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Mercredi
7 mai 2025

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ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Wednesday 7 May 2025

Mercredi 7 mai 2025

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): And now, a moment of silence for inner thought and personal reflection.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SAFER MUNICIPALITIES ACT, 2025
LOI DE 2025 POUR DES MUNICIPALITÉS
PLUS SÛRES

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 6, 2025, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

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

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Further debate?

Mr. Stephen Blais: It's an honour to rise today to speak to Bill 6, the Safer Municipalities Act, legislation that has sparked strong emotions, conflicting viewpoints and, I believe, an opportunity for us in this chamber to take a more honest and balanced approach to one of the most visible and painful issues facing our communities today.

At its core, Bill 6 is about giving municipalities and law enforcement the tools to manage public drug use and dismantle encampments. These are not abstract concerns; these are daily realities for people across Ontario: parents trying to walk their children to school through a park lined with tents, local businesses seeing customers driven away and communities growing anxious as public spaces feel increasingly unsafe.

Madam Speaker, I want to be clear: I support the objective of this legislation. We must be able to remove encampments that are unsafe, unsanitary and unsustainable. We must be able to intervene when public drug use endangers individuals and communities alike. In fact, when I was a city councillor in Ottawa, I led the way to ban smoking in public parks to ensure families could enjoy these public spaces without being exposed to second-hand smoke, and I hope that we can all agree that hard drug use is many, many, many steps above smoking.

But the legislation does not exist in a vacuum, and it is our job as legislators to consider not just the hammer but

the hand behind it. Let's start with some hard truths: Homeless encampments did not exist on this scale before Doug Ford's government was elected. Before 2018, the number of visible large-scale encampments across Ontario was negligible. Today, they're everywhere, from downtown Toronto to Sudbury, from Niagara to the nation's capital. In 2023 alone, municipalities across Ontario documented over 1,400 separate encampments, a dramatic increase that reflects a deeper, more serious erosion in our social safety net.

And it's not just anecdotal. According to the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, more than 80,000 Ontarians were homeless at some point in 2024, a 25% increase since 2022. In northern and rural Ontario, these rates have exploded, growing by 150% and 200% respectively over the last eight years. And while this government blames municipalities or Ottawa or anyone else within arm's reach, let's not forget who cancelled affordable housing projects, who underfunded mental health care, who allowed rent control loopholes and who still, after seven years in office, does not have a coherent provincial homelessness strategy.

Madam Speaker, we cannot talk about enforcement without talking about what happens after. If all this bill does is give police the power to clear tents and confiscate personal belongings but leaves people with nowhere to go, then we haven't solved the problem. We've moved the problem—from one park to another, from one underpass to the next.

Now, this government has touted its recent commitment of \$75 million for homelessness and housing supports, but let's put that in perspective. That's about \$5 per Ontarian. We spend more on highway billboards than we do on shelter beds. But it's not just about the money; it's about leadership. Where is the provincial coordination to ensure encampment removals are paired with immediate shelter options? Where are the wraparound mental health and addiction services? Where is the investment in deeply affordable housing, not just attainable homes no one living in poverty can afford?

Now, Bill 6 allows officers to escort people to support services, and that's great, but it only allows that if it's enabled by regulation. So let me ask the government, where are those regulations? Where are those services? Don't tell Ontarians you're offering help while writing a bill that's all stick and no carrot.

It is entirely possible—and it's necessary—to hold two ideas at once: that public spaces must be protected and remain accessible for families, seniors and our communities and that people living in tents are not criminals, that they are often in pain, people in crisis, people who have been failed by the very systems that are supposed to support

them. So, yes, we must restore safety to our public spaces and, yes, we must crack down on illegal drug use when it threatens lives, but we also must confront the truth that many of those struggling with addiction are, in fact, self-medicating for trauma, for mental illness and because of despair.

Unfortunately, this government has spent more time vilifying those living in encampments than supporting them, and in doing so it risks making the problem worse, not better.

Now, Madam Speaker, while I have laid plenty of criticism at the feet of the Ford government, let's also speak honestly about the hypocrisy of the NDP, because time and again, we hear them lecture this House about compassion, about equity, about human dignity, but let me tell you what happens after question period when the cameras are turned off: NDP members of provincial Parliament and city councillors across Ontario vote against new shelters, they oppose infill housing developments and they organize against housing developments in their own backyards. They call for action and then they fight it when it arrives on their doorstep.

While I was on council in Ottawa for a decade, I saw this over and over and over again. I saw this from some of the members who now sit in this Legislature: housing developments along main streets voted against because the brick was the wrong colour or it was one storey too tall, shelter beds that were voted against because shelters are not as good as permanent housing—and I would agree, but shelter beds are a lot better than living in a tent or sleeping on a sidewalk.

For decades, New Democrats in this Legislature and on city councils across the province have stood in the way of incremental progress that has unfortunately helped lead us to the situation we are in today with housing. You cannot claim to care about homelessness while voting against the very solutions that give people somewhere to live. You can't claim the moral high ground while contributing to the housing gridlock that makes housing more expensive and keeps people on the street—because real leadership means saying yes even when it's not popular, even when it is hard.

So while I support the intent of Bill 6, I am calling on the government to do four things:

(1) I would like the government to table the accompanying regulations immediately so that people can be escorted to actual services, not just removed from sites.

(2) I would like the government to commit to real funding for municipalities, because municipalities are the ones tasked with enforcing the bill. Otherwise, we risk turning this into yet another unfunded mandate for our cities and our law enforcement agencies.

0910

(3) The government must publish a provincial homelessness strategy. It should have clear goals for housing construction, mental health supports and addiction recovery programs. These things should not be treated in silos; there needs to be horizontal coordination with a comprehensive strategy.

(4) The government must rein in the Ontario Land Tribunal, who keeps overturning municipal efforts to build housing—they keep overturning those proposals in favour of NIMBY appeals.

Madam Speaker, the question about Bill 6 isn't whether or not it goes too far; the question is whether it goes far enough in the right ways, because I think, honestly, we all want the same thing. We want safe communities for our families, our kids and our neighbours. We want clean public spaces that we pay for with our taxes so that we can enjoy a high quality of life. And we want a society that doesn't turn its back on those in need.

Bill 6 is a step in restoring order, but if it's not paired with compassion, if it's not paired with investment and if it's not paired with real vision then it's only a half measure, and half measures are what got us into this mess in the first place.

So, let's dismantle encampments, yes, but let's also dismantle the barriers to housing, the barriers to treatment and the barriers to dignity. We can be tough on crime. We can be compassionate. And we can do both of those things at the same time, if we choose to.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): I recognize the member from Don Valley East.

Mr. Adil Shamji: Thank you so much, Madam Speaker, and I just want to say how great it is to see you sitting in the chair over there.

I rise today to provide my remarks and feedback on Bill 6, which is presented before the House. I'll be sharing my perspective on behalf of my constituents in Don Valley East but also reflecting on my experience in a variety of capacities—of course, as a member of provincial Parliament, but also as a family and emergency physician in practice for over 10 years—and also reflecting on my experience providing leadership in over 10 homeless shelters here in the city of Toronto. The reality is that my experiences in all of these capacities all converge on the exact same reservations and concerns.

I want to take some of my time this morning to share some of those real-life experiences and stories, dispel some of the stigma and stereotypes, and illustrate the profound gravity of the crisis that we face right now, because as many people sit in this House and imagine what someone in a shelter or an encampment looks like, I have no doubt that there is an image of a lawless individual under the influence of illicit substances. My own experience says very starkly the opposite: that there are people who are working living in shelters and encampments. There are health care workers that I have personally treated living in a shelter—a personal support worker in the middle of COVID-19, in the middle of the pandemic, who went and served some of our most vulnerable people in society in long-term-care homes and then went home and resided in a shelter. The people that this legislation seeks to criminalize are people who deserve our compassion and support and, under this government, have not been receiving it.

This bill arrives at a moment of profound crisis in our province. Ontario, we can all agree, is facing a visible and escalating wave of homelessness. As of 2024, in Toronto

alone, more than 10,800 people are actively experiencing homelessness on any given night, and we know that across Ontario, that number is well over 14,000. Within that population, we know that thousands—at least 1,900, but I am confident many more than that—are living in public spaces like in encampments, unsheltered, in tents, across parks, ravines, sidewalks and underpasses. That is very difficult for all of us to see. Cities like Hamilton, Ottawa, London, Thunder Bay and, of course, right here in Toronto are all reporting surges in encampments and emergency shelter overflows. This phenomenon of encampments was nearly unheard of prior to 2018 but has proliferated under the inaction and lack of wisdom of this government.

The government members today, and over the next few days as we debate Bill 6, are going to try and make the people of Ontario believe that this situation exists because of weak laws on crime. They're going to want the people of Ontario to believe that encampments exist because some of the most vulnerable members in our society—people struggling with mental illness, addictions, individuals who may be under the coercive influence of human traffickers and drug dealers, or people who can't access health care—are the causes of this problem. They're not. They are—the members of this government.

I say that because this crisis is not a coincidence; it is a consequence of the decisions made by this Premier. Under this Premier, hundreds of millions of dollars in planned mental health and addictions funding have been cut. Funding for Ontario Works and ODSP have fallen further and further below the poverty line. Rent control protections have been eviscerated, and as a result, now over 290,000 households are on the social housing wait-list, more than 2.5 million people don't have a family doctor, over 2,500 people died of opioid-related causes in 2023, and encampments have multiplied because there is no alternative.

And it's not like alternatives don't exist. Just this week, we learned in Toronto that a modular housing project at 175 Cumber Avenue will finally be allowed to proceed after years of delays, after years of this government stonewalling the project. I have long been critical of this government's abuse of minister's zoning orders, usually because they seem to support their friends. But when the city of Toronto asked for a minister's zoning order to this supportive housing project, which would clear 60 people from encampments, this government said no, and now, the courts have proven them wrong. So, presented with the opportunity to do something meaningful to address our housing and encampment crisis, this government said no, and now it's choosing to criminalize the people who are asking for help and aren't receiving it from this government.

Bill 6 has two parts. The first schedule creates a law which would allow search, seizure and arrest without a warrant of individuals who are showing signs of struggling with addiction. It would fine people up to \$10,000, which, of course, they don't have, or imprison for them six months, which, of course, our system does not have.

The second schedule amends the Trespass to Property Act to increase sentencing if someone returns to a location

after being asked to leave or if the court simply believes they might return again in the future. But of course, they have nowhere else to go. They could have had 175 Cumber Avenue several years ago. This government decided to stop that.

Let's not sugar-coat this: This bill targets people who are visibly unhoused, mentally ill or addicted. Instead of offering care, it offers cuffs. It tries to make it look like this government is doing something about encampments even though they do worse than nothing: They actively make the situation worse. Madam Speaker, you can put lipstick on a pig, but a pig still rolls in the mud.

The Premier wants us to believe that this is a law-and-order bill, but that framing is wrong, and it is dangerous. This legislation paints poverty, addiction and mental illness as criminal issues. It pretends that people are living in encampments because they're lawless, not because they've been left behind. If these people were criminals, they wouldn't be sleeping in tents. They are there because they have nowhere else to go: no affordable housing, no access to detox, no mental health beds, no income support, no doctors. To criminalize people for surviving, or trying to survive, in public is to ignore the public policy failures that drove them there. That is not justice; it is merely stigma, stereotype and abandonment.

0920

Now, I speak this not just as a member of provincial Parliament but as an emergency physician. During the pandemic, I served as medical director in 11 homeless shelters across Toronto. These sites provided beds, but critically, they delivered wraparound supports: primary care, mental health and psychiatric care, addiction support, food, a warm bed, housing help and much more. And here is what happened: People were lining up to get in. We didn't have to coerce people to come out of encampments. They were clamouring to come out of encampments.

We saw that with the right supports, people could stabilize. First, I usually saw their addictions challenge treated and stabilized. And with that, an underlying psychiatric diagnosis was oftentimes revealed for the first time—a psychiatric diagnosis that was being self-medicated with illicit substances, which oftentimes provide euphoria and an escape from reality, because those individuals could not get psychiatric care. With those pieces in place, once the mental illness was stabilized, people could access physical care, reconnect with family and even—with my own eyes, I've seen it—find housing and work and reintegrate as productive, independent members in society. The people that this government seeks to criminalize and villainize are people who, with the right help, can thrive, and when given the chance, I've seen them do it. This wasn't theory; it was practice.

But instead of scaling that success, what we see is a government reaching for handcuffs. Madam Speaker, this is the reality: People experiencing homelessness need health care, not handcuffs. They need housing, not handcuffs. They need hope, not handcuffs.

Can there be criminality amongst people living in encampments? I will say categorically that there can be, but not in the way that you think. I have personally tried

to help homeless individuals struggling with addiction who want my help, are asking for my help and who are getting my help. But then, they leave my clinic and return to their tent or their shelter space, and predatory drug dealers go in and beat them senseless if they don't keep purchasing their drugs. What is this government doing to address that? Nothing. So I acknowledge that criminality may exist, but not in the way this bill portrays and not in the way this bill does nothing to prevent.

I would also like to point out that there may even be criminality in this House. As we speak, the Premier of this province is facing an RCMP criminal investigation into greenbelt corruption and racketeering. But I wouldn't accuse every member here of being a criminal because that investigation is taking place. So why are we condemning every person living in a tent? This bill treats an entire population as criminals based upon their hardship, not upon their actions.

Let's talk about what this bill actually does and what it doesn't do. It sends people to jail, but our jails are full. Correctional staff are overwhelmed. The remand population is growing. There are no beds in our correctional facilities for the people this bill targets.

It allows police to divert people to social or health services instead of jail, which at face value is a good thing; I will acknowledge that. But where are those services? There are no detox beds that are available on demand. Mental health clinics are understaffed and overwhelmed. Addiction treatment programs have wait-lists stretching weeks or months, and HART hubs, like the one in Thunder Bay, have been rushed out, poorly coordinated and aren't reducing overdoses. In fact, in many cases, overdoses are increasing because HART hubs are in disarray.

Some people may say, "Fine. Pass this bill for the elements of it that address criminality, and we'll push for the compassion separately." But, Madam Speaker, the compassion isn't coming. This government has shown no interest in mental health funding, supportive housing or community-based care. To vote for this bill is not to vote for both sides of the equation. It is to vote for one side: only enforcement. The other side is a mirage, and the public isn't buying it.

Data from Abacus polling reveals that Ontarians, when asked what they think is the best approach for addressing homeless encampments in Ontario, 80% of respondents say their preferred approach is to prioritize providing housing and mental health and addiction services to help individuals transition out of homelessness and find long-term stability. And when you poll the Premier's supporters, even there, 65% of his supporters would agree that that is their preferred approach. So with overwhelming public opinion calling for these things, that's not what they're getting with this bill. Supporting this bill while calling for compassion is like ordering a steak and getting a salad: You don't just eat it anyway; you send it back.

Let's also not forget the fact that this legislation in all likelihood won't survive court challenges. In Victoria, a similar law was struck down as unconstitutional. In Waterloo, the Superior Court ruled encampment evictions were illegal unless real shelter alternatives were offered,

but this government consistently works against delivering shelter alternatives, and that's why there aren't any. The Premier has a pattern of writing bad laws and losing in court, and this will be no different.

Madam Speaker, Bill 6 is a political stunt masquerading as a solution. It does not make our city safer. It doesn't reduce drug use. It doesn't address housing. It simply pushes vulnerable people further to the margins. It punishes desperation. It targets the visible symptoms of policy failure, and it abandons compassion. Our vulnerable deserve more than this, and Ontarians are demanding better than this.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Ms. Laura Smith: I want to thank the member opposite—or both of them—for their contributions and their service.

I listened to both members' statements, and they talked about—I felt like it was a moralization. It's astonishing, because a park is not a home. Quite simply, an encampment is not a long-term answer to homelessness, and these sites are not a suitable place for a person to call home. I say this as a mother that takes their kids to the park on a regular basis.

I'm asking the members opposite that—we've heard a lot about this kind of moralization. Communities are sounding off an alarm at an escalating rate, and we're hearing them. We're hearing that at the door. We heard them just recently, a couple of months ago, when we knocked on their doors.

Will the member finally put public safety first, put the needs of the families and the communities first, or will they keep voting against supports that help people leave these dangerous conditions in the parks behind?

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

Mr. Stephen Blais: I do truly appreciate the question, which I suspect was pre-written by a member of the government's caucus bureau, because clearly the member didn't actually listen to what was said.

0930

I believe—I think we all believe—that parks are a place for families, for members of the community to enjoy: to play with your kids, for a couple to walk together after a night out on the town, to throw the frisbee with your dog. They are not a place where people should be living—100%.

The question is, what is the government doing to provide the answer? You have not provided mental health supports. You have not provided more affordable housing. You have taken steps, in many cases with your partners in the NDP, to make housing more expensive for people and made those options harder for people to achieve. And your bill does not provide the cities any financial supports for the police to actually go in and undertake this work.

So you are proposing making it more difficult to actually address the homelessness in the parks.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

MPP Wayne Gates: It's a little concerning that the Liberals are attacking the NDP, when they were in power for 15 years and the PCs have been in power for seven

years. And today we still haven't doubled ODSP or OW. That is the solution to this.

You're forcing people into homelessness because of job loss, and with the tariffs that are going on, we're seeing the unemployment rate at 7.3%. More people are going to be homeless. Why is that going to be? Because they can't afford their rents. The 2019—we should have rent controls on new builds.

My question to you is a pretty good one: Do you believe that the resources required to enforce this act could be more effectively used in expanding access to mental health services, addiction treatment and affordable housing?

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): I recognize the member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

Ms. Lee Fairclough: Thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity to speak, and for the question.

In my debate yesterday, I certainly made the same cry for the same kinds of resources, and I couldn't underscore more strongly that we need more mental health supports. My colleagues have also articulated this morning how critical that will be and that that's where we should ultimately be focusing our efforts.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question? I recognize the member from—

Interjection: Vanier.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Ottawa–Vanier.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I know it's challenging to be in that chair some days and especially remembering the names of all the ridings.

I would like to direct my question back to the member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore. I was here yesterday when she presented her perspective on the bill, and she talked about the impacts on our society at different levels. Being a health care professional, I know that she understands that reality, but I would like to hear more from her—she alluded to it briefly: What is going to be the impact of that legislation on our hospitals?

Ms. Lee Fairclough: Thank you for the question about our hospitals. Again, we're talking about health care and, in particular, our hospitals, where emergency departments are already overwhelmed. We already have more patients in hallways than we've ever seen before.

In this legislation, there is the option to bring people to hospital, but I have to tell you how many people are staying with us in hospital that we would like to be discharging but we have no place to discharge them but back to the streets, back to that tent.

Again, I made a plea yesterday that it will be a success if we actually never need to use this law; that we need to actually find a way to be sure that, as people are being discharged back to the streets, they aren't falling prey to the same dealers who are helping to support a substance use challenge that they may be experiencing. Lastly, I—

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Response?

Ms. Lee Fairclough: Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Mr. Robert Bailey: I've listened to both opposition parties here—the official opposition and the third party opposition—and it seems to me they're ignoring the fact

that we've created, and some are in the formation of being created and under way, the 22 HART hubs, which are going to do a great deal to relieve people, get them off the street. I know in Sarnia–Lambton, we have one that's under way right now. I'm waiting for the final analysis of that and see it take place.

So if one of the Liberal colleagues who should be answering the questions, if it's their turn, if one of them would care to respond to that.

Mr. Adil Shamji: You don't have to look very far to see that the HART hubs are really struggling. They're underfunded. They're not able to scale up to the capacity that is required in this province. You need look no further than Thunder Bay, where the current HART hub is operating out of temporary facilities and struggling to keep up. Here in Toronto, one of the consumption sites that was shut down has seen a rise in overdoses. I was speaking to someone who told me that the rise in overdoses has been something on the order of 450%.

I think these examples and many others I'd be happy to walk across and share with the member illustrate that the half-hearted, lukewarm, superficial policies that have been implemented by this government are doing nothing but leaving Ontarians and our most vulnerable people in this province abandoned.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: My question will be to the member from Orléans.

Obviously, there are some very large concerns with Bill 6 and the criminalization of people who are already marginalized, pushing them yet further into the margins. But recently, we've seen Prime Minister-elect Mark Carney has quoted the official opposition in saying that we need a wartime effort to build the housing that Canadians and Ontarians need. Recently, we've brought forward legislation with Homes Ontario to do this very thing.

My question is, will the third-party Liberals support our official opposition push to get the government back into the business of building housing, or will they once again sit on their hands?

Mr. Stephen Blais: Only New Democrats would think that creating a massive government bureaucracy is how you win a war. That will not build a single new home. In fact, today—today—New Democrats in Ottawa are fighting against housing expansion. New Democrats in Ottawa are fighting against housing expansion that would build thousands of new residences—New Democrats that are supported by members over there. New Democrats—they used to work for the New Democratic Party—they are fighting against housing developments in Ottawa today.

If New Democrats actually want to solve the problem, you have to build houses. Not just affordable housing, not just shelters—you have to build the entire spectrum of housing. And if you don't support building houses in the suburbs and you don't support infill development downtown and you don't support building shelters to get people off the streets, what the heck do you support?

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Hon. Andrea Khanjin: My question to the members opposite is, would they legalize schedule 1 substances?

Mr. Stephen Blais: I'm sorry, I didn't entirely hear—"legalize" something—

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

Ms. Laura Smith: It's a great pleasure to rise today in firm support of the Safer Municipalities Act. It's an important and timely piece of legislation that addresses a deeply troubling and growing challenge in communities across Ontario, including my community of Thornhill.

Let's be very honest and direct about the core issue at hand: A park is not a home. An encampment is not a long-term answer to homelessness and these sites are not suitable. It's not a suitable place for a person to call a home. They pose serious safety risks and diminish the quality of life for everyone around them. And let us be very frank, they're a safety hazard.

Our public parks should be a place of peace and enjoyment, not areas people cross the street to avoid out of fear and frustration. Parks should be places where families get together, where children can play, where communities connect.

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Safety matters, and yet too many of our public spaces are becoming something very different. No one should find used needles scattered on the ground in a community green space. Nobody should feel fear or anxiety as they walk towards their neighbourhood park. That's not the Ontario we know, and as a mother, it's certainly not the Ontario we want to leave behind for the next generation.

Ontarians have made themselves very clear: Enough is enough. Across our cities, towns and rural communities, public parks and recreational areas are more than just a green space; they are common ground. They are where communities gather, where seniors walk, where children play and where generations make memories. We owe it to the people of this province to protect those spaces not only from deterioration but from becoming the front lines of a housing and mental health crisis that cannot be solved by turning a blind eye.

Let me be clear: This government will not pretend that encampments are a solution. No one in this chamber believes that people end up in encampments by choice, but no one benefits when laws go unenforced, when public parks and shared spaces become unusable, or when municipal officials are left without the tools they need to respond to persistent, unlawful trespassing that disrupts communities and undermines trust in the rule of law. Our government is taking action not because it's simple but because ignoring this problem is no longer an option.

Encampments are a growing number, and they're complex. Tents and makeshift shelters appear under overpasses, in wooded ravines, near schools and in city parks. In many cases, these sites are unsafe, unsanitary and marked by serious risks to public health and safety, including open drug use, fire hazards and criminal activity. What was once sporadic is now entrenched in many communities.

Despite the tireless work of outreach workers, police, municipal leaders and bylaw enforcement, the situation

continues to escalate, and many encampments defy removal efforts. Residents refuse to leave even when shelter options are offered, and the cycle repeats.

We must act, and we must do it in a manner that is lawful, measured and just. It's balanced.

The Trespass to Property Act has long served as Ontario's legal framework for addressing unauthorized presence on private and public lands. It applies to homes, businesses, schools, vacant properties and public parks. It lays out when an individual is unlawfully present, what kind of notice is required and what penalties may apply.

But that act was not designed to deal with the scale, the persistence or the complexity of encampments today. Its language lacks the clarity needed for modern enforcement, its deterrent effect is weak and at the sentencing stage, its scope is simply too limited to deal with repeat or prolonged trespassers who ignore lawful orders.

That is why we are introducing these thoughtful and targeted amendments, not to criminalize poverty, but to provide municipalities, courts and enforcement officials with the clarity and the discretion they need to protect the safety and uphold the law.

Let me be very clear: These amendments do not create any new offences. They do not introduce any new class of individuals subject to penalties. What they do is improve how courts may consider certain repeat behaviours at the sentencing stage.

Specifically, we are introducing two new statutory aggravating factors under the Trespass to Property Act. The first is continuing trespass. This is when an individual has been lawfully told to vacate a property by a specific and specified time and remains, in defiance of that order. The second is likelihood to reoffend, where there is evidence suggesting that the person in question is likely to trespass again. In both of these cases, courts will retain full discretion, but under our amendments, they will be required to consider these factors when determining whether a higher fine, up to the existing \$10,000 maximum—they will decide if that is appropriate.

Why does this matter? Because without statutory aggravating factors, there is no meaningful way to distinguish between a first-time accidental trespass and a repeat encampment that defies lawful direction over and over again. These changes recognize what Ontarians already understand instinctively: context matters. Speaker, we are reinforcing the principle that laws must mean something and that orders issued under them are not optional. Let me emphasize again, judicial discretion remains fully intact. Courts will continue to assess each case based on the individual circumstances, their conduct and their ability to pay. We are not removing compassion from the process. We are injecting fairness, clarity and proportionality into a system that has, until now, lacked the tools to deal with prolonged, unlawful occupation of shared space. Please always remember, we are talking about shared community space.

These kinds of aggravating factors are standard practice in sentencing law. They are not mandates for harsher penalties; they are guideposts for discretion in cases where

public safety or public order are seriously at risk. And, very importantly, Ontario's courts retain the ability under the Provincial Offences Act to extend payment deadlines, order instalment plans and reduce fines based on financial hardship. No one will be bankrupt for trespassing. But repeat defiance of lawful authority must have consequences that reflect its seriousness.

These changes are not arbitrary. They are grounded in extensive consultation with municipalities across this province. From large cities to rural towns, we've heard the same message over and over again: "We don't have the tools." Local governments are being asked to manage a crisis in public space without the legal clarity. They don't have the clarity, the enforcement, the capacity or provincial backing that they need. They're walking a legal tightrope, trying to uphold individual rights while also protecting community safety. We're giving them what they've asked for. We're restoring balance to the law.

When we first introduced this legislation last December, municipalities were very quick to express their support. I have a few quotes.

Oakville mayor Rob Burton said, "The actions in this legislation are what we" have "asked for. It feels great to work with a government that listens. We are united to support our most vulnerable and create safer environments for everyone."

Windsor mayor Drew Dilkens said the tools we are proposing would "help make a positive difference in communities across Ontario."

Sudbury mayor Paul Lefebvre said our approach "prioritizes the dignity and well-being of individuals in need, while balancing other residents' right to feel safe in public spaces."

These are not isolated voices. Just last month, Ontario's Big City Mayors issued a joint letter urging this Legislature to move quickly, citing the growing strain on local services and the need for provincial leadership. That is why, when this legislative session resumed, we introduced the Safer Municipalities Act right away, and that is why we are reaffirming our commitment to it in the speech from the throne, because the support from municipalities across this province has been unwavering. We promised to give them the tools to clear encampments safely, lawfully and compassionately, and we are delivering on that promise.

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Speaker, let me be just as clear on this point: Legislation alone is not the solution. A legal framework is only part of the response. That framework must be matched by real, ongoing investment in housing, mental health care and addiction services, and this government has made those investments.

Since 2020, we have allocated over \$4 billion to supportive and affordable housing. We've increased funding to municipal service managers, expanded rent supplements, accelerated the construction of deeply affordable units, and we've added mobile crisis response teams. We funded new addiction treatment beds and opened mental health hubs across the province. And we've launched

flexible programs like the Homelessness Prevention Program, which gives municipalities the resources they need to respond directly and effectively to local needs, including outreach to encampments.

This is a whole-of-government response. It reflects the complexity of the crisis and the urgency of coordinated action. We're not treating homelessness as a crime. We are treating it as a challenge that demands compassion, courage and sustained commitment.

Speaker, a credible enforcement regime also depends on a justice system that can respond in a timely and fair manner, and that is why we are investing heavily in the capacity of Ontario's courts. Since 2023, we've appointed more than 45 new justices of the peace. We've increased the number of provincial judges and streamlined the appointments process so that qualified candidates can fill those vacancies faster. We're staffing up our courthouses, adding full-time court and client representatives, improving compensation and accelerating hiring timelines.

As a side note, in my previous life, I worked under the child protection act. I worked within the courts, and I watched that revolution, that change in the courts, happen. We went from paper documents to filing things online and it was incredible to watch. It's helped in reducing the backlogs with digital tools and modernizing court processes so judicial resources can be focused where they are most needed, because a law that cannot be enforced fairly is a law in name only.

Speaker, at the heart of this legislation, there's a fundamental question: What is public space for? We believe that public space belongs to everyone: to families, to children, to seniors, to newcomers, and yes, to even those without a home. But shared space must be managed in a way that balances access with safety, compassion with community needs. Encampments that persist, despite outreach, despite shelter offers, despite lawful notices, do not reflect that balance. They strain infrastructure. They reduce safety, and far too often, they subject those very people living in them to violence, to theft and to exploitation. This is not compassion; it is a failure.

The Safer Municipalities Act is not about punishment. It's about protection: protection of the vulnerable, protecting our parks and protecting the public good. This legislation says to municipalities, "We've heard you. You have our support, and you now have the tools to use them wisely and in good faith."

Speaker, this bill does not pretend that the housing crisis can be legislated away, but it does affirm that public safety matters, that laws must be enforceable, and that persistent defiance of lawful authority is not harmless; it's harmful.

Think about that: Persistent defiance of lawful authority is not harmless; it's harmful.

We are proposing a balanced, humane and practical reform that strengthens enforcement tools for municipalities, provides courts with clear sentencing guidance, respects individual rights and supports front-line workers and police, who have been working so hard across this

province on this issue. It reaffirms our collective commitment to safe, inclusive public spaces.

This government will continue to invest in what works: housing, treatment and justice. And, yes, we will also ensure that the laws of this province are fair, clear and enforceable. This is a balance. Because when public space becomes no one's responsibility, it becomes no one's refuge. And when law becomes merely suggestive, justice becomes elusive. It's time to restore that balance between safety and compassion, between the rights and responsibilities, between disorder and dignity.

I want to thank everyone in the House. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I listened carefully to the member's remarks this morning, and I have to admit that I was pretty disturbed to hear the member describe the government's approach as compassionate. We have an affordable housing crisis in the province. In Ottawa alone, there are 10,000 people on the wait-list for affordable housing. There are 3,000 people who do not have a home of any kind. Provincially, we have 40,000 people on the wait-list for supportive housing.

Salus, which operates in Ottawa, has said if the funding was there, they could start building 250 supportive housing units immediately and could quickly scale that up to 500—if the money was there.

Given the government's failure to invest in affordable housing and supportive housing, how can the member possibly claim that it is compassionate to charge people \$10,000 or put them in jail for not having a home in Ontario?

Ms. Laura Smith: Thank you for the question. I'm going to go back in time a bit, and this is even before we brought in the HART hubs. Our government has provided over \$400 million in homelessness prevention, and that was before the HART hubs came into place. The government recognizes that individuals affected by this legislation are vulnerable. We are committed to ensuring that any penalties imposed are fair and take into account the circumstances of each individual.

It really takes into consideration that the primary intent of this legislation is not to burden individuals with fines, but help a broader issue, which is public safety and the challenges that encampments present to communities for those who are experiencing homelessness, and these are shelter spaces and HART hubs. We are proactively taking a very balanced approach to this issue.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Looking at that bill, it doesn't matter how many times I read it and try to give it a different interpretation, it's pretty clear that the government believes that removing people who consume illegal substances in encampments that are located in parks will resolve the issue of encampments.

I would like to know what evidence the government based itself on to justify this course of action. Is there

evidence that the majority of people in encampments are drug users? I would like to hear it, if there is such evidence.

Ms. Laura Smith: Thank you for the question. Speaker, this government is fully aware of the intersection between homelessness, mental health and addictions. We're committed to addressing these challenges in a very holistic way and a supportive way. Our approach is designed to provide individuals with the resources and supports that they need to stabilize their lives, regain independence and move towards long-term housing solutions. Once again, it gets back to the balance that we talked about.

