

Legislative
Assembly
of Ontario



Assemblée
législative
de l'Ontario

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

No. 64

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

N° 64

1st Session
44th Parliament

Monday
20 April 2026

1^{re} session
44^e législature

Lundi
20 avril 2026

Speaker: Honourable Donna Skelly
Clerk: Trevor Day

Présidente : L'honorable Donna Skelly
Greffier : Trevor Day

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Hansard Publications and Language Services
Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario

Journal des débats et services linguistiques
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Monday 20 April 2026

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 20 avril 2026

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Good morning.
Let us pray.
Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

2026 ONTARIO BUDGET

BUDGET DE L'ONTARIO DE 2026

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 13, 2026, on the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

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

MPP Jamie West: I'm pleased to resume the debate on the budget. Before I start—and I hope nobody calls me out for this because it's not speaking to the motion itself—on Wednesday it's my parents' anniversary. I don't know if I'll have the opportunity to speak ahead of time, so I just want to quickly thank my mom and my dad, Bev and Bill, for their seventh-year anniversary. Congratulations to them.

A short anecdote: When I talk about my dad, I'm generally talking about my stepdad. Bill and my mom started dating when I was 16. Because they were both divorced, my dad had given her rings promising never to marry her, and then they eloped when my mom was 70 years old. I called her to ask why I wasn't invited, and she said, "Jamie, I'm 70 years old. How many romantic things do you think I get to do?" Congratulations, again, to Bev and Bill for seven years of love.

Today we're here to talk about the budget—
Interjection.

MPP Jamie West: The government House leader would love for me to not talk about the budget. I can understand why, because let's look at the numbers in real total. This is something people in Ontario have to be really aware about. The debt in Ontario is \$485 billion. That's up more than 50% than it was in 2018. That's an astronomical number. The deficit is \$13.3 billion. It's \$6 billion more than it was last year. We are talking about big, big money in this.

Two weeks ago, I was asking the member for Nickel Belt the question—I had a series of questions, and I asked if this was the Premier of Ontario or one of the students in my wife's kindergarten class who was asking for a secret tunnel, a secret island in the middle of Lake Ontario, an extra Ferris wheel. I was trying to make her laugh, but at

the same time I was trying to point out that this is nonsensical. All across Ontario, the people of Ontario are tightening their belts, trying to do more with less. When they go to the grocery stores, they're absolutely being gouged, completely being ripped off at the grocery store. The Premier, meanwhile, is on a spending spree. His brother, best known for saying, "The party with the taxpayer's money is over;" the Premier, now best known for saying, "Get on my private jet; I just picked it up for \$30 million"—this is not fiscal responsibility. It simply isn't. It doesn't matter how many ads you have that come out saying, "We're spending your money responsibly;" "We're protecting Ontario"—we're not. We're not. Not "we," we're New Democrats; we are. Conservatives are not; the Premier is not. This is a bad use of your money. It's not a great way to spend money.

When you think about, in education—a lot of people are concerned about education. A lot of kids who have special needs who need special education—learning disabilities, like my kids; autism, like my friend Sean's kids—are supposed to have EAs and extra support. That doesn't exist for them. No matter how many times the Minister of Education gets up saying, "There's record spending, record spending," the real math is there has been a cut of \$6.4 billion to education—\$6.35 billion; I don't want to overcharge—\$6.35 billion to education. That's why if you have a child with autism and special needs, you may be told by the school that your child has to be picked up that day: because they don't have the support. That's why we have overcrowded classrooms. That's the reality of what's going on here.

So when you look at the budget and you think about people tightening their belts—let me give you a quick anecdote about this, actually. Pure Country does fundraising, or basically food raising, for the food bank, so at Christmastime they do something for the infant food bank, and then they do Camping for Cans after Christmas where they set up a campsite in the mall and they ask people to drop off food because food donation declines a lot after Christmas.

