these policies forward.

One of the places that passed a law like this is actually Mississauga where we had the queen of the carbon tax, Bonnie Crombie, as the former mayor. Actually, at a time when Ontario was growing—we're seeing hundreds of thousands of people coming into the province every year—and, frankly, Mississauga being a place that actually has the biggest airport in Ontario, Pearson airport, they actually managed to shrink their population, not grow their population at a time when everybody else was growing their population and we need all municipalities to do their part. We need them all to step up.

This anti-development approach has not only consequences on the population in the area, it has consequences across the province. Look at highways. Every major city has a bypass highway, and then when Brampton—we've grown; we've doubled over the last two decades in population—finally gets a government ready to build our bypass highway, Highway 413, everybody gets the torches and pitchforks out, and the downtown Toronto environmental activists start to say, "Oh, no, we have a problem. It's okay to build highways elsewhere in Ontario, just not for Brampton—just not for you."

We saw that from the leader of the Liberals during her time as mayor of Mississauga when it felt like she actually spent, it felt like, more time opposing a highway which would benefit the residents of Brampton than actually building homes in her own community to support the growth that her population was seeing.

Now I was very happy that we have a different approach in Brampton. We've been growing. Brampton's a very shovel-ready city, and we saw that with the recent Building Faster Fund and the work that we did towards our housing target, \$25.5 million—very happy that we had the minister there, the Premier there and my Brampton caucus colleagues all there to support that fund, and we're looking forward to not only doing what we did this year, but we're going to smash those targets next year, so hopefully an even bigger cheque from the minister when that gets done.

We need to listen to local communities who want to have their voices heard, but we need to set incentivized structures in place to make sure that municipalities are doing their part. We've listened to municipalities on some of the changes that we made around use-it-or-lose-it clauses etc., but we've also incentivized them to move in the right direction by setting housing targets.

This is something that was scoffed at when we were first looking at it by the opposition who thought that municipalities would never sign on to our housing targets. Look at where we are now, where almost every single major big municipality not only signed on to the targets, but most of them actually made significant progress at hitting them. Many of them even exceeded those housing targets.

This is an approach that works. It's unfortunate we hear from the opposition—they talk about the need for non-profit housing. Why did you vote against removing development charges on non-profit housing? Okay. When we moved to have three units as of right in homes, legalizing nanny suites and that kind of thing, why did you vote against it then? When we removed height restrictions around major transit station areas—again, something that makes sense—why did you vote against it then?

It's an opposition that has opposed housing at every step, and it seems like consistently from the members across that what we hear is, "We need the government to set up an agency, and we need more bureaucracy. If we just put more power in the hands of government, then everything will be okay." We don't agree with that on the PC side. We need more power in the hands of citizens, more power in the hands of residents, more power in the hands of industry to actually build the homes, get our market going and get some homes that my generation can afford.

It's frustrating being a millennial, and people say millennials, oh, you know—you've got to realize millennials, some of us are 40. I'm not, but we're not just kids anymore. We're a big generation and we're in our prime earning years. Simply put, my generation just can't afford to get into the housing market. It's not through lack of trying.

You hear—what was it—the mayor of Calgary said that people don't want to own homes. Did you guys hear this? I don't want to blast another—but we hear some of this rhetoric; she's not the only one who's made this rhetoric, that people want to rent.

I just want to be clear, Madam Speaker: My generation doesn't want to rent. We have to rent—if we can afford the

rent. We want to be homeowners. We want to own homes and we want to move our lives forward.

1640

Frankly, nothing in this motion that I see from the NDP helps that and supports that, but everything that I've seen from the PC plan and our government's plan is getting us in the right direction, and that plan is working. We're going to continue to do what we can to promote development, to not only create jobs but to make sure that we're building homes that people who are working those jobs can afford.

With the time I have left, I want to talk a little bit about the record of the Liberal leader. This is something that—you know, we hear a lot of talk from the Liberals now. They're awfully quiet when we mention support of the carbon tax. They don't want to take a stance on the carbon tax, but they seem to talk a lot about housing lately.