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We're investing over \$550 million in the creation of 28 homelessness and addiction recovery treatment centres, known as HART hubs. Ontario is an example of how we are addressing these issues directly. These hubs will provide comprehensive wraparound services that include addiction recovery programs, mental health care and employment supports. Importantly, these HART hubs will also provide housing, allowing individuals to transition from temporary shelters to more permanent supportive housing options that meet their unique needs.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I want to ask the member opposite—in my riding there are not enough shelter beds. I am grateful for the HART hub money; there are shelter beds on the way. But I have one of the most infamous encampments in my riding. The question I continue to ask—yes, we spend money; yes, we build these things. But at this present time, in my community, there are not enough shelter beds. So where is that person supposed to go?

Ms. Laura Smith: Thank you to the member for the question. Our government recognizes that the root cause of homelessness is largely tied to lack of affordable housing, and that's why we're addressing this issue. That's the core of why people are probably in the situations that they are. That's the core of our efforts: focus not on criminalizing homelessness but creating real solutions, including investments in housing.

The \$75.5-million investment announced by our government is part of a broader commitment on tackling this housing crisis. The investment will create over 1,200 new affordable and supportive housing units across Ontario, addressing the severe shortage of housing that is exacerbating homelessness. In addition, we're expanding shelter capacity by nearly 1,000 spaces and investing in temporary accommodation options, such as modular housing units, to provide people in encampments with immediate alternative accommodation.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Mr. Robert Bailey: I enjoyed the debate this morning. I'd like the member from Thornhill to further expand. As I understand it, there are over 1,440-some homeless encampments at last count in Ontario. I was wondering if she could explain the ramifications and the harm that these encampments do to the local communities where they're based.

Ms. Laura Smith: Thank you to the member for his question. I think he, like anybody else in this room, is a parent. They love their family. They love their communities. I want to thank him for his advocacy on behalf of all of those families across Ontario. Our government is relentlessly focused on protecting communities while supporting those experiencing the risk of homelessness with safe, secure and appropriate alternatives to encampments.

I think we all understand what these parks were and what they've become. As a mother, I find it very challenging to look through one of these parks that has now become an encampment and wonder if my son can walk through the field. Is there a needle on the ground? We have to take a holistic approach and we're doing this in a very compassionate way by expanding spaces and introducing temporary accommodations that will allow these individuals to get a hand up.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): I recognize the member from Toronto–Danforth.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate the speech by the member this morning. Your government has been in power since 2018. The encampment problem has been growing for years. You say you're going to deal with it now. Why weren't you dealing with it before? Why is it that more people are having to sleep out on the ground because they don't have a home? Why is it, as you were saying, that people are feeling unsafe because they go into parks that have been turned into homeless encampments? Where have you been for the last six years and more on this issue? Why did you let it get to this point? Why did you neglect the people of Ontario?

Ms. Laura Smith: We've actually taken very proactive measures, as I discussed earlier, in the amount of money that's been put into mental health and addictions, the money that's been put into homelessness and addictions. These are very important issues that we've actually taken a proactive approach to for a while. I think we've invested, just in this alone, \$75.5 million.

And Ontario announced nearly \$550 million to create 28 new HART hubs. We are taking action. And nine more—these are nine more HART hubs than were originally planned, which speaks to the growing need. These hubs are a game-changer approach, and they bring services under one roof, from addiction recovery to mental health treatments.

So we are moving in the right direction.

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

Mr. Stephen Blais: You mentioned in one of your responses the recent investment of, I think, \$75 million that's going to create 1,200 spaces. There are, of course, some 80,000 homeless people in Ontario, over 1,400 encampments—\$75 million is roughly \$5 for every Ontarian, and it's less money, I believe, than we spend on highway billboards every year.

So I'm wondering if you believe that the encampment problem, which is prolific and which has only grown

under the watch of your government, is deserving of a greater investment than highway billboards.

Ms. Laura Smith: I think our government is showing its value in what we're doing. This is a balanced approach.

I would say that investing the nearly \$550 million to create 28 new HART hubs, nine more than originally planned, speaks to the work that we're doing. Each hub will also provide access to highly supportive housing and recovery beds, allowing individuals to—

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: It is an honour to rise today to participate in this debate, on behalf of the people I represent in London West.

I have to say, having listened to the debate that started yesterday and has continued this morning, this is one of those issues where there is almost complete agreement on what the problem is. I think that many of the members who have spoken to this bill have articulated what we are seeing in this province: an explosion of encampments across every community in Ontario. We have seen alarmingly rising rates of opioid addictions, substance use problems, drug users consuming drugs in public, and we all agree that this is not the Ontario that we want for ourselves, for our families, for the people who live in this province.

However, what we do not agree on—what we could not be further apart on, in fact—are the solutions that are presented in this bill, because the measures that are included won't do anything to solve the problem. They won't do anything to get people who use illegal drugs into the treatment programs, the recovery programs, the harm reduction programs that they need. The bill won't do anything to get people who are chronically unhoused, who are living in encampments, into the stable, long-term, supportive housing that they need to be able to move forward with their lives. In fact, the measures proposed in this bill will do the exact opposite. They will make the problems worse. They will do nothing to deal with the underlying issues that have risen astronomically under this government's watch.

We heard in a report from AMO just earlier this year that there has been a 25% increase in the number of homeless people in Ontario. We now have more than 80,000 Ontarians who are unhoused. That is the legacy of this government. Encampments are the legacy of this government.

The other concern about this bill is that it is completely performative. It ignores the reality that police do not need new powers to deal with the consumption of illegal drugs in public. They already have that ability under the Criminal Code. The Criminal Code states that police can prosecute the possession and use of prohibited drugs in places such as public parks or areas nearby such as schools and daycares. There are no changes to provincial laws necessary, and the changes that this bill introduces to allow police to fine up to \$10,000 and judges to convict with a prison sentence of up to six months—that is not going to do anything to address the issues. It is simply

going to criminalize people who have been unable to find a place to live or who have been forced to live in encampments.

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The other thing I wanted to say is that we have a dire shortage of people who are waiting for supportive housing in Ontario. We know supportive housing is a big part of the solution to both of the issues that this bill addresses, that of opioid addiction and substance use and also people who are unhoused. But this government has done virtually nothing to increase the supply of affordable housing in Ontario. Their HART hub announcement comes with 540 new supportive housing units. However, experts have told us that in Ontario, we need as little as 30,000 new supportive housing units to as much as 90,000 supportive housing units to address the scale of the problem that we are facing. In the city of London, we need a minimum of 600 units just in our city alone over the next three years, and that is only to deal with the most chronic of the problems.

We see also that this government has ignored advice from their own consultants, from the experts that they have consulted about what it would take to move forward with a meaningful plan to increase the supply of supportive housing. They engaged KPMG, before the 2022 election, to do a review of the cost of supportive housing and the benefits to the province—the costs that are avoided because of getting people into appropriate supportive housing units. KPMG submitted a report to the government, as I said, before the election, and they reported clearly that three out of four case studies of supportive housing projects demonstrated a positive cost offset. The costs avoided were greater than the cost to serve each client each year.

That, Speaker, makes a lot of sense. We know that when people are in supportive housing, we save money in the health care system, in particular. We save money in hospitalizations and emergency department visits. We save money in the justice system. We generate money in our economy because when people are getting the supports that they need in a stable housing environment, they are more likely to be able to enter the labour market and generate income, perhaps seek further education. It is good for the person who has moved into supportive housing, and it is good for the province as a whole.

KPMG found an average return on investment of between \$1.60 and \$2 for every \$1 spent on supportive housing. So there's a lot of rationale for the government to move forward with a supportive housing plan to support people—

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): We'll now move on to members' statements.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

STRATFORD LIONS CLUB

Mr. Matthew Rae: I rise today to recognize and congratulate the Stratford Lions Club on their 100th charter anniversary. This past weekend, I had the opportunity to join them to celebrate this momentous milestone.

For a century, the Stratford Lions Club has not just served, they have built. From the Stratford Lions Pool and the Lions Dufferin Arena to the Lions bandshell and Romeo Court, their contributions to Stratford's infrastructure are undeniable. They've also played a pivotal role in supporting major capital initiatives at Stratford General Hospital.

But their impact goes beyond bricks and mortar, Speaker. The Stratford Lions have remained steadfast in their commitment to community service. Through projects like eyeglass recycling and, more recently, vital support for our local food banks, they have shown what it truly means to serve with compassion and purpose.

For the past 100 years, the Stratford Lions Club has been there consistently, quietly and powerfully, supporting our communities. Their motto is "We Serve," and they have lived up to it every single day and year.

To the Lions past and present, thank you. Stratford is a more strong and caring city because of you.

CLOSET SHARE

MPP Jamie West: Today, I want to talk about Closet Share. This is an organization that started when Melissa and Drew Porter began collecting clothing for a family after a house fire. Sudbury is a community that cares, and helping people feels good, so they just kept at it.

What started in their garage has now grown into a non-profit organization called Closet Share. With a small warehouse of donated items, Closet Share diverts textile waste from the landfill and ensures that clothing is accessible and affordable to anyone. Not just that, every item is cleaned, repaired and posted online so you can thrift from your phone, and most of these items are free.

If you have kids graduating this spring, show up in person at the MacKenzie warehouse near the library on May 10, because on Saturday Closet Share is hosting a grad event for grade 8 and grade 12 grads. Every student will receive one full outfit free of charge—that's suits, ties, dress shoes, gowns and all that stuff.

The event will also have cupcakes, refreshments, fitting rooms and a photo booth. As well, there will also be two volunteer seamstresses on-site for any last-minute alterations. So, thank you, Louise and Stacey.

It's amazing, and it's personal to Melissa. When I asked her where she got the idea, Melissa said, "I was once in the system and didn't have the opportunity to graduate, so providing students with a dignified, joyful, and stress-free graduation experience is deeply personal to me, and central to our mission."

I'd like to thank everyone at Closet Share, including Melissa and Drew Porter, for their incredible work and dedication to our community.

LAMBTON GENERATING STATION

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's an honour to rise in the Legislature and share some important news for the residents of Sarnia–Lambton with the Legislature.

As we know, our province continues to grow at a rapid pace and, as a result, Ontario will soon be facing a surge in electricity demand. Luckily, the Ontario government, under the leadership of Premier Ford and the Minister of Energy, is taking action to ensure we grow that energy supply in our province. One such action involves examining the potential redevelopment of former energy-producing sites like that of the former Lambton Generating Station, owned by Ontario Power Generation, in my riding of Sarnia–Lambton.

The Lambton site was once an energy-producing all-star for the province. With its existing infrastructure, proximity to transmission lines and the local expertise in industrial construction and energy production, the former Lambton generating site represents a promising opportunity for significant future energy development.

Early community engagement is critical for our government's approach to new energy generation. I'm excited that we will be kicking off conversations with communities close to these potential sites in the very near future. These discussions will help gauge community support and explore potential benefits, including economic opportunities and energy security.

I look forward to learning more from these conversations in Sarnia–Lambton. I believe our government's plan to generate more energy will help to ensure we keep our energy bills down and the power on for generations to come.

EDUCATION FUNDING

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Ontario's students face ongoing budget and service cuts to their school and public education. Despite claims of record spending and public investment, when adjusted for inflation, the truth is, under this government, per-student funding is now the lowest in recent history.

Because of Conservative ideology to defund public education, take over school boards and privatize our schools, 41 out of 72 distinct school boards in Ontario are now facing deficits and service cuts this year.

Unlike the provincial government, school boards are not permitted to carry forward deficits. They'll be forced to balance their budgets by cutting academic and other essential programs.

This is what it looks like in Toronto: The TDSB is facing a \$58-million deficit. They're forced to cut music programs, shut down continuing education and close half of their swimming pools. Over the past week, many parents in Toronto Centre have reached out in anger

toward this government. They're raging mad that their children will lose the opportunity to learn to swim, a life-saving skill.

Last week, I wrote to the Minister of Education and called on him to invest in our province's future, our future workforce: our children. This all feels even more critical today as we find ourselves in the midst of Education Week.

On behalf of the students and families of Toronto, I challenge this Conservative government to finally put our kids first, fund public education, fix our schools and keep our swimming pools open.

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EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS WEEK

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: This Emergency Preparedness Week, I want to begin by thanking the incredible first responders across Ontario: our firefighters, paramedics, police officers, emergency managers and volunteers. You are on the front lines when disaster strikes. Your work is heroic, and we are deeply grateful.

But gratitude alone is not enough. We need to be better prepared. The reality is, we are not ready. Climate change is wreaking havoc across our province. Wildfires are burning longer. Ice storms and extreme weather events are no longer rare; they are part of the new reality. Yet our emergency management systems are outdated and under-resourced. Municipalities are struggling without clear provincial leadership or long-term investment. Vulnerable communities are being left behind, and people don't always know where to turn when the worst happens.

Flooding is the number one cause of public emergency in Ontario and is the most common natural disaster in Canada, costing Canadians more than any other climate issue. As public servants, it is our duty to protect and safeguard our residents. We need to prepare Ontarians for the future.

In March 2023, I proposed a bill that would spotlight flooding awareness. There was no downside; it was a win-win. This government did not see the value in it.

Let's use this week to not just talk about preparedness, but to commit to it. Ontarians can and must do better.

EVENTS IN MISSISSAUGA EAST– COOKSVILLE

MPP Silvia Gualtieri: As a new MPP, I am learning just how quickly calendars fill up. In a vibrant riding like Mississauga East–Cooksville, there's no shortage of meaningful moments. I was proud to attend the Cops for Cancer fundraiser at Il Porcellino, a local gem known not only for its award-winning Italian cuisine but for its big heart.

For 14 years, the Tucci family has partnered with Peel Regional Police to turn Thursday lunches in April into hope, supporting the Canadian Cancer Society. Watching officers trade cruisers for lunch shifts reminded me that this is what community looks like.

That same spirit was present as we raised the freedom flag to mark 50 years since the fall of Saigon. Over 3,500 Vietnamese Canadians call my riding home, many with powerful stories of survival and sacrifice. Canada's welcome of over 120,000 Vietnamese refugees remains a proud chapter in our history.

And I was honoured to celebrate the 234th anniversary of Poland's constitution of May 3, a bold symbol of democracy and resilience. Polish—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): We're out of time. Members' statements?

HIGHWAY SAFETY

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Highway safety remains the number one issue in northern Ontario. Access to health care is also a priority, but people in the region cannot access health care if the highways are closed due to yet another catastrophic accident.

The NDP's northern highway safety plan recommends having all new commercial drivers tested by MTO-certified inspectors. If new drivers can't pass a legitimate road test, they shouldn't be on the road. We also recommend clearing snow within eight hours and returning highway maintenance to the MTO. Spending \$30 million on an inspection station that is rarely used is bad economics. Qualified local people want to work as enforcement officers at the Shuniah station, yet they can't get job interviews. What's up with that? This station should be staffed 24/7, and it's possible to do it.

Then there's Driver Inc., where companies force drivers to be self-employed, undercutting companies that offer driver benefits and leaving those under Driver Inc. with nothing if they are in an accident.

These concerns and recommendations are echoed by Truckers for Safer Highways, the Women's Trucking Federation of Canada, Trucker's Voice and many other industry professionals.

It's time the minister stopped ignoring our calls and addressed the urgent safety needs of our northern highways.

ONTARIO TRILLIUM FOUNDATION GRANTS

Mr. John Jordan: Last month, I was happy to announce funding to two local organizations in Lanark county through the Ontario Trillium Foundation's Grow grants, which help to expand programs already making a positive impact. Thanks to the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming, Rural FASD and the Carleton Place Canoe Club were two of the successful recipients in Lanark-Frontenac-Kingston.

Rural FASD, or Rural Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, provides essential services to those with FASD and their families. Chair Rob More said the three-year grant "demonstrates Ontario's commitment to seeing people living with severe disabilities such as FASD no longer live in poverty." The grant will be used to expand its life skills

programs for youth and young adults into a hybrid model, providing both in-person and virtual access.

The Carleton Place Canoe Club will use its three-year grant to expand its adult recreational programming, increase equipment and build community connections. Heidi Lowry says, "As our town and surrounding communities grow, we intend to provide inclusive programs, social connections ... by focusing on our adult and aging population. We are honoured to be a recipient of the" OTF's Grow grant.

Madam Speaker, our government will continue to support projects that help build healthy and vibrant places to live. Thank you to Rural FASD and the Carleton Place Canoe Club for making such a huge difference in their communities.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Billy Pang: I'm proud to rise in the House today to share some exciting news for our neighbours and friends in Markham-Unionville. Our government is investing nearly \$41 million in local education infrastructure through the 2024-25 Capital Priorities Program.

I'm exceptionally thrilled that \$12.7 million has been added to Markville Secondary School for its expansion, and \$28.1 million goes to the construction of a brand new elementary school on Village Parkway.

These investments will create 409 new spaces at Markville Secondary School and 637 new elementary student spaces at the future Village Parkway school, along with 48 licensed child care spaces to support families with young children.

This funding ensures that children from Markham-Unionville can learn in modern, high-quality classrooms close to home and that families have access to affordable child care in our community. This is a significant investment in our riding, one that will meet the needs of our growing community and help prepare students for success in the years ahead.

I want to thank the York Region District School Board for their leadership and advocacy, and I'm proud that our government and the Ministry of Education is delivering real results for families in Markham-Unionville.

WEARING OF RIBBONS

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member for Markham-Unionville.

Mr. Billy Pang: The government will be seeking unanimous consent to allow MPPs to wear purple ribbons in recognition of May 10 being Lupus Awareness Day.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): MPP Pang is seeking unanimous consent to wear purple ribbons to recognize Lupus Awareness Day. Agreed? Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Lee Fairclough: I'm delighted to recognize today's page captain, Emily McLaughlin, from the wonderful riding of Etobicoke–Lakeshore—there she is. Joining her today are her proud parents Katherine DiTomaso and Ed McLaughlin, and her grandparents, the Honourable Guy DiTomaso and Mary DiTomaso.

I also want to take this opportunity to wish Ed a very happy birthday. Welcome to Queen's Park, and I look forward to hosting them for lunch following this.

1030

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: This morning, on behalf of Minister Lecce, I would like to acknowledge Massimo Capozzi, the page captain for today, and I'd like to welcome his family: Luigi Capozzi, his father; Anna Capozzi, his mother; Lucia Capozzi, his grandmother; and Marcel Gidaro, his grandfather. Welcome to Queen's Park. Massimo, you're doing a fantastic job as page captain.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: It's an honour to welcome Tom McLaughlin of Thomasfield Homes, who's the vice-chair of the Guelph and District Home Builders' Association, to Queen's Park today. Welcome to your House.

Mr. Billy Pang: I would like to welcome Lupus Ontario to Queen's Park today. Lupus Ontario is the largest organization in the province dedicated to supporting those living with lupus through education, advocacy and research. Their work inspired me to create Bill 112 to proclaim May 10 as Lupus Awareness Day in Ontario to help raise awareness for the one in 1,000 Ontarians living with this disease.

After question period, I would like to invite members to join the Lupus Ontario delegation for a group picture at the grand staircase.

Welcome to Queen's Park.

QUESTION PERIOD

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Marit Stiles: My question is for the Premier. On July 14, 2022, several high-ranking government staff, including staff in the Premier's office, held a meeting with a developer. In Ryan Amato's calendar, the meeting was titled, "Winona Lands—East Hamilton—Greenbelt Matters." These lands were subsequently removed from the greenbelt, until the Premier was forced to change course.

Would the Premier consider a meeting regarding the greenbelt held with a number of government staff and a prominent developer to be government business?

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

Hon. Rob Flack: Our government has made crystal clear the commitment to the people of Ontario to fully restore and protect the greenbelt. This decision was made, and this decision is final. Today, these protections have been enshrined in legislation, and they will stay that way for generations to come.

We have zero tolerance—I repeat, zero tolerance—for any wrongdoing and expect anyone involved in the decision-making about the greenbelt lands to uphold the letter of the law, period. I share the Premier's expectation that we expect everyone to fully co-operate with the investigation.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I'd say the minister has his work cut out for him. Just to be clear, we think that this is government business, and an adjudicator in the office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner agrees with us.

In fact, through our process of untangling the greenbelt scandal, we have FOIed calendars. What we've found was that this meeting and dozens more that were marked as private appear to actually be related to government business: meetings about the greenbelt, meetings with developers held by the Premier's top staff, marked as private.

Why did the staff in the Premier's office mislabel these greenbelt meetings? Will the Premier admit that his staff were trying to hide the truth?

Hon. Rob Flack: I think we've been very clear: Any investigation is to be followed to the letter of the law. The greenbelt is protected. It will be for generations to come.

Any wrongdoing or concerns, I should not be speaking about here, obviously, due to confidentiality matters. But importantly, I share the Premier's expectation and emphasize that we expect everyone to fully co-operate with whatever investigation is going on, period.

Ms. Marit Stiles: We're not just talking about one meeting or two meetings, but 34 meetings. Let me be clear: This isn't the first instance of something like this happening. It's not even the second instance. Remember, the government was caught just a few months ago using code words like "G*" and altering references to the greenbelt.

It appears a member of the Premier's staff had a meeting with a greenbelt developer, mislabelled it as "private" to avoid disclosure rules and now an adjudicator is requiring an affidavit to confirm whether these 34 meetings were actually private.

To the Premier: Was anyone directed to deliberately avoid or conceal references to the greenbelt from their calendars or their official communications so they could avoid being captured in freedom-of-information requests?

Hon. Rob Flack: I can repeat and repeat—and I will—that I share the Premier's expectation that everyone and anyone will fully co-operate with this investigation.

But, importantly, we're about getting on with the business of Ontario—to protect Ontario, to build more homes faster. This is what we're focused on. We are letting the investigation take care of itself.

This government, led by this Premier, is going to continue to build our economy with headwinds in our face. We're worried about Trump tariffs. We're worried about our economy. We're protecting our economy, we're going to continue to do it, and, furthermore, we will win the day when it comes to housing, building more homes faster. It costs too much and it takes too much time to get a house

built. That's what we're focused on on this side of the House.

PUBLIC HEALTH

Ms. Marit Stiles: Well, Speaker, no one's buying what they're selling. I know we're not going to get any answers from the government on this, but I'm pretty sure the RCMP will.

I want to go back to the Premier on a different but very important topic, one that is really preoccupying a lot of parents and families out there right now, and that is Ontario's out-of-control measles outbreak.

Measles cases in Ontario have increased by another 140 this week—just this week alone—and more than 200 the week before for a total of 1,383 cases right now confirmed in the province. This is worse than the case count in the entire United States—just think about that. Why have we not heard anything from this Premier?

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

Mr. Anthony Leardi: Of course, measles is a disease against which we have a vaccine, and that vaccine is very well known. It's called the MMR vaccine—measles, mumps, rubella vaccine. It's widely available in the province of Ontario, and it has been available in the province of Ontario for over 50 years. It's a tried vaccine, it is a tested vaccine, it is a true vaccine, it is an effective vaccine, and people who are vaccinated by this vaccine have a 99% protection rate against measles.

That's why we encourage everybody in the province of Ontario to avail themselves of the vaccine, which of course is perfectly free and can be administered quite readily and easily throughout the province of Ontario.

It is important to get people vaccinated. Vaccines work, and we want to protect children, especially, against measles. Please get vaccinated.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: That does not sound like a response from a government that understands we are facing an emergency here.

I asked the Premier to respond; I'm to go back to the Premier again, because cases are increasing, right? Parents are worried about sending their kids to school. We've got Mother's Day coming along this weekend, and families are worried about gathering with their loved ones.

But the government seems to be just totally content with the state of things, like mansplaining this stuff to us here in the Legislature—please. We understand; the people out there don't. They need to hear from the Premier.

Why have we not heard from the Premier about the direct and urgent action that this government is going to take to address the worst measles outbreak the province has seen in decades?

Mr. Anthony Leardi: The measles vaccination is readily available to everybody in the province of Ontario, and of course there is no cost to get the measles vaccination. In fact, you can get it through your local public health

unit, and we are very happy that we have elevated the funding for our local health units by over 20%—

Interjections.

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

Mr. Anthony Leardi: So you can go to your local health unit and get vaccinated.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The Minister of Education will come to order.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I want to particularly single out—

Interjections.

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

The House will come to order.

Back to the member for a response.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: Thank you, Speaker.

I want to particularly congratulate Erie Shores HealthCare, where they are launching a dedicated measles assessment clinic outside their hospital in a mobile unit. That is just one example of the actions that have been taken by the provincial government to fight measles.

1040

But, of course, everybody needs to get vaccinated. Once again, I remind everybody that the best protection against this disease is to get the vaccination. It is readily available, and it is 99% effective when you get the vaccination.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Supplementary?

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, this government has no serious response. You heard it right there. Where is the public health promotion? Is it just going to be here? Where is the vaccine education? Communities are looking to their leaders to promote public health—vaccine education; trust in the medical system, my goodness—but they're only getting silence.

Look, a child died last year from a—yes, preventable—communicable disease. Our numbers in this outbreak exceed what we're seeing in the United States. There's a travel advisory in New York state about travelling to Ontario, for goodness' sake.

We need a plan. I'm going to ask the government and the Premier to please address this. Let's hold a take-note debate here. Let's come up with a plan together to actually get out there and show leadership. If this government won't do it, let's do it together. Will you call for a take-note debate addressing the measles outbreak?

Mr. Anthony Leardi: The government has launched an information campaign. This was just recently launched in response to the recent events. I want to remind everybody that when you hear the information from the information campaign, the best way to get your immunization is to contact your local health unit. They can set up a vaccination for you.

We've increased funding to health units over 20% since this government took office, because it's very important for people to get their immunizations—especially children. As I look across the PC caucus, I notice members of

our caucus who have young children. I encourage them, and everybody who has young children, to get their immunization. It's 99% effective against the disease. We want to make sure that everybody in the province of Ontario is safe, especially our children and especially our children when they go to school.

PUBLIC HEALTH

Mr. John Fraser: My question is for the Premier. Right now, in Ontario, there are 1,243 cases of the measles, which far outpaces, by the way, all of the United States—all of the United States—and twice as much as Texas, which has twice the population. It's the worst outbreak in three decades. Maybe the government doesn't realize it, but it's a serious situation, and we didn't have to be here. We've got to ask ourselves, how the heck did we get here?

So, to the Premier: Why is the Premier failing to protect Ontario's children from the measles?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The member for Essex for a response.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: Speaker, of course the measles vaccine is readily available in the province of Ontario. Anybody can get the measles vaccine. It is commonly referred to as the MMR—measles, mumps and rubella—vaccine. It has been around for over 50 years. It is proven and it is effective. We encourage everyone to get the measles vaccine, but especially children, especially young children.

The vaccine is free. You can get it anywhere in the province of Ontario. And it is especially made free because we fund our public health units. We've increased funding to the public health units by approximately 20%. That is one of the reasons we promote the vaccine and want to promote the vaccine, especially for children and especially for young children, because we want to protect our children from getting the measles and we want them to be healthy and good.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Supplementary?

Mr. John Fraser: I'm tempted to send that member some iron because that's the most anemic response I've heard to something in this place.

Measles is a childhood disease that has very serious consequences for children. That's why we worked for decades and decades to get vaccination rates up, and guess what? We eradicated it. Guess what again? It's back. Right now, just like Nero played the fiddle while Rome was burning, the Premier is playing the fiddle while measles is burning through Ontario.

Speaker, we all knew that childhood vaccinations after the pandemic would be a challenge. My question is, why has the Premier failed to do what he needed to do to protect Ontario's children from the measles?

Mr. Anthony Leardi: Of course, the funding for the public health units, which has increased by approximately 20%, is specifically made in order to assist for the delivery of such services as the measles vaccine. Of course, unfortunately, the Liberal Party voted against that funding

because they voted against the budget that provided that funding. But we believe in providing that funding, as we believe in providing the measles vaccine free for everybody across the province of Ontario.

This is a tried-and-true vaccine. It has been used for over 50 years. It is effective. When children get the vaccine, they are 99% protected against the possibility of contracting this disease. It is very important for people to become vaccinated. We understand that some families fell behind their schedule as a result of the pandemic, but it is definitely important to catch up and get your vaccine.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Supplementary?

Mr. John Fraser: You cut public health funding by hundreds of millions of dollars and the fact is, right now, you're not giving families the tools that they need, the information that they need, the help that they need. That's an embarrassing answer.

We know that three quarters of measles patients are under 17. Most of those children are unvaccinated, the vast majority of them. And we know that any drop in vaccination rates is a risk because measles is so infectious.

So, respectfully to the member across, the current situation was foreseeable and preventable. I'm going to ask you once again, why is the Premier failing to protect Ontario's children from the measles?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I'll remind members to direct their questions through the Speaker.

Back to the member for Essex.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: Again, it's unfortunate that the Liberals voted against the budget which provided the increased funding to public health units because that was an increase of over 20% since this government has taken office. It's very important to provide this funding so that these public health units can provide the vaccine, which is absolutely free to everybody in the province of Ontario. Anyone who wants to get the vaccine can have the vaccine absolutely free, and that is provided through public health units and various other places where you can get the vaccine.

We encourage everyone in the province of Ontario to get vaccinated, particularly if you have fallen behind the schedule as a result of the pandemic. Please get your children vaccinated and get yourselves vaccinated if you have not been vaccinated. You can get a vaccine by contacting your local primary health provider, or you can contact your health unit and they will put you in touch with a source.

PUBLIC HEALTH

Mr. John Fraser: The government's response so far is, "Hey, guys. Everything's fine." I don't think so.

The Premier likes to say we're in a war. We were in a war long before Donald Trump got elected and that war is an anti-vax war. It's the aggressive campaign that permeates the Internet and social media, trying to get people not to vaccinate their children. It's well documented that anti-vax campaigns are coming from inside and outside our

borders. We all knew this. It's nothing new. It's been going on for a long time. In the pandemic, it intensified.

So I don't understand why the Premier failed to act to have Ontario have the best, the most robust information and vaccination campaign in the whole world. I don't why he doesn't aspire to that.

I'm going to ask again, why is the Premier failing to protect Ontario's children from the measles?

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

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I'm interested that the member has brought up issues related to the pandemic because as we remember, after the Liberals left office and the pandemic struck, when we opened the cupboards, the cupboards were bare. There was no preparation for what happened during the pandemic and so this brand new government had to take over in a situation where there was no official rule book.

I want to say that under the incredible circumstances that occurred during that pandemic, it was really, really, really important that we had the leadership of our present Premier, who steered us through that pandemic with leadership unparalleled by any other Premier.

Getting back to the issue of the vaccinations, just like vaccinations work—the MMR vaccine has been tested for 50 years. It works. People should get vaccinated.

1050

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

Mr. John Fraser: Well, when we're talking about the anti-vax campaign, I would like to remind the member opposite—because he waxed so eloquently the other day about all those countries that have special economic zones—if you take a look at that list, that's where this information is coming from, is places like Russia. I know the member had a lot to say about Russia last week, so I would just encourage him to think about that.

Every year, we know that government spends hundreds of millions of dollars on self-serving, taxpayer-funded ads designed to help the government. They spent \$60 million two years ago. This year, I'm willing to bet it's closer to \$100 million. That's a lot of money to pat yourself on the back, and that's what they do with this money. I just think all of that money would have been way better spent making sure we have the best information and vaccination campaign in the world. Does the Premier agree?

Mr. Anthony Leardi: Speaker, it's very nice to hear the member endorse our information campaign with regard to informing people about the importance of being vaccinated. That public awareness campaign, of course, has already been launched, so I thank the member for endorsing this government's action in providing information to the public about getting vaccinated.

It's important that people receive that information because there are elements out there that will provide contradictory information, and we want to make sure that our youngest individuals in our population are protected. Those are our children. And I want to make sure that all the parents out there understand that we have a vaccine

that's been in place for over 50 years. It's a commonly used vaccine. It's been tested over, over and over again. It is a very safe vaccine. It will protect your children against the measles. It is 99% effective against the measles, and we encourage everybody to be vaccinated.