I was going out there to see Josh and Coop, and I stopped on the way to pick up some donations. Then I thought, "Well, Josh and Coop are really big on the infant food bank so I'll get some formula." My kids are all adults, so I haven't bought formula in a long time. A can of formula is about 50 bucks—50 bucks for a can of formula. So I looked this up: Formula has gone up 81.5% since the Premier was elected in 2018. Now, there's always going to be inflation, but I like to think that if it's 81.5%, you're probably getting ripped off; you're probably being gouged. So I got my two cans, and I gave them to Josh and Coop.

I was thinking about it afterward because later today we'll be doing an opposition day motion, and I was thinking about, as a new parent, if I needed infant formula—my kids were breastfed, but if it didn't work, if we had to supplement and were using formula, and lot of people aren't able to feed their child through breastfeeding—could I afford 50 bucks a week for formula for my child?

The motion we have is actually about dynamic pricing. They use algorithms to track what you're doing. They base the price—so I pay 50 bucks because I'm in my 50s, and I don't buy infant formula that much. But if I was in my 20s and I was buying it for Sam, and they noticed that once or twice a week I was buying infant formula, it wouldn't be 50 bucks for me; it would be \$60; it would be \$70. That's the regular infant formula. Let's say I needed a specialty formula for lactose intolerance, and they noticed that I started buying this once or twice a week. It's about 60 bucks to 70 bucks normally. How much is the grocery store going to start charging me? Because if they've raised prices over 80% in the last eight years, they don't care how expensive it is to feed your baby. They are going to gouge you and gouge you and gouge you.

That's why this afternoon we have a motion to outlaw dynamic pricing. The Premier, of course, is not a fan of this idea. The Premier said, "God bless Galen Weston"—his family owns a lot of the grocery chains—and he's high-fiving him. Why not, right? Because I'm sure that if you're able to raise grocery prices through the roof—you're kidding yourself if you go to the grocery store and you don't feel like you're being ripped off. COVID ended a long time ago; the supply chains aren't affected the same way. We're getting ripped off, and we know we're being ripped off because just a couple of days ago there was a frozen meat scandal, injecting water into the meat so it looks heavier than it actually is because you're paying for water. Then when the investigative reporters weighed the meat, they found out that it wasn't even the weight that was in there. And I can almost guarantee you that the penalty for these greedy grocers ripping people off in this way will be the exact same penalty that happened for the bread-fixing scandal with the Weston family: You'll get a gift card to shop at their grocery store. This is not a government that's tough on crime; this is a government that looks the other way.

0910

Let's talk about crime, too, because buried in the budget bill on page 139—so we know this is incredibly important to the Premier, but it's buried in the bill. It's hidden in there, just as a short little paragraph. After nearly four decades without any major updates, we've got an update to the FOI. It sounds like it's really helpful for you, but it's not.

The FOI, freedom of information, is why we know about the SDF scandal. It's why we know how much money went to people who primarily donated to the Conservative Party. We know why the lowest-scoring people got the most amount of money. Oddly enough, people who scored better didn't get money. It's because of FOI that we know about the greenbelt grab. It's because of FOI that the

people of Ontario—the journalists, the random people—can ask for freedom of information about what's coming out there. The Premier is really well known for saying, "Call me on my personal phone; I do business on my personal phone." Well, when they did the investigation on the greenbelt—there's an RCMP criminal investigation happening. When they did an investigation on the greenbelt scandal, they determined, number one, there was obsi—

Interjections.

MPP Jamie West: Obfuscation—I worked in a mine; we weren't big on three-syllable words. Basically, what they did is they tried to hide it in emails. They used Gmail and other emails, not their official emails, and then they used code words for it. The RCMP was able to figure this out, and through the FOI investigation, they were able to figure this out.

They also want to know what's on the Premier's personal cellphone. The Premier has been fighting this tooth and nail, and he has lost in court, and I think he lost his appeal in court. So now what he's decided to do is bury it in the budget. When the Conservative government goes to talk and knock on doors, they'll point out little berries and little treats that are in the budget and ignore the FOI part, but this is the most important part to the Premier: "You cannot have my personal cellphone." He's going to say, "Well I don't want you to see my personal texts to my family." The RCMP isn't going to look that. They're going to look at the parts—they're going to find out if the Premier did something that is criminal and should be charged, or if he didn't.