I just want to reiterate that, under their leader's leadership, Mississauga is the only major city in Ontario to recently shrink in population. You know, under the Liberal leader's leadership, Mississauga said no to thousands of homes for her community. While we were pushing to build up near transit and reforming zoning to create more gentle density, Bonnie Crombie, the leader of the Liberal Party, called a 17-storey, 148-unit rental development "way too much density." Like, she's campaigning to be the Premier of the province—I just want to, you know—just for context. When she was in leadership as the mayor of Mississauga—again, where these quotes come from—she also called a proposed 12-storey, 195-unit development "an abomination."

And under Bonnie Crombie's leadership—again, campaigning to be the Premier of the province, wants to be in charge of Ontario. When she was in charge of Mississauga, under her leadership, Mississauga said no to a 4,690-unit development because of sun shadow issues.

That's not real leadership. That's not the leadership that we need here in Ontario. We need a government that gets it done for people, not only building homes but building highways, long-term care, transit infrastructure, hospitals, to really get the job done and really get our province back to a good place. So we know that the people of Mississauga certainly deserve better than Bonnie Crombie, but I would also say that Ontario deserves better than Bonnie Crombie.

With the time that I have, I want to take some time to thank the minister as well, not only for the \$25.5-million Building Faster Fund for Brampton but also for the 30% increase for the Homelessness Prevention Program that we got in Peel region last year. That money is really helping, really supporting. My colleague from Mississauga–Lakeshore talked about the fund going to Armagh House and other organizations. I mean, that's a massive help. It's big for our community and very, very helpful.

So, I'll wrap it up by asking my colleagues across to rethink their motion and take a second look at our housing plan and what we've been doing. I know they voted against it. I know they voted against cutting taxes on rental housing. They voted against eliminating taxes for non-

profit housing for Habitat for Humanity and awesome organizations like that. I know they voted against those things, but it's not too late. They can support us in our plan to build homes. They can support us in our plan to build Highway 413 and to build 50 new hospital capital projects across Ontario.

It is not too late; we've still got two years before the election. I certainly hope that our colleagues change their mind, but frankly, when you look at this motion and the content of it, for all the reasons that I've talked about, Speaker, I won't be supporting it and I encourage all my colleagues not to support it as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Tom Rakocevic): Further debate?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It's my honour to rise today in support of our opposition day motion. You know, for the government, they often are talking about the current housing crisis in which we are living, which we are experiencing. The first and most obvious answer would be what, Speaker? If there aren't enough homes, what do we do? We build them. Instead of leaving this up to other people and all these different roundabout ways, the most simple answer is to get shovels in the ground and to build.

I was honoured to table this legislation late last year, and I'm proud that, despite the Conservatives not wanting to get their hands dirty and not wanting to get shovels in the ground and voted it down, we are undaunted. The official opposition will raise the voices of people across this province. The affordability crisis must be addressed in a meaningful way. What is foundational, what is fundamental, what is most often the largest expense in our lives? It's housing.

While this government blunders ahead and tiptoes clumsily backwards, the Ontario NDP is focused on solutions, and part of that is a commitment to affordable housing. We need a wartime effort to address this housing crisis. We need all hands on deck. We need to capitalize on the strengths and abilities of our community partners such as experts in the field like co-ops, municipal partners and social housing providers.

I recently had the opportunity to congratulate Homes Unlimited London in my riding on 50 years of incorporation. Carmen Sprovieri and Cathy Park were there. It was an amazing event. It was a beautiful and poignant evening. But here is a not-for-profit organization that is phenomenal. They have industry partners. They're doers. They have industry leaders. They know how to navigate systems. They can easily leverage their own expertise as well as that of others just to get the job done. I sat with Bob and Margo Hahn and Gord and Maria Hardcastle and we had a phenomenal conversation. But it was amazing to see that those are the kinds of organizations that this government could depend upon that could help create that affordable housing.

Recently, in my riding, Richard Sifton of Sifton Properties, with the Anglican Diocese of Huron, are now taking Homes Unlimited into downtown London. There's going to be at 195 Dufferin Ave., which is going to be 94 residential units—80 one-bedroom and 14 two-bedroom

units. It's going to cost \$20 million, and Sifton is donating the building and is going to oversee the reconstruction. It's a beautiful plan.

But this is exactly what the government could do. Not-for-profits can split a nickel five ways from centre. Co-ops have been in the business of creating and maintaining that housing stock that is vitally necessary to address the affordability crisis that is happening across our province. Yet, this government would talk about recommendations from Scotiabank as being communist. They would talk about how the government creating housing would ruin the free market.