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

Mr. John Fraser: I think the most appropriate thing I can say is something the member has probably heard before, and that is the term “failure to launch.” The Premier and the minister have kept the Chief Medical Officer of Health literally in the basement. Requests for interviews have been repeatedly denied—repeatedly denied—and then we hear the anemic responses that we're getting from the member and the minister on this measles outbreak. Also, these guys have tons of friendly questions. I have not heard one about the measles. Do you think maybe some of your constituents are concerned? Mine are.

Speaker, other places in this country are actually taking stronger action. Even the anti-vax Premier of Alberta is taking stronger action than we are here in Ontario. They're stepping up. My question is, why will this Premier not step up for Ontario's children and prevent the measles?

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I think the words “failure to launch” best describe the Liberal campaign in Mississauga East–Cooksville. By the way, I'd like to congratulate the PC member from Mississauga East–Cooksville for winning that riding.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The government House leader will come to order. The leader of the third party will come to order.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: But I digress. I should talk about immunization, which is very important for our children. Again, I make reference to some members of our own caucus who have young children of their own, and that's a wonderful, wonderful example that we should probably follow, the example of good immunization practice—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I apologize to the member. The leader of the third party and the government House leader will please come to order.

The member may continue.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: Speaker, I never realized that immunization would cause such a ruckus among the opposition parties. I thought we could all agree that getting immunization is important—important for protecting our children. But I think maybe after a little thought we can all agree on this: It's important to be immunized, protect our children. It's a safe vaccine. Please get vaccinated.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

MPP Jamie West: The Premier called an early election to fight Trump's tariffs, and in January he estimated that tariffs could cost Ontario as many as 500,000 jobs. Four months later, workers are losing their jobs by the thousands, Ontario has the second-highest unemployment rate

in the country, and the Financial Accountability Officer is warning that Ontario will face a recession.

In response, the Premier said he would wait and see what happened. What is the Premier waiting for?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development.

Hon. David Piccini: Speaker, I'll tell you what the Premier has done: He's stepped up, with a vacuum of national leadership, which got him back in this place—a strong majority government.

Secondly, he announced an investment for tools and machinery with the finance minister that is going to support SME in particular—those supply feeder plants that are supporting our big plants.

Thirdly, he went down to Unifor in Oshawa, toured the plant floor to listen to workers, met with Unifor Local 222 to sit down and talk to them about issues that are affecting them, about additional supports.

Fourth, yesterday at Skills Ontario, he announced another billion dollars in the Skills Development Fund—something unions in that member's own riding are benefiting from. I met with labour leaders yesterday about the Sudbury project.

Speaker, that member voted against each and every one of those measures, and it's a real shame.

MPP Jamie West: I don't know how I voted against the Premier's tour schedule, but let's talk about what's been happening while the Premier has been waiting. Nearly one in three Ontario trucking carriers have already laid off employees. Stellantis announced a temporary layoff of 3,800 in Windsor. Alstom announced nearly 200 layoffs in Thunder Bay. GM announced 750 layoffs in Oshawa. GM announced a fall layoff of almost 500 workers in Ingersoll. Ivaco Rolling Mills announced 30-plus layoffs in L'Orignal.

The Premier spoke about tariff layoffs in January. I appreciate he's doing a tour of the province, but when will he start protecting jobs?

Hon. David Piccini: What a shame that member voted against the Skills Development Fund, Speaker.

The difference between this party and that party: That party was propping up the previous Liberal government when they were slated for zero EV investments—zero. Say that to the members in Windsor collecting \$14 million in payroll. That member couldn't care less, because we know under their track record we wouldn't have had—they don't even dress to play the game, Speaker. That's the difference between our party and them.

We're going to continue to attract world-class investments. Without question, there are very real threats posed by the President of the United States, and in response we're investing in tools and machinery. In response, we're investing in skills development and training that are elevating people with better training, bigger jobs and bigger paycheques.

That member votes against each and every one of those measures, Speaker, because he doesn't want those jobs in our communities. He votes against mining, after all.

PUBLIC HEALTH

Mr. Adil Shamji: For the Premier: I'd like to begin by thanking the Chief Medical Officer of Health for providing a much-needed update this week. He has a difficult job, and I know that parents were relieved to hear from him.

What concerns me is his statement that we should expect another 100 to 125 cases of measles every week until the summer. We already saw more cases than that last week.

The problem here is that this government is trying to condition Ontarians to mediocrity. They want us to accept housing prices that are out of control, accept ER wait times that are through the roof and millions of people without a family doctor.

Well, on behalf of all Ontarians, I'm here to say that we do not accept those things. We are not willing to settle for less, even as this government collects more tax than any other in our province's history.

This morning the Minister of Health said that her measles response is working. Why does the Premier think it's okay to be the only jurisdiction in North America and on this continent to have 125 cases of measles every week until the summer?

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

Mr. Anthony Leardi: Of course we're all very concerned about the health of our children, and particularly myself; I have children. There are members of all parties in this House who have children, and we all share a concern for the protection of our children against any disease, including measles. That's why we have a great vaccine. It's a vaccine that has been in place for over 50 years. It is a tried-and-true vaccine. It's been tested and used over and over and over again.

This vaccine is free. You can get it anywhere in the province of Ontario. You don't have to pay for it. It would be administered by your primary care provider. And on that topic, we're expanding the delivery of primary care across the province of Ontario through this government's programs and through this government's health budget, which has expanded as well.

1100

We encourage everyone to get the measles vaccine. It will protect your children—99% effectiveness against measles.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Supplementary?

Mr. Adil Shamji: The member across has 3,000 children in his riding that don't have a family doctor. Even if they saw his riveting performance during question period, they wouldn't be able to get vaccinated in the first place.

Now, in a shocking update this morning at a press conference, the Minister of Health defended her government's abysmal response on measles by saying she wrote a letter to public health officers reminding them to vaccinate children. She reminded public health doctors, who have a four-year bachelor's degree, four-year medical degree and five-year residency training in public health

and preventive medicine, that they need to vaccinate children. They didn't need a reminder; they needed resources and didn't get it.

We need look no further than Alberta, led by an anti-vax Premier and with a fraction of the cases that we have, to see that they implemented a measles hotline, television ad campaign and public vaccination clinics. Why won't this government do the same?

Will the Premier stop selling snake oil in a crystal bottle and come clean with Ontarians about what new steps he will implement, now that he's revealed that the current ones have failed?

Mr. Anthony Leardi: As a medical professional himself, I'm sure that the member who just spoke understands the importance of everybody getting immunized. I'd think that he would promote the government's plan, which is to inform everybody in the province of Ontario about not only the importance of being immunized, but also the availability of immunization, which is absolutely free and very available throughout the entire province of Ontario.

We do, in fact, encourage everybody to get their children immunized against measles. The common vaccine is referred to as the MMR—measles, mumps and rubella—vaccine. I encourage that member and all members of this House to join the government's information program and make sure that their constituents are informed that this vaccine is available for free to everyone. They can even call the number 811 if they want to get further information about where they can obtain the vaccine absolutely free in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I want to caution our members when they are asking questions on their choice of words. We don't want anything inflammatory.

Question?

PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: My question is to the Attorney General. Crime today is not just happening on the street; it's happening online. We're seeing more cyber attacks, more stolen data and more criminals using new tools to do harm. Even serious crimes like auto theft and gun violence now involve high-tech tools and digital networks. Ontarians are right to be worried.

They want to know that our justice system can keep up. That's why I'm proud our government is stepping up with real action. We're cracking down on high-tech crime. We're standing with police and crown prosecutors, and we're making sure criminals face justice, no matter how they try to hide.

Speaker, can the Attorney General please explain how Ontario is taking the lead in fighting cybercrime and protecting our communities?

Hon. Doug Downey: I appreciate the question from the member for Oakville North–Burlington. It is true that crime isn't just happening on our streets anymore. More and more is happening online, and it's increasing, Madam Speaker. The criminal element is far more sophisticated than it used to be, and they're using tools that they didn't

have before. Nearly all criminal activity nowadays, from auto theft to guns and gangs, is using technology.

That's why we created the new and permanent cybercrime and cryptocurrency prosecution team to make sure that police and prosecutors have the technical knowledge that they need to tackle this online scourge. This team is the first of its kind in Canada. It's very cutting edge.

Although we've had police in that space, we didn't have prosecutors to provide pre-charge advice and to help make sure that we're putting our best case forward as the charges are laid. The crowns will do the pre-charge advice. They will help assist in the asset recovery and they will prosecute complex and novel cybercrime cases, Madam Speaker. I'll have more to say in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the member for Oakville North–Burlington.

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: I'd like to thank the Attorney General for his answer. People in Ontario want to see real action on crime. They want to know that the criminals who commit serious offences like car theft, gun crime and gang violence are being held to account. They want to know that our courts are ready to deal with violent criminals quickly and effectively.

That's why it's so important that our government is continuing to put resources in the right places. From new bail teams to auto theft units, we're making smart investments to support our police and prosecutors. We're helping our justice system move faster, get tougher and deliver better results.

Speaker, can the Attorney General please explain how these new specialized teams will help keep our streets and communities safe across Ontario?

Hon. Doug Downey: I appreciate the opportunity to respond to the member from Oakville–North Burlington. Our specialized cyber crime and cryptocurrency prosecution team is just the newest addition to our specialized teams.

We have the major auto theft prosecution team, who are specialists, special prosecutors, who will bring the best evidence forward and help in the very complex investigations tackling organized crime. The team provides prosecutors legal supports within the communities, especially in the areas that have the highest rates of auto theft.

We're expanding the dedicated guns-and-gangs units in targeted regions as well to deal with illegal firearms coming into our country and to deal with organized crime in those areas. The provincial guns-and-gangs support unit is made up of expert prosecutors that work with provincial and municipal police forces, again, to put our best foot forward. I think of them like a SWAT team of prosecutors to make sure that we have the offenders being held responsible. We'll be announcing more in the days to come.

ONTARIO FILM AND TELEVISION INDUSTRY

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Premier, as you well know, the US president is threatening to impose—

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

Ms. Sandy Shaw:—a 100% tariff on foreign-produced films. Our homegrown film and television industry is vital. The Leader of the Opposition asked the Premier for details on how he plans to defend it. Unfortunately, we didn't get any reassuring answers. The Premier has even been quoted as saying, "Let's wait and see."

So again, to the Premier, in the face of these threats, what new and what specific actions is the government going to take to defend the film and television industry here in Ontario?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Response? I recognize the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Gaming.

Hon. Stan Cho: Yesterday, we talked about the importance of the creative industries in the province of Ontario. I reiterate that here this morning. What the member asks, though, is for new measures on a hypothetical when we said we must stand and protect and continue to support this industry, as we have done since 2018.

In that member's own riding, let's talk about the shows that have been filmed there: The Umbrella Academy, The Handmaid's Tale, Children Ruin Everything, Murdoch Mysteries. What about movies? Four Brothers, Cinderella Man, The Incredible Hulk. These are iconic films that have provided huge economic opportunity on both sides of the camera as well as billions of dollars in economic spending.

Now, what did we do to help that production happen? Since 2018, we've introduced the Ontario Film and Television Tax Credit, the Ontario Production Services Tax Credit, the Ontario Computer Animation and Special Effects Tax Credit, the Ontario Interactive Digital Media Tax Credit, the Ontario Book Publishing Tax Credit—all resulting in billions in economic activity here. What does that have in common with that member? She voted against every single one.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Supplementary?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: So again, from the minister, more "wait and see." You're talking about what has been done in the past, but the industry is currently in a crisis, and we're talking about "wait and see."

As you will know, Speaker, Hamilton is one of the busiest cities in Ontario for film and television production. We know what we do in Hamilton. We know the well-known films include the new Reacher film, The Handmaid's Tale and Brilliant Minds.

There were 139 productions in Hamilton last year driven by the city of Hamilton's office for film production. It brought in revenue of \$60 million to the city.

There are 10,000 film and television cultural workers in Hamilton alone and they want answers. They're looking for more than a promise to retrain them if the bottom drops out.

So again, what action is the government taking now to counter the threat coming from the US and to protect our film and television industry in Hamilton and in Ontario?

Hon. Stan Cho: More words from the NDP saying they care about this industry, Speaker. Where were they in

2018? Where were they in 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024? This year, when we said that we are going to protect this industry—they've been in opposition, screaming at the top of their lungs to help this industry, but every time they've had an opportunity to vote in favour of those industries, they said no. Not only did they say no to the television tax credit, they said no to the Ontario Arts Council for grants for TV and film and television.

1110

Speaker, what has that meant in Hamilton? Well, let's talk about that: Hamilton Music Collective, \$200,000; the Interval House of Hamilton, \$150,000; McMaster Museum of Art, \$50,000; Dundas historical society museum, \$32,000—totalling, since 2018, an investment of \$4.7 million.

That member and those members voted against it. They continue to vote against the industry. We are here to protect creative industries in Ontario for good.

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES

Ms. Lee Fairclough: This week is Mental Health Week, and sadly, my inbox continues to fill with stories of people unable to access the care they desperately need. I met with mental health service organizations in my community, and they've not seen a base pay increase for their staff in the last seven years, making it difficult to hold on to the very people that we need most to deliver care.

To the Minister of Health: When will we get serious about funding basic community mental health care services in this province?

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

Hon. Vijay Thanigasalam: Madam Speaker, through you to the member opposite, thank you for that question. Too many Ontarians know the pain of mental health and addictions. These individuals who are suffering, they are our brothers, sisters, fathers, children. That's why this government, under the leadership of Premier Ford, we have launched the Roadmap to Wellness, investing \$3.8 billion.

Since the implementing of that plan, we have increased the funding for mental health and addictions by \$500 million every year. Just recently, we are establishing 28 new homelessness and addiction recovery treatment beds, offering new mental health, addiction and social services, and also expanding the importance of supportive housing units to make sure we provide high-quality addiction and mental health care to Ontarians of all ages, where and when they need it.

Ms. Lee Fairclough: I thought that's what we might hear, but unfortunately, the HART hubs aren't designed to realize an increase in the volume of services. They are a screen for this government to dismantle services that the government doesn't like. We need to add, not subtract, mental health and addiction services, and we need to fund increased access to actual care, period. What is your plan, your real plan, to do that?

Hon. Vijay Thanigasalam: We believe that addiction should not be a dead end, and recovery is real. That's why we are investing \$550 million to establish these HART hubs.

My team heard from an individual at the northwest HART hub in Thunder Bay, who was so grateful for the support he received, from a simple cup of coffee to clothing, hygiene necessities, a warm meal, access to the Internet, and so much more. He said he felt understood and genuinely cared for, and that is what HART hubs are all about.

We want to break the cycle of addiction, give them a hand up, make sure they reclaim their life and have the dignity of being with family and community.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Ms. Laurie Scott: My question is to the Minister of Emergency Preparedness and Response. When disaster strikes, people expect help to come fast. They want to know someone is ready and able to respond. We've seen fires, floods and, most recently, the devastating ice storm that hit not only my riding of Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, but also the minister's riding and other parts of Ontario.

The risks of extreme weather and natural disasters are growing. That's why our government is showing leadership and making emergency preparedness a priority. Families want to know that Ontario is ready. They want to see quick actions and real plans when times get tough.

Can the minister explain how this ministry will help our province prepare for future emergencies and make sure help gets to those who need it the most?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: I'd like to thank the member for her advocacy and response during the recent ice storm in her region as well.

Speaker, as the new Minister of Emergency Preparedness and Response, I want to reassure Ontarians that their safety, security and well-being will always be our government's top priority. Our ministry is committed to ensuring that our province is as resilient, ready and strong as ever in the face of emergencies such as the recent ice storm.

When the ice storm hit Ontario, my riding was directly impacted. I witnessed first-hand how quickly my ministry was able to deploy Ontario Corps partners to the areas hit hardest. As a result of their work, over 4,000 wellness checks were conducted in person and on the phone; more than 2,500 personal hygiene items were distributed; over 1,000 blankets, pillows and towels distributed; and more than 3,700 meals and food hampers were provided.

When it comes to emergency management, our government is doing everything possible to ensure that Ontario is prepared and protected.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the member for Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I want to thank the minister for the response, and her and the Premier for coming up to Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock to see first-hand the damage that occurred and meet the incredible people of

the emergency response personnel and the volunteers that helped us get through this.

People across Ontario want to feel safe in their homes and communities. When disaster hits, local teams are often the first to respond. They need clear plans, the right tools and strong support from the province to do their jobs well.

People want to know their towns and their cities are ready. They also want to know that their government is working behind the scenes to support them with technology and training they need for any crisis. That kind of work can save lives and protect our communities.

Speaker, can the minister explain how our government is supporting local responders with the tools they need to act fast and protect the people of Ontario when emergencies strike?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: We now require every municipality in Ontario to have an emergency management program, including response plans. To build out our province's emergency management capacity, our government is investing a historic \$110 million to support the emergency response sector.

My ministry supports our key emergency partners by using enhanced digital tools, including AI, for situational awareness and rapid incident assessments across the province so we know ahead of time when and where people will need support.

To plan for future emergencies, we released the Provincial Emergency Management Strategy and Action Plan, the first made-in-Ontario plan to ensure communities and people are safe, practised and prepared before, during and after emergencies. I want to remind all members to pick up their educational resource packages in the lobbies as it is Emergency Preparedness Week.

Speaker, I am proud of the work we are doing and the work of our volunteers and emergency responders. Under the leadership of Premier Ford, our government will continue to invest and support our emergency response sector to ensure every person in Ontario is protected.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

PROTECTION DU CONSOMMATEUR

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Last month, Public Health Ontario reported that in my riding, families spent up to \$300 more on groceries every month than the Ontario average. It's even worse in communities along the James Bay coast. We put forward a motion that would have stopped price gouging and helped bring everyday costs down, but the government voted against it.

My question is for the Premier. At a time where north-erners are looking for real relief, why did the government vote against our motion?

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

Hon. Stephen Crawford: To the member opposite, thank you for the question.

There's a reason that in this House today there are twice as many members sitting on this side of the House than there is with the Liberals and NDP combined. The reason for that is, on February 27, the people of Ontario spoke, and they supported a Premier—Premier Doug Ford—who's leading Ontario and protecting Ontario.

There is nobody that is leading this province, protecting the people of this province, protecting the small businesses of this province, protecting the consumers of this province more than Premier Doug Ford.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Supplementary?
1120

M. Guy Bourgouin: As-tu écouté la question que je t'ai posée? Je parle de l'insécurité alimentaire. Tu me réponds avec une réponse comme tu viens de me donner, là. C'est clair que vous n'avez aucune idée comment les gens ont besoin d'aide dans le Nord. C'est clair que votre gouvernement ne veut pas s'occuper sérieusement de développer le Nord, ni aider à répondre à l'insécurité alimentaire.

Alors, je vais te donner une autre opportunité de répondre. Encore au premier ministre : pourquoi est-ce que le gouvernement a voté contre notre motion qui apportait du soulagement immédiat pour les familles en besoin de Mushkegowuk—Baie James?

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

Hon. Trevor Jones: Thank you for the question, from my friend in the north, but coming from a party who supported the regime that called your north and my north “no man's land”—I don't understand how you don't understand that things like the carbon tax and food prices are directly related to one another. The longer food has to travel, the more expensive food is.

But this Premier and this side of the House and that side of the House voted to rail against the carbon tax that made food prices more expensive in your community and my community.

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

Hon. Trevor Jones: But, Madam Speaker, the member opposite has a good question. We're working very hard to support the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund, which invested \$62 million to your communities that attracted private sector investment to increase that to \$95 million for 489 projects, over 500 jobs to make food access more inexpensive—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Question?

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

MPP Tyler Watt: As a front-line nurse, I've seen first-hand what's going on in our hospitals. I've worked for years at the Queensway Carleton Hospital in my community that serves over 50% of the city of Ottawa and surrounding areas. Unfortunately, this hospital has one of the longest emergency room wait times in the province. It isn't uncommon that we're operating well over 100% capacity.

That's on top of being short-staffed pretty much every single day.

Our health care system is in crisis, a crisis that has been manufactured by this government. My colleagues on the front lines are tired. They're burnt-out and demanding better from this government.

Speaker, through you to the Minister of Health, will this government commit to funding and expanding the Queensway Carleton's emergency room capacity?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: While the member opposite will talk down the Queensway Carleton Hospital and our exceptional nurses and clinicians who work in the—

Interjections.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Methinks they protest too much, Speaker.

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

Hon. Sylvia Jones: The truth is you're talking down the hospital that you should be defending as an MPP. We have made investments in nursing, in physicians, in hospitals to ensure that we have the best clinicians and the best hospital system across Ontario.

I will always stand up for our incredible health care workers because I know they are on the front lines and they are doing what needs to be done. While this member talks down hospitals, we will defend—to ensure that the hospitals and all of our health care systems have the supports they need.

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

MPP Tyler Watt: Respectfully, I'm a nurse at the Queensway Carleton Hospital. I am proud of what we do there. I am proud of what we do with so little attention from this government.

Listen, nobody wants to be waiting 12 hours to see a doctor; nobody wants to be in a hospital waiting room; and certainly, nobody wants to be languishing in a bed in a hallway, waiting for care that they need. The amount of times that I've seen patients getting care in hallways is atrocious.

Health care workers and patients everywhere are calling for more investments in our hospitals to address the pressure we're seeing on every hospital in this province.

Speaker, through you to the Minister of Health, what is this government actually doing to address our hospital crisis?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Well, Speaker, how much time are you going to give me? Because I can talk about a lot of the programs that we've been able to put in place. Let's start with 911 models of care, something we are working on with paramedics, with hospitals, with our municipalities to ensure that people can quickly get access through our emergency departments.

The member opposite knows well that the city of Guelph, because of 911 models of care, saw an 86% decrease in waiting in emergency departments. And those are initiatives and programs that our government has been funding to ensure that when we have hospitals and paramedics working together, we can absolutely cut down the

wait times because we know no one wants to wait for critical services when they go to an emergency department. That's why we will work with our hospital partners, with our paramedics, and not talk them down.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Billy Pang: My question is for the Associate Minister of Energy-Intensive Industries. Families and job creators across Ontario want to know that our energy system is safe, secure and ready for the future. Global threats, including from the US and other countries, mean we cannot take our energy security for granted. At the same time, demand for energy in Ontario is expected to grow by 75% by 2050.

We need to plan ahead and act now. That means building strong, made-in-Ontario energy solutions that protect our grid, support jobs and grow our economy. That's why our government's plan to grow Ontario's hydrogen sector matters. Hydrogen helps cut emissions, lower costs and build Ontario energy.

Speaker, can the minister explain how the Hydrogen Innovation Fund can help secure Ontario's energy future and protect us from global threats?

Hon. Sam Oosterhoff: I want to acknowledge the strong member from Markham–Unionville and his leadership on this important issue. The member is absolutely right. When it comes to energy in the province of Ontario, we are building out a diverse energy system that supports industry, that supports growth and ultimately is powered by affordability. One of the ways that we're doing that is building out the Hydrogen Innovation Fund.

I was at the recent Canadian Hydrogen Convention, where I heard the excitement that was palpable about what's happening in the growing hydrogen sector here in Ontario. And recently, I had the privilege of joining the member from Markham–Unionville in his riding at the Markham mixing plant, where Enbridge is actually taking hydrogen, mixing it directly into the grid in our natural gas pipeline to add yet another form of power to provide an alternative and an opportunity for growth.

It's not just in the production and the utilization of hydrogen that we see opportunities here, Speaker. Through the Hydrogen Innovation Fund, we're also supporting the manufacturing technologies like we've seen in other energy aspects to be able to build out and support good jobs here in Ontario today and for generations to come.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Supplementary.

Mr. Billy Pang: I would like to take this opportunity to thank the minister for visiting the hydrogen facility in my riding the other day.

Ontario is home to some of the most important industries in the country: steel, mining, cement and manufacturing. These jobs matter to people across Ontario, but right now, these jobs are facing big risks from rising energy costs and threats from other countries. That is why it is so important to have a strong energy plan, one that supports local industries, cuts costs and builds on our energy

independence. Hydrogen can help us to do that. It gives companies a cleaner way to power their work and grow.

Speaker, can the minister explain how the expanded Hydrogen Innovation Fund will help more Ontario businesses switch to clean energy and protect good jobs across the province?

Hon. Sam Oosterhoff: The member is absolutely right: This is how we protect Ontario. It's by supporting the industries that drive growth and by ensuring that families and job creators have the affordable, reliable, secure energy that they need today and into the future for generations to come.

That's why last month I was pleased to be able to announce the expanded Hydrogen Innovation Fund, doubling that fund to \$30 million. But it's not just about the amount of money. It's about the fact that there's increased eligibility for these sectors—steel, mining, cement, manufacturing, transportation—to utilize yet another form of energy in their operations, to be able to bring down costs, ultimately, and to protect those jobs.

We know it's so important in these energy-intensive industries to ensure that they have that affordable power. That's why every action that our government takes when it comes to power is to ensure that they have that today and going forward so we know those industries are going to be here for generations to come.

WATER QUALITY

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Premier. It's 25 years this month since the contaminated water tragedy at Walkerton. Seven people died and over 2,000 became severely ill. Twenty-five years later, and people are still at risk.

On March 31, the Auditor General reported that many non-municipal drinking water systems were not being tested and could not be assumed to be safe.

What is the Premier doing to ensure that the over three million people who depend on these water supplies are safe?

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

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: To the member opposite and to the entire House, I can say proudly that Ontario's drinking water is among the best protected in the world. Our comprehensive legislation and our strong monitoring processes, reporting and enforcement help ensure that our drinking water is held to Ontario's high safety standards.

The ministry works with stakeholders and partners—including drinking water system owners and operators; laboratories; and agencies such as the Walkerton Clean Water Centre, a legacy of the O'Connor inquiry—and source-protection authorities and committees are involved to deliver the drinking water protection framework.

We will continue to work with our partners through our comprehensive framework to protect Ontario's drinking water from source to tap so that all Ontarians can rely on it.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Again to the Premier: Maybe the minister didn't read the Auditor General's report. The Auditor General reported that many water systems were not tested, regularly inspected or subjected to public health enforcement. The Auditor General commented, as demonstrated by the Walkerton crisis, that consequences of Ontarians drinking unsafe water can be deadly.

Will it take another round of deaths to get the Premier to act?

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: Madam Speaker, we do act. We are monitoring: 99.9% of drinking water tests from municipal residential drinking water systems met the drinking water quality standards—these systems serve more than 80% of the Ontario population; 99.6% of drinking-water test results from non-municipal year-round residential systems met the standards; 99.7% of drinking-water tests from systems serving designated facilities, such as schools and health care centres, also met the standards.

Source protection plans under the Clean Water Act, 2006, are in place across Ontario's 38 source protection areas. Together, they protect the sources of drinking water from contamination and depletion for almost 440 municipalities.

That is our track record, and we're proud of it.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Before we rise for lunch, I would like to introduce, I guess, and draw attention to a member who is in the Speaker's gallery: Eleanor McMahon, who served in the riding of Burlington in the 41st Parliament. Welcome.

This House stands in recess until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1133 to 1300.

HOUSE SITTINGS

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I beg to inform the House that pursuant to standing order 9(h), the Clerk has received written notice from the government House leader indicating that a temporary change in the weekly meeting schedule of the House is required, and therefore the House shall commence at 9 a.m. on Monday, May 12, 2025, for the proceeding orders of the day.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Sylvia Jones: It's my pleasure to welcome to the chamber today Dr. Jane Philpott, who of course has been leading up our primary care expansion. Welcome, Dr. Philpott.

I would be remiss if I didn't say that Dr. Philpott has some of her team here, many of whom are Ministry of Health staff. So thank you to everyone for the work you do.

INTRODUCTION OF GOVERNMENT BILLS

PRIMARY CARE ACT, 2025

LOI DE 2025 SUR LES SOINS PRIMAIRES

Ms. Jones moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 13, An Act respecting primary care / Projet de loi 13, Loi concernant les soins primaires.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Indeed I do. The Primary Care Act, 2025, if enacted, its purpose is to establish the government of Ontario's vision for primary care so that insured persons know what they should expect when accessing primary care within Ontario. The act sets out objectives respecting the design, the implementation and maintenance of the publicly funded primary care system within Ontario.

The minister is required to prepare an annual report describing how the government of Ontario is working to achieve these objectives.

PETITIONS

UNIVERSITY FUNDING

Mr. Ted Hsu: My petition today is from constituents in Kingston and the Islands, some of whom may be users of the food bank at Queen's University and some of whom are faculty who donate to the food bank at Queen's University.

They are asking for this government to rectify the insufficient funding for post-secondary education and to boost Ontario universities' base operating funds to the level recommended by their own Blue-Ribbon Panel on Financial Sustainability in the Post-Secondary Education Sector.

ADDICTION SERVICES

Ms. Jessica Bell: This is a petition entitled "Harm Reduction Saves Lives." It is a petition signed by people in my riding who are very concerned about the closure of the safe consumption site in Kensington.

This safe consumption site provides a private space for people to use drugs under the careful, watchful eye of a health care provider. We know that that is a very effective way to stop the sharp increase in deadly overdoses that are taking place in my riding and many of yours.

I support this petition. I'll be affixing my signature to it and giving it to page Daniela.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

MPP Catherine McKenney: This is a petition to raise social assistance rates. It's from citizens of Ontario from across the province.

We know that \$2,000 per month has been established as the standard support required for individuals to be able to afford rent and food, and right now our ODSP and OW fall far below that.

I will send this down with Henry, attaching my name to it, and I support this petition.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Good afternoon, everyone. I too have a petition to raise the social assistance rates in Ontario. We know we're in an affordability crisis, and as elected officials, it is our job in the province of Ontario to help improve people's quality of life.

So I am happy to submit this petition and to sign it and send it with page Shepherd today.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: I'm proud to rise in this House to present this petition. This petition is signed by a number of Ontario residents. It calls on this House to address the housing crisis—the demand for safe and affordable housing—now.

There's a recognition that Toronto's residential vacancy rate is just around 1%. The average rent for a one-bedroom apartment is over \$2,000, which is the highest in the country. We've seen the social wait-list grow and balloon out, and that the government has eliminated rent control protections on new housing. Everyone deserves safe and affordable housing.

This petition is calling on the Legislative Assembly to do the following: reverse the recent elimination of rent control protections for new units, end vacancy decontrol, end the above-guideline rent increases and do everything we can to strengthen the Residential Tenancies Act.

I'll be very proud to sign this petition and send it back to the table with the wonderful page Henry.

TENANT PROTECTION

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I am pleased to present to this House a petition entitled "The Rent Stabilization Act: Pay What the Last Tenant Paid."

This is a very important issue in my riding and certainly across the province, Speaker. The petition notes that rents have more than doubled in the last 10 years in this province, and it indicates that people in Ontario are now paying an average of over \$2,000 a month for their rent. And when they move out, if they live in a rent-controlled building, the landlord is still able to increase that rent even higher.

The petitioners are calling for a rent stabilization act that would ensure that a new tenant would pay the same

rent as a former tenant, with any allowable annual rent increases to be based on inflation, which is what rent control is supposed to do.

I fully support this petition, affix my signature and will send it to the table with page Tej.

TAXATION

Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady: I have a petition here signed by small business owners from across Ontario. We know that small business represents 98% of all businesses in the province. We also know that small business confidence has not recovered from pre-pandemic levels.

The Ontario small business tax rate is currently 3.2%. It's tied for the highest in the country with Quebec. Small businesses would like to see this government increase the Ontario small business tax rate deduction threshold to \$700,000, index it to inflation annually and reduce Ontario's small business tax rate from 3.2%, beginning with an immediate reduction to at least 2%, with the goal of reaching zero.

I will affix my name to the bottom of the petition and table it with the Clerks with Aashman.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PROTECT ONTARIO THROUGH SAFER STREETS AND STRONGER COMMUNITIES ACT, 2025

LOI DE 2025 POUR PROTÉGER L'ONTARIO EN RENDANT LES RUES PLUS SÛRES ET LES COLLECTIVITÉS PLUS FORTES

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 6, 2025, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 10, An Act to enact the Measures Respecting Premises with Illegal Drug Activity Act, 2025 and to amend various Acts with respect to public safety and the justice system / Projet de loi 10, Loi édictant la Loi de 2025 sur les mesures visant les lieux où se déroulent des activités illégales liées à la drogue et modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne la sécurité publique et le système judiciaire.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Further debate?