I want to be clear: Everyone is innocent until proven guilty. But I want to tell you that as New Democrats, if you are guilty of criminal behaviour, especially as an MPP, we want you held accountable. And I would say to my colleagues on the other side, because the majority of last week we talked a lot about bills having to do with keeping criminals behind bars, that we 100% believe that if the Premier ends up being charged with criminal behaviour that he should be kept behind bars.

With 30 seconds on the end, I just want to thank everyone for their attention at the beginning, thank them for allowing me to say some kind words about my parents and their anniversary, and remind everybody that we are looking at \$485 billion—50% more than it was when the Premier was elected in 2018—and a deficit that climbed by \$6 billion just last year alone.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Questions?

Mr. Anthony Leardi: The member from Sudbury is from a mining district in the province of Ontario, so I'm going ask him a mining question.

Some efforts are being made now to finally open up the Ring of Fire, which I think are very positive developments. I know that many people have waited a long time for the Ring of Fire to get opened up. It's not open yet, but we are launching the progress towards building the access roads, and those undertakings are being led by First Nations. I think that's a positive development as well. I think it's

going to assist the entire province of Ontario and be of particular assistance to the member for Sudbury's riding.

So I just wanted to open up the discussion and invite the member for Sudbury to offer his own observations with regard to mining and the Ring of Fire.

MPP Jamie West: The Ring of Fire is very exciting, but the reality is, and the government side knows this as well, that it is easily a decade away before breaking ground. It's very difficult to get there because the terrain—you have to build a road to the first mine site, which is a nickel mine. Then you're going to use the profits from the nickel mine to build the path to the Ring of Fire where the chromite is. And so it's a great idea, but it's a long-term plan.

There are a lot of mining projects in place already that are brownfield or greenfield. Canada Nickel for example: They have to move the highway because it's so close to the highway. We could be investing short-term if we're talking about protecting Ontario. There are a lot of mining organizations who have projects in the works, where we could actually be pulling ore out of the ground in a lot shorter time than what's happening at the Ring of Fire, especially with the attack from Trump and the need for critical minerals.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Questions?

Ms. Jessica Bell: I noticed in your presentation you talked about the astronomical amount of debt the Conservative government is putting us on track as having. This is happening at the same time as the Conservative government—Doug Ford—bought a \$30-million plane—a \$30-million gravy plane—at a time when we're having difficulty having enough money for classrooms or hospitals.

You were back in your constituency office this weekend. When you were talking to constituents, did they raise the issue of the gravy plane, and what did they say to you?

MPP Jamie West: I think that's an excellent question. I talked about the high debt and the deficit. It's interesting because the Premier buying the gravy plane for \$30 billion just makes absolutely no sense to people.

Number one, in Sudbury, the most common thing people are talking about is Highway 69 and the three lives that were lost about two weeks ago and the frustration they have that the Premier promised in 2018, and has promised every election since then—but the budget has no money towards fixing Highway 69. Meanwhile, he can find \$30 billion, seemingly like that, to buy a personal luxury plane. That's the disconnect.

The other thing when you talk about this debt is, if you look in the Premier's office, there's \$8 million for 50 people to help the Premier in his office. I know the Premier's office isn't a regular office; there are a lot of things going on. But it seems like a ton of people. And when you think of people at home who are struggling to make ends meet, \$8 million for people in your office and \$30 billion for a luxury plane is not the way to go.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Questions?

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I have been anticipating the remarks today from the Minister of Long-Term Care. I

know she has a lot of good things to say. In my own riding, I have two brand new developments with regard to long-term care. There are, for example, 160 new resident spots being developed in the town of Belle River and, in addition to that, another 160 spots being developed in the town of Amherstburg, for a total of approximately 320 new residential spots. It allows people to stay close to home and close to their families.

I think that's a great development. I think it's a great investment from the province of Ontario, in part. I invite the member from Sudbury to offer his comments with regard to residences and long-term care.