Here on this side, the official opposition speaks to folks who are in the creation of private, for-profit housing. They do not want the responsibility of creating all the affordable housing that Ontario needs. That is not their mandate, Speaker. They are in the business of providing shareholder return. They want to make sure there is a return on investment for all of their people and, quite frankly, there isn't a great return on investment in the creation of truly affordable housing and long-term affordable housing.

So this government in their reliance—their ideological, their fixed mindset, where they can't seem to get it through their ears that we need to have the government incent and assist co-ops, municipal partners and non-profits to create that housing. Instead, they have this myopic vision that for-profit is the only way to go. They're really letting Ontarians down.

We see other disastrous initiatives from this government including the removal of rent control on buildings first occupied after November 2018. During an affordability crisis, what does this government do for affordability? They poured gasoline on the fire. They've created a system of exploitation which has destroyed many lives.

I talk to seniors all the time who have been in buildings for decades. They have paid for the apartment building in which they live, and they are afraid, to this day, each and every single day, that that building is going to be sold to a new owner who will want to get them out so they can jack the rent up to whatever the market can withstand. It's a legacy of the Liberal government, who shot holes in the boat of affordability in terms of renters, bringing in vacancy decontrol.

This government could follow and could implement NDP legislation to protect renters. They could pass this opposition day motion today to create more affordable housing, to stabilize the system, making sure people have a safe place to call home. Yet, I wonder if they will choose to, or if they will continue to act as partisan puppets for their for-profit friends. Time will tell, and we will see today.

Housing is foundational, housing is fundamental, housing is a human right and housing is health care. I hope this government will understand the importance of housing. They say a lot of words. Let's see some action today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Tom Rakocevic): Further debate?

1650

Mr. Matthew Rae: It's a pleasure to rise today to speak to the opposition day motion and talk about what I'm

hearing in my community, and I wouldn't necessarily call them "puppets"—to my colleagues here.

I know our government believes that the number one cause of rental unaffordability in Ontario is the lack of supply, Speaker. To improve rental affordability, we need to increase the number of rental units. To do this, our government introduced an exemption to the rent increase guidelines for units first occupied after November 2018. Since this policy was introduced, Ontario has seen the highest number of purpose-built rental starts ever—the highest ever in our history as a province.

At the same time, we have held the 2024 rent increase guidelines at 2.5%, well below the inflation rate of 5.9%, which was last year, and the lowest in the country, I will say, Speaker. I'll say again: It is the lowest rental increase guideline in the country, lower than the NDP government in BC, lower than any other Liberal or provincial Conservative government in this country.

The rental policy is such as this, Speaker: This helps protect the vast majority of tenants from significant rent increases. Our balanced approach supports the construction of more rental housing, ultimately leading to more affordable rents while also ensuring the vast majority of rental units remain under rent control.

As the members of this House will know, last fall we were pleased to see that the federal government finally accepted our recommendations and advice on removing the HST on purpose-built rentals. This has led to a record start in the purpose-built rentals for a second year in a row. In 2023, we saw the highest level of purpose-built rental housing starts in Ontario's history. As I've mentioned, at nearly 19,000, that is topping the record of 15,000 the year before in 2022. I know many in this place look forward to seeing us break that record again this year—this at the same time, as I mentioned, that we're ensuring the vast majority of tenants are under rent control still.

Speaker, this is obviously not the first time in Ontario's history there has been an exemption for rent control to encourage the construction of more rental units. In fact, it was the last NDP government under Premier Rae that introduced the exemption for rent control for all buildings built after 1991.

In budget 2023, our government invested an additional \$19 million to increase the capacity of the Ontario Land Tribunal and of the Landlord and Tenant Board to resolve cases faster, address significant backlogs, support a more efficient dispute resolution and increase the housing supply and opportunity. The LTB is currently focused on reducing its backlog to reduce wait times for both tenants and landlords. Implementing a rent registry, as the member from Kitchener Centre has suggested in the past, would delay these starts, Speaker, and we will not do that. Again, we are focused on getting more homes built and maintaining a balance in that approach.

We have tabled Bill 184, Protecting Tenants and Strengthening Community Housing Act, and Bill 97, Helping Homebuyers, Protecting Tenants Act. Through these acts, we required landlords to make efforts to negotiate a repayment agreement if a tenant has entered

into rent arrears before the LTB can issue an eviction notice. We also increased the fines under the RTA offences to \$100,000 for an individual and half a million dollars for a corporation—the highest level in the country.