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: It's always good to know what you're going to debate in this House, so thank you to the government House leader for letting us know that it is now time to debate government Bill 10. I'm always pleased to rise in this House.

1310

Bill 10 is titled Protect Ontario Through Safer Streets and Stronger Communities Act. This is another government bill with a very lofty, aspirational title. It has several schedules, eight in total, and I will endeavour to speak to all of those schedules. I will need to spend some time and focus on schedules 1 and 5 as they relate to the Bail Act and the Courts of Justice Act.

Legal experts and others involved, including those who are system users, agree that Ontario's justice system is broken, slow, needs massive change to serve the people of Ontario well and to deliver real justice. We're at a critical juncture in the province of Ontario. The foundation of our democracy, our justice system, is in crisis.

The courts, once a bastion of fairness and timely justice, are now clogged with record-high backlogs. Cases, including those involving some of the most vulnerable in our society—victims and survivors of intimate partner violence, gender-based violence—are being dismissed. The system meant to protect them is instead turning them away.

Meanwhile, concerns are growing over the Premier's political comments and meddling in judicial appointments, and the glaring inadequacies in community bail compliance and supervision.

Speaker, I will aim to outline the dimensions of this crisis, explain how we got to this point and propose changes necessary to restore trust and functionality to Ontario's justice system.

Let me begin today by talking about the court backlogs. Ontario courts are now facing unprecedented delays. The justice system is simply overwhelmed, under-resourced and under strain. Across the province, criminal and civil cases are piling higher and higher. Some individuals are waiting months; more often than not, they are waiting years for their day in court. Justice delayed is justice denied. These delays jeopardize fair trials, they erode public confidence and, in too many cases, result in cases being thrown out altogether.

The Supreme Court of Canada's *R. v. Jordan* decision set out some strict timelines for trials to proceed, and when those timelines are breached—unconstitutional delays, as we'll call them—charges can be stayed. This has led to numerous dismissals even in serious criminal matters. These delays are particularly egregious for victims and survivors of intimate partner violence. They come forward, often at great personal risk, seeking safety and justice, and instead of being supported they are retraumatized by a system that cannot process their cases in time. Cases are then dropped, not because the evidence is weak or they cannot win. The cases are dropped because they simply don't have the core capacity to have an expedient trial. This sends a devastating, heartbreaking message to survivors in Ontario, and that message is, their suffering is not important, not a priority.

Instead of tackling the court backlogs, in the last year what we saw is that this government then cut half a billion dollars—that's 9%—from the justice system's budget in the fall economic statement. And I demand, we all demand, survivors who are not here to speak for themselves demand that that funding be restored and topped up when this government tables their budget next week.

There are so many experts who are now weighing in on the problem. They are offering practical and actionable solutions, but this government does not seem to be listening. I will share with them today the voices that have come forward and the solutions that they have brought

forward. If you weren't listening in committee, perhaps you'll listen to their remarks as I deliver them on their behalf in this House.

It would be a lot easier to take this Conservative government seriously when they talk about being tough on crime if they themselves were not actively under police investigation. It would be easier to take them seriously if they were proposing solutions instead of making off-the-cuff, random remarks about electing judges, like they do in the US.

Just last week, the Premier went on an angry rant and stormed, "Last time I checked, there haven't been any judges elected. Maybe that's the problem. We should do what the US does. Let's start electing our judges, holding them accountable."

Americanizing our Canadian and Ontario justice system is a horrible, horrible idea. Retired Ontario judge Norman Douglas agrees with me. He wrote a column in *SooToday* in response. He spoke out about the conflicts that arise in the court system when judges are elected.

He shared a story: While on vacation in Texas, he visited a courthouse to see how the Americans do it. He met with a courthouse staff who then introduced him to an American sitting judge, who he will refer to and who I will refer to in my remarks as "Her Honour." Upon learning about his role as an Ontario judge, they shared a conversation. Ontario Justice Douglas said Her Honour "graciously welcomed me into her chambers and we had a delightful chat about our different systems. She told me that she campaigned on a 'get tough with criminals' platform, and her next case was going to be interesting because the defence lawyer was a friend of hers who had contributed to her campaign.

"My response was that I did not envy her, that our job was difficult enough without that added pressure.

"I left court that day grateful that Canadian judges are not elected. 'Please contribute money to my campaign, Mr. Defence Lawyer. I will be indebted to you if I get elected. Oh, and Mr. Attorney General and Mr. Premier, let's have lunch, I'm buying....'

"Being a judge means you are accountable to two people only: yourself, and the blind lady holding the scales of justice."

Those were the words from Ontario Judge Norman Douglas.

The Ontario Premier also went and said this: "These judges that are bleeding hearts, I can't wait until they retire. Matter of fact, I'll pay them to retire earlier. I'll pay you out, for two, three, four years. Just get out of the system." Sorry if my impersonation is not that good, but you get the point.

The Premier said that while he is a big believer in Ontario's justice system and the province does have some good judges, he also denounced other judges who he believes are making decisions because of their "ideology." This is from a sitting Premier.

The Premier went further and called judicial independence "a joke." The Premier clearly has no respect for Ontario judges, which is shameful.

The Attorney General's comments, while a little more tempered, were also quite chilling. He joked that the Premier's remarks about judges were actually restrained. "You should see what he says in private," said our Attorney General. The Attorney General defended the Premier for his remarks about judges, saying "the frustration that it comes from is real," including the Premier's concerns that "bleeding heart judges" are letting too many violent criminals out on bail.

The issue of judicial independence has been something that the Attorney General has been alluding to since 2019, when he first stated in a TVO interview that he wants to see more judges who share his values.

Three of Ontario's top judges quickly released a public statement, following the Premier's remarks, reaffirming how crucial judicial independence is to democracy in Ontario. I would like to read their statement to you now because it is so powerful and we need to take heed of their words.

The Ontario justices' public statement:

"We are very proud of the work of the judicial officials who preside in the Ontario courts. Judicial independence is a cornerstone of our constitutional democracy. An independent judiciary protects the public, not just judicial officials. It means a society governed by the rule of law. In Canada, this means, as is set out in section 52 of the Constitution Act, 1982, that the Constitution is the supreme law of the country. Our constitutional democracy is comprised of three branches of government—the executive, the legislative and the judicial—and all three branches of government must exercise their power in accordance with the constitution. While it is the Legislature that enacts legislation, it is the role of a judicial official to interpret and apply the law. To fulfill this role, the judiciary must be distinct from, and operate independently of, all other justice system participants, including the other two branches of government.

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"The principle of judicial independence is generally recognized as having two dimensions. The first applies to individual judicial officials and embodies the fundamental principle that a judicial official must be, and must be seen to be, free to decide each case on its own merits, without interference or influence of any kind from any source, including politicians.... It requires the court, as a whole to be, and appear to be independent of the legislative and executive branches of government. Together, both dimensions safeguard the judicial decision-making process and, in turn, the public that the court serves.

"Every Canadian has the constitutional right to have their legal issues decided by a fair and impartial judiciary. Our justice system is founded on public confidence that decisions, whether popular or not, are fully heard or fairly made. It is crucial that the judiciary is both actually independent and appears to be independent so that the public can be confident that judicial decisions are made without bias."

And it is signed: Chief Justice of Ontario Michael H. Tulloch, Court of Appeal for Ontario; Chief Justice

Geoffrey Morawetz, Superior Court of Justice; and Chief Justice Sharon Nicklas, Ontario Court of Justice.

It's hard to imagine why the justices had to come together and issue a statement like this. This is something I learned in a grade-9-high-school class, and yet here we are: an official letter issued to the Premier and this government.

I'm so proud of these three justices. Standing up to a Premier cannot be easy, but they found it important to do so because they were defending the independence of our judiciary. They were also saying very clearly and loudly to Ontarians: "This justice system is yours. It is here to work for you. We want you to have faith and trust in it."

So how are we to trust this government to make any sweeping changes to judicial appointments when the Premier is talking about removing judicial independence altogether? How can we trust this government's judgment, especially when we hear from the Attorney General directly that we haven't even heard the Premier's most extreme personal views that he will share in smaller gatherings?

How are judges supposed to do their jobs well when they are fearful that the Premier will force them into early retirement just for making decisions based on their expert interpretation of the law? The Premier should not focus on "like-minded judges," but on the ones that are most experienced and qualified for the job. Judges are not too lenient; they are working within a broken system where there is a lack of resources that cause a snowballing of cascading issues that grind the system to a halt.

Court backlogs cause more people to be in pre-trial detention: 80% of the people who are sitting in detention are awaiting trial. They have not been convicted or found to be guilty; they are waiting for their day in court. Overcrowded jails are making news headlines, where we're seeing violence and trauma unfold. Videos that are being released after being FOied show illegal strip-searching, harm and other types of offences. This all makes people feel demoralized. When the government has a chance to introduce new legislation such as this in a justice-oriented bill, you figure they would take the opportunity to fix the problem.

Just last October, a senior was killed in jail while waiting for a spot in a long-term-care home. Let that settle in for a bit. Retired Ontario judge Norman Douglas also had this to share: "Here's the point I think you have missed, Mr. Premier: We need judges who are kind and compassionate whenever they can be and tough when they must be.

"(2) We do not need justices of the peace who believe their job is to not let anyone get bail."

It was against this perverted discourse that the government introduced Bill 10 last week.

Let me now talk about schedule five in the Courts of Justice Act, all pertaining to judicial appointments. The bill seeks to increase the Attorney General's influence on judicial candidate assessment. It allows the AG to specify criteria by the Judicial Appointments Advisory Committee in evaluating candidates.

This is a change from the AG being able to recommend the criteria for JAAC to use but not requiring them to use it. This begs the question: Why does the AG want this power and change? Are JAAC members ignoring his requests? Why does he feel that he must now force them to listen and to act under his direction? This change seems to give the AG unrestricted sway over how candidates are evaluated by JAAC. If he felt like it, the AG could direct the committee to only recommend judges who are left-handed or speak five languages or who own a dog. Obviously, he would never make those recommendations, but I wonder what other recommendations or requests he would come forward with, based on his past comments and current defence of the Premier's recent rant.

This government has a proud tradition of appointing their friends and insiders to top jobs, often at the expense of qualified people who are already holding the position. The criteria the government seems to focus on—and there is a pattern—tend to be: Is the candidate a failed Conservative candidate from a past election or perhaps a previous Conservative MPP or MP? Are they a high-rolling Conservative donor? Do they have connections to well-heeled lobbyist friends? Beyond these criteria, sometimes it feels like their other credentials really don't matter. You don't have to look too far, Speaker. The chair of JAAC is Matthew Bondy, the Premier's former chief of staff. Mr. Bondy is a full-time lobbyist, lobbying the government from time to time while he chairs JAAC. He is also a lobbyist for a gun manufacturer. All this doesn't quite pass the smell test for me, but perhaps other people have a different sense of smell.

Schedule 5 also allows the composition of the judicial advisory committee to change by allowing the Attorney General to appoint more lawyers to the committee. So instead of seven members of JAAC needing to be neither judges nor lawyers, they now just need to not be judges. I am interested to know who asked for this change and what the expected outcomes are of it. I'm concerned that this would be an attempt to shut the public out of the committee.

Schedule 5 also introduces a brand new system of recommending and appointing judges. Currently, the system works like the general job market, where prospective judges apply for specific roles as vacancies come up and interviews are often conducted. After that process, JAAC provides a ranked list of at least six candidates to the AG. If the AG rejects the list, then JAAC produces a supplementary list of six new ranked candidates. Then, the AG recommends a candidate from the ranked list to the Lieutenant Governor in Council. Here is the new process: JAAC advertises for judicial candidate application at the AG's request. A judicial vacancy is no longer required. JAAC reviews and evaluates all the applications, including interviews if necessary. Instead of a list of at least six candidates, JAAC classifies all candidates as "not recommended," "recommended" or "highly recommended," and provides a list of candidates with their respective classifications and brief reasons to the AG. The AG will only be permitted to recommend a candidate to the Lieutenant

Governor in Council to fulfill a judicial candidacy if a candidate is "recommended" or "highly recommended."

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The legal community wants to know more about why this particular process was chosen and what the size of the new list will be, compared to the six-candidate list that we currently have. I'm concerned that this process will create massive lists so that the AG can more efficiently appoint candidates that he agrees with ideologically, regardless of the fit to the specific role. Additionally, I am concerned that this process may increase the influence of the JAAC chair, since they are the tie-breaking vote when prospective judges are being classified as "not recommended," "recommended" or "highly recommended."

I want us all to remember that the current chair of JAAC is Mr. Matthew Bondy, the Premier's former chief of staff.

I also am looking for more clarity around the concept of a classification period for judicial appointment candidates where their recommendation status lasts for more than three years. It makes sense to me to not be reclassifying candidates constantly, but the fact that there's a clear path to upgrading that classification when candidates become more qualified, as there should be, but not for downgrading bad actors is concerning. Instead of downgrading candidates, JAAC is simply directed to notify the AG of any information they think he ought to know about the candidates.

Speaker, I understand this matter to be technical in nature, and it's very easy to overlook, but I would like to remind the House, through you, that the Attorney General in a 2019 interview, again said, he wants to see more judges share his values.

There's a history and a pattern that keeps repeating itself. In 2021, the Conservative government increased the Attorney General's control over judicial appointments by increasing the number of judicial candidates recommended by the committee from two to six, so already we have seen some "massaging" of this particular process, and that was just a few years ago.

Also in 2021, the Conservative government increased the Attorney General's influence on the composition of the committee by increasing the number of members appointed by the AG. There's the pattern again.

In 2022, while selecting the next Chief Justice of Ontario, the AG increased its personal involvement in selecting that Chief Justice. Previously, judges shared news about candidates with the outgoing Chief Justice who then discussed those candidates with the Attorney General. This Attorney General instead asked those judges to speak directly to him while he "personally and directly" conducted "discreet inquiries." This change was criticized by the Association of Ontario Judges as "alarming" and "an aberration," that suggested "judges ignore the separation of powers and their ethical obligations...."

In 2024, in response to questions about appointing former staffers to JAAC, the Premier stated that his goal was to appoint "like-minded judges," saying, "Every single appointment I can to find tough judges, tough JPs to keep guys in jail...."

Now, the Premier may be just sort of spouting off, as he does sometimes, thumping his chest about how he is tough on crime, but all of this sends alarm bells through the legal system.

I could go on—I mean, quite honestly, I have so many pages of examples of where The Premier has continued to publicly undermine the system. But, Speaker, I think in the interest of time, I'm going to just gloss over a few of them because it would just take too long. I could burn up an hour talking about all those inappropriate comments.

Bottom line, Speaker: Judicial appointments must be impartial, transparent and merit-based, but we know that under this Premier and under this Attorney General, there have been serious concerns about their interference and politicalization. The Ford government has moved to exert greater control over the appointment process. This is raising fears about their partisanship and compromising judicial independence. The appearance and reality of political meddling undermines public trust. The judiciary must not only be independent, but it must be seen as independent. The interference comes at a time when the justice system is already struggling. Instead of shoring up resources and empowering legal institutions, we see efforts to decentralize power and dilute checks and balances. This is not just bad optics; it's about the very rule of law. The bench should not be shaped by ideology or political loyalty, but by a commitment to justice, integrity and competence.

Speaker, the government boasts a lot about their tough-on-crime attitude, but I don't hear them boasting about being smart on crime. They frequently bang their drum to call on bail reform and point their finger to Ottawa, saying it's Ottawa's fault. Somehow, the feds are responsible for everything that has gone wrong under this government's watch in Ontario. They have so much power and political currency, just given the composition of this House. They could use that power to do good and to fix the problem.

I'm going to just roll back to schedule 1 as it pertains to the Bail Act. This schedule calls on the Attorney General to make regulations requiring sureties to provide information within a prescribed time frame. According to the government's press release, this will improve and increase the collection of forfeited bail monies. A surety is a person who assumes responsibility for supervising an accused person while they are out on bail. The surety promises an amount of money to the court if that accused person fails to comply with the bail conditions or fails to show up to court.

While a surety can be ordered to forfeit financial assets pledged to the court, it isn't a common occurrence. During a deputation at the Standing Committee for Justice Policy while we were looking at bail reform in the last session, the head of the Ontario Provincial Police Association stated, "In 27 years ... I have never seen a surety held accountable for whatever they've put up." Twenty-seven years, says the head of the Ontario Provincial Police Association.

Requiring a surety is one of the more common conditions for bail. However, the Supreme Court of Canada has

deemed sureties as one of the most erroneous conditions of release.

Schedule 1 is not entirely questionable. However, the government could be doing so much more to support community-based compliance and supervision programs, instead of requiring families and friends to assume the responsibility for monitoring people when they are out on bail.

Moreover, Ontario's bail system is floundering. Community compliance and supervision are woefully inadequate. Individuals released on bail are often unsupervised with little to no follow-up or enforcement. That's the biggest problem here. This creates risk for communities and undermines public safety. When someone on bail commits another offence, the credibility of the justice system takes a further blow, but it is not merely an issue of punishment or restriction, it is a structural problem. The system lacks the necessary infrastructure and personnel to monitor bail conditions effectively. Probation officers are overworked, social services are stretched thin, programs that could help individuals comply with bail conditions, such as mental health services, addiction support and housing, are underfunded and inaccessible.

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In the province of Ontario, I understand there are five bail beds for someone who is being released from detention onto the street—no pathway to housing, no pathway to shelters, just back out into the street, where they're vulnerable and most likely to reoffend.

In Ontario, less than 15% of individuals released on bail are actively supervised through community programs, compared to 60% in a province that has less resources and less money. That province is Manitoba. This government could expand and fund community-based bail supervision programs with wraparound support, something that the sector has been calling for for years. Again, this government is choosing not to do so.

We are seeing court backlogs balloon out of control. This government thinks that the court backlogs are only caused by an inadequate number of judges or perhaps delays in appointing judges. This is simply not true. The bill, Bill 10, fails to meaningfully acknowledge the backlogs in our court, which goes beyond the judges' capacity, and it is largely a court staff issue.

I've met with court staff in Ontario; I've met with their union reps on several occasions. What they tell me is that before the crisis deepened and got worse under this government, they were already warning this government about the massive underfunding staffing crisis they were facing, how workers that they represent were run off their feet, and there were simply not enough hours in a day to do all that work.

The court backlog hurts everyone who interacts with our court system:

- families in Family Court, victims of violence;
- the accused, people waiting for trial while they're waiting in detention centres;
- jails and detentions, as I mentioned, that are occupied by unconvicted people, many of them who are Black and

Indigenous, people of colour; many of them living with mental illness and other disabilities that create vulnerabilities for them;

—many waiting longer in detention than they would if they were actually sentenced and found guilty;

—people agreeing to plea bargains for crimes they did not commit just so they can get out because they've already served the plea sentence.

Speaker, this is unjust. This is a broken justice system that rips families apart. It's also extremely expensive. It costs over \$100,000 a year to hold someone in jail, and now it's becoming more expensive—because we're seeing individuals triple and quadruple bunked in cells.

There is a crisis from every end of the justice system backlogs thrown out because cases are a huge waste of resources when they are thrown out; time and money spent on a cases before it was thrown out—always some sunk costs; time and money spent on policing to investigate, to interview, to collect the evidence, to consult with the crown to determine that there is enough there to press charges and most likely be able to win at trial all gone because the cases are tossed because of underfunding of the court system and the backlog; the emotional distress and time off for victims, witnesses, the accused, family members.

We have accused drunk drivers routinely pleading down to lesser charges because of the backlogs in courts and staff being pressured to downgrade those charges so that their trial can be sped up. And if a trial is not sped up, the whole thing could be thrown out, and no consequences whatsoever are levied. How does this keep us safer? How can we continue to push people when the mechanism for determining if they are guilty is so broken? How is this justice for the victims and families?

Ontario courts are so delayed that serious cases, including alleged physical and sexual assault—after they've been recorded, investigated—are thrown out. If a trial in provincial court has taken longer than 18 months to complete, the accused person's lawyer can bring an application under the Jordan decision to have the case tossed and charges stayed. And where this decision is evenly applied, even when the case is of the most serious violence, the charges are stayed and the trials ends, with no decision and no closure for the victim or the accused.

These delays and denials of justice have incredible impacts on lives. When the government allows our court systems to slow down as much as they have, they make communities less safe by releasing people charged with serious crimes, repeat offenders, back into our neighbourhoods without any assurances that they are safe because there isn't adequate supervision around bail and compliance. We need greater action in changing the way that judges are appointed; I agree. We need to do it faster. What the government has proposed in this bill just does not reach the solution.

It's been over a year since I introduced my private member's Bill 173, calling on the government to declare intimate partner violence an epidemic. It was the number one recommendation out of the Renfrew inquest out of 86

recommendations. During the debate, I had over 100 advocates and survivors and their families fill this chamber to support the bill. Instead of adopting the bill quickly and then moving to implement the Renfrew recommendations to end IPV in Ontario, the government referred my bill to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy and left it on the order paper and never called it up for review.

Instead, they set up a subcommittee to study IPV. We were promised resources to fly to northern Indigenous communities to meet with survivors and advocates so we could gain a better understanding of what rural communities need to address IPV. But once we were in subcommittee, we sat all summer and listened to more than 100 witnesses, including many, many survivors. We met with certain ministers who came before our committee. Then, without warning and reason, our subcommittee was no longer afforded the privileges of travel to the remote areas that we were promised.

To this day, I deeply regret, and I am so sorry to the people of Renfrew, because we never kept our promise, this House, to go out and meet with them in their community, with the victims and the families. The families of those murdered daughters waited for us, but our committee never showed up. The committee went dark with the election, and my bill died on the order paper, letting down all the people who showed up for the IPV debate. They had their hopes in this government that they were going to take meaningful action. I did too.

And now, a year later, I'm debating a government justice bill that mentions intimate partner violence once in the preamble and never again in its eight schedules. One year later, the Renfrew inquest recommendations remain outstanding in Ontario. One year later, 100 municipalities have declared IPV an epidemic, but not this provincial government. One year later, survivors are mentioned only passively in a justice bill that does nothing to help them.

What a shame and embarrassment. We all carry that, even if you're the person who authored the original bill. I still get to wear these decisions.

During the intimate-partner-violence subcommittee hearings, we heard from the Ontario Crown Attorneys' Association. Now, Ontario crown attorneys are rarely able to speak freely, but since these association members are on leave to lead the association, they were able to tell us how the crown prosecutors are feeling.

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The lack of resources, alongside an increase in cases and increase in evidence brought on by digital evidence—texting, video, audio—makes devoting time required to properly prepare for the cases even more challenging. There is a need for a trauma-informed approach to trials and victim witness interviewing, but it also takes time and crown resources, which don't exist or are simply too slim.

If a trial is stayed, all the work, resources and re-traumatization on the part of the victim are for naught. Stays and lack of resources make the entire exercise very disheartening, not just for the survivors and the victims of crime, but for the crown attorneys, leading them to burn

out and want to leave the profession and the sector that they love so much. Experienced crowns are leaving due to the unduly stressful work environment making the problems worse. We need their experience, institutional memory and knowledge to make this the best justice system in Canada. I would love to see the government invest in the hiring and training of more crown attorneys. Victims deserve to work with a crown who has time to deal with their cases sensitively and who will take their case to trial without delays, if the court works.

The Ontario Bar Association has these recommendations—I'm actually very pleased to have met with the representatives from the Ontario Bar Association on many occasions. Most recently, they shared with me their top three recommendations for getting Ontario courts moving again. Surprise, surprise, not on that list was reducing judicial independence.

First on their list is that they acknowledged the critical nature of timely judicial appointments, which I understand this government is trying to do with their bill, but they additionally stated that those appointments need to reflect the diversity of Ontario, which don't exactly square with the Premier's wish to have all judges share his values. They coupled that call to process appointments quickly with the need for all court resources to grow alongside the increasing demands being placed on the courts. They specifically highlighted the need to ensure court staff are compensated at a level that allows for recruitment and retention. I couldn't have said it better.

Their additional recommendations are also intended not to be a stopgap, but a permanent solution. I really hope that this government will listen, because there are lots and lots of people with deep legal expertise that are coming forward with the solutions.

The bar association has asked us to consider a few more things, including allowing a standing fully remote court to deal with urgent one-day matters, taking the pressure off in-person courts. This would allow a smaller group of staff to become proficient in virtual court operations, improving efficiency and reducing errors. If this virtual court was to go ahead, the courts would need to provide spaces where the litigants who need technology and assistance or access to devices could go to make their virtual appearance.

The Ontario bar reiterated how critical it was to speed up our courts for the well-being of Ontario. They highlighted how gut-wrenching it is when cases, especially serious cases, are dismissed because of the Jordan decision.

They brought to my attention the issues children face when courts are backed up. Delays to child protection means that children remain in interim care, unable to return to their family home or be placed in a longer-term foster home. This is incredibly destabilizing and traumatizing for the children, who need a stable home and environment.

The delays in Family Court trap families in the most adversarial parts of divorce and custody proceedings, which can fracture parenting relationships forever. Some of you may have had a divorce. Some of you may have

been in those proceedings; I have not. But I have friends and loved ones who are in those situations, and it sounds horrible.

Worst of all, it's the children who suffer the most, and that scarring can be so deep and very difficult to repair. This is also when we see dangerous cases of family violence because of what is so challenging when a family is torn apart.

I want to thank the Ontario Bar Association for these recommendations. I know they have many more that they have delivered to this government, and I will do everything I can to make sure this government follows up and acts on those key recommendations.

Schedule 6, the Family Law Act, which talks about restraining orders and the procedures: This concerns family law as it expands who can apply to the court for a restraining order against a spouse, a former spouse or a person who is cohabitating or being cohabitated where a person fears for the safety or the safety of their child. Schedule 6 adds to this list of persons prescribed by the court and other persons, with leave of the court.

The government is claiming that this will increase tools to address intimate partner violence. While I think it's clear that the restraining order procedure in this province demands change, particularly to uphold the safety and sense of security experienced by victims of intimate partner violence, this bill simply doesn't go far enough.

We can take a look at the story of Cait Alexander, a story that I know that many in this house are now familiar with. Ms. Alexander was ultimately granted a restraining order after her criminal case was dropped before trial, and this restraining order continues to be a consistent drain on her life. After experiencing attempted murder at the hands of her ex-boyfriend in 2021, her criminal case was rescheduled twice before it was dropped due to the right to a trial within a reasonable time—again, the Jordan principle. All Ms. Alexander was provided was a restraining order against her ex-partner.

This exemplifies the disheartening reality of many victims of intimate partner violence. You can issue all the restraining orders you wish, but if they are not enforced due to the backlogs in the system, survivors, their friends and their families remain at risk. As I've said before in reference to Ms. Alexander's case, tough-on-crime rhetoric from this government means absolutely nothing if the courts are understaffed and the cases are being tossed out.

Ms. Alexander now lives in the USA. Apart from distance, the only protection she has is a peace bond, a year-long restraining order against the man who tried to kill her. Ms. Alexander is forced to travel back to Toronto every year to renew her restraining order. Not only is this costly in time and money, but it can be re-traumatizing for victims of intimate partner violence to have to return and relive the incident over and over and over again to ensure their safety.

Therefore, expanding the group of people who are eligible to obtain restraining orders is supportable, but there remains significant work to be done because it is intertwined, entirely coupled together, with the harrowing

court backlogs. Restraining orders do not substitute criminal trials as a direct result of the court backlogs. Restraining orders may be issued, but if the police and the court systems are too backlogged to enforce them and address the breaches when they occur—we know it happens often—then they aren't an effective tool at all.

Let's take a look at another story that just appeared this week. Ms. Seojin Kim was being stalked and harassed by a former boyfriend. Despite asking him to stop contacting her and blocking him, she says the calls, emails and texts were relentless: 450 missed calls, 11 voice mails and 500 emails in roughly six weeks. When she blocked his number, she says he called from a different line, and when she blocked his email, he created alternative addresses. Ms. Kim was forced to go to court to get a restraining order to keep herself safe.

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At the beginning of this month, the CBC reported on this story where Ms. Kim confirms that her ex-boyfriend was still contacting her and showing up to her home and place of work, despite Ms. Kim's court order against him. Even after the Ontario Superior Court granted Ms. Kim a protective order that barred contact, she expressed the challenges in enforcing it. She reported living "in constant fear." When she brought the protective order and evidence of breaches to the local police, she was told they were "too busy right now."

The executive director of Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic, a legal clinic with deep experience in supporting women harmed by gender-based violence, stated that Ms. Kim's interaction with police is "troubling" and highlights the need for systemic change: "Restraining orders are otherwise just a piece of paper if there's no follow-up possible in these situations." Ms. Deepa Mattoo says, "We want a reform in the system, a change in the system where restraining orders can actually have some better teeth."

Ms. Laura Snowdon, a lawyer leading a commission by the Law Commission of Ontario on protective orders and how they're being enforced, weighed in as well, stating, "Not only do women have to jump through significant procedural and evidentiary hurdles to even get a protection order ... but in cases where they're granted one, the rates of non-compliance are extremely high."

The troubling cases of Ms. Alexander and Ms. Kim reflect the need for systemic change in the justice system which is not contained in government Bill 10.

At the beginning of 2025, Ontario has over 45,000 pending criminal cases awaiting trial. This represents a 37% increase since this Conservative government came to power with a promise to fix what the Liberals broke. Instead of fixing the courts and improving access to justice, this government has made it significantly worse—much worse.

One thing this government can do to support survivors trapped in the court backlogs is to have the Attorney General prioritize intimate partner violence and sexual assault cases and mandate trauma-informed training. This government can do so much more to protect and support

survivors and victims. Instead, their failed justice system further harms and revictimizes survivors. How much longer do women and girls have to wait until this government takes the issue of intimate partner violence seriously enough to call it what it is, an epidemic?

I'm going to move on to schedule 7, the Highway Traffic Act, around auto theft. Absolutely, we need action to prevent auto theft: cracking down on re-VINing of stolen cars, working with manufacturers on new tracking technology and so much more.

What this bill is proposing is a piecemeal change when we need sweeping legislation. This bill makes it potentially illegal to possess a device that can be used to steal a car. These devices are commercially available. I can buy one on Amazon while sitting at my desk right here in the House. Not that I would go shopping on Amazon right now, but you get my point: easily accessible by anybody anywhere.

The question is, do these devices have legitimate uses for everyday people? If not, it would be prudent to restrict their availability. But if they do have legitimate uses, how will law enforcement differentiate between criminal actors and the people who are possessing these devices for legitimate personal or business reasons? I would like to have that fleshed out in the bill; it's not clear. As the bill grants police the ability to stop and search a vehicle without warrant if they have reasonable grounds to suspect these devices are being possessed, it really is crucial to have clarity about whether these devices have other uses and what criteria are used to determine who possesses them with the intention to steal.

I wish that this bill also worked out the frustrations that we have around organized crime that is protecting the VIN registry because of government inaction. Auto theft is a massive problem right now in Ontario. It's incredibly stressful for those who have lost their vehicles: they can't get to work, it's very expensive, they have to fight with their insurance companies, and it's just emotionally draining. Constituents who have experienced this have reached out to me sharing their own horrible stories about their cars being stolen from mall parking lots, from college campuses and from in front of their own homes. This has to be remedied, and this government should be working with local law enforcement, provincial-level strategists and manufacturers to fix this all too prevalent problem.

Manufacturers have a big role to play here. The modern keyless start technologies are the reason most of these cars are being stolen. Clearly, there is a reason at the design level here if organized criminals can intercept those wireless codes so easily and then steal a car. We have to bring in the manufacturers to increase the use of tamper-proofing this technology, and that will do a great deal to curb the activity.

Schedule 8 prescribes penalties to landlords who knowingly rent premises used in the production or trafficking of controlled substances or precursors to cannabis as well as possessing the proceeds. This relates to both residential and commercial properties. The question remains, what problem exactly is the government intending to solve with

this act? It raises a few questions of clarity that need to be unpacked, such as:

—whether or not the landlord knowingly rented the premises to those involved with drug trafficking or production;

—whether there is any consideration for those landlords who report or evict these tenants in terms of ensuring that they don't face backlash or threats to their safety; and

—how we are going to keep everybody who's involved in this safe.