MPP Jamie West: Let me give some praise, actually, to the long-term-care minister and the parliamentary assistant because we had some issues with long-term care in Sudbury, not too far from my home, actually, and we were able to work with the minister and the parliamentary assistant about having improvements made in that long-term care. A lot of times people think it's always confrontational, but we do get to work together very well. So thank you for that work.

In terms of the budget, something I would like to see in the budget, actually, is an increase to long-term care, with the caveat that that money goes to front-line care, that it goes to the workers who spend their time with them to allow them to spend more time with people, more time helping them to get dressed, to bathe, to feed, and to the people cleaning the long-term-care facilities.

We know private long-term care is a real money-maker for the investors, but a chunk of that money should make it to the front-line people and the people who are residents in long-term care.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further questions.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: So let's talk about the Premier's gravy plane. It makes perfect sense when we're talking about the budget. The Premier seems to have no reluctance to spend the taxpayers' money, and this is not the first time. I mean, he spent \$2.2 billion on the Ontario Place redevelopment. Instead of that, he could have repaired the Gardiner Expressway and other public infrastructure, but that's not what he chose to do. He decided to call an early election that cost the taxpayers \$189 million.

So let's be clear with the Premier's gravy plane. We see that he's prepared to spend big, but he's just not spending it on us. He's spending it on his insiders, on his own personal luxury and comfort.

So my question to you is, why do you think that the Premier feels entitled to spend the taxpayers' money when we see a budget here that doesn't provide the basic needs for the people of the province of Ontario?

0920

MPP Jamie West: Thank you to my colleague. You know, this gravy plane has made the news, and it's funny because it got announced yesterday and then I think the day after that it was, "I'm selling it." The reality is, if anyone has bought a car, you're going to lose about 30% because you took it off the lot.

First of all, I think the people of Ontario need to know how much money this is going to cost with the resell value.

I think as well that he's got to be transparent, and I think that the Premier should be accountable on the difference. This is ridiculous spending, right? He's not Nelly, right? He's not in first class sitting next to Vanna White. He's got to be accountable for this.

The other thing—you didn't mention Therme, this luxury spa. Every resident in Sudbury is paying 400 bucks for a private luxury spa in downtown Toronto. Don't kid yourself: You're not going to get a coupon to be able to go in for a free facial or a visit. We are going to pay a private company. We're going to give them a lease, I think, for 97 years. We're going to give them a ton of money basically so they can make a profit off of all the money we invest.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Questions?

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Thank you to the member for Sudbury. I caught the first part of your speech, and I know you finished it today and I think you were touching on a lot of important points. Budgets are always about priorities, and every time there's one, we hope that in our riding there's going to be some relief into the important areas that need it.

For me, I would have liked to see a lot more investment in mental health and addiction support services instead of sending people behind bars, which does nothing to help them. I would have liked to see money invested for services in our schools to help our teachers with kids with special needs, but also on the infrastructure. I would like to see portables disappear from our school board system.

What would you like to have seen for Sudbury, particularly, in this budget?

MPP Jamie West: I think that's a great question and it's hard to pick the thing, but I think the most visible thing that we've seen in all our communities—Conservative, Liberal, Green, independent, NDP—is the rise in people who are struggling with addictions and the rise of people who are homeless. It is an affordability issue. It has never been like this in my riding.

Prior to the Premier being elected, we had some people who were struggling, but not this visible tent city that we're seeing all over the place. You cannot lock up people. I remember, in my first term, talking to our chief of police, Paul Pedersen, and he said, basically, that the ability for someone to just magically quit without support isn't going to be able to happen without funding and without places for people to get support.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Quick question.

Mr. Deepak Anand: There's not enough time, so I'm going to be quick, but before I be quick, I want to say congratulations to your parents for their anniversary. My mom lost her husband, my father, and I see the deterioration, so may God give them many years of togetherness.

My question is simple: There is a 30% reduction in corporate income tax for small business. Do you support this for small business?