We're requiring landlords to disclose to the board if they have previously filed for an eviction to move into a unit or renovate a unit. This is to provide knowledge to our adjudicators to look for patterns and identify landlords who may be breaking the law. We're requiring this information to be ready because of the pieces of legislation that we have tabled. It's because of our actions that this information is available to a tenant.

We've also increased the compensation for a bad-faith eviction to allow the LTB to order an additional 12 months' rent in tenant compensation, and we're also providing tenants with two years instead of the historical one year to apply for a remedy if the landlord evicts to repair or renovate a unit and does not give the tenant an opportunity to move back in.

Speaker, our government understands the need to increase the rental housing supply across Ontario, not just in Toronto, in downtown Kitchener, in Collingwood, in Stratford also, and ensuring in every community we increase the rental supply in Ontario. We'll continue to put forward proposals that do just that.

I know some members in this place may be aware of a housing model called the Helsinki model, from Finland, obviously. They have a unique model—I learned about it in my role as PA to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing—where they were focused extensively on increasing market rental supply.

I'll explain why that's important. When you increase the market rental supply, those who may be in an affordable rent-gated housing unit who can't afford to move to market rental will move to the market rental, so they'll climb the ladder. And then those who may be in a precarious situation or even unhoused can then move into the supportive housing, and obviously those who have been unhoused move into those supportive units. Essentially, every person is able to climb the ladder, but the only reason all those individuals can climb that ladder is because, at the top, for market rental, there is that supply.

In Finland, they've focused on this extensively over the years, increasing that market-rate rental apartment, allowing those individuals to move up that ladder, to move into their own place, ensuring that those who may be from a lower income on that ladder move into a unit for them, allowing them to have that stability of a place to call home and move up that ladder.

As the member from Brampton North mentioned, some politicians in this country believe that millennials want to rent forever. I can tell you, Speaker, that is not the case. Many millennials want to purchase a property at some point in their lives, and ensuring that that supply is there as well, ensuring that we get a vast majority of homes built—and different types of homes: of course, single-detached, but townhomes, apartments, multi-residential apartments for families as well.

I think often of a builder in my own area of the world, in my riding, building a great development in Palmerston,

Ontario. He has recently presented at a mayor's breakfast, as many of us in this place attend, where he is building, essentially, a stacked townhouse. It's unique for rural Ontario; I know it's very common in some of the larger urban centres. But he is building a stacked townhouse. It is unique in the fact that it has a walkout basement that has separate hydro utilities attached to it, and then three bedrooms, I believe, in the upper unit. The builder told the group that he has traditionally built single-detached. He is about mid-career, I would say. He has built single-detached his entire career. Now, for the next half of his career, he's only going to build this, because he knows he can move this product.

Why this product is so beneficial: Whether it's a young person who can then rent out the basement or rent out the upper part and live in the bachelor unit in the basement, they have that supplemental income so that they can then afford the mortgage. They can get into the market and be able to provide that source there. Or, also, very importantly, I have a larger senior population in my riding. Whether it is there for our senior population, who may want to downsize—for example, a younger family can move into this stacked townhome and live in the three-bedroom unit above, and their in-laws or parents can live in the walkout basement. Then they can then move out of their over-housed situation, where they may have multiple bedrooms that they are no longer using, but are looking, though, to stay in the community they helped build.

Our builders are very innovative in moving forward these different types of offerings to the market and ensuring that, as in our most recent piece of legislation, Bill 185, was tabled—there are common themes in that, as has been mentioned already by the Associate Minister of Housing. It's ensuring that we cut red tape, remove barriers and get shovels in the ground on critical infrastructure.

Speaker, I tell our municipal colleagues often—
Interjection.

Mr. Matthew Rae: Yes, get some shovels in the ground there, my friend from Brampton North. I know he enjoys that a lot.

I will mention the member from Brampton North. I had the pleasure of speaking with Environmental Defence at committee. As he knows, they're against the 413, but they're not against other highways. They're only just against the 413.

Mr. Graham McGregor: Only when it's Brampton.

Mr. Matthew Rae: Only when it's Brampton. I know. It's shameful, Speaker.