Apart from the lack of clarity or any details, the provision ultimately fails to address the root problem. Penalizing landlords for knowingly renting to those trafficking or producing drugs will ultimately result in this production and trafficking moving and occurring elsewhere. You're pushing it underground.

There's more that needs to be unpacked with this bill, which is why this bill should go to committee. There's no reason why this should not happen. When it goes to committee, it should have the broadest range of public consultation.

But let's take a look at what else is missing in this bill because we know that this is not the only government bill that's come before us as it relates to justice. The government tends to tease out these types of solutions one at a time—it's like little strands; you've got to keep pulling at it from this ball of thread. But what's not here in this latest round of government measures is implementation of recommendations from multiple inquests: implementation of recommendations from the IPV subcommittee—early days, but we have already learned some things; implementation of the bar association's recommendations—we know that that's not there. And yes, I recognize that prevention can be unsexy. However, if this bill is not focused on prevention, then it falls short because it fails to address the other larger issues. Those other larger issues that keep our society safe and coherent are proper access and funding to schools, hospitals, public housing, social assistance and so much more.

The social determinants of health are exactly the same as the social determinants of safety. Investing in public services, investing in our systems, in our safety net, will make us all safer. Ensuring that kids grow up with enough to eat in stable homes where caregivers can afford to take care of them without having to turn to something else will make us safer. Funding organizations like the John Howard Society, the Elizabeth Fry Society will make us safer. Doing more to fix the court backlogs, to ensure that the bail compliance program is properly funded—all of those things will make us safer and stronger.

Thank you, Speaker. That concludes my remarks.

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The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Questions?

Ms. Laura Smith: When it comes to preventing violence against women, I respectfully submit—and I appreciate the member across, her conversations about GBV. We've also, as a government, funded a broad range of services, including 24-hour crisis lines; safety planning;

transitional housing supports; \$27 million over three years beginning in 2024 to enhance sexual assault and domestic violence; and \$6.4 million over three years beginning in 2024. I could go on and on.

But I guess my question is, it's clear that our government is on a track to continue its investments in communities, including this bill, and in the judicial system, as somebody who worked within it. This will speed up the process, whether it's GBV or auto theft. Quite simply, will you support this bill that will enhance our judicial system?

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Thank you very much to the wonderful member across for that question. This bill is entirely supportable as we send it to committee. What I have flagged in my remarks is that there are some gaping holes that I would like to see addressed through public consultation and through amendments. So let's get it off to committee, let's hear what the experts have got to say, and then let's do everything we can to work together to fix it.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you to the member for Toronto Centre for your one-hour lead. It is disturbing to learn that the majority of criminal cases in Ontario today are stayed, withdrawn, dismissed or discharged before a decision at trial. It's a 14% increase. It's significant.

I recently heard about Emily Quint. Emily's charge of sexual assault against her assailant was stayed because of unreasonable delays. I want to quote her. She said, "I never would have pursued the prosecution if I knew what I would have to go through."

So my question is to the member for Toronto Centre: What should be done to address the court backlogs that are resulting in cases being thrown out? And does this bill address some of those issues that we're seeing?

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Thank you very much to the member from University–Rosedale for that question—a very important question.

Things that can happen very quickly with respect to gender-based violence, IPV, is that we need to invest in the courts. We need to prioritize those cases—a special prosecution team to prioritize those cases so that they advance quickly, so we don't run up against the Jordan principle. That's just one quick thing that can be done. And it doesn't need a lot of legislative changes. It needs to be directed by the Attorney General.

The other thing, and the most important thing, is that this government has taken half a billion dollars out of the justice system in their fall economic statement. That is actually setting the foundation for a crumbling justice system, and that must be reversed.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Mr. Matthew Rae: Thank you to the member from Toronto Centre for their one-hour lead-off and deputation this afternoon on a very important piece of legislation. I know our colleagues in this place, on this side of the aisle, look forward to supporting this bill and taking it to committee. I was glad to hear that the member of the opposition will be supporting this bill, at least at this

reading stage, and sending it to committee and working through that process.

I am hopeful that this support will then extend to when we make those historic investments, the \$29 million that we made in last year's provincial budget to expand our court system and support getting that backlog down, cutting that. We're seeing that with timelines in a variety of initiatives across the government.

My question to the member opposite, Speaker, through you, is: Will they be supporting continued investments in our court system?

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Yes, thank you very much to the honourable member for that critical question. The court backlog in Ontario, as it stands in the first quarter of 2025, is 45,000 cases deep; \$29 million is simply not going to cut it. So, absolutely, we need that investment, plus so much more. When the government members challenge us to invest, absolutely we will and we should, but oftentimes, those budget measures that you put forward are inadequate, and you may see us voting against it because we're asking you to do more and calling on you to invest more.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I want to thank my friend and the member from Toronto Centre for their incredible presentation and the incredible work that they do on this file.

I have to say, the issue of auto theft came up, and if I've been compiling some of the Conservative government's greatest hits, I think that their ideas in the last session to give people a lifetime ban and put them on public transit instead of in jail was very interesting, and it kind of speaks to their priorities.

Another one of the greatest hits that I think they did which was harmful—surprisingly for them, of course—is cuts to legal aid. This was one of the first things they did. You talked about defunding the court systems, but they cut legal aid, putting huge financial barriers to people trying to access justice.

Can you talk a little bit about why this is not the right way forward and that finances and money should never be a barrier to justice?

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Thank you very much to the member from Humber River–Black Creek. Legal aid clinics have been coming forward year after year to talk about their constant defunding, especially as it butts up against inflation. Every year, they're being asked to do more with less, and the certificate program is not working for everyone. This is leading to a lot of self-representation in the courts, which, of course, can be very costly because there are people who are not informed with the system.

We are having a significant problem in addressing the court backlog, and by underfunding legal aid, this government is simply making it worse, and the solutions are not there, again, in this bill.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Mme Lucille Collard: Thank you to the member for Toronto Centre for her hour-lead. I was listening, and,

obviously, she understands the challenges that are a big concern in our court system. The lack of funding is an understatement, as far as I'm concerned.

I've come across some really particular cases in my own riding where somebody wanted to have access to a hearing in person. I know that the Attorney General's response to "We need to accelerate access by funding our courts better" has been "Everybody has got a phone, and they can do hearings on the phone." But that person didn't have a computer; only had a land line. She wanted a hearing in person. She never got her day in court, and she got a judgment *ex parte*. Have you encountered some similar cases in your own riding?

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Thank you very much to the member for that question. Absolutely, I've experienced those cases in my own community. Low-income individuals, seniors, people who don't have access to reliable devices or reliable WiFi who are not conversant with technology—they really struggle with online hearings. And despite the number of times that we've had anti-poverty legal organizations that have come forward and said, "You've got to change this. You've got to enable the in-person hearings," it just simply hasn't happened. That puts those individuals who are already disadvantaged at even further disadvantage, and that, again, is not addressed in this bill.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Mr. Anthony Leardi: With regard to in-person and other hearings, I can make a recommendation to this House, and that is that if you can get the legal aid clinic in partnership with your local library system, sometimes they'll set up a nice place in the library for people who don't have that kind of access to go to the library and get their access at the library—just a little tip there.

My question is this, regarding the ROPE program, Repeat Offender Parole Enforcement—that's a government-funded program that is funding specific teams to go out there and go after repeat offenders. It has been funded in the greater Essex county area. It's had some success. They've made approximately, I think, 62 arrests. Last time I checked, five of those were people guilty of intimate partner violence, having committed some very serious crimes.

It seems to me that our problem is not catching the criminals, it's keeping them in jail. I invite the member to comment: What does she think about that?

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: If I can just, off the top, speak to the suggestion around virtual hearings in libraries—that's a horrible idea, largely because there's no privacy in those libraries and these are very private matters. But it's also not addressing the chronic structural problem that we have in the courts.

Any solution that will actually bring forward sustainable outcomes that will keep our communities safer is a good thing. The problem is that the government continues to tamper in piecemeal, stopgap resolutions. It is not addressing the overall chronic problem, which is their defunding of the court system, and we need to be able to

fix that. It is not a partisan issue. We need to be able to address it because it's also a cornerstone of our judiciary.

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The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Further debate? I recognize the member from Ottawa–Vanier.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Good afternoon to you and the rest of the people who are sticking around this afternoon for this important debate.

I'm the critic for justice and also the proud representative of the good people of Ottawa–Vanier. That's why I'm rising today to speak to Bill 10, the Protect Ontario Through Safer Streets and Stronger Communities Act.

I also need to mention, before I go too much further, that I will be sharing my time with the member for Kanata–Carleton.

I'll begin by stating that I hear regularly from constituents in my riding, and particularly in the areas of Lower-town and the ByWard Market, and really, across Ottawa–Vanier, that crime is out of control and something has to be done. People literally told me during the election campaign that they were fed up with our government's lack of real action to deal with the consequences of unaffordable living. People do understand that people turning to crime or to drugs have issues that they need help with, and the lack of measures to help people is making everything worse and affecting everyone's quality of life.

Ontario Liberals are in full agreement that our streets need police, our courts need judges, and that those who commit serious crimes must face serious consequences.

An unfortunate trend under this government is a lack of investment in our court system, which has resulted in undue delays to trial and violent criminals being let out without a trial. All the tough-on-crime posturing in the world doesn't mean anything if the government doesn't get the basics right and ensure that violent criminals are taken off the streets. Austerity harms public safety, making our communities less safe and our justice system less fair.

The government presents this bill as offering broad improvements to our justice and public safety system. Yes, there are aspects of it that are worth careful discussion, but we also have a responsibility to dig deeper. Ontario Liberals insist that we examine what's not being said, to question the structures being proposed and to ask who gains power and who loses accountability in the process.

So, today, I speak not out of a position for its own sake, but out of concern for the principles that must guide our justice system. Those important principles are fairness, transparency, independence and public trust.

I listened closely to the Solicitor General's remarks yesterday on the proposed changes to Ontario's Community Safety and Policing Act. Bringing a law into force is only part of the job; the bigger challenge and the bigger responsibility is how we choose to shape and amend it. The Solicitor General described schedule 4 as a means of protecting police and fundamental rights. But rights are not protected through unchecked control by politically motivated ministers. They're protected through strong, independent institutions that answer to the people, not to politics.

Let me explain why schedule 4 raises serious concerns. Schedule 4 expands the minister's power to file complaints against police services and to request interim measures from the inspector general. On paper, that sounds reasonable, but let's remember: The inspector general was created to serve as an independent oversight body, not a tool of the elected government. When the minister of the day can direct interim action, like suspending officers and limiting duties, before a full investigation is even complete, we risk undermining the neutrality of oversight. No matter who holds office, police oversight must stay independent.

Much of schedule 4 isn't spelled out in the legislation; instead, it will be defined later by regulation. We don't know what interim measures will look like, we don't know how the minister's complaint process will work and we don't know how local voices will be involved in selecting new OPP commanders. This isn't just a lack of detail; it's a lack of accountability, because once those decisions move behind closed cabinet doors, the public has no way to engage, to object or to shape the rules. If this government truly values community safety, it should also value community input. Let's legislate transparently, not govern in the shadows.

When we speak of police oversight in Ontario, we must remember that the road to reform has been shaped by hard lessons, none more powerful than the tragedy at Ipperwash. I think it's worth some time to recall the facts: In 1995, Dudley George, an unarmed Indigenous man, was shot and killed by the Ontario Provincial Police during a land dispute in Ipperwash Provincial Park. A public inquiry, led by Justice Sidney Linden, found serious failings in how the government and police handled the situation—failings rooted in poor communication, lack of cultural understanding and, most importantly, the absence of strong civilian oversight and accountability.

The Ipperwash inquiry released in 2007 made sweeping recommendations for building trust between police and communities—particularly Indigenous communities—including calls for enhanced transparency, cultural competency and independent oversight mechanisms that are free from political interference.

Fast-forward a decade, and the work of Justice Michael Tulloch deepened that conversation. In both his 2017 independent police oversight review and the 2018 report on street checks, Justice Tulloch emphasized that public trust in police cannot exist without oversight bodies that are independent, transparent and community-informed. His recommendations included strengthening the independence of agencies like the Special Investigations Unit, the Office of the Independent Police Review Director and the Ontario Civilian Police Commission.

What both Justice Linden and Justice Tulloch made clear over a decade apart is this: Oversight must not be subject to political pressure; it must be robust, impartial and grounded in the lived experience of the most impacted by policing. Yet when we look at the changes proposed in schedule 4 of Bill 10, we see a troubling move away from those principles. That's why we must be vigilant to ensure

that the hard-won lessons of the past are not quietly undone by expedience or centralization of power.

I'm very concerned that schedule 4 pulls us backward as it centralizes power in Queen's Park and erodes the authority of local police boards and oversight institutions. That's not how we build trust; that's how we lose it. So I ask the government: If the goal is to improve responsiveness and accountability, why not do it in a way that strengthens oversight rather than politicizing it?

Madame la Présidente, lorsqu'on parle de surveillance des services policiers en Ontario, on ne peut ignorer les leçons douloureuses de notre histoire, à commencer par la tragédie d'Ipperwash. En 1995, Dudley George, un homme autochtone non armé, a été abattu par la Police provinciale de l'Ontario lors d'un conflit territorial au parc provincial Ipperwash. Une enquête publique dirigée par le juge Sidney Linden a révélé de graves lacunes dans la gestion de la situation par le gouvernement et les forces policières—des lacunes enracinées dans une communication déficiente, un manque de compréhension culturelle, et surtout, l'absence de mécanismes solides de surveillance civile indépendante.

Le rapport de l'enquête Ipperwash, publié en 2007, a formulé des recommandations majeures pour restaurer la confiance entre la police et les communautés—en particulier, les communautés autochtones. Ces recommandations comprenaient l'amélioration de la transparence, le renforcement de la compétence culturelle, et surtout, la mise en place d'organismes de surveillance véritablement indépendants du pouvoir politique.

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Plus récemment, les travaux du juge Michael Tulloch ont approfondi cette réflexion. Dans son examen indépendant de la surveillance policière de 2017, puis dans son rapport sur les contrôles de routine de 2018, le juge Tulloch a insisté sur un principe fondamental : la confiance du public envers les services policiers ne peut exister sans les organismes de surveillance indépendants, transparents et enracinés dans les réalités des communautés concernées. Il a recommandé spécifiquement de renforcer l'indépendance d'organismes clés, comme l'Unité des enquêtes spéciales, le Bureau du directeur indépendant de l'examen de la police et la Commission civile de l'Ontario sur la police.

Ce que les juges Linden et Tulloch nous ont clairement indiqué—à plus de 10 ans d'intervalle—c'est que la surveillance policière doit être à l'abri de toute influence politique, rigoureuse, impartiale et ancrée dans la communauté.

Et pourtant, Madame la Présidente, les changements proposés à l'annexe 4 du projet de loi 10 semblent s'éloigner dangereusement de ces principes. C'est pourquoi nous devons rester vigilants, pour ne pas voir les leçons durement acquises de notre passé être effacées au nom de la commodité ou de la centralisation des pouvoirs.

Madame la Présidente, je me permets de continuer en français pour souligner que les changements proposés dans l'annexe 4 ne sont pas seulement techniques; ils touchent aux fondements mêmes de la gouvernance

policrière et de la démocratie. L'un des principes essentiels de notre système de justice est que la surveillance des services policiers doit être exercée par des organismes indépendants—non par des ministres ou des représentants politiques. Lorsque le gouvernement propose de donner au ministre le pouvoir de demander des mesures intérimaires contre un corps policier, sans enquête complète, il brouille la ligne entre la responsabilité politique et la justice impartiale. Et si les détails de ces pouvoirs sont définis par règlement, sans débat public, sans transparence, alors c'est la population ontarienne elle-même qui est exclue du processus.

Nous devons également protéger le rôle des commissions locales des services policiers. Ces commissions représentent nos collectivités. Elles connaissent les enjeux locaux. Les marginaliser, c'est tourner le dos à la participation démocratique.

Enfin, Madame la Présidente, la confiance du public dans nos services policiers ne peut être imposée par le haut. Elle doit être gagnée par l'intégrité, la transparence et le respect des droits fondamentaux. Voilà pourquoi l'annexe 4, telle qu'elle est rédigée, mérite une sérieuse révision.

Madam Speaker, of all the schedules in Bill 10, schedule 5 may well be the most dangerous to the integrity of Ontario's institutions, because while other sections of the bill deal with administration, funding or oversight, this one touches something far more fundamental: the independence of our judiciary.

Let's be clear: What this government is proposing is not administrative housekeeping. It is not modernization. It is not efficiency. It is a direct assault on the principles of fairness, impartiality and the rule of law.

Under the current system, Ontario's judicial appointments process is widely respected—not just across Canada, but internationally—as a model of transparency and merit. It is administered by the Judicial Appointments Advisory Committee—commonly known as the JAAC—a body composed of legal experts, judges, community members and laypeople. This committee rigorously assesses each applicant through interviews, background checks and references and produces a ranked list of the most qualified candidates for any given judicial vacancy. This process was deliberately designed to keep politics out of the courtroom, but under Bill 10 that firewall comes down. Schedule 5 would eliminate the ranked short list, and instead the Attorney General would be given a much larger pool of names and be free to choose any of them with no obligation to select the most qualified candidate and no requirement to explain or justify their choice. What's more, the Attorney General would also have the power to rewrite the very criteria by which judicial candidates are evaluated. That power would be exercised through regulation, behind closed doors, without debate, without oversight and without transparency.

Madam Speaker, that is not how a democracy ensures fair courts; that is how a government stacks the bench. The potential consequences are chilling. Political loyalty may start to matter more than legal excellence. Judicial

appointments could begin to reflect the ideological preferences of the government of the day, rather than the best interests of justice or the needs of Ontarians. And slowly, quietly, but unmistakably, public confidence in our justice system will erode. We've seen this movie before. This government has a long and well-documented pattern of prioritizing political friends over professional qualifications. They've handed public contracts to donors, appointed party insiders to boards and agencies, and now they're coming for the courts.

This isn't just dangerous; it's anti-democratic. Let me remind this House what's at stake: Judicial independence isn't some elite legal theory. It's what guarantees that when Ontarians walk into a courtroom, whether they are a tenant, a worker, a survivor or someone seeking redress from the government, they will be treated fairly by a judge who is impartial, who earned their seat through merit, not connections. Once you politicize the bench, you politicize justice. That is why former judges, legal scholars and the Ontario Bar Association have sounded the alarm on this bill. That is why this government is facing resistance, not just from the opposition, but from the very people who've dedicated their lives to upholding the rule of law. Madam Speaker, the justice system is the backbone of our democracy; we undermine it at our peril. If this government refuses to reverse course, it will not just damage the courts; it will damage the very idea of justice in Ontario.

Madame la Présidente, parmi toutes les annexes du projet de loi 10, l'annexe 5 soulève sans doute les préoccupations les plus graves. Car ici, il ne s'agit pas simplement de logistique ou de gestion, il s'agit de l'indépendance de notre système judiciaire. Soyons clairs : ce que propose le gouvernement n'a rien à voir avec une mise à jour administrative. Ce n'est pas une question d'efficacité ou de modernisation; c'est une attaque directe contre les principes d'équité, d'impartialité et de primauté du droit.

Aujourd'hui en Ontario, le processus de nomination des juges est largement reconnu—pas seulement au Canada mais à l'international aussi—comme l'un des plus transparents et fondés sur le mérite. Ce processus est administré par le Comité consultatif sur les nominations à la magistrature. Ce comité est composé d'experts du droit, de juges, de représentants communautaires et de citoyennes et citoyens ordinaires. Le comité évalue rigoureusement chaque candidat, mène des entrevues, vérifie les références et produit une liste restreinte et classée des personnes les plus qualifiées. Ce système a été conçu expressément pour garder la politique en dehors des tribunaux. Mais, avec le projet de loi 10, cette protection s'effondre. L'annexe 5 éliminerait la liste restreinte. Le procureur général recevrait à la place un bassin élargi de noms, parmi lesquels il pourrait choisir librement, sans obligation de sélectionner la personne la plus qualifiée, ni d'expliquer sa décision. Pire encore, le procureur général aurait aussi le pouvoir de redéfinir lui-même les critères de sélection, par voie de règlement, à huis clos, sans consultation, sans débats, sans transparence.

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Madame la Présidente, ce n'est pas ainsi qu'une démocratie protège l'impartialité de ses tribunaux. C'est ainsi qu'un gouvernement politise la magistrature. Les conséquences potentielles sont inquiétantes. La loyauté politique pourrait primer sur la compétence juridique. Les nominations judiciaires pourraient refléter les préférences idéologiques du gouvernement, plutôt que les intérêts des citoyennes et des citoyens, et progressivement, la confiance du public dans la justice s'effriterait. Ce n'est pas nouveau. Ce gouvernement nous a déjà montré qu'il préfère nommer des alliés politiques plutôt que des professionnels qualifiés. Il a attribué des contrats publics à ses donateurs, placé des amis du parti sur des conseils d'administration, et maintenant, il vise nos tribunaux.

Madame la Présidente, ce n'est pas seulement dangereux, c'est antidémocratique. L'indépendance judiciaire n'est pas une notion abstraite. C'est ce qui garantit qu'en entrant dans une salle de cour, qu'on soit locataire, travailleur, survivant ou citoyen en conflit avec l'État, on sera traité équitablement par un juge impartial, nommé selon ses compétences et non selon ses relations politiques.

Politiser les nominations, c'est politiser la justice. C'est pourquoi les anciens juges, les experts en droit et l'association du Barreau de l'Ontario ont tous sonné l'alarme. Ils ont raison. L'indépendance judiciaire n'est pas un luxe. C'est une assurance démocratique, et une fois qu'on la fragilise, il est très difficile de la restaurer.

Madame la Présidente, la justice est la colonne vertébrale de notre démocratie. Ce gouvernement joue avec des fondations qu'il ne comprend manifestement pas ou qu'il choisit d'ignorer.

Madam Speaker, this is not a question of whether we want safer streets or stronger communities—we all do. But safety cannot come at the cost of transparency, and strength cannot be built on concentrated power. Rather than shifting more and more power into their Conservative ministers' offices, the government should focus on getting the basics right. That means investing in the system to make trials prompt, fair and effective. It also means addressing the root causes of crime. Our neighbours deserve to live safe from violence and we need a serious, evidence-based approach to see tangible reductions in crime.

Across multiple schedules in this bill, we actually see a pattern: shifting authority away from independent bodies and towards executive decision-makers; delegating critical choices to regulations instead of open debate; and treating oversight not as a democratic necessity, but as a bureaucratic inconvenience. That's not how you build a fair and accountable system.

So I urge the government to do real work in committee. Let's bring in legal experts, community leaders and Ontarians from all walks of life to help us get this right. Because what we're hearing right now is that this isn't good enough, and public safety won't be improved by politicizing the justice system.

Justice is not about expedience; it's about principle. All Ontarians deserve fairness from their government. Merci. Thank you. Meegwetich.

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

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: I'd like to start my debate by acknowledging and celebrating the fact that next week is National Police Week. May 11 to 17 is a great time for everyone in the House to acknowledge the excellent work that the police have been doing across our country and how they have worked tirelessly to provide the safety and the community that Ontarians and Canadians are so grateful for. This is important, difficult work that needs support from all sectors, a work that is inspired by those who wish to help people and help communities, and a work that is deeply based in service.

It's police service like this that gives us in government an incredible duty of care to provide legislation that makes meaningful difference in the capacity, in the safety and in the resilience of our officers.

This bill has serious and concerning deficiencies. Like my colleague mentioned, I have serious concerns about the implications of this bill and how it inserts politicians and ministers into the business of law enforcement.

We owe our officers the absolute clarity of a rigorously and powerfully independent judicial and law enforcement system. That is the system where their service is given the respect it deserves.

Any attempts to politicize, influence and insert ideology into justice and policing does a grave disservice to those who serve. It becomes a burden on them to make them question whether they can trust their actions are free from favour or bias.

From my time in the Canadian Armed Forces, I know that service in uniform is a deeply personal relationship with your job, one where your integrity is central to your duty. Political interference additions and motives that aren't publicly tested and clear but are rather hidden away in ministerial directions burden and distract from the clear and proper work that serves our communities. Someone not on the ground interfering, getting in the way, handing down directions from on high, especially those for political reasons, is step one towards a disaster.

I found the Premier's comments about ideology in the judicial system absolutely disgusting. Now more than ever, we politicians must take every action to strengthen our institutions, not to degrade them or ridicule them for political gain. It is so important that we defend the strength of our three branches of government. This can be a teaching moment for the Premier to remember that the courts are the institution that protects the rule of law that protects Ontarians and protects Ontarians' rights.

In the Legislature, we make the laws. We're in the process of doing that right here, right now, but the executive, the ministers, are the ones who wield the power of the government, making orders, passing regulations. They are held in check by a strong and independent court system, judges who are able to tell them no, who will

protect our charter rights from laws, regulations or actions that go too far.

I'm joined in my concern by the Chief Justice of the Ontario Court of Appeal, the Chief Justice of the Ontario Court of Justice and the Chief Justice of the Ontario Superior Court in my condemnation of these reckless and undemocratic statements.

For the Premier to say that judges are being ideological or implying that they don't have the right to tell him no is either a grossly negligent understanding of the separation of powers and a misunderstanding of how judges can exercise oversight over the government or it is a point-blank rejection of Ontario's charter rights and the processes that protect them.

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I want to quote the joint statement from the three chief justices: "An independent judiciary protects the public, not" the "judges." It means that you live in a society governed by the rule of law. The Premier is more interested in the laws he could hand down than the laws of the land, and when it comes to our charter rights or his politics, he has picked politics time and time again.

Speaker, I was appalled when this government was the first and only Ontario government to ever use the "notwithstanding" clause. The Premier stands as the first to step away from a long tradition of our deep and abiding respect for Ontarians' charter rights. Again, he's insistent on personal party politics over respecting that things will always go his way. We need to step up for people's rights and their capacity to rule in such a way that everyone is treated fairly with respect and dignity.

A cautionary tale that is on everyone's mind these days is the constant and unprecedented abuses of power south of the border. Not only has the leader of the United States similarly railed against judges and accused them of bias, but he has inserted political appointees into law enforcement positions and he continues to use them to serve political purposes. Our neighbours to the south—it has escalated to a terrible conclusion which, in my opinion, is a complete degradation of due process that has gone as far as affecting Canadians who try to enter the United States.

These days, every single possible action should be taken to inspire confidence in our justice system. Putting more power in the hands of ministers behind closed doors is absolutely the wrong step to be taking to strengthen the independence of our legal system. The independence that is the backbone of democracy is more at risk today than it has been in decades. Do you want your politicians to be able to tell your police forces whose politics to prosecute and whose to protect? I don't think you do.

Other than giving ministers more power over a judiciary and police, the real meat of this bill is completely useless for the people on the streets and for our officers who are trying to enforce the law. The suggestion that this bill would give us safer streets and stronger communities is just politics. It's not based on reality or even common results. Real community safety and strength would come from increased resources that prevent the determinants of

criminal behaviour rather than only tools to address the fallout.

My mother would say, “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.” How many of us here have heard that? And yet this government continues to focus on prosecution instead of prevention.

We all know that the data—the evidence, the science, the statistics and the testimony of lived experience—says that, time and time again, the place to invest your money is in prevention. You will get far more of a return if you invest in prevention than if you invest in prosecution, but that’s not the direction this government is choosing to go.

I don’t like to see a government that actually has been part of causing some of the problems that we’re experiencing today. The underfunding of the court—and now we’re seeing the politicization of the judiciary. That will cause us problems in the future unless we address it right here, right now.

This government talks a lot about bail as being the problem, but the federal government did strengthen bail laws. But by underfunding our current detention and court system and judges, the backlog simply pushes people out of the system, back onto the streets.

Our job here is to do risk analysis: to read the legislation and to understand what the potential risk and consequences are. With such a huge and varied bill like this, there are so many changes to both the judiciary and to policing that we don’t know the consequences of the cumulative changes that this government is suggesting that we implement. While a small individual change might be fine, the overall result can be an overreach of political influence that leads to an authoritarian bent, and we don’t want that.

This bill inserts extra influence of regulations and the OPP detachment board on the selection of detachment commanders. I really would like to know what the ministry plans to add as regulations. Why should politics be interfering in these types of police decisions?

I also have concerns about the interim measures that the minister can request of the inspector general. What kind of cases would require intervention with the due process of the inspector general’s investigation? I don’t have an answer to that question, but I’d like to have one.

Madam Speaker, our enforcement and judicial systems are so crucial to our community well-being. They are so crucial to the future of our democracy. They are so crucial to our functioning as a province, as a community, as a country, that I worry that fragmentary, reactive—in my opinion, ill-considered—politically motivated changes such as these are not the right way forward.

We need real, substantive improvements to our judicial, our court and our law enforcement systems and the guidelines that govern them, but it will take consultation; it will take co-operation; it will take comprehensive study and time.

Accountability and oversight are key to the future health of our judicial and law enforcement systems.

Madam Speaker, this piece of legislation is an amalgam of a whole bunch of ideas—we can’t even see where each

one individual fits into the overall system, because nobody has done that work, and I think that’s going to be our number one concern. We know what we want our judicial system, our law enforcement system to work like, and we are going to make sure that those kinds of questions that I mentioned—we need answers, because we can’t support this until those kinds of questions are answered.

On that, I would like to say thank you to my colleagues for listening. I look forward to future discussions on this bill.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Mr. Anthony Leardi: Just looking at one of the schedules of this particular bill and it was the schedule which pertained to the Family Law Act. What the schedule does—I want to give the member an opportunity to flip to it if she has the chance—is it empowers courts to issue an order telling somebody to do something or to not do something. I think that’s important, especially when it comes to parties that have separated and then have commenced cohabitation with another partner. It allows the court to tell that other partner to stop communicating with either a child or one of the litigants involved. I think that’s a useful exercise for the court to engage in. I think it’s very important and I invite any member to comment on that usefulness.

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Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: I thank the honourable member for his question. There are parts of this bill that are very useful. There are parts of this bill that absolutely make some sense. But the idea of not knowing exactly how it’s going to fit and how it’s going to be used: What guidelines are we putting in place so that those powers are used responsibly? I think that’s what we’re looking for. We could see situations where certain powers would be applicable, but how do we make sure it’s carried out in a way that does conform with due process in this province.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Thank you to the member for her remarks in this debate; very, very important and extremely informative.

I’m going to ask you about the changes that are proposed in schedule 1 around surety. What we’ve heard repeatedly from the legal sector is the need to ensure that bail compliance and supervision is prioritized by this government to keep our streets safe. And we know that there are a number of other measures that can be taken to ensure that bail works most effectively. This government is taking a different approach. They’re asking to expand and allow for additional sureties. Do you think that that is the way the government should be prioritizing what the legal community has asked for, which has not been what’s contained in schedule 1 right now?

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: I thank the honourable member for her question. When I see the increased sureties, like financial, I think that’s always the easy route. It’s the easy route. Give them a fine; make them pay more

in bail. But it actually doesn't end up solving the problem in the long run.

I think there are going to be needed changes, because we do need supervision, but I think there are better ways of doing it than sureties. I don't think the increase in the sureties will actually get us the results that we want.

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

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Nice to see you there.

I have a question for the member from Kanata—Carleton. I was really intrigued by what you said about your mother's advice, actually, and the importance of prevention. I'm wondering if you could elaborate a little bit on that and if you feel this government should heed your mother's advice, since they're not listening to Ontarians.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: I'd like to thank the honourable member for her question. I do try and heed my mother's advice, and I do believe that prevention is the key. My mother was right, but the interesting thing is, all of the science and data and evidence and statistics that have come out over the years have proven, time and time again, that she is correct: that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

And so there are things that we do need to tweak in our system, but really, making sure that prevention—and I don't see that on many of the government's bills that they're putting forward—very, very little attention to prevention, even in terms of emergency response and things like that.

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

Ms. Laura Smith: Thank you for both of the members' statements. I appreciate what they brought to the table, especially when we get into the nuggets of this bill, the different schedules.