MPP Jamie West: Absolutely. There are always little things that are good in the budget. My colleague—I forget his riding—once talked about, you know, the government sometimes will hold up your favourite candy bar, take it

out of the wrapper, throw it in a garbage pail and then let it swirl around with the juice at the bottom and then take it out and say, "Don't you like Snickers?" And that's the reality for a lot of bills. There's some good stuff in here, but you mix it with the garbage and it's—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further debate?

MPP Tyler Watt: I will be sharing my time with the amazing member from Scarborough—Guildwood.

Je suis honoré de me lever aujourd'hui pour discuter du budget de l'Ontario et exprimer la grande déception que j'ai entendue de la part des résidents de ma circonscription de Nepean en ce qui concerne les soins de santé, l'abordabilité, l'éducation et le transport en commun. Ce gouvernement a complètement abandonné Nepean et Ottawa.

It's an honour to rise here today to discuss the budget motion. I've had some time to discuss with people in my riding to go over what is good, what is missing, and this will be a good opportunity to go over it over the next 10 minutes.

Obviously, a big part of why I'm here is to advocate for health care. My lens, experience and expertise are as a nurse in our health care system, that we all know is really struggling right now with record wait times in hospitals, particularly in Ottawa, patients being treated in the hallways—we don't even know how many at this point are being treated in hallways. There are a lot of concerns. One of the biggest things that we spend on in Ontario is health care, so with how much money we spend on health care, to still be getting the same or worse results to me shows that it's not working. This is where we need a more upstream-thinking approach. We need to be investing more in prevention. We need to be investing more in community. We need to be investing more in access to primary care so we can prevent people from getting to the point of a health crisis, or just getting to a point where they need to use the emergency room because that's the only thing that they have access to.

In my riding of Nepean, walk-in clinics are scarce and often closed before noon. Over 30,000 people in my riding don't have access to primary care through a nurse practitioner or a family doctor, and 30% of people who are using the emergency room at the Queensway Carleton Hospital are unattached to a nurse practitioner or family doctor, so often the emergency room is the only place that they can go. And often, people who actually need to be at the emergency room don't want to go because they know that they're going to be waiting there for an eternity. This will result in worse health ailments, further worsening their potential chronic health issues—things that they should be accessing health care for but they just don't believe in the system anymore.

There's \$3.4 billion over four years, but it includes \$1.8 billion already committed in 2025, so that is net new funding of only \$325 million this year. The two million connection target is the same as 2025—unchanged—and the 300-plus primary care teams is less specific than the 2025. The reality here is that the funding is being reprofiled, not expanded, certainly not getting more cre-

ative or listening to experts on the ground about how we can actually address this health care crisis.

One of the biggest concerns that I've heard from people in my riding is the fact that this FOI business is in this budget. It does not belong there. This FOI is a major change to how this government operates. With all the scrutiny going on—we've got the gravy plane, the green belt, the \$500-million parking lot next to a private spa; I could go on and on and on—where would we be without the ability to make these FOI requests, not only for members but for journalists and for the public?

I will tell you, people are outraged over this FOI. They are not buying what this government is trying to sell, and they want this to be removed from the budget. People don't understand why it's being done in the first place, let alone why it is being slipped in and included in the budget. For a government that just says, "Just trust me; just trust me," this goes against the grain with that. Why should I trust a government that is actively trying to hide and prevent what they're actually doing behind closed doors? Why is the Premier fighting so hard to keep his personal cellphone record hidden from the public when he openly brags about giving his number out and conducting government business on his personal phone? So the FOI is a huge concern to myself and to people in Nepean.

Really, with this budget, it's a rinse and repeat of 2025. It completely lacks imagination. It's the same as the previous year. It even has the exact same title; we couldn't even give it a new title.

I'll tell you, things are tough right now. The affordability crisis is not being addressed in this budget. Our health care crisis, our education crisis, our housing crisis—what isn't in crisis? After eight long years of this government, Ontarians and people in Nepean expect more, especially when we are spending, yet again, another record amount of money. So much for fiscal responsibility: We're about to hit half a trillion dollars of debt.