When we're focused on our most recent housing-enabling legislation, it's shovels in the ground. I tell our municipal colleagues often. I had the pleasure of a few delegations at Good Roads on Sunday afternoon. I met with them, and I have told them often: I'm happy to open a sewer main, a water main, because I know at the end of the day, us putting shovels in the ground for that type of infrastructure will get many, many homes built.

1700

The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing says it often. We don't want to build hundreds of homes. We

don't want to build thousands of homes. We want to build millions of homes. Right now, we are building millions of homes. We are well on the way, as the Associate Minister of Housing mentioned in his remarks: historic starts year over year, despite high inflation, which is a federal Liberal problem. We're cutting red tape. I know our municipal colleagues appreciate the fact that we're investing over \$1.8 billion in housing-enabling infrastructure, waste water in particular, and another billion dollars for roads, bridges, roundabouts that are vital to getting homes built. Traffic flow is very important.

I know our government is also taking a Team Ontario approach. I know the National Housing Strategy has come up today in the debate, and I know that the minister has written a counterproposal to Minister Fraser federally. It was disappointing that he did not accept that fair proposal. I know our municipal colleagues stand with us in that ask of the federal government to honour its commitment to its provincial partners.

Speaker, I think it is very concerning that we have a federal government that disregards the Canadian Constitution whenever it wants to—I'll be frank; whenever it wants to. We are seeing record high numbers of separatists in Quebec. I can still remember when the last vote was in Quebec, and I do not want to see this country split apart. The federal Liberal government continues to override the constitutional responsibilities of the various levels of government.

We'll stand with our municipal partners to ensure that we are there for them and working with them to advocate for the vital funds which are owed to them. We agreed to this agreement. We agreed to meeting these targets, and it's shameful that the federal Liberal government is not there to honour those agreements.

I know other members have mentioned fourplexes today as well. It's working with our municipal partners, as I have mentioned. Whether it's getting roads built, whether it's getting pipes in the ground, we are working with them to remove obstacles, and if they choose to implement fourplexes and, as was mentioned, we did introduce three as of right, and even within this most recent legislation we have tabled, we are still going to ensure—we're making regulatory changes to ensure that those three as of rights are across this province, ensuring that a municipality cannot prevent that moving forward.

We'll work with our municipal partners to ensure that we support, if they choose to do so, fourplexes in their communities, but they know what's best. The Premier says it often: It's not downtown Toronto or Queen's Park that knows best, it's out there in their communities, listening to the people on the ground. That's what I do often in my own riding, as I know many members do in this place.

We'll continue to work, as I mentioned, with our municipal partners to support critical waste water infrastructure to ensure that we get more homes built. I know in my own riding there is the potential in a smaller community to see over 800 homes built, but we need that waste water capacity. I know the Minister of Infrastructure is working very hard to get that money out the door as

quickly as possible to ensure we get more homes built across Ontario.

Speaker, I also want to address something the NDP housing critic mentioned on social media recently. The NDP housing critic, the member from University–Rose-dale, is advocating for policies that would eliminate the supply of rental housing units in a housing supply crisis and lead to higher rents in Ontario. Don't take my word for it, Speaker. You can take an independent housing expert who has said it would be a disaster for renters in Ontario, and I quote: "The research is actually clear. What the member for University–Rosedale is suggesting would hurt renters who can't afford to buy and send gentrification through the roof."

There is nothing progressive about what is being suggested here, Speaker.

Mr. Joel Harden: Fraser Institute?

Mr. Matthew Rae: It's not the Fraser Institute.

Interjections.

Mr. Matthew Rae: This is an independent housing expert. They can go look it up on X, I believe.

I think I hit a nerve, but I know the member from Niagara Falls mentioned homelessness prevention funding, which the member from Brampton North mentioned. In Peel, we increased 30%, I believe, in Peel.

Now, for those in this House, in Niagara, we increased it by 86%—86%.

Mr. Graham McGregor: That's huge.

Mr. Matthew Rae: That is huge. We were there for our service managers and providers to ensure that we are investing there. Colleagues, what did the members opposite do? They voted no. They voted no to three as of right, they voted no to removing DCs on non-profit affordable homes, and they voted no to increasing homelessness prevention funding. We will continue to say yes to get all types of homes built across Ontario.