I was very pleased, when I looked at this bill for the first time, that it included a tweak in Christopher's Law. For all those in the House who are wondering what Christopher's Law is, it's basically the Sex Offender Registry, which goes to protect our most vulnerable citizens: our children. I was a proud supporter, and I actually worked on this bill in the last session. One of the things that they do is they widen that scope, which helps to really tighten up our judicial system in dealing with these bad actors—and I'm using the term "bad actors" very lightly here. We're talking about sex offenders.

In this spirit, I'm wondering if either one of the members want to comment on the tweak that's happening, or the modification, in Christopher's Law. And do you agree that this bill is going to help increase support for our judicial system?

M^{me} Lucille Collard: I do appreciate the question from the member, who is also from the legal community, if I'm not mistaken.

Interjection.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: No, not so much? Okay. You sounded like you knew—so I was a little bit surprised that

you would actually lend your support to some of the provisions that are in that bill.

The provision you're referring to about Christopher's Law is actually one of the good things in the bill that we can support, but given the rest of the bill and some of the real concerns that we've just explained at length, I think, along with the member from the NDP—I think they're worth consideration. That's why I said in my remarks, given that there are concerns not only from the opposition members, but also from the legal community, from Chief Justices, from the Canadian Bar Association, from other legal experts, I certainly hope that this bill, when it makes its way to committee—and I certainly hope that it will—that we will listen to those people and make this bill the best version that it can be.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

M^{me} Sandy Shaw: Ma question cet après-midi est pour la députée d'Ottawa—Vanier. J'ai vraiment apprécié votre discours cet après-midi. J'ai appris beaucoup. Merci pour ça.

Vous avez mentionné Dudley George et Stony Point. C'était vraiment une tragédie. J'espère que nous avons appris une leçon après ça, mais apparemment pas. Ce n'est pas le cas, parce que maintenant ce projet de loi érode la fondation de notre système de justice—our faith in it, our belief that it is free from political interference. Surtout, quand on parle de Dudley George et de ce qui est arrivé là, ce n'était pas seulement le « justice system », mais c'était le bureau du premier ministre, de Mike Harris, qui a dit cette fois-là : « Get those Indians out of the park. » Est-ce qu'on a vraiment gagné des leçons de cette tragédie-là?

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Merci pour la question. J'apprécie vraiment également pouvoir m'exprimer en français en Chambre parce qu'il y a une certaine facilité qui vient avec ça. Mon background est en droit. Je suis avocate de profession. Je ne sais pas, des fois, pourquoi j'ai décidé de m'en aller en politique, parce que je faisais du travail qui avait peut-être un plus gros impact en étant avocate, surtout quand on est dans l'opposition.

Évidemment, ce que ces recommandations-là ont fait, ce que nous apprend l'histoire, c'est que c'est important d'écouter la communauté, d'avoir des consultations et de ne pas politiser les processus.

Quand on parle de notre corps de police, c'est important, le travail qu'ils font, mais c'est encore plus important qu'il soit « groundé » dans les communautés, et pour ça, on a besoin d'extraire le gouvernement des processus qui dirigent le système de police pour écouter plus—

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

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Mr. Billy Pang: I'm honoured to rise today to speak on behalf of the government about the Protect Ontario Through Safer Streets and Stronger Communities Act. This new legislation is building on the initiatives we have taken in the Safer Streets and Stronger Communities Act last year and is part of our ongoing commitment to keep communities safe and to protect Ontario.

During this past election, I was going door to door, talking to people in my community of Markham–Unionville. Across the community, people shared with me their concerns about the rising crime in Ontario. Constant news stories of repeating offenders out on bail caught committing more crime, or hearing about their neighbours getting cars stolen has left people scared for their families.

We know crime is changing. Whether it's auto theft, drug crime or online attacks, the people of Ontario want a justice system that can keep up. They want action. They want to know that the courts, the police and our laws are working together to keep them safe. This is why our government must keep moving forward.

With this new legislation, we are taking targeted action to keep the people of Ontario safe in their communities by increasing tools to address serious crimes. These new measures will help give our justice system the tools it needs to better protect Ontario families and communities. I'm proud to stand here today to speak to this legislation that is taking real action—like tougher bail rules, more judges and stronger laws to fight crime.

If passed, we will be able to improve bail collection and start the process for a comprehensive review of the bail system, explore legislative options to crack down on illicit drug production and trafficking and to continue to combat auto theft by making a dedicated major auto theft prosecution response team permanent.

If passed, this legislation will allow us to increase tools to address intimate partner violence by amending the Family Law Act and Children's Law Reform Act to make family law restraining orders against abusers more accessible; to make the justice system more effective by allocating 17 new judges to the Ontario Court of Justice; and proposing amendments to the Courts of Justice Act to streamline the process for judicial appointments. These proposals will strengthen our justice partners on all levels, ensuring they have the tools they need to combat crime and protect Ontario.

I want to share some of these important new changes and how they build on existing measures that our government has taken to fight crime and keep Ontario safe.

This legislation is part of tackling crime on all fronts, including cybercrime. We are stepping up to the challenge of regulating technology within the law. Though there are many great benefits from improved innovative technologies, there are people out there using it to take advantage of others and commit crimes. For example, while newer technology on cars provides enhanced features, thieves can take advantage of the technology to block signals to remote car locking keys, rendering them useless.

We know that crime no longer happens just on the streets, but in the digital world as well. Ontario has seen a dramatic increase in the amount of cybercrime. The criminal element is far more sophisticated now than ever before with countless high-profile cyber attacks and cyber-related offences impacting the lives of Ontarians. Nearly all criminal activity nowadays, from auto theft to guns-and-gangs-related crime, is facilitated by technology. This is why our government is taking decisive action to bolster

the prosecution of these criminals. We created a new permanent cybercrime and cryptocurrency prosecution team to ensure police and prosecutors have the technical knowledge and expertise needed to handle cases properly. This team is the first of its kind in Canada with specialized, dedicated crown prosecutors who are specifically trained in the unique factual, technical and legal issues inherent in technology-based crimes. These crowns provide pre-charge advice to the various police cybercrime units, assist in asset recovery and prosecute complex and novel cybercrime cases. The team receives cases directly from police services across the province and works with the police from the early stages of an investigation to trial. This builds on the important changes made through the Strengthening Cyber Security and Building Trust in the Public Sector Act, 2024.

Last year, we introduced measures to strengthen safeguards for children's personal information and lay the foundation for the ethical use of artificial intelligence in the public sector. This includes safeguarding the data of children and youth from being stolen with stronger privacy protection in schools. We've taken measures to strengthen cyber security in the public sector, including hospitals, schools and children's aid societies. This has helped these organizations rapidly respond to cyber threats and attacks and minimize service interruptions.

Through the Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery and Procurement, we have made significant steps to modernizing privacy protection through increasing the authority of the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario to investigate and respond to privacy breaches and incorporate the use of personal data, and mandating organizations to complete privacy impact assessments. Now, through this new legislation, we are taking proactive measures to ensure our justice system is modernizing and has the technology and the technical expertise in place to deal with changing technology.

Speaker, our government was given a strong mandate, and we are making historic efforts to modernize our justice system to keep up with the growing threat of crime in Ontario. Our government is taking action to ensure the sustainability of the criminal justice system and to keep people safe. Ontario is investing over \$29 million this year to appoint a minimum of 25 new judges to the Ontario Court of Justice and hire 190 more crown prosecutors and victim support and court staff. This new funding builds on the \$72 million that we announced in 2021 to improve our criminal courts. Our government has made historic investments to respond to the evolving demands of the justice system with new and innovative measures.

Through our Criminal Justice Digital Design projects, we are building a new digital justice platform. This includes a digital evidence management program to support criminal investigations and prosecutions. This is speeding up the process of filing charges, making it easier to access case information, to connect to hearings virtually and manage court appearances more efficiently. We are building up our courts by making sure they have the staff, resources and tools to be more efficient and effective.

Anyone who has spent time in courts understands how important these measures are for processing cases and improving our justice system. Now we are allocating an additional 17 judges to the Ontario Court of Justice to help cases move through the system quicker and more efficiently.

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We are proposing changes that would allow a new pool-based recommendation process that would speed up the appointments process. By modernizing the judicial appointments process, we will have a larger number of qualified, vetted candidates ready to be appointed. Filing judicial appointments more quickly means fewer delays for people waiting for their day in court, increasing access to justice for all Ontarians.

When it comes to bail in this province, we are constantly working with law enforcement and our justice sector partners to find new solutions and build a better system. Earlier this year in January, we announced the bail compliance dashboard that will allow police services to monitor, consolidate and share information related to individuals on bail for firearms-related offences, including offender release addresses. The dashboard is part of the government's \$112-million investment over the next three years to strengthen the province's justice system and ensure that high-risk and repeat violent offenders strictly comply with their bail conditions.

In January 2024, our government announced an investment of \$24 million over three years to support projects under the Bail Compliance and Warrant Apprehension Grant to help prevent repeat and violent offenders from committing serious crimes while out on bail.

Our government has been a national leader in advocating for strong bail laws with our federal counterparts and has made significant investments to strengthen Ontario's bail system. We have invested \$48 million into the expansion of the OPP Repeat Offender Parole Enforcement Squad. We invested \$26 million to create intensive serious violent crime bail teams within the court system to ensure there are dedicated prosecutors and subject matter experts to prepare for, and properly conduct, the often lengthy and complex bail hearings.

The measures we have introduced are targeted, comprehensive and designed with law-abiding citizens in mind. We are giving our partners the resources and tools they need to reduce violence and protect our communities now and in the future.

And now, with this new legislation, we intend to introduce changes to the Bail Act which, if passed, would improve collection in cases where the accused has breached the conditions of their bail. We will also carry out a comprehensive review of the province's bail system to make it real and consequential through better tracking of repeat offenders, improved administration and possible use of cash payments. These immediate changes will allow us to make better use of powerful collection tools when bail conditions have been breached. We are confident that these changes will have a real impact on public safety.

Another key aspect of this new legislation is the expansion of our justice centres. Justice centres help reduce recidivism, increase community safety and address the root causes of crime by moving certain criminal cases out of the traditional courtroom and into a community setting. They hold offenders accountable while using wraparound services to stabilize youth and adult offenders, including those with addictions, homelessness and mental health issues, to prevent them from cycling through the justice system. Justice centres work together with the courts to hold offenders accountable while connecting them to services that reduce the risk of re-offending and promote community safety and well-being, improving the outcomes of both individuals and communities.

The expansion of justice centres is informed by collaboration with the community, Indigenous leadership, municipalities and key stakeholders, including the police and the Ontario Court of Justice.

We are excited about the expansion that would include:

- a new dedicated facility for the Toronto Downtown East justice centre, a first-of-its-kind hybrid health and justice centre that will provide wraparound recovery for those facing homelessness, mental health and addictions challenges;

- a new justice centre and community campus model in Barrie, designed to reflect the complex needs of the community;

- a new justice centre in Timmins, the first in north-eastern Ontario, following calls from community and Indigenous leadership;

- a new dedicated facility to house the London justice centre that will include a new young adult integrated intimate partner violence model;

- a new youth justice centre model in Toronto to process all youth cases across all Toronto police divisions through satellites in high-needs communities;

- an Indigenous-led community kitchen and employment skills training program within the Kenora justice centre for youth and young adults to create pathways out of the criminal justice system.

By providing social services and using restorative-justice practices, justice centres support improved outcomes for people involved in the justice system and help offenders, victims and communities heal and grow in the aftermath of a crime.

Speaker, protecting Ontario means keeping our families and communities safe from the threat of crime. Our government was given a strong mandate because Ontarians want a government that is committed to pushing back against violent criminals and to do what it takes to keep our communities safe. With this legislation, we are proposing stronger measures to improve the efficiencies of our courts and to stop the revolving-door style of criminal activity that puts the people of Ontario at risk.

Since 2018, we have worked each year across ministries to build a better Ontario and make the right changes and best investments to support our communities, from technological advancements, bail reform and making sure the systems are in place to uphold justice. We are making

sure the resources and tools are in place for law enforcement and prosecutors to do their job, with stronger bail teams, tighter monitoring and faster action in the courts.

We made a promise to protect Ontario, and that is exactly what we are doing.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Given that the bill increases the number of people that the Attorney General can appoint, given that the head of the appointments committee is actually a former staffer—there are two former staffers on that committee—and given that one of them is actually a lobbyist for a gun manufacturer, which is quite interesting, can you explain to me how the important separation between the law and applying the law and political influence is going to be protected?

How are you going to protect that separation between political influence and following the law?

Mr. Billy Pang: Thank you to the member for the question. As a government, we always want to protect Ontario and Ontarians, so all these appointments under the Protect Ontario Through Safer Streets and Stronger Communities Act include amendments to the Courts of Justice Act that, if passed, would ensure a more effective justice system by improving the process for judicial appointments.

If passed, these changes would include shifting to a pool-based recommendation process. This would increase the number of applicants available to be selected for various judicial positions.

So, we have a committee—we have a government that wants to protect Ontarians. That's why we are appointing more judges to serve in the courts to protect Ontario. Thank you very much.

1530

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

I recognize the member from Thornhill.

Ms. Laura Smith: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I want to thank the member for his comments. He talked a little bit about justice centres and the tools that are available in justice centres that really prioritize and reduce recidivism. I'm wondering if you could talk to us about this implementation.

Mr. Billy Pang: Thank you, member, for the question. This centre, basically supported by the community, would work with the local stakeholders so that we can keep in touch with different communities. As I mentioned earlier in my speech, we are working with the local communities and different particular people groups, including Indigenous, including from the northeast, so that we can put down-to-earth justice centres in different areas to help those who are being prosecuted or the victims, so that they can receive down-to-earth services.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

I recognize the member from Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you, Speaker. I'm interested to know: In schedule 5 of the bill, under judicial

appointments—schedule 5 prohibits new judges from requesting a transfer to a new court location for the first five years following their appointment unless extenuating circumstances apply.

Could you tell me, if a court in northern Ontario is in need of a bilingual judge, would that qualify as extenuating circumstances where a bilingual judge from someplace else but hasn't been there for five years would be allowed to fulfill the requirement of the French Language Services Act to have a bilingual court with a bilingual judge?

Mr. Billy Pang: Thank you for the question. "Bilingual" is our government's very important initiative. That's why we have francophones in our public systems, and when we are proposing the change, we're doing our best to strengthen Ontario's court system by streamlining the process for judicial appointments. So timely judicial appointments are crucial to reducing delays and backlogs and preventing cases from being stayed.

The key is, on one hand, we need to take care of the language, but more importantly we need to streamline the process for judicial appointments so that we have more judges, more staff, more support and resources to deal with the backlog. If this change is passed, it will also continue to maintain the integrity of the process while shifting to a pool-based approach in order to further speed up those streamlined appointments so that the AG can commend the candidates classified by the independent—

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

I recognize the member for Orléans.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Thank you very much for your presentation.

Through the bill, the criteria for appointing judges gets very concentrated within the authority of the Attorney General, and given both his public comments and the Premier's public comments about appointing judges who are more like the Premier from a political and ideological perspective—in fact, even going so far as electing judges—I'm wondering if you think that the provisions in this bill concentrate too much political power within the Attorney General's office and risk undermining the independence of the judiciary?

Mr. Billy Pang: Thank you, member, for the question. This appointment, if passed, would continue to maintain the integrity of the process while shifting to a pool-based approach in order to further speed up the streamlining of appointments. So the AG can only commend candidates classified by the independent JAAC as highly recommended for the appointment. This would not change under the new pool-based system that we are proposing. Even the federal government uses a pool-based process to select candidates for judicial appointments. So candidate classifications are also retained for three years. Our government's proposed changes mirror the federal judicial appointment process, and we will continue to ensure transparency in the recommendation process.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Mr. David Smith: I want to thank the member from Richmond Hill for his—

Interjections: Markham.

Mr. David Smith: Sorry, Markham.

The bail system is a shared responsibility between the federal government and the provinces and the territories. What changes can we make without federal approval?

Mr. Billy Pang: Thank you to the member for the question. Public safety is and always will be a top priority of the government. We are taking action to address concerns regarding the current bail system. Our government has introduced changes to the Bail Act that, if passed, would improve collection in cases where the accused have breached the conditions of their bail.

We'll also carry out a comprehensive review of the province's bail system to make it consequential through better tracking of repeat offenders and improved administration and possible use of cash payments.

We will work closely with the federal government. We will continue to advocate that the federal government make changes to the Criminal Code to strengthen bail requirements, including changes to the procedure for bail forfeiture. So we are taking bold action to keep Ontario safe, protect our most vulnerable and build a more effective justice system.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I was pleased to see that schedules 2 and 6 of this bill make some changes that will increase protections for victims of intimate partner violence. I was surprised, however, that the changes that the government has made don't align with any of the recommendations that came out of the Renfrew coroner's inquest, which had made the number one recommendation to declare intimate partner violence an epidemic in this province and come up with a plan and resources to combat it.

Can the member tell me why the government did not implement the recommendations from the Renfrew coroner's inquest and apparently did not listen at all to the many delegations who appeared before the sexual violence committee that the justice committee was engaged in?

Mr. Billy Pang: Thank you, member, for the question. Ontario is making significant effort to help prevent and address gender-based violence so that those affected by violence will receive support while offenders are held accountable through the justice system.

In December 2023, we announced an Ontario action plan to end gender-based violence, our four-year action plan to better respond to GBV, build faster, healthier communities and support women's well-being and economic opportunities. This plan—

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: This is always a privilege, to stand in my place on behalf of the people of Waterloo. I feel very privileged that they sent me back to this Legislature with over 50% of the vote. It's a responsibility that I take very seriously. It's a heavy responsibility.

Interjection.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Oh, thank you very much, Sandy.

Before I start, with the Legislature's indulgence, I just want to let the House know that we lost a very special person in our community: Kari Williams. She was a region of Waterloo councillor. She died following a long fight with cancer. She was just 40 years old. Kari was known as a passionate, active community builder. She was elected to represent Kitchener in 2022. She brought more than 10 years of political research experience to her role as an elected representative, and her master's degree in political science and research from Wilfred Laurier University provided her with valuable insight into poverty reduction strategies that served her well within our own community.

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Kari was described as a shining light by her council colleagues, and she was definitely a stellar example of what public service should be. Our community, especially in the Stanley Park area, is diminished by her loss. Her friend and colleague, Stephanie Stretch, said that she did friendship well, and all of us know that we need friends in politics, for sure, because this is not an easy job on a good day.

So my thoughts and prayers are with Kari's husband, Nathan; her kids, Piper and Bennett; and her many loved ones. She will be sadly missed.

Interjection.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you.

Bill 10—well, where do you start with a piece of legislation that misses the mark so profoundly? I want to tell the House that in the province of Ontario—let me just lay out the problem and explain why Bill 10 is so insufficient and unambitious to address crime in the province of Ontario.

When I brought forward Lydia's Law—Lydia is a young woman in my riding, but she had experienced sexual assault and then she experienced the trauma, really, of Ontario's court system. This is a young woman who experienced violence by a family member, and then she found herself embroiled in a court system that did not meet the moment, was not compassionate, delayed justice for almost two years.

There is a publication ban on her case. She is actively trying to lift that publication ban so that she can come back to this Legislature and tell her story.

I want to centre this debate on our justice system, on the stories of survivors in Ontario who have had the courage to come forward, who have had the courage to tell their stories, who have the courage to actually even levy a complaint, to file a charge, because so many women do not do this in Ontario. It's very intimidating. Sexual violence is one of the worst kinds of violence that you could possibly experience.

We're seeing this case play out right now in London. The testimony here—they have to give you a warning when you're watching what's transpiring with this court case because it is so upsetting and it's so violent.

One could actually argue that the violence that transpired in that hotel room is also the violence that is experienced in the court system. This is how people feel

who have come forward, who have had the courage to come forward and face their accuser in a court system that continually fails them.

I'm going to go back to Lydia's Law because I think that there are some members of this Legislature who do not know what happened with my private member's bill. I'm going to touch on that because this was also a huge miscarriage of justice that happened in this place, and we all bore witness to it.

The number of sexual assault cases in the province of Ontario that were disposed of, which were dispensed—these are primarily women, sometimes young girls, sometimes young men. In 2022, 1,326 cases were thrown out of court. In 2023, 1,171 cases were also thrown out of court. We are not going in the right direction because in 2024, 1,526 cases were dispensed. This is on the ministry's website. You have to go digging for it, though, I must tell you.

They're not advertising the fact that people who have come forward, who have pressed charges, who have been assaulted, who have experienced violence in the province of Ontario—when they go to the court system, that court system fails them, and that court system is failing them because this government is failing them.

And so Bill 10, which is an opportunity right here for all of us as lawmakers to correct this wrong, has been missed by this government.

This is a government—Madam Speaker, you will know full well—that claims to be tough on crime. But to deny justice to so many survivors and their loved ones—violence, sexual violence in particular, impacts the entire family and the friend network and the community as a whole.

Sexual violence disproportionately impacts women and girls and gender-diverse people. We know this to be true. So, in the face of the truth, in the face of having a system that continually fails, despite the best intentions of the people within that system, is a call to action.

The Ford government has deliberately starved the justice system. In 2020—because you need to know how we got to this very dark place in Ontario's justice system. In 2020, this government chose not to renew \$1 million to rape crisis centres. We all have rape crisis centres. In Waterloo region, it's the Sexual Assault Support Centre. They have a wait-list now of over 400 women waiting to be counselled. These are women and girls who have said, "Oh my God, I need help," and that help is a wait-list.

The worlds "sexual assault" was not mentioned in the 2022 or 2023 provincial budget, although statistics show the significant increase in sexual assaults during that time. There has been an intentional erasure of sexual assault: Just because you don't want to admit it, just because you don't want to acknowledge how bad it is, does not mean that it is not happening in Ontario.

Since 2016, 86 Ontario sexual assault cases have been thrown out because of the Jordan principle, which requires cases to be concluded within 18 months. Our system is not meeting this mark. It is not meeting the 18-month mark to

get justice. This is a significant measure of how our system is doing.

Please understand that this means that those people who sexually assaulted women and children and boys and men—this means that those rapists are walking free and they are causing more harm, because there was no accountability and there was no justice, which makes Ontario less safe as a whole.

Police officers in Waterloo region have told me personally that it is unconscionable. They have done their due diligence, our police officers in the province of Ontario; they have filed the reports. The detectives have gathered the evidence; the detectives have ensured that everything is good to go as far as that case gets into the justice system. Then to see all their hard work, all of that emotional labour—which cannot be easy as parents—to see that work just walk out of a court room because the system is not responsive is a true failure of our democracy in Ontario.

Resource shortages and systemic failures in the MCCSS, a report from the Financial Accountability Office—for those of you watching, the FAO is an independent officer of the Legislature, non-partisan, looking at the numbers, tracking the finances and hoping to inform government policy. In Ontario, from June 2024, the FAO estimated that the provincial government had underfunded the ministry by \$3.7 billion. It is true.

Interjections.

Ms. Catherine Fife: The government members are countering the FAO's reports. There's a reason why we have an independent officer of this Legislature: It is to take the politics out of these very emotional, partisan issues.

A \$3.7 billion shortfall meant that the ministry, a major funder of MCCSS and CAS and sexual assault, did not have the funding required to fulfill its existing programs and announced commitments, including supports to child abuse survivors.

So you can put it in a press release, you can cut a ribbon, you can post it all on your social media, but if there is no money to resource the programs, you are failing survivors in Ontario.

We have a lot of evidence and research. We really led the IPV call to action to declare intimate partner violence an in Ontario. I have no idea why this government refuses to acknowledge that this is something real. Is it because if you acknowledge that it's real, that it's happening in every one of our communities, that you would then have to actually fund it and resource it? I hope not.

1550

"'Stop with the Excuses: Emotional Appeals to Overhaul Court System amid Growing Backlogs'"—and this is from the IPV committee.

Two survivors of violence, Cait Alexander and Emily Ager, who've had the courage to speak up, to appear before committees, to come to this Legislature, to be seen, to be heard, to be acknowledged in their pain but also their courage—they have called on this government to step up and properly fund the Ontario court system as criminal

cases, many involving sexual and physical assault, are being thrown out due to delays and backlogs.

“The province opened a new billion-dollar courthouse on Armoury Street in February 2023”—well, isn’t that wonderful? A brand new courthouse. This was meant “to consolidate criminal proceedings from six Ontario Court of Justice facilities in Toronto, North York, and Scarborough. However, staffing issues and courtroom closures have exacerbated the backlog when it comes to getting cases heard within legal time restraints.”

This is a quote from Emily Ager: “This goes beyond us. We know that there are other victims of this broken legal system who like us will live with this pain forever. Enough is enough, stop with the excuses and make real change.”

Those who have experienced sexual violence and sexual assault deserve justice, but I would also argue that people who have been accused also deserve that justice. The scales of justice are supposed to level the playing field and create some confidence in our society as a whole.

It was interesting to hear Minister Downey and Minister Kerzner also talk about this bill, which they appear to be very proud of. They talked about “victims” 41 times in their speeches on Bill 10, and they mentioned “survivors” only five times.

We learned, through our consultations, on Lydia’s Law and the IPV committee that travelled across the province—we still have no report on what happened. With all of those voices who spoke up in support of changing our system and our justice system, we still have no report. So there has been no accountability on that front. This Bill 10 would have been an opportunity to reflect what you learned through that—great cost, great energy, huge emotional labour on behalf of the people who had the courage to come forward.

We learned, through our consultations on Lydia’s Law, that folks in the field don’t use the term “victim” because it is not survivor-centric and it’s retraumatizing. Language matters for us. We are lawmakers. We have a responsibility to own that language and use the appropriate language when we are talking about people who have experienced violence. Both the Attorney General and Solicitor General also noted that they did all these consultations, but no one we consulted uses that language they are using in this bill. It might indicate a true lack of meaningful consultations with providers in the field. If you are only consulting the people who want something from you, then you are missing the opportunity. Everything that we do on justice in Ontario needs to be survivor-centric. We need to honour those voices in a very real way.

In yesterday’s debate on the bill, the Associate Attorney General said, “As part of last year’s budget, our government is providing an additional \$6.4 billion over three years to child victim/witnesses and independent legal advice programs.” It’s claimed that “this sustains and expands supports for victims of crime and survivors of sexual violence.... The act now makes it easier for victims of crime to sue convicted offenders for emotional distress and related bodily harms for more crimes.” But this is

essentially throwing some money at a problem without the structural work that is needed to do so.

Madam Speaker, one of the number one issues that the sexual assault centre of Waterloo region has told us is that when women flee violence, they need a safe place to go, and they don’t go with all of their luggage. They go with their children and whatever they can pack while the assaulter is leaving the premises. So housing—supportive housing, safe housing, a safe place to land when you are faced with some of the most egregious crimes in Ontario—needs to be part of Bill 5.

I have to say, for those of you who don’t know what happened with Lydia’s Law: Lydia, as I mentioned, a young woman in my riding—many of us as legislators have the privilege to bring those voices to this place. We designed and crafted a piece of legislation which reflected what the Auditor General of Ontario said, that there has to be an accountability measure with these cases. There has to be survivor funding so that victims and survivors, however they identify, receive that support. And it holds the Attorney General specifically to account for these numbers. When you look at these numbers, the fact that 1,526 cases were dispensed in 2024 without justice—this obviously is a call to action.

I was also speaking with a survivor of a violent sexual assault from Simcoe–Grey just on Friday. She said that the victim services and the survivor benefits are so inadequate that now she is applying for ODSP. Her assault was so violent that she is now disabled. We need to talk about this. We need to be honest about what is actually happening here in our communities.

She went on to say that her assaulter is now out in the community. The police know where he is, but they have to track him, Madam Speaker. They have to track a known offender who has left her in a wheelchair, and now she also has to apply for Ontario Works because she, of course, cannot work. She has not been able to access counselling. She has not been able to even access the appropriate health care. It was actually my office that found her a wheelchair, because the wait-list for assistive devices is so long, and she needs to have some autonomy and some independence, as you can imagine, if you have been assaulted in such a way.

What I would say to the government members is that I’m very pleased to be the Vice-Chair of the justice committee. Because, when we get justice right in Ontario, many other things will fall into place, Madam Speaker, because that social infrastructure matters to all the players. All the economy, education, health care—it impacts everything. And when we get the judiciary right and it is efficient and it is effective as an institution, then this underpins our very democracy.

Make no mistake about it: Lydia’s Law will come back to the floor of this Legislature. We will not be silenced. It will not be sent to justice committee to languish. Lydia’s voice will be respected in this place, and Lydia’s voice should inform the judicial system in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Ms. Laura Smith: I want to thank the member opposite for her very impassioned statement.

When it comes to preventing violence against women and children and helping survivors, I think everyone in this room can agree this is something that we want to be proactive on, and our government is focusing on actions that deliver concrete and tangible results.

Under Ontario's Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence, we've invested \$162 million through the national action plan. This includes \$18.7 million to organizations across this province, not to mention a \$1.4-billion investment through the Ontario-STANDS program, through MCCSS, which helps women and affected families get a hand up out of the unfortunate circumstances that they are in. Now, this is a very passionate issue for myself; I know it is for the member opposite.

1600

I'm just wondering if she is going to support this bill that will obviously bring a more expedited system and judicial program that will allow us to help these individuals who are affected.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I think our critic from Toronto Centre earlier this afternoon gave a very impassioned speech. They have intimate experience working in this field. My criticism of Bill 10 is based on evidence, and it's based on facts, Madam Speaker. This is why the committee process is so important, so that this bill should come to justice policy.

We should reinvigorate the IPV study. We should inform this bill by the voices who have already taken the time and revealed the courage to come forward. This bill hopefully will get to committee so we can make it a bill that actually meets the needs of people in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank my colleague from Waterloo for her presentation this afternoon. A lot of it was focused on intimate partner violence.

I want to bring everybody back to 2015 when three women—Carol Culleton, Anastasia Kuzyk and Nathalie Warmerdam—were murdered by the same man. This was followed by an investigation, followed by recommendations. The number one recommendation was for the province of Ontario to declare intimate partner violence an epidemic, which they've had many opportunities to do but have failed to do.

What difference would it make to all the survivors out there—their families, their friends—if Ontario was to respect the recommendations from the inquest and declare intimate partner violence an epidemic?

Ms. Catherine Fife: What a great question. I think that this is the thing that frustrates Ontarians about this place. You have the Renfrew inquest, you have tangible recommendations that the government can apply to address the issue of intimate partner violence and the scourge of sexual assaults, and yet those recommendations, by and large, have been ignored.

This is an opportunity right now—and you know, we have come to the government in this session very propos-

itionally, willing to work with you. The people of Ontario expect us to do this, Madam Speaker. But when the Premier of the province of Ontario goes on a rant, as he did last week—Douglas Judson, former federation of Ontario judges chair, said that the Premier has indicated a fundamental misunderstanding and a juvenile misunderstanding of how our institutions are structured to hold each other accountable in our democracy.

To sum it up, we all need to do better.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Thank you for your discussion of this bill and the concerns about intimate partner violence and sexual assault cases. You referenced what's going on in London, Ontario, right now, which is making big headlines. There is also another sex assault case before the courts right now in the city of Toronto, which is delayed for three years.

I'm wondering how you feel about another bill before this House that would see people in homeless encampments sent to prison and before the justice system, and potential further delays with this kind of enactment of a bill.

Ms. Catherine Fife: A very good question—and I like the connection, because there is a theme here, Madam Speaker. The theme is very concerning to all of us. When the Premier of the province is talking about electing judges, when criminalizing the poor because of a failed housing strategy on behalf of the government—I mean, charging people who live in encampments \$10,000 really is—if it wasn't so sad it would be comical, almost like a Monty Python theatre of the absurd here.

And so, there is real work before us. Let's do the work. Three years for this young woman in Toronto, waiting for justice—imagine if she was your daughter or your mother or your sister. Let's bring some humanity back to this discourse on our justice system and let's centre survivors at the centre of that discourse.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): I recognize the member from Newmarket—Aurora.

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: Thank you to the member from Waterloo for her comments today.

Something that I'd like to raise that is contained in the Protect Ontario Through Safer Streets and Stronger Communities Act is how the government is addressing cybercrime. Cybercrime and cryptocurrency theft is a growing issue, not just here in Ontario but around the world. You hear about it day after day. In my own community, I hear about community members who have been hit by a cyber security threat. We know that, from auto theft to guns and gangs, all of this related crime all stems through very sophisticated cybercrime technology.