Another disappointment of mine was the lack of mention of nurse practitioners in this budget—not one mention of nurse practitioners. They are there, they are ready and they want to be a part of the public system. They're calling on this government to bring them into the OHIP system and give them flexible funding models—because the loophole that the health minister herself has admitted to is creating a two-tier system in this province, where if you have a credit card or you have money, you can pay to access a nurse practitioner in a private clinic, and that is not the Ontario or the Canada that I know. So I certainly hope that we get to—we already missed the April 1 deadline; there's no excuse for that. But I hope that we can actively work together and bring nurse practitioners into the public system as soon as possible, because it's a huge part of how we can actually address the health care crisis that we're facing.

0930

Talking about hospitals: big, flashy numbers, but it's still a very broken system. I'm deeply disappointed there's

not one mention of the Queensway Carleton Hospital in this budget. This hospital treats over 50% of the people in the city of Ottawa and parts around it, and it has a fraction of the capacity of the Ottawa Hospital. With Queensway Carleton having one of the longest wait times and the least amount of space and resources, this government should be investing in that.

The Queensway Carleton has a plan. They already have plans to expand their emergency department, which we desperately need. I implore the health minister to look at that plan on her desk and approve it, so we can finally start getting people in Ottawa and west Ottawa the care that they need, because right now the Ottawa Hospital is predicted to cut 400 jobs, 3% of its workforce. Patients are already in hallways. Staff warn patients will feel these cuts, and they certainly will.

The Ontario Hospital Association says that investment is insufficient to cover inflationary pressures. Bruyère Health: five total cuts; 46 PSWs, nine RPNs. London Health Sciences: 200 RN positions eliminated over three to five years; cuts across pediatric, adult ambulatory and in-patient care; 563,000 hours of RN care eliminated.

We've seen this pattern before, where, under Conservative governments, we start eliminating RN positions and we start replacing them with RPN positions. There is a difference of scope. There is a difference of education and experience there. When hospitals have to start eliminating RN positions, ultimately that will affect the care of the patients and the workers around.

St. Joseph's Health Centre: 62 jobs cut. Windsor Regional Hospital: 166 positions cut by mid-2026. Niagara Health: 98 jobs cut; hospitals cited significant pressures to make responsible use of resources. This is not the world-class health care system that the health minister likes to brag about. When hospitals are actively laying off and eliminating positions, that should be a blaring alarm for this government.

There was very little mention—actually, no mention at all—about retention of health care workers in this budget. There are lots of plans, and I will tip my hat because recruitment plans and investments are great, but the retention factor is not there. What are we doing to show health care workers and front-line workers that we respect them, we hear them, we appreciate them? You have to back it up with money. You have to back it up with ensuring that they have health care themselves, that they have access to things like physiotherapy and mental health care.

I've been chatting a lot about health care. My time is almost up, so I'm going to move on quickly to OSAP.

We've heard from students, faculty and advocates across the province that they are not okay with what this government is doing to OSAP. There's \$500 million predicted to be cut in OSAP this year, on top of the huge change in the grant system, going from 85% to 25%, telling students and young people that they need to take on more debt if they want to get an education or the training to get into the workforce here in Ontario, if they stay at all. Many tell me they want to get out of here because they feel hopeless.

When the Premier has spent \$29 million on a private jet but you're telling students, "No, you need to take on more debt," it shakes them. It tells them, "You are not important."

This government should be sending a different message. We want to give them a message of hope, that we hear you, that we're here for you and we're actually going to do things that will help you.

There was very little mention of Ottawa in this budget. The government promised to upload the Ottawa LRT in the fun early winter election that we had, and still no signs of that. This would actually be huge for the city of Ottawa, and it would take off a huge amount of financial pressure and allow them to focus on many other needs in the city of Ottawa. So I'm hoping to hear, despite it not being mentioned in the budget, that we will be getting the LRT uploaded.

I'm going to end there and pass it over to my colleague from Scarborough–Guildwood.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I recognize the member from Scarborough–Guildwood.

MPP Andrea Hazell: Thank you to my wonderful colleague from Nepean for really sharing some tough information on health care. I will continue.