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

Mr. Joel Harden: It's great to rise and talk about affordable housing. That's what our motion is about. And I want it to be clear to members of this House: This debate is about affordable housing. What do I mean by that? My definition of affordable housing is informed by the great Carolyn Whitzman, Professor Carolyn Whitzman at the University of Ottawa. She is a member of the Housing Assessment Resource Tools, housed between the University of British Columbia and University of Ottawa. The goal of affordable housing, according to Professor Whitzman and decades of research, is that it should be 30% of someone's income. There was a time, apparently, when it was 20%, but 30%. That's the metric.

And how you measure is important, because if all one cares about is supply, as I just heard in debate from my friend in the government, then you can say, "Oh, purpose-built rentals are up. Everything's great. One climbs the ladder. One day you might have a home you can afford." But the fact of the matter is, if we look at affordable housing by that definition, 30% of one's income, then we have failed—abysmally failed Ontario.

We're failing Ontario because—I'm not making these figures up. Look at the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp., the federal agency responsible for measuring housing starts. What are they saying? Housing starts across the board from last month are down almost 14%, and from last year at this time, they are down by 4.6%. That is the market itself, but if we look at affordable housing units—this is the thing that disturbs me the most from Professor Whitzman's research—in our market in Ottawa, for every unit of affordable housing we built—remember the definition, 30% of your income—we are losing 15, and why? Because greedy real estate investment trusts are sweeping into our communities, buying up real estate stock, prettying up the units, throwing out the tenants.

Councillor Ariel Troster back home just published an op-ed in the Ottawa Citizen. I encourage people to read it. What she has uncovered from her research at the city of Ottawa is that the number of N13 notices—those are the eviction notices—has increased—wait for it, Speaker; wait for it, members—by 545% between 2021 and 2022—545%. So we are watching the affordable homes in our community, 30% of market rent, being ripped out of our hands by greedy real estate investment trusts swooping in, buying up units, prettifying them to an extent, kicking out the tenants. And what have we done? Absolutely nothing—nothing—because we have had blind faith, blind faith that the market is going to produce affordable housing. And as the member for London North Centre said, that is not what the market does. That is not what private developers do. It's actually the role of government. It's the role of a government to make sure that there are affordable homes for people so they can climb the ladder the member opposite was talking about. But it doesn't happen by accident.

Let me talk about a government that made it happen. I know about this government because my friend, my neighbour Evelyn Gigantes, who was once Minister of Housing, who was once the MPP for Ottawa Centre, was there and saw it happen. There was a federal government that had very good financing for non-profit and co-operative homes, and between 1989, a period preceding her government, and 1995, more than 14,000 co-op homes were built in the province of Ontario—more than 14,000.

But wait, what happened in 1995? A Conservative government was elected. They immediately ceased the funding of that program, and they immediately ceased the funding of affordable social housing. Why? Because Premier Harris at the time said, "The market will solve these problems." It hasn't.

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The market has made real estate investment trusts very rich. The market has made sure that people who earn wonderful salaries, like the 82 vice-presidents at Metrolinx I was talking about earlier today, can have not just one home; they can have a vacation property. They can have lots of opportunities. But the average person scraping and struggling, the 50% of Canadians that research tells us are living paycheque to paycheque right now—they can't find a place to live. So that's why I'm

very happy that our housing critic from University–Rosedale and our party, led by Marit Stiles, has said it’s time for this province, Ontario, to get back into the business of enabling non-market homes, because that’s what we need.

Now, we could have blind faith. Speaker, I could have it too. I could stand here before you and say that after I make this speech, I’m going to get back to my condo at a rate of, per 100 metres, 10 seconds; I can bench-press 300 pounds; I could earn a Nobel Prize tomorrow; I could imagine myself earning a Grammy Award one day. I could have lots of fantastic ideas, but if I’m not partnering with the people who can build the housing, it won’t matter at all. It won’t matter at all.

I’m aware of the fact that the government has talked often about the need to build critical infrastructure so housing could be built—the water and sewer systems. It’s true. But the problem is, if you look at their latest bill, Bill 185, the kinds of homes that are being encouraged here would lead, potentially, as I’m reading the bill before the House, to sprawl development. Let me talk about one project of sprawl development in our city that the staff of the city of Ottawa urged the city council not to authorize but they did: the Tewin development, way in the south end of the city. The cost of running water and sewer to that one development is going to be \$600 million, in excess of \$600 million. The amount of money my city can expect from the latest federal program, the Canada Housing Infrastructure Fund, a \$6-billion fund, is about \$180 million. That is one housing development that we can’t even pay for with the program that the Prime Minister is talking about.