So my question to the member opposite is, do you not think that by having a forward-thinking piece of legislation that allows a prosecution team to advance themselves in the knowledge—because we need technically knowledgeable prosecution teams—to be able to fight—

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Response?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Listen, this is the really important piece: When police officers are watching their detective work be ignored by the court system—so 1,526 cases walk out of court; these are known offenders; these are people who have done a lot of damage. Their time and their energy is focused on that, right?

Police officers also tell me that a majority of the social ills of society, you know, those folks who are struggling with addiction, homeless, they're dealing with those issues. That's why we have to get those issues right.

You reference auto theft and crypto and cybercrime. These crimes are real, but the resources are being focused on the failed justice system. So if we get the justice system right, then we'll have more time to deal with auto theft and crypto and cybercrime, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I want to congratulate the member for Waterloo on her leadership with Lydia's Law, which she referenced with regard to the missed opportunity that this bill represents, to have brought forward some of those protections for survivors of sexual violence who have the courage to take their case right to the police and then to court, and how devastating it is when the charges are dismissed or stayed.

I know the member did a lot of consultation on her bill, on Lydia's Law, before she brought that forward. I wondered if she wanted to comment on Bill 10 and whether she thinks it reflects the kind of consultation that should take place with survivors of intimate partner violence and survivors of sexual assault.

Ms. Catherine Fife: The consultation on Lydia's Law was real because the responsibility was real, right? When someone has come forward as a young woman and she shares the details of her assault with you, you carry that with you forever. That means that I will always bring up Lydia's Law in this House.

That is why Bill 10 is so disappointing on many levels. We're going to try to make it stronger, though, because Lydia and so many other women in the province of Ontario deserve our attention and our—

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

Mr. John Fraser: I'm pleased to be able to speak to this bill.

I want to just refer to the comments from the member from Waterloo on Lydia's Law and congratulate her for bringing it forward and sticking with it, which is the thing that we have to do in this House. When people come to us with things that have happened to them, that have not just hurt them physically but have hurt them for their whole life, it is something that you carry with you. I'm going to tell a story a little bit later that's illustrative of this.

But it is really disappointing not to see some action on intimate partner violence in the first piece of legislation to come out from the Attorney General in this session. I don't understand why. I think we all agree that maybe if we don't even agree that it's an epidemic it's very, very important to all our constituents that intimate partner vio-

lence is taken seriously and is addressed by this assembly. I want to thank the member from Waterloo or congratulate the member for all her work in this regard.

1610

I want to talk about bail, and this will tie into judges as well too. So bail reform, it's really important, right? The federal government said we've got to work on that. We all know there's some work to be done. The smooth functioning of the courts is critical to that situation, and, actually, the smooth functioning of our penal system is as well too. Both of those things impact the ability of the system to manage crime, and I would argue that the current backlog that exists in our courts, in particular for people who've experienced gender-based violence, is having an impact. I heard on many occasions concerns by those people who have been hurt, injured, changed for life, that they didn't get justice because of Jordan's principle, which is really about the smooth functioning of the courts, and that's something we should all take heed of in this place.

In August 2022, in my riding of Ottawa South, on Anoka Street, a mother and her daughter were stabbed to death. They were murdered by a neighbour—21 years old. There was a pattern of harassment. Both Anne-Marie, the mom, she's 50; Jasmine, her daughter, was 15—and the sister, she was injured. The perpetrator of the crime, who ended up being killed by police on the scene, because this all took place on the street, had actually, three days before, been released on bail after having been accused of sexually assaulting a 16-year-old girl. And the dad and the surviving daughter, Catherine, had really serious questions about how the heck that could happen, given there was already a previous history that existed between the victim and the perpetrator as well.

So the problem is education for justices of the peace but it's also about information. One of the things about the smooth functioning of courts or the judicial system—I know because my father was on the Ontario Parole Board for, I think, 17 years, and the thing that he said to me was, "When you make a decision, you need all the information. And if you don't get that information, it makes it harder to make a decision that is fair but is also in the public's interest." Now, I don't know the circumstances of this case in terms of the justice of the peace's decision and what information that he had, but I do understand what the tragic consequences are. And I know that the father, Raphael, has requested to be able to meet with the Attorney General to talk about this because he wants to do something about it.

So we have to understand, and the Attorney General has to understand, that in order for things like bail reform to work, in order for the justice system to function properly, it needs resources, the right flow of information and the right education for people who are making those decisions. I would argue—and there are some things in this bill that are going to do that—that this hasn't been done until now. It's really important in relation to what we were talking about earlier, intimate partner violence—very important.

The second thing I would like to talk about, and this has actually been kind of topical in the last few days because

the Premier released a screed on judges and the justice system. It was absolutely incredible for me—apart from the personality of the person who's the Premier—that the person who is a top politician in Ontario would not understand the importance of the independence of the judiciary. We make the laws; they enforce the laws that we make. Those laws that we make actually have to be compliant or in accordance with the charter, which is the thing that holds us together. That separation ensures that politicians don't interfere with the courts, that they don't try to get the decision that they want.

So when the Premier of this province launches into the fact that judges are left-leaning, they're woke and they make their own decisions, you know what has to happen? The three top judges in this province—the three of them—write him the next day, which is unprecedented, to explain to the Premier just how the courts, government and politics work because he obviously doesn't know. It wasn't that the cheese slid off the cracker; it just never got there.

We don't need a Trump-style elected judiciary. I'm sorry. The crack that the Premier made about a judge's party was totally unhinged, and it undermines the confidence that we need to have in our judges. If we don't have confidence in our judges—and we certainly don't have confidence in our politicians—we're in a deep hole. Somebody needs to keep us in check. That's why we have an independent judiciary.

The Premier likes to use the “notwithstanding” clause like a get-out-of-jail-free card to do whatever he wants, whenever he wants to do it. I don't think this Premier respects the justice system, so it's a little hard to take the fact that he feels that he actually has an opinion on this that's even remotely worthwhile.

Let's talk about the JPAAC, because they talk about it in the bill. What happened to the JPAAC? Well, the Premier made two appointments last year. They were two people who worked for the Premier. One of them was a gun lobbyist at the time. I don't quite understand that. Maybe somebody didn't do their homework.

Let's go back to 2018. I don't know if you remember this goody—not the justice system, but policing. What did the Premier want to do? Well, he wanted to appoint one of his best friends as the commissioner of the OPP. Total understanding of his role, right? There was no understanding of the separation that's needed. He just wanted to take care of a friend and thought it was a good idea.

Well, the irony is, and maybe this is why he's angry, it was a retired judge who was appointed—and reappointed as the Integrity Commissioner by this government, by the way—who wrote a 108-page report on what happened, and all of the nonsense and emails and stupidity that had gone on. Now, I don't know if I have ever seen since, or even before, a 108-page report from the Integrity Commissioner on anything—not even the greenbelt.

1620

I would have more confidence in the Premier appointing judges, or having more input into the appointed judges through the Attorney General, if he actually understood

the function of our courts and the role of our courts in a democracy.

We all can look south of the border where political influence on courts has taken away women's rights, taken away people's rights and led to arbitrary arrests. It's the Wild West down there right now. I think Mexico is thinking of actually electing judges. They're kind of thinking about it right now. There's one other place in South America; I think it's Bolivia that does it. In Switzerland, they're elected by politicians, which may not be that much better, I don't think.

The JPAAC is supposed to be made up of non-partisan people who are interested in the law, who want to make sure that we have the right people there who can apply the law in a way that is both fair and transparent. Because if we don't have that—if we did the thing where we elected judges, we'd lose that, and people would lose confidence.

There are good things in this bill that relate to children and things that we need to do, and it's often the case in the government's bills that there are things in there that should be done. Sometimes they don't go far enough, but they're there and they're important. And as legislators, we have to acknowledge those and support those. But it's really hard to—it's so hard for me to actually feel confident in the measures in this bill, given the Premier's public, loud distrust of our judicial system—all over a couple of bike lanes, for God's sake. Is it really worth it?

I'm not going to debate the bike lanes. But why are we saying that judges are somehow woke and corrupt or left-leaning because they're applying the law in a case where the government has overstepped its jurisdiction? Can you imagine if the federal government came in here and told the Minister of Health, “You can't do this thing”? My God, the Premier's head would explode.

So to actually take it out on the judiciary, because you don't actually understand the law or understand fully that you shouldn't be interfering in other jurisdictions in which you have no standing, it makes it hard to support this bill. Given the fact that there is stuff in there that I think is good and that's important, I'm probably going to support this bill.

Interjection.

Mr. John Fraser: Well, I don't know—the member from Sarnia, I can hear you mumbling over there. But it's like the Premier of the province basically tried to create mistrust in our judicial system by criticizing judges publicly. It is incredible. I don't think a Premier has ever done that. And then the next day, he didn't have the gumption to stand behind his words—I didn't use the other word; I only used it once, Speaker, in respect to you. I mean, I don't think he should say it again, but I just think the price of creating mistrust and a reduction of faith in the judicial system so the Premier can have a little temper tantrum in public is not worth it. Keep it inside. Keep it inside.

Pass laws that pass the sniff test, and then I believe we'll be in a spot where we'll be way better off.

I look forward to the rest of the debate.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Questions?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you to the member. I agree with you wholeheartedly that what the Premier has done here to undermine confidence in our judicial system—intentionally creating mistrust—is unconscionable. We have a Premier who stands up time and time again to say he is trying to defend us against Donald Trump, but he's in fact doing exactly what's happening in the States, which is politicizing our judicial system.

The idea of judicial independence is not just a fancy term, it's something that every single person should expect; they should expect to go to court and have an impartial judge, an impartial judicial system. But because this Premier doesn't like the results of what judges say, he's going to undermine the entire system.

I find that dangerous, and I think you may agree.

Mr. John Fraser: Oh, 100%. There has to be confidence and faith in the justice system. The reality is the Premier, through the JPAAC and through the Attorney General—they see who the appointees are; they have some responsibility in that.

I did wake up this morning and I was thinking about this whole thing about US-style judges, and I thought, maybe it's more appropriate, because we've been talking about it lately—how does Vladimir Putin appoint his judges?

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Mr. Stephen Blais: I was very enthralled by your presentation this afternoon and obviously your commitment to an independent judiciary.

I'm wondering if you can give us some additional thoughts on the dangers involved in politicizing both the appointments of judges, the public criticism—

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): The member is not in his seat.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Two seats too close.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Can you move it quickly with the question?

Mr. Stephen Blais: I'm right at my seat.

Could the member perhaps elaborate more on his concerns around the politicization of selection of judges, political criticism in public of judges and the erosion of that independence, and the risks in moving towards a more autocratic system?

Mr. John Fraser: First off, I think that is the first time in my entire life that someone has been enthralled at what I had to say. I mean, I go right through my whole life. I just want to thank the member for saying that—

Mr. Chris Glover: Being the first.

Mr. John Fraser: Being the first. You're the first.

Look, all we have to do is look south of the border and the chaos that's there. Do you want a judge that somebody has donated to make a judge?

Mr. Robert Bailey: They donate in Canada.

Mr. John Fraser: You don't donate to judges.

Interjections.

Mr. John Fraser: Hey, to the member from Sarnia: Look, all of us here—people don't have a lot of trust in us, and we've done that to ourselves. It's true; we've done it, because we each tell each other how bad we are, right—how bad we are; how bad the other side is.

We need to have confidence in the judiciary, and that's why they need to be independent and that's why the way we do it is the right way to do it.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Mr. Matthew Rae: I've had the pleasure to visit the member from Sarnia's riding and I know the constituents there have a lot of trust in that member, Speaker.

1630

Mr. Robert Bailey: Even the judges.

Mr. Matthew Rae: Even the judges, the member says.

Mr. John Fraser: I trust you. I do, really, but it's not about us.

Mr. Matthew Rae: Thank you to the member from Ottawa South for that trust.

I was just wondering if—the member from Ottawa South, his remarks this afternoon and the debate we're having. I'm glad he's continuing that debate and ensuring that we make important investments in our judicial system.

Last year, in the provincial budget, we invested \$29 million to expand the resources for our judges, to hire more judges. The Attorney General has said multiple times that we're going to hire 17 more new judges as well—entire teams around those individuals. It's not just the adjudicator; it's support staff. The Attorney General in question period at one point said a seven-person team.

Will the member opposite and the party he represents support more important investments in our court system?

Mr. John Fraser: I was hoping to get another “enthralled,” but I didn't get it.

Look, I support investments in the system. I want the system to work better. But here's the fact: It's almost seven years and what you see is the result of seven years. Who's been in government for seven years? Hasn't been us, I can tell you that. Who's been here for seven years? Now, I know you would like to point your finger backwards—maybe not you, because I trust you, and I trust the member from Sarnia too. I trust all of you, quite frankly.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Would the member speak through the Chair, please.

Mr. John Fraser: And Speaker, I trust you, so I will continue to speak through you. And I won't point my finger; I'll keep my hands together and use my thumbs. But the reality is, folks, seven long years and here's where we're at.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: The member from Ottawa South talked a lot about the importance of the independence of the judiciary. I was thinking also that this is basically—we're talking about a conflict of interest baked into the way the bill is structured right now, how people are appointed to be part of this election group and so on. I wonder if the member could talk about that and kind of—

because I think the language of conflict of interest may also connect with people in a way perhaps that don't know as much about the court system.

Mr. John Fraser: I just go back to the appointment to the JPAAC of two former staff members, one of who was a gun lobbyist at the time. I'm not sure that that would inspire confidence in the decision-making of the JPAAC.

The role of the judiciary in choosing new judges is critical because that's the job that they do, and they're interested in the law. They're not interested in us. The only interest that they have in us is that they actually have to apply the laws that we make or actually decide whether those laws that we make here fit with the charter. It's pretty simple. It's pretty straightforward. What we want are people who apply the law in a fair and transparent way so that people have confidence in the justice system.

To have the Premier slag judges just because he wanted to have a little screed isn't good enough, folks.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Ms. Laura Smith: Thank you to the member opposite.

One of the things that this bill includes is the expansion of justice centres. Justice centres help reduce recidivism, and they increase community safety and address the root cause of crime by moving criminal cases out of the traditional courtroom and into a community setting. They also provide wraparound supports for persons and victims through coordinated special on-site social work. These justice centres work in conjunction with the courts to hold offenders accountable, while connecting them to services that reduce the risk of reoffending and promote community safety.

So will the member from Ottawa South please comment on whether he supports this expansion of the justice centres?

Mr. John Fraser: Yes, 100%, for all different forms of justice that work in communities, restorative justice.

The Premier claims that Ontario's courts must reflect public values, but Bill 10 lets the Attorney General screen, sort and sideline judicial applicants without a vacancy even existing.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Mr. Matthew Rae: I have an opportunity to ask the member from Ottawa South another very brief question. There are not many opportunities for me to rise to ask the member a question in this place.

I'm sure the Minister of Finance is working on our next provincial budget. Will the member opposite be supporting that budget?

Mr. John Fraser: Bill 10 doesn't fully politicize judicial appointments like Russia's presidential model, but it significantly erodes safeguards and moves Ontario's system more toward an executive-driven structure that earns a six or seven out of 10 on the centralization, politicization scale.

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

MPP Monica Ciriello: I will be splitting my time with the member from Perth–Wellington today.

I'm grateful for the opportunity to rise today and speak to the Protect Ontario Through Safer Streets and Stronger Communities Act.

Madam Speaker, just over two months ago, our government received a strong mandate from the people of Ontario to protect Ontario. And today, I am proud to share the latest measures in our government's plan to strengthen the justice system, protect our communities and keep repeat and violent offenders behind bars where they belong.

Before I begin, I want to recognize the Attorney General and the Associate Attorney General for their hard work in leading this portfolio and for being leaders when it comes to improving access to justice here in Ontario and taking steps to keep our province safe.

The Protect Ontario Through Safer Streets and Stronger Communities Act proposes a robust and comprehensive set of practical reforms. These measures are designed to reinforce our bail system, crack down on serious and organized crime, combat auto theft, address intimate partner violence, tackle human trafficking, target illicit drug operations, enhance funding for police services, modernize the judicial appointments process and strengthen our justice systems.

The people of Ontario are concerned about the growing threat of rising crime. They want to feel safe in their homes, on their streets and in their communities. They want a justice system that is fast and fair and that puts victims first, not the criminals. They want real change, not more excuses from other governments.

That is why our government made a clear promise during the last election. We will crack down on crime, protect families and make Ontario safer. Our government must keep acting to strengthen our courts, make bail tougher and work with police to stop serious crime.

Through this legislation, we are proposing increased tools to address crimes and to find solutions to strengthen public safety in Ontario. The people of Ontario elected us because they trust our government to listen to their concerns when it comes to safety in their communities. This legislation is urgently needed to protect Ontario and restore confidence in our justice systems.

As many of you know, across the province, the pressure on our courts continues to grow. Time and again, we've seen the devastating results of the federal government's revolving-door bail policies. Offenders—often violent and repeat offenders—are released back onto the streets only to reoffend, sometimes with tragic consequences. The public has had enough, and so have we.

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Let me share two deeply troubling examples from my own community in Hamilton, cases that underscore the urgent need for reform. The Winona Peach Festival, a local event that brings together families, children and seniors to enjoy rides, food and live music was the setting for a disturbing incident last August. A 23-year-old male was arrested in the midst after being found in possession of a loaded prohibited firearm, a high-capacity magazine

and ammunition. Despite the public nature of the offence and the clear threat to public safety, he was granted bail. He is now back out on the street and wanted for surety revocation.

Another example occurred just a few months ago, in March. A 28-year-old male, already subject to a firearms provision and a Canada-wide parole warrant, was arrested alongside others after police discovered a loaded prohibited firearm and large quantities of fentanyl in a Hamilton apartment. Despite the serious charges and the obvious safety risk, he was also granted bail.

Madam Speaker, our Hamilton police, like the men and women in law enforcement across the province, are working hard to investigate and arrest those who break our laws, which is a critical part of keeping our community safe. But more needs to be done to keep repeat violent offenders off our streets. Police need the backing of a justice system that keeps violent repeat offenders off our streets and delivers real consequences for those who break the law.

With this legislation, we're getting to work to get tough on crime and keeping criminals behind bars, where they belong. As part of our government's commitment to crack down on crime, we're taking action to enact important new crime measures to help strengthen our justice system and, just as important, deliver justice for those who have been victimized by serious crimes.

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

Mr. Matthew Rae: Thank you, Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill 10 and take over for my colleague, who did an admirable job this afternoon.

As my colleague was saying, as part of our government's commitment to crack down on crime, we're taking action to enact important new tough-on-crime measures to help strengthen our justice system and, just as important, deliver justice for those who have been victimized by heinous crimes. I'm going to highlight some of this legislation and our approaches as well.

For example, bail reform: Our government is cracking down on crime by strengthening our bail system, while continuing to advocate forcefully for the federal government to do the same. We're expanding the work of our intensive serious violent crime bail teams, making them permanent. These teams are made up of 62 dedicated prosecutors who will work with law enforcement to present the most persuasive case possible at a bail hearing, with a priority on repeat and violent offenders, including those charged with firearm offences.

The impact of these teams is real. For example, in Hamilton, 248 individuals were charged with serious criminal offences in 2024. Of those, our bail team completed 67 enhanced bail packages. Among the 91 who received these release orders, only 11 have reoffended, a testament to what can be achieved when crown attorneys have the resources they need.

Our government believes our teams should have the support, information and resources necessary to obtain better bail outcomes for the community, and these teams

will ensure that people applying for bail, especially after carrying a loaded gun into a crowd at a family event such as the member referenced earlier, the peach festival, will face tough scrutiny and consequences.

In addition, we are also undertaking a comprehensive review of the bail system to make it more consequential and effective. By starting the process for a comprehensive review of the bail system, we're laying the groundwork for long-overdue reforms that prioritize the safety of our communities while respecting due process.

For too long, Ontarians have raised concerns about violent offenders being released on bail too easily, and our government is responding. We're committed to ensuring that the bail system works as it should, protecting the public, supporting victims and restoring confidence in a strong justice process.

Many of us in this place on the government side speak often about the concerns we're hearing in auto thefts. It affects every part of Ontario, whether it is our urban city centres or rural areas, such as I have the pleasure of representing again. I hear this at the doors time and time again, that people are worried about the safety of their neighbourhoods, their families and the security of their properties, particularly their vehicles, and rightfully so.

Ontarians have seen a drastic increase in violent theft of motor vehicles since 2023. In cities across Ontario, vehicles are stolen on the daily, it seems. For example, 80% of the vehicles stolen in Hamilton were stolen from the member's riding in Hamilton Mountain.

As a result of our government's ongoing investments to tackle this growing problem, this bill will also include measures to combat auto theft by making the dedicated Major Auto Theft Prosecution Response Team a permanent fixture in Ontario's fight against organized crime. This specialized team will focus its efforts on crime hot spots across the province, where auto theft is not only more prevalent but increasingly linked to sophisticated criminal networks and violent offences.

Auto theft is a serious public safety concern that disrupts lives, fuels other illegal activity and creates fear in our neighbourhoods. By making these teams permanent, we are sending a strong message to criminals: Ontario is not an easy target.

We are investing in focused, expert-led enforcement and prosecution to hold offenders accountable, dismantling organized crime rings and restoring the peace of mind to communities impacted by these crimes. These efforts are beginning to turn the tide against organized criminal activity, and through these teams, our justice system is gaining the tools and expertise to become stronger and more effective to tackle auto theft crimes across Ontario.

Madam Speaker, as many of us will know in this place, justice delayed is justice denied. That is why as part of this legislation, we are also proposing new changes to the Courts of Justice Act to streamline judicial appointments processes and speed up the appointments of judges to the Ontario Court of Justice.

Last year, our government made an historic investment by significantly increasing the court capacity at the Ontario

Court of Justice with a \$29-million investment to add at least 17 new net judges. This legislation builds on that investment by adding an additional 17 Ontario Court of Justice judges.

These changes will support our goal of providing swift access to justice for victims of crime and help them avoid the grief and anxiety that comes with delays. These measures build on historic progress in reducing and resolving cases before the courts, and it's all part of our plan to increase capacity. Quite frankly, any way that we can help address backlogs and delays in the Ontario Court of Justice is a better day for victims and their families.

In addition to these important legislative changes, our government is expanding the dedicated guns-and-gangs units in key regions across Ontario where the threat of organized crime and firearm violence remains high. These specialized units will give law enforcement the added capacity and focus needed to disrupt criminal activity and dismantle the networks that traffic illegal weapons into our communities. Strengthening our presence in these targeted areas also supports our broader efforts to enhance border security and stop the steady flow of illegal firearms entering Canada, many of which end up in the hands of violent gang members.

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Since 2018, Ontario has invested \$358 million through the Guns, Gangs and Violence Reduction Strategy, with support from our federal partners. This investment has already helped protect communities, save lives and confront the growing dangers posed by organized crime. We're building on that momentum because no one in this province should have to live in fear of gang violence or illegally obtained guns.

Additionally, this legislation will strengthen our ability to combat intimate partner violence and support survivors. This is about empowering victims, holding abusers accountable and ensuring that no one is forced to remain in a dangerous situation because legal tools meant to protect them are out of reach.

Our government is taking a clear stand: Intimate partner violence will not be tolerated in Ontario, and we're committed to providing real, effective safeguards to keep people safe.

Speaker, before I conclude my remarks this afternoon, I just want to leave all of us in this place with an important message. Our government's ongoing commitment to protecting Ontario and communities across Ontario is unwavering. Ontario families deserve to feel safe in their homes, their neighbourhoods and at community events—as the member mentioned in her own riding—like the peach festival and many other events that we will all be experiencing once we rise in a few short weeks for the summer across our ridings. To ensure that these festivals remain safe is a key component of our government and focus. Through this legislation before us today, we're making historic changes that would improve capacity and efficiency in the court system, introducing stronger measures to hold offenders accountable and helping stop criminal activity online and in our streets.

This legislation is about more than policy; it is about people. It's about protecting our kids, standing up for victims and showing offenders that crime has consequences. Through this legislation, we are modernizing our justice system; expanding our ability to prosecute serious crimes; giving law enforcement the tools they need; and, most importantly, standing firm with the people of Ontario. These tough-on-crime measures are putting violent repeat offenders on notice that if you commit a crime in Ontario, we'll do everything in our power to find you, prosecute you and put you behind bars.

For the victims of crime and their families, our government, myself included, want to reiterate that through this legislation, we are laser-focused on getting you justice.

These reforms build on our government's record investments in law enforcement, prosecution teams and border and bail enforcement. They reflect our commitment to a justice system that puts public safety first, supports victims and gives law enforcement the tools they need to do their jobs effectively.

With this legislation, Ontario is stepping forward with strength, purpose and clarity, making it clear that we will do what is necessary to protect our streets, stand up for our communities and do what it takes to build a safer and stronger province.

With my remaining two and a half minutes, I know this bill is important even, as I mentioned, for our rural communities. Auto theft is a challenge, even in our rural areas. It may not be the BMW or the sports car being stolen out of a driveway; it may be the Ford F-150 that a lot of people in my riding drive, or the Dodge Ram, which is well over \$100,000 Canadian. It may be the trades person that has their tools in a trailer. Many of my neighbours are tradespeople in my area, and they've had to take initiatives to protect the valuable equipment they use every single day to literally build this province.

Our Premier and our government will continue to stand with those individuals and with our police forces. They do very important work across the province: the guns-and-gangs program that I mentioned in my remarks, but also supporting the victims of crime—being there for those individuals as well. I know the associate minister for women in this place has announced investments across this province to support those individuals, ensuring that we are there—whether it's for women fleeing intimate partner violence, whether it's for other victims of crime—to support those families and be there with them. It's making those investments as we have done on the border, stepping up when the federal government was not stepping up, ensuring that those police forces on the border towns have those resources. And we're seeing results from those investments. We are seeing those auto theft rings being broken up. We see those guns and gangs taken off our streets. And we'll continue to make those investments.

I look forward to the budget in a couple of weeks, and I'm sure there will be many investments in protecting Ontario, supporting our local police services, both the OPP and our municipal police services across Ontario, to ensure

we have boots on the ground, being in our communities, working with our mental health professionals.

The mobile crisis response team is something that is very successful that I'm very proud that this government is working with our police forces to implement. We'll continue to stand with victims, with our police services and with the judges who are going to ensure we keep criminals behind bars and do the time.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thanks to the member from Perth–Wellington, who completed some of the comments by his colleague.

I believe the member from Perth–Wellington is expecting your first child—is that right? Okay, so congratulations.

Applause.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I will say that this changes the way you see the world, right? And why this bill is kind of even more important, I would think, because, if you're looking at these stats and you're portraying this tough-on-crime image, it can't sit well with you that 1,526 sexual assault cases were thrown out of court last year, right?

So, Bill 5, in its entirety, misses this accountability measure. And I will say that, of course, as a mother, I carry that with me all the time, and I see the legislation differently in this House because of the fact that I have a daughter, and I want her to be safe and I want her to reach her potential, but in order for that to happen, the system has to support her.

Can you please explain as a member of the government how these stats sit with you, and why Bill 5 misses the opportunity to address this failure and weakness of our legislative system?

Mr. Matthew Rae: Speaker, through you, to the member opposite, I thank you for those very kind, congratulatory words. Yes, I'm expecting my first child. Apparently, people are telling me to bank sleep. If anyone can let me know how that works, let me know how to do that. I don't think I can do that, but thank you. And everyone's healthy, baby and all. We're going to be traditional and actually not find out the sex until it is born.

Anyway, to your substantive question, from the member from Waterloo: I am proud to stand with a government that continues to invest in our court system, in our police forces. Yes, those stats are concerning. That is why we invested \$29 million to hire more new judges. That is why this legislation before this House is bringing 17 additional judges on board. As I mentioned earlier this afternoon, that's just not the judge themselves, whoever that individual may be, it's the support staff that goes with that judge. It is, however that team may form—it's the mental health practitioner, potentially, it is the assistant prosecutor, it is the clerk—ensuring that we have that team around those individuals to ensure that those individuals who have committed those crimes do serve the time.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Mr. Ted Hsu: When I was young, I was raised by my parents to work hard. Work hard, work hard—that was kind of part of the culture, Chinese culture as well. And that is predicated on the idea that we live in a society where you'll get your just rewards, that if you work hard, you'll be treated fairly and you'll earn the reward that's due to you. And to live in a society where you have an expectation that you'll be treated fairly depends on a number of things, and one of them is a judicial system where you'll be treated fairly.

In this bill, more power is being given to the government, the cabinet, the Premier and the Attorney General, but we have a Premier who really doesn't believe that judges even should be impartial. The Premier has said that he wants more “like-minded judges” to be appointed. The Premier has said that he believes that all judges are political appointees.

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How can we be allowing this bill to pass, to give more discretion over choosing partial judges?

Mr. Matthew Rae: Thank you to my colleague from Kingston and Islands for the question.

It's important that we do have those judges in our system—hiring more judges through that; ensuring that this body, everyone here, is elected by the people to serve the people—that people may decide to throw us out one day, in that aspect. I know the member will work hard to ensure that this government is thrown out one day. It's ensuring that we put forward judges who are going to adjudicate to the fullest extent of the law, to ensure that violent, repeat offenders are serving the time—that they are getting to that, putting more resources in, as I mentioned already, to ensure that we are clearing that backlog, seeing those metrics improved, seeing that justice is served for those individuals who have committed those crimes.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Hon. Michael Parsa: I want to thank both of my colleagues, the member for Hamilton Mountain and of course the new dad-to-be, for their remarks.

Madam Speaker, when it comes to our government's record, as you know, we've been very clear, and we're working across government constantly to ensure that women and children, all Ontarians, can in fact live free from the fear of threats, exploitation and violence.

I want to ask the member, when it comes to our Ontario-STANDS, which is an action plan to end gender-based violence in this province—it's an action plan that's backed by \$1.4 billion. And we've said we signed an agreement with the federal government. The member just alluded to the fact that my colleague the Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity has announced investments across the province to support our partners.

I'm wondering if my colleague can add and let us know how this bill will augment the supports that are already being provided across the province so that we can end gender-based violence across the province.

Mr. Matthew Rae: Thank you to the minister for the very important question.

As I alluded in my remarks, and the member from Hamilton Mountain as well—supporting victims of these crimes; supporting women, in particular, who have gone through that terrible situation; ensuring that the resources are there, because of the minister and the associate minister’s great work in securing that funding.

I think of Optimism Place, one of the local women’s shelters in my area that does great work in the community. They already have those key partnerships, working with them to ensure that whether they work with the police, the mental health practitioners, public health, primary care teams—providing those wraparound supports. They tell me these resources are needed and welcomed—through our government providing the resources on the ground. They work with the mobile crisis response teams, to the Solicitor General’s office, to ensure that the support is there for those who may have experienced that.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Ask anyone in this province, and they know that the judicial system is broken. There are 45,000 criminal cases waiting—it’s up 37% since you took office. This is a government that removed half a billion dollars from the justice budget. Ask any woman in Ontario, if they are seeking justice—ask the 1,500 women who had their cases thrown out—if it’s working. The answer is no. So, as the member from Waterloo said, given all that, this bill falls so dramatically short from addressing the crisis.

Now we have a new crisis, which is a Premier who is intentionally trying to undermine people’s confidence in this justice system. He’s intentionally trying to make sure that people do not trust the judicial independence of the court system. The Attorney General has talked about appointing like-minded judges. He now has talked about bleeding heart judges and that they should be elected. The Attorney General has incredible power to appoint people.

So my question to you is, how can anybody trust this court system, trust the independence of the judicial system, when the Attorney General and the Premier seem to be running roughshod over the things that are so fundamentally important to democratic jurisdictions like Ontario.

Mr. Matthew Rae: Thank you, Speaker. Thank you to the member from Hamilton-Ancaster-Dundas.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Sorry, it’s hard—HWAS.

Mr. Matthew Rae: HWAS—thank you to the member.