Good morning, Speaker and good morning, everyone. I'm very happy to be here this morning. I'm grateful for the opportunity to rise in this honourable House to address the 2026 budget.

Speaker, this is the eighth year in a row this government has delivered a budget of broken promises. The people of Ontario are listening, they're seeing and they're now fighting back because they're being pushed to a breaking point with the current affordability crisis, health care crisis, education crisis, housing crisis, mental health and addiction crisis, homelessness crisis and a major increase in crime.

Is this the government we want to continue to be in power while he pursues private, out-of-touch priorities with your hard-earned tax dollars and continuously fails to listen to Ontarians, especially the ones that voted him in?

Speaker, his mega spa at Ontario Place is costing us billions of dollars. His vision tunnel under the 401 will cost Ontarians over \$100 billion—also, moving the Metro Toronto Convention Centre into his mega spa and expanding Billy Bishop airport to, now we understand, land his private jet. It's all about Doug Ford. And the latest slap in the face of Ontarians: He has the audacity to decide to purchase a luxurious jet. While families struggle to afford groceries and gas, he bought a \$28.9-million private jet—shame.

This Premier wants to live like a billionaire with our hard-earned tax dollars. Only after the people of Ontario stood up and spoke out against this government's reckless spending, with no heart for the pain and suffering that so many families are experiencing through the horrible affordability crisis, he decided to backtrack on his decision.

I want to mention something: We all know that the best time for a government to announce bad news is on the weekend. This is exactly what happened. We're not stupid. The people of Ontario elected all of us to be their voice.

And we're going to push back today and we're going to be talking about it today, so we're not going to let that fly. Ontarians may be left holding a liability if it's sold at a loss, or we might not hear the end of it because of the FOI situation.

This government is also pulling anti-freedom-of-information changes from committee to ram them through in secret. With this government, there will be no transparency and no accountability—nothing here, Speaker. But let me be clear: Ontario cannot afford a Premier who hides decisions, spends recklessly and puts luxury over the 16 million people that call Ontario home.

This government has cut millions of dollars from half of its ministries while the government's executive offices have grown by 243% since 2018. This budget mentioned alcohol 74 times—now we know where their focus is—and 24 times in the 2025 budget—come on. That tells you everything about this government's priorities.

Speaker, major cuts to more than half of the ministries are being made to pay for his "Captain Canada" ads while health care is on the brink of collapse—\$1.1 billion in additional hospital funding for 2026-27. Single-year funding increases make it impossible for hospitals to plan for their financial obligations.

Current health care funding is barely keeping pace with inflation while demand continues to grow. Health care is at its limit: Hospitals are in financial distress, ERs are closing and wait-times are rising. Some 2.5 million Ontarians and counting still do not have a family doctor. People are paying out-of-pocket to see nurse practitioners because they can't find a family doctor. And the government is choosing not to publicly fund that care; that's a policy choice. Hospitals are calling for a \$1-billion emergency funding boost after years of underfunding. This budget does not meet the moment. Some 73,000 patients are waiting longer than medically recommended for surgery. Do you know what I say to the people in my riding? I say, "Try to eat healthy, try to exercise, because this is not the time for anyone to get sick and go into a hospital." Surgical backlogs have doubled. Over 2,000 patients are treated in hallways daily. Some 23,000 Canadians died on a waiting list in a year. And again, this government promised to end hallway health care eight years ago. What's happening with hallway health care? This is worse than my Caribbean country, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, when you really look at hallway medicine. At least they take you in a room to take care of you.

0940

Speaker, treating patients in hallways—to me, it's the government's new normal. He has failed again in this year's budget to properly fund the health care system.

I want to quickly focus on mental health. This government has missed the mark in the budget to properly fund the crisis, especially a crisis that is heavily weighing on our young people and increasing the unhoused population. The mental health and addictions system in Ontario is experiencing a severe crisis: Record demand for services and significant staffing shortages are leading to a projected funding gap in this year's budget. Nearly 846,000 Ontarians