And let’s be fair in case the government thinks I’m picking on them: The federal government has been asleep at the switch too. The federal government has had a housing strategy—it launched in 2019—that began with the idea that housing is a human right, that said they were going to build affordable homes, and they have not done that. Three per cent of the homes, according to Professor Whitzman, that they have built over the last five years can be described as affordable housing, at 30% of income—3%.

I remember it well, because when I was knocking on doors for the Nova Scotia NDP in the last provincial election, I was in a neighbourhood, Halifax-Fairfax, if I’m getting the riding correct, and it was a wonderful postwar bungalow neighbourhood. Apartment buildings were coming in, and I was getting ready to talk to neighbours about housing opportunities for their kids. What I was hearing from the neighbours, in fact, was that rent in many of these buildings in the city of Halifax was in excess of \$2,000 per unit. When I walked by them, I saw big signs saying, “Benefiting from the National Housing Strategy.” Why in the world are the taxpayers of this country providing generous subsidies to developers to make market housing that is not affordable? That’s my question to the federal government.

But my question to the provincial government here is, you signed a deal in 2018 with the feds—a \$5.8-billion

deal—and you pledged to build 19,660 affordable housing units. You’ve hit 6% of your target. That’s better than the Prime Minister’s 3%, but not much better. So if the market has consistently failed, it’s time to get the state back involved, without apology.

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

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Speaker, through you, today my colleagues in the opposition stand united about the urgent need for Ontario families. That need is to address affordability issues, and that has to start with affordable housing. It is about the dream and the security one receives when they know they have shelter. It’s about the confidence that parents should have to know their children can stay in the communities they grew up in. It’s about recognizing the absence of past provincial governments to adequately address the pain of a housing crisis. It’s about taking action when others did not. That’s leadership, Speaker.

Niagara has the most beautiful landscape. This is why we are a gem for tourism. Yet, for the families that live there, we are facing this reality that more and more families are at risk of being unhoused and underhoused.

Speaker, did you know the average wait time for an affordable one-bedroom apartment can stretch over decades, from nine years in the Lincoln area to a staggering 17 years in Niagara Falls? And in my riding of St. Catharines, for one bedroom, it now exceeds 20 years. That’s 20 years people are waiting for affordable housing.

By the time space becomes available, you are almost literally an entirely different person. Our community need for housing grows while the supply lags dramatically behind. This is unacceptable, Speaker. This is why we are here today debating this.

I strive to do the work to be of service to my community. This is why a guide was written—a guide to provide tenants the knowledge to know their rights, so that they are not bullied out of their affordable housing by out-of-area speculators.

Speaker, this is why I strive to advocate to fix the LTB by addressing the wait-list, benefiting both good tenants and landlords. And yet, without affordable housing, the situation will continue to worsen.

St. Catharines was ranked as the 10th most expensive rental market in all of Canada in 2019. I wish I could say that Ontario has dropped the ball on trying to build affordable housing. However, let’s face it: The reality is that Ontario never even bothered to pick that ball up in the first place.

When the Ontario government struck a task force to address housing affordability six months before the last election, not one single representative from the non-profit or affordable housing sector—there was not one. So, this is why it is no surprise we are where we are right now.

The research by assistant professor Joanne Heritz from Brock University sheds light on the bleak picture. It tells us that the gap between supply and demand in affordable housing is not just a temporary imbalance but a chronic failure of our housing policies.

Recalling the conversation at a round table on housing in Niagara, one that included the Leader of the Opposition, we heard a unanimous call for action. Non-profits alone are spearheading the change for non-market housing with little to no support from current provincial strategies. This is not merely a gap in policy; it is a rift in our moral obligations.

The motion before us today calls for bold steps. These are radical ideas. They are rational. They're not radical; I said they're rational. More than any of that, Ontario is at risk of losing billions of federal funding intended for affordable housing, all because the action from this Ontario Conservative government on building houses has always been about politics rather than progress.

Think of a single mother in St. Catharines, the young graduate in our south end, the elderly couple in the north:

all of whom deserve real action that hits to the core of every family. We must also look towards solutions that have begun to make a difference.

The recent initiatives in St. Catharines, like the 127 units on Church Street and the 24-unit transitional housing on Oakdale Avenue, are worthy projects that are examples of what our community in Niagara can do. However, it is not enough if we do not have meaningful and active participation by the provincial government.

What does courage look like in the face of crisis? It looks like getting our hands dirty, helping families right now, changing our direction and moving forward together. Today, I invite all members to support this motion and get back into the business of building non-market housing today.

Report continues in volume B.

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Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
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Blais, Stephen (LIB)	Orléans	
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Burch, Jeff (NDP)	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	
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Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Raymond Sung Joon (PC)	Scarborough North / Scarborough- Nord	Minister for Seniors and Accessibility / Ministre des Services aux aînés et de l'Accessibilité
Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Stan (PC)	Willowdale	Minister of Long-Term Care / Ministre des Soins de longue durée
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Coe, Lorne (PC)	Whitby	
Collard, Lucille (LIB)	Ottawa—Vanier	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
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Dowie, Andrew (PC)	Windsor—Tecumseh	
Downey, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte	Attorney General / Procureur général
Dunlop, Hon. / L'hon. Jill (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Minister of Colleges and Universities / Ministre des Collèges et Universités
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Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Waterloo	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Flack, Hon. / L'hon. Rob (PC)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Associate Minister of Housing / Ministre associé du Logement
Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
		Premier / Premier ministre
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Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Michael D. (PC)	York South—Weston / York-Sud—Weston	Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism / Ministre des Affaires civiques et du Multiculturalisme
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French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn (PC)	Newmarket—Aurora	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Ghamari, Goldie (PC)	Carleton	
Glover, Chris (NDP)	Spadina—Fort York	
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Grewal, Hardeep Singh (PC)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harden, Joel (NDP)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Harris, Mike (PC)	Kitchener—Conestoga	
Hazell, Andrea (LIB)	Scarborough—Guildwood	
Hogarth, Christine (PC)	Etobicoke—Lakeshore	
Holland, Kevin (PC)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
Hsu, Ted (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Jama, Sarah (IND)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	
Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin—Caledon	Minister of Health / Ministre de la Santé
		Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre
Jones, Trevor (PC)	Chatham-Kent—Leamington	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
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Kanapathi, Logan (PC)	Markham—Thornhill	
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Khanjin, Hon. / L'hon. Andrea (PC)	Barrie—Innisfil	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs
		Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe du gouvernement
Kusendova-Bashta, Natalia (PC)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga-Centre	
Leardi, Anthony (PC)	Essex	
Lecce, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)	King—Vaughan	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Lumsden, Hon. / L'hon. Neil (PC)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean	
Mamakwa, Sol (NDP)	Kiiwetinoong	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Mantha, Michael (IND)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Martin, Robin (PC)	Eglinton—Lawrence	
McCarthy, Hon. / L'hon. Todd J. (PC)	Durham	Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery / Ministre des Services au public et aux entreprises
McCrimmon, Karen (LIB)	Kanata—Carleton	
McGregor, Graham (PC)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	
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
		Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones
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Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Parsa, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (PC)	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires
Pasma, Chandra (NDP)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	
Piccini, Hon. / L'hon. David (PC)	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de l'Immigration, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences
Pierre, Natalie (PC)	Burlington	
Pirie, Hon. / L'hon. George (PC)	Timmins	Minister of Mines / Ministre des Mines
Quinn, Nolan (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	
Rae, Matthew (PC)	Perth—Wellington	
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
Rasheed, Kaleed (IND)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	
Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Northern Development / Ministre du Développement du Nord Minister of Indigenous Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Riddell, Brian (PC)	Cambridge	
Romano, Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Sarrazin, Stéphane (PC)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Saunderson, Brian (PC)	Simcoe—Grey	
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	
Shamji, Adil (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Skelly, Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	Deputy Speaker / Vice-Présidente Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, David (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Graydon (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
Smith, Laura (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
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 déléguée aux Petites Entreprises
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain / Hamilton-Mountain	
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Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Vaugois, Lise (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
Williams, Hon. / L'hon. Charmaine A. (PC)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity / Ministre associée des Perspectives sociales et économiques pour les femmes
Wong-Tam, Kristyn (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	
Vacant	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	
Vacant	Milton	