I know with the changes, this legislation, if passed before this House, would continue to maintain the integrity of the process while shifting to a pool-based approach in order to further speed up and streamline the appointments of the Ontario Court of Justice. The AG would only still be able to recommend these candidates to the independent JAAC committee. They would not change under the new pool-based system. Speaker, this is the same process the federal government uses to appoint federal judges. That is

why we are copying that process—the same process, the same integrity will be maintained.

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

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It’s an honour for me to rise today to discuss this government’s Bill 10, Protect Ontario Through Safer Streets and Stronger Communities Act, 2025. We’ve heard a lot of words and a lot of buzzwords, a lot of sloganeering from this government on justice and on the justice file. I know that community safety is an incredibly important concern for my community of London North Centre. I know that people are concerned about the fact that this government has not housed people properly, not housed people with supports. We’ve also seen different measures from this government to criminalize those folks who have been denied a safe place to call home because of this government not building enough housing. We see a government that wants to police its way out of homelessness.

I had the opportunity, a couple of years ago, to go on a ride-along with Sergeant Mike Muscat with the London Police Service, and actually the night on which I decided to go on that ride-along was St. Patrick’s Day, so it was a very busy evening. But I remember the conversations we had really centred around the fact that the police services are not meant to be mental health workers. Yet this government and their inaction has made them into a position that has to be that. We have great ways of making sure we get people supports, such as the COAST program, which this government does not fund properly in the London area. And yet they want to continue to blame criminals for the gaps that they have created within our system.

On January 29, the, I guess, candidate for Premier, Mr. Ford, came and visited London, Ontario. He attended the London Police Service Chief’s Gala. At that gala he made some of the most bizarre and disturbing statements I’ve ever heard a political leader ever issue in our country. This is what Mr. Ford said at that event—and he was not the Premier at that time—“You know, someone breaks into your house, uses a gun—10 years automatic. They discharge that gun, they get 15 years automatic. God forbid they shoot someone and they survive, 20 years automatic, and god forbid they kill an innocent person. I don’t even go 25 years; I sent them right to spunky, and then we’ll take care of everything from there.” At that time, this was a reference to the electric chair. This was at a police chief’s gala supporting the Canadian Mental Health Association and Youth Opportunities Unlimited, great organizations who are doing wonderful work in our community, and he came in and talked about the death penalty.

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I’d like to quote the city of London ward 6 councillor, Sam Trosow. He called Ford’s comment “absolutely appalling.” He took aim at the Premier’s partisan remarks, especially noting that this was an event to raise money for CMHA and Youth Opportunities Unlimited. Here’s a quote from Councillor Trosow: “I think that this is part and

parcel of the new rhetoric that we're hearing. I don't even want to say Trump-light because there's nothing light about this," Trosow said of the death penalty remark. "He's appealing to an extreme partisan base."

I could not agree more. These comments were absolutely unconscionable—unacceptable. I mean, read the room and, for heaven's sakes, know who is receiving the benefit of this gala.

A spokesman for the PC Party tried to run a little bit of damage control after these remarks. They said, "The Premier made a poor-taste joke out of frustration for the many people affected by violent criminals out on our streets because of the federal government's broken bail system and soft-on-crime policies..."

If this were a joke, Speaker, was there laughing? Did anyone laugh? Did anyone think this was funny? Because I certainly don't see that that is a comment befitting a leader in this province. But not only that, the response from the party themselves really just turned into more finger-pointing, saying, "Oh, we're only doing this because of the federal government." It's more stones in glass houses.

We've seen this government really fail on the justice file. They would portray themselves as being tough on crime, but really what they've been tough on is the system of justice itself, because it has become so beleaguered with problems because of their cuts and because of their underfunding. Think about how many women in Ontario had the bravery to bring a case forward, to admit to the world and to admit to the court that they had been attacked. They had the courage to face the scrutiny of the legal opposition, the scrutiny of possibly the public, even if there is a publication ban.

As my friend the MPP for Waterloo has pointed out, in so many of those cases the attacker goes free, and the survivor receives no justice. How is that tough on crime? How is that not addressed within Bill 10? When we also consider that only 20% of women and gender-diverse folks actually pursue these cases in a legal setting, think about how many more are actually being failed by this government. I would suggest that the number will actually decrease, because how many won't want to pursue this because they know, under a Conservative government, they will never get justice?

We saw from this government that one of their first moves was to undermine legal aid within this province for some of the people who are the most unable to receive justice. They cut that funding. In their most recent fall economic statement, we saw a cut of half a billion dollars.

I want to reference some of the court delays that are happening in London, Ontario. I'd like to reference Jane Sims, who wrote an article in August of 2024—this most recent August. The article is entitled, "Why Do Ontario's Court Offices Still Close in the Middle of the Day?" Ms. Sims reached out to the provincial Attorney General's office and asked the question: "Why do Ontario court offices that help people navigate the often-confusing justice system continue to have pandemic-like hours and

shut down daily counter services to the public between 11 a.m. and 2 p.m.?"

As Jane points out, court offices are the first stop in the justice system. In response to this inquiry, they returned Jane's email and said they would get back to her. They sent another email a few days later to say they were still working on it and, back and forth and back and forth, still trying to get an answer.

As Jane points out, most days in London and the surrounding area, you can throw a bowling ball through court areas and hit nothing. As she points out, imagine the frustration of someone who has limited time in the day, drives into London from St. Thomas, Goderich, Sarnia, Chatham or Woodstock to file papers, pay a fine or make inquiries about cases only to find that the office is closed.

Part of the problem that this Bill 10 does not solve is the tremendous lack of people that are in the court system right now. While this does purport to address some of the backlog by hiring more judges, it doesn't deal with the fact that there simply aren't enough workers in the court systems.

In Ontario, it's been pointed out that the Civil and Family Courts are the worst in Canada, that it can take up to five years for civil action to proceed from commencement to trial. That is not addressed within Bill 10 properly.

I also want to raise the voices of a lawyer who reached out and pointed out that, in terms of estate processing—normally these requests would be processed within a week or two—they are now taking up to four months. People who have lost a loved one, people who are trying to navigate the courts, people who are trying to dispense with the estate are having to go through that laborious, time-consuming process. Think about the cost that is incurred by an individual who is simply waiting to settle an estate, and as has been pointed out, that is because there simply aren't enough people hired to work within our court system.

As we consider the remarks that Premier Ford made recently about hiring judges that are tough on crime—it often makes me wonder if this is actually a distraction. It's curious that these remarks came at the exact same time as a judge ruled against bike lanes. I mean, talk about bringing something absolutely inappropriate to a battle. It was the battle about bike lanes, and he chose the nuclear option, that he wants to not abide by the separation of powers that we have, that we uphold, that we treasure within this country of the legislative executive and judiciary branches of government. He wants to get himself involved.

So, as a start-off, he's talking about the death penalty and now he's talking about involving himself in the appointment of judges or that they should be elected. While Bill 10 does not necessarily promote the election of judges per se, it certainly does concern itself with the selection of judges. It's a curious manoeuvre when one considers that one of the Premier's acts in the first Parliament of the Conservatives was to try to appoint a family friend as the head of the OPP, Ron Taverner.

Now, the Judicial Appointments Advisory Committee has been upheld as the gold standard for impartiality and really respects the rule of law. All you need do is look at any physical or artistic representation of justice and consider what you see involved there. Do you see an individual who is holding the scales for justice, a sword for enforcement? And what do you notice on their face, Speaker? They are blindfolded because justice is blind. Justice is not subject to ideology. Justice is something that is sacrosanct, but we see a Premier that wants to violate that sanctity of the rule of law itself.

After the Premier got his knickers in a twist after there was the court injunction that halted the removal of the bike lanes, Ontario's Chief Justices weighed into the matter. Chief Justices Michael Tulloch, Geoffrey Morawetz and Sharon Nicklas said judges should not—or, pardon me: The Premier said that “judges should not determine items like bike lanes ... because of ideology.” They said, “A judge must be, and must be seen to be, free to decide each case on its own merits, without interference or influence of any kind from any source, including politicians.”

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Now, the Attorney General, MPP Downey, defended the Premier and said that “the frustration that it comes from is real,” including the Premier's concern that “bleeding heart judges” are letting too many violent criminals out on bail. We had a decision about bike lanes and they're talking about violent criminals now.

For any action there is a following reaction. I mean, we see a court injunction about bike lanes and we see a Premier that wants to talk about electing judges because there are too many criminals on the street—oh boy, you could not make this stuff up.

What is also concerning to me is another comment from the Premier. He said, “These judges that are bleeding hearts, I can't wait until they retire. Matter of fact, I'll pay them to retire earlier. I'll pay you out, for two, three, four years. Just get out of the system.”

These are curious comments from a Premier that won't pay nurses fairly—that there's not wage parity between all of the different health care sectors. Community health care workers are paid the lowest of low in home care, then it goes up slightly with long-term care and then the gold standard is the acute care system. Whereas a health care worker is a health care worker is a health care worker, they should be paid the same. The government is well aware of this disparity, they're well aware of this unfairness, but the Premier won't pay them fairly, certainly won't pay PSWs fairly. But if he could tip the scales of justice, that's where his attention will go.

Now, the Chief Justices also wrote: “An independent judiciary protects the public, not just judges. It means a society governed by the rule of law.” And I want to just ask this chamber, can anyone think of a place in the world where political leaders try to control the judiciary? I'm sure you can think of lots of examples, and how did that go for them? Not great.

I want to also provide another quote: “Every single appointment I can find tough judges, tough” JPs, “to

keep guys in jail ... I'm going to do it,” Ford said in 2024. “So that's part of democracy. You voted a party in.” Well, that's a fundamental misunderstanding of the separation of powers and the rule of law—so many more things.

Our Attorney General actually said, “I believe the advisory committee's review and interview process is too subjective.” Not only does this really eat at the heart of the rule of law, the separation of powers, the independence of the judiciary, but it also really negatively impacts all the people who do make it through legitimately. Because any time after Bill 10 is passed, and I'm sure it will pass—obviously, we have a majority government here—but any person who becomes a judge after that fact, other people in the justice system will say, “Oh, are you one of the people who were ideological, and one of the people who were appointed as a result of this change?”

We've seen changes like this happen. We saw changes like this in 2021. At that time, we saw tinkering around the edges, manipulating the appointment of judges. People were concerned then, and yet we see even more in Bill 10.

So as we look at this bill, obviously there are a number of things that are entirely supportable. There are details which are concerning; there are details which attack our fundamental democratic principles. I would say, though, that for this government's words and rhetoric and sloganeering about being tough on crime, they have been tough on the justice system itself. They have undermined the justice system itself. They've actually been soft on crime because of their inability to have a justice system that operates properly, effectively, makes sure that people are punished, and makes sure that people pay for the crimes that they've created.

Just with the example of people who have gone through a sexual assault case and had their cases stayed or thrown out by the courts because of administrative backlog, because time has run out, this government should be embarrassed. They should really re-evaluate their funding. Not only should we be looking at appointing enough judges to make sure that justice is carried, we also need to have all of the people within the courthouses so that they can help with the administration of justice. That is something that is woefully missing, something that this government ought to address.

I look forward to supporting measures such as that, but I think we also have to look at who is going to end up with the power as a result of this judicial appointments process. Are we going to see an Attorney General that is allowed to throw out good candidates because they haven't been the right party colour? That's a deep concern, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you to my colleague for sharing that rather disturbing information, actually. I was happier when I did not know what you taught me this afternoon, but now I know.

My question is, staying focused on intimate partner violence, the recommendations from the Renfrew inquest following the deaths, the murders by the same man, of Carol Culleton, Anastasia Kuzyk and Nathalie Warmerdam:

The number one recommendation is to declare intimate partner violence an epidemic so that the resources, the focus is put to help those survivors. Is this an issue that is present in your riding and something that should be supported by this government?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank my excellent colleague and seatmate from Nickel Belt for an important question.

It should be very easy, it should be a knee-jerk reaction for this government to declare intimate partner violence an epidemic, and yet we see them reluctant to do so because they simply don't want to spend the money to support survivors.

In 2024, I had the opportunity to participate on the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, and we heard from a wonderful organization in my city called Anova. Anova cited statistics that in 2023, they had 10,000 calls to their 24-hour crisis and support line. Three thousand of those calls were for emergency shelter. Only 150 of those calls got space. So they had to turn away 95% of women seeking shelter trying to flee abuse. And this government has cut funding to women's shelters. They won't declare an epidemic and they've cut funding to shelters. What does that say?

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Mr. Stephen Blais: Thank you very much for your presentation. I have to admit, you're very soft-spoken, so I had to listen very closely to try to understand what you were saying. I think at one point you asked rhetorically about either countries or jurisdictions or perhaps autocracies who take a more centralized approach and politically aligned approach to identifying who will participate in the judicial process. I'm wondering if you have some thoughts on what some of these countries and places might be and how Bill 10 compares to how they do things over there.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: One thing I've never been called in life is soft-spoken, so there is a first time for everything. Oh, my goodness.

I want to thank the member from Orléans for the question. We have what has been called the "gold standard" here in Ontario and in Canada for the appointment of judges. We have the ability for the JAAC to appoint judges in a manner in which it looks towards the people's experience, their impartiality. It is the opportunity for us to make sure that justice is sacrosanct, and justice is something that is sacred.

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When we look at the government trying to impact this by changing the selection number to a larger number, allowing the Attorney General to override all of the candidates and suggest that there needs to be another body of them, that's deeply concerning. Are we going to see an Attorney General that's doing background checks on all of these judges before they're allowed to even be suggested? Wow, what kind of province would we be living in?

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: Thank you to the member for his remarks. Listening to all the remarks today, I got thinking about my community members in Newmarket–Aurora. In March 2024, I held a town hall on community safety because so many of my constituents were calling me and emailing me about their concerns about the increase in the number of auto thefts that were happening, cars being stolen right from their own driving space. Then again, this past March, just after the election, wouldn't you know, the town of Aurora held another town hall—same topics all over again. The town hall was full of people each time. This is why our government launched a coordinated strategy to fight auto theft.

My question to the member opposite is that there have been good—

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Response?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Thank you very much to my friend from Newmarket–Aurora for the question. I think it should be indicative to the member that clearly all of the measures that this government has taken in the past seven years have not addressed the root causes of crime because everything is getting worse. I would say that the legacy of this government is that of encampments, that of people unable to afford the basics of life. Their response to housing was to remove rent control for people in 2018, and we've seen an exponential rise in homelessness.

We also see a government that has not addressed social assistance rates. I thought it was bad enough with the Liberal government in 15 years doing so little and then, at the end, promising guaranteed basic income. But, I mean, this government indexing people to inflation below the poverty line? It's like you're keeping your foot on their head and hoping that they never get above water. That is legislated poverty.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Ms. Catherine Fife: The member from London West—

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: North Centre.

Ms. Catherine Fife: London North Centre—I'm so sorry.

He referenced this scenario where the Premier was a candidate in the last election and went to a community event and was, I would say, very irresponsible with his words. The Ontario Bar Association president, Kathryn Manning, has also said, "A society in which politics plays a role in conviction and prosecution is not a safe one, as we have seen in the US. The premier has built a reputation for protecting Ontario from the dangers of the Trump administration. Attempting to politicize the judiciary is one such danger—we need to protect against it."

This is an interesting place that we find ourselves in as a society. When the Premier talks about "sparky," what message does that send out to the good people of London North Centre?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank my friend from Waterloo, the MPP from Waterloo, for her question. I was looking also at President Manning's comments, and I thought they were incredibly important. When we have a candidate to be the leader of this province saying that type

of very disturbing sort of language, it's a distraction from what should actually be happening.

We shouldn't, first of all, have a Premier that's talking about interfering in the courts or interfering with the separation of powers. But when I heard that, I also thought of those movies where there is a murder, and I thought, "My gosh, the call is coming from inside the house." We have a politician who is trying to manipulate some of our basic principles. He's trying to manipulate the Criminal Code, which isn't even his level of government. How far will this go?

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Ms. Laura Smith: There's so much to unpack, and I want to utilize my time as best as possible. I'm going to remind the members across the House, through the Speaker, that there are so many remarkable programs. Ontario-STANDS is another example of a supportive and comprehensive program that helps women and families with a hand up.

I'm just going to list:

—\$14.5 million over three years for the Investing in Women's Futures fund;

—\$26.7 million over three years to provide 25 training programs across the province through the Women's Economic Security Program; and

—the program that deals with Ontario-STANDS is \$1.4 billion.

This is an incredible program. I wanted to know if the member opposite was aware of that program.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I want to thank the member from Thornhill. Look, I'm not going to stand here in my place and say everything that the Conservative government does is bad and evil and wrong. That would be ridiculous, and that would be ham-handed and that would be foolish.

However, I will say that you need to listen to the people in communities who are saying women are being turned away from shelters seeking basic assistance. Survivors of assault and sexual assault are not getting justice within our court system. That should give you pause. You can't go and say, "I've got this program, this program and this program," when thousands of people are not receiving justice, when thousands of women are being turned away without support.

I have to ask the question: After being turned away from support, those survivors—what happens to them next as a result of this government not funding the supports that they need?

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

Mr. Ted Hsu: It's an honour to get up today to speak to Bill 10. I got the opportunity to have a good chat with our Attorney General a few weeks ago, and I wanted to say that he knows a little bit about Kingston and the Islands. We were able to talk about the Frontenac courthouse that is in need of funds for renovation. We were also able to talk about delays in the probate system and about what remedies could be applied in Kingston. I enjoy speaking with the Attorney General, and I'm confi-

dent that he will take the remarks in the debate today into consideration as this bill moves into committee.

I want to concentrate today on schedule 5 of the bill. The important thing about schedule 5 is that it proposes to change how judges are appointed. The danger here is that the minister, or the Attorney General or the Premier and the cabinet, are getting more power to make choices in a less transparent way about who is picked to serve on the judiciary. For example, instead of a ranked list of candidates, the government will be given a list of candidates who are recommended, highly recommended or not recommended. So they will be able to pick and choose with less justification for why they chose a particular person for a particular seat as judge.

The reason why I decided I would get up and speak today is that I had the opportunity in the last Parliament to put up a private member's bill about our tribunal system. Over the last few years, certain tribunals had problems because positions were not being filled in a timely manner. There was certain evidence that positions were being filled slowly so that the government's preferred candidates could be appointed or, maybe, perhaps, they were waiting for preferred candidates, and that perfectly qualified candidates were not being reappointed. These, of course, were adjudicators on the tribunals that were appointed by the previous government. That motivated me to look into the question of why certain tribunals were not functioning very well: the Landlord and Tenant Board, the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal, for example. That's what led me to propose a private member's bill in the last Parliament. There were some analogs between what was happening with the tribunals and what was happening with the Judicial Appointment Advisory Committee.

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Why is it so important that not only are judges impartial, but that people perceive the justice system as being impartial? It has to do with people in society wanting to work hard and contribute. We want a society where people work hard, and they try to build their lives and the lives of their family and the community around them. If you want people to work hard to build things, they have to have confidence that they will be treated fairly, that they will receive the fruits of their work.

I was raised by my parents and the village, the culture, around me when I was young to work hard, work hard, work hard. Put your head down and work hard and you'll be rewarded, and you'll do well in life if you work hard. But that's predicated on an important idea: that you'll be treated fairly. If we live in a society where people are not sure whether they're going to be treated fairly, they're going to be less likely to work hard and work hard to contribute to building their own lives, their families' lives, the community, the province and the country as a whole. And part of where that confidence that we live in a society where everybody will be treated fairly—part of that confidence comes from a judicial system where judges are not only impartial but are perceived to be impartial, have earned their position as judges through merit and not

connections, and have been perceived to have earned their positions through merit and not connections.

So this bill, schedule 5 of this bill, gives more power to ministers, the Attorney General, the Premier, to choose judges. Instead of having a ranked list that is given to them by the appointments committee, they're just given a group of candidates—many, many candidates to choose from—and they're simply grouped into recommended, highly recommended and not recommended. That gives more discretionary power to ministers, and they can choose judges without really having to justify very much why they chose particular people.

The other thing that happens in this bill is this bill would give the minister the ability to set the criteria for the committee to use to group the candidates into these three categories. Now, the criteria haven't been specified in this bill. They'll be specified later in regulation. But the point is that this means that there's more influence by the political minister over the judicial appointments process. If this bill were to pass in its present form, the minister would get more power to influence which judges get on the recommended or highly recommended lists when the committee is done interviewing and checking through the backgrounds and looking at the recommendations from the legal community for all of the candidates for positions.

So there are these two ways in which the minister and the cabinet, the Premier's office, will get more influence over who is chosen as judges.

Why is this so bad? Well, I think the Premier has shown why this is so bad. The Premier has spoken a lot in public about judges and what kinds of judges he'd like to see and how he would like them to behave—that sort of general thing has already eroded people's confidence in the judicial system. But last year, the Premier defended his appointment of two former political staffers in his government to the JAAC. He said that he did that because he wanted like-minded people in appointments, and the implication was that he didn't want Liberals or New Democrats appointed. So this is already eroding the independence of the committee, or at least the perceived independence of the committee.

Then the Premier also said—and I'll quote this from an article that I found in the Windsor newspaper: "There's no judge appointed anywhere in this country, anywhere in the United States, anywhere in the world that's not a political appointment. Simple as that." So, the Premier actually just believes that all judges are political appointments.

If that were to become the popular perception, justified or not, I think anybody would see how that erodes public confidence in the judicial system; public confidence that they're living in a society where they will be treated fairly; public confidence that they will receive the just rewards for the effort they put into building their lives. It's unfortunate that the Premier has chosen this route to undermine the judicial system.

But now we have this bill which comes along that gives more power to the Premier and the Premier's cabinet to choose judges. The Premier has already said that he wants

judges who will help him achieve his goals—political goals since he's a politician.

Here's another quote: "You can't have judges constantly overruling the government." I guess this was related to the time where he said, for example, "Judges should not determine items like bike lanes." "Because of ideology," they decide to put an injunction in. I guess at the same event, he said things like, "Let's start electing our judges."

The point is, he thinks that judges who are getting in the way of political goals are not desirable, but there's a reason why sometimes judges get in the way of politics, and that's because in our system, where people should feel like they will be treated fairly if something ever happens, there's this idea of due process under the law. The people get their say. The people will be treated in a certain way that's fair and not different from how other people are treated, whether or not they are supporters of the current party in power or if they have made the appropriate donations or attended the appropriate events. It's so important to live in a society where we have due process. It actually erodes confidence in our system when you have a Premier who says you can't have judges constantly overruling the government.

I was reminded of this because I saw in the news today—just today, actually—another leader who said, "Our court system is not letting me do the job I was elected to do." This was a quote in the news today. It comes from the leader of a country who wants to deport people from his country without due process, and I think everybody can guess who that is: It's Donald Trump. Donald Trump finds that the courts are getting in his way. He wants to do things without giving people due process. He wants to create a country where people don't feel like they will be treated fairly, and instead a country where if they pay the appropriate entry fee to the president, they will then get some favours and at least not be treated unfairly by the system.

All of this undermines confidence in our judicial system and confidence in society as a whole, because our government plays an important role in society. Certainly our political leaders want to do things, and we vote—during elections we choose which way we want to go, but we have certain protections in place: that people will be given due process, that people who are in the minority will have rights that they can try to assert when the need arises, and that they will be given due process, they will be treated fairly when they try to assert those rights.

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That's why we have all these things. That's why the system, sometimes, doesn't let a government do everything it wants to do. In fact, we have governments these days who try to do as much as they can, and they get stopped. We rely on this whole system, whether it's a judicial system or other checks and balances in our democratic system that stop governments who try to do too much and trample on people's rights and trample on people's sense that they will always be treated fairly when it's important for that to happen.

I think that's why this particular schedule—schedule 5—is problematic. There are a number of good things in

this bill. Our caucus will certainly discuss this bill. We may even vote for it overall in principle at second reading—maybe, maybe not; we’ll have to see.

But schedule 5 in particular, for me, has some problems in it. I really do think that we should be taking political loyalty totally out of the picture when it comes to appointing judges. We know people are people: People have different political views, but that shouldn’t come into play when we are trying to decide whether somebody should take on a position on the bench. It should be merit and it should, as much as possible, not be about who has connections.

This government has a long and well-documented pattern, unfortunately, of politicizing all sorts of policy decisions and prioritizing political friends and donors over, shall we say, more objective considerations and perhaps considerations for the overall public good. And so I do hope that when this bill gets to committee, we will look at these issues and that we will make some amendments to improve schedule 5 of this bill.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Mr. Stephen Blais: Thank you for your remarks this afternoon. I think we agree that the politicization of the selection of judges has the potential to lead us down a very dangerous path—a path that makes our system look more and more like that of the Americans or even other less democratic countries around the world—and, I think you quite rightly pointed out, opens the door to the general public having a diminished view of the independence of our courts and therefore faith in the court system. If people don’t have faith in the court system, they won’t have faith in the results of that system, and democracy erodes. I’m wondering if you might spend some time expanding on that thought a little bit.

Mr. Ted Hsu: I have another quote that I didn’t mention in the main speech. The Premier talked about offering buyouts to what he called “bleeding heart” judges. I’ll quote again from this news article. He said, “I can’t wait until they retire. Matter of fact, I’ll pay them to retire earlier. I’ll pay you out for two, three, four years. Just get out of the system, simple as that.”

The Premier seems to be willing to offer money to get judges that he doesn’t like to step aside. I don’t think that is good at all for confidence in our judicial system when a political leader is offering money to a judge to stop working as a judge and to leave the bench.

I just don’t think that this government can be trusted with the extra powers that schedule 5 of Bill 10 is granting to them.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Ms. Catherine Fife: The member from Kingston and the Islands has talked about the responsibility of power that government has and the threat of abusing that power. Earlier today, I talked about the number of disposed sexual assault cases that are being thrown out of court in Ontario.

In 2023, it was 1,171 cases. This has increased in 2024 to 1,526 cases.

Judges across this province have told this government that they need the resources and the support to do their jobs. It does not suit judges to throw away these cases and dispense them from the court system.

Can the member from Kingston and the Islands tell us why Bill 10 misses the mark on this fundamental issue of access to justice in Ontario?

Mr. Ted Hsu: I’m sorry I missed the speech from my honourable colleague who represents Waterloo. I know she’s a very smart MPP and always worth listening to.

I think she makes a very valid point, that perhaps the Premier would actually be satisfied with the judges that we have, who are chosen in an impartial way, if they had the resources to expeditiously do the work that they’re supposed to do so that cases get processed and moved through the courts.

At the beginning of my speech, I mentioned an area that affected me personally and also caused a lot of letters to be written to my constituency office, and that was delays in handling probate. In Kingston last summer, we had waits of 10 months for pretty simple probate cases to get handled. So this is just another example. It’s not just one area of the legal system that’s experiencing delays but many.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Mr. Stephen Blais: You referenced in your debate, and then again in questioning, the Premier’s indication that he would be willing to pay judges to retire early—two, three, four, multiple years of salary to leave. Given what a judge is paid in Ontario, that is approaching a million dollars a judge, I would suggest. I’m guessing that the Premier has problems with more than just one judge. He probably has a problem with many more than that.

I’m wondering if, instead of paying judges potentially tens of millions of dollars to leave, that money was then maybe invested in hiring more judges or expanding the court system in other ways, might that better help the judicial system here in the province of Ontario?

Mr. Ted Hsu: I think that’s an excellent suggestion. The member from Orléans has suggested something which is along the same lines as the member from Waterloo.

I think the system is crying for the resources so that it can operate properly. Justice delayed is justice denied. When cases don’t even get heard because they’ve been delayed for so long, that’s an injustice.

I think when the Premier says he’s willing to pay out judges to get them to retire early, it just smells bad. It is something that could be interpreted wrongly, and I think the Premier chose his words very poorly when he said that.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Thank you.
Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): With it being close to 6 o’clock, this House is now adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1758.

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Grewal, Hardeep Singh (PC)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	
Gualtieri, Silvia (PC)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	
Hamid, Hon. / L'hon. Zee (PC)	Milton	Associate Solicitor General for Auto Theft and Bail Reform / Solliciteur général associé responsable de la Lutte contre le vol d'automobiles et de la Réforme relative aux mises en liberté sous caution
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Hon. / L'hon. Mike (PC)	Kitchener—Conestoga	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Hazell, Andrea (LIB)	Scarborough—Guildwood	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Holland, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin (PC)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	Associate Minister of Forestry and Forest Products / Ministre associé des Forêts et des Produits forestiers
Hsu, Ted (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin—Caledon	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health / Ministre de la Santé
Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Trevor (PC)	Chatham-Kent—Leamington	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et de l'Agroentreprise
Jordan, John (PC)	Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston	
Kanapathi, Logan (PC)	Markham—Thornhill	
Kernaghan, Terence (NDP)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	
Kerzner, Hon. / L'hon. Michael S. (PC)	York Centre / York-Centre	Solicitor General / Solliciteur général
Khanjin, Hon. / L'hon. Andrea (PC)	Barrie—Innisfil	Minister of Red Tape Reduction / Ministre de la Réduction des formalités administratives
Kusendova-Bashta, Hon. / L'hon. Natalia (PC)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga- Centre	Minister of Long-Term Care / Ministre des Soins de longue durée
Leardi, Anthony (PC)	Essex	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Lecce, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)	King—Vaughan	Minister of Energy and Mines / Ministre de l'Énergie et des Mines
Lennox, Robin (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	
Lumsden, Hon. / L'hon. Neil (PC)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	Minister of Sport / Ministre du Sport
Mamakwa, Sol (NDP)	Kiiwetinoong	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
McCarthy, Hon. / L'hon. Todd J. (PC)	Durham	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs
McCrimmon, Karen (LIB)	Kanata—Carleton	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
McGregor, Hon. / L'hon. Graham (PC)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism / Ministre des Affaires civiles et du Multiculturalisme
McKenney, Catherine (NDP)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
McMahon, Mary-Margaret (LIB)	Beaches—East York	
Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)	York—Simcoe	President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor
Oosterhoff, Hon. / L'hon. Sam (PC)	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones Associate Minister of Energy-Intensive Industries / Ministre associé des Industries à forte consommation d'énergie
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	
Parsa, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (PC)	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires
Pasma, Chandra (NDP)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	Deputy House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Piccini, Hon. / L'hon. David (PC)	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de l'Immigration, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences
Pierre, Natalie (PC)	Burlington	
Pinsonneault, Steve (PC)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	
Pirie, Hon. / L'hon. George (PC)	Timmins	Minister of Northern Economic Development and Growth / Ministre du Développement et de la croissance économique du Nord
Quinn, Hon. / L'hon. Nolan (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	Minister of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security / Ministre des Collèges et Universités, de l'Excellence en recherche et de la Sécurité
Racinsky, Joseph (PC)	Wellington—Halton Hills	
Rae, Matthew (PC)	Perth—Wellington	
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Indigenous Affairs and First Nations Economic Reconciliation / Ministre des Affaires autochtones et de la Réconciliation économique avec les Premières Nations Minister Responsible for Ring of Fire Economic and Community Partnerships / Ministre responsable des Partenariats économiques et communautaires pour le développement du Cercle de feu
Riddell, Brian (PC)	Cambridge	
Rosenberg, Bill (PC)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Sarrazin, Stéphane (PC)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Saunderson, Brian (PC)	Simcoe—Grey	
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Chris (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	
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, Hon. / L'hon. Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	Speaker / Présidente de l'Assemblée législative
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, David (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Graydon (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre associé des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Smith, Laura (PC)	Thornhill	
Smyth, Stephanie (LIB)	Toronto—St. Paul's	
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Tangri, Hon. / L'hon. Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	Associate Minister of Small Business / Ministre associée des Petites Entreprises

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Thanigasalam, Hon. / L'hon. Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associé délégué à la Santé mentale et à la Lutte contre les dépendances
Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Rural Affairs / Ministre des Affaires rurales
Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Associate Attorney General / Procureur général associé
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	Deputy Speaker / Vice-Présidente Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Tsao, Jonathan (LIB)	Don Valley North / Don Valley-Nord	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Vaugeois, Lise (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
Vickers, Paul (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	
Watt, Tyler (LIB)	Nepean	
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
Williams, Hon. / L'hon. Charmaine A. (PC)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity / Ministre associée des Perspectives sociales et économiques pour les femmes
Wong-Tam, Kristyn (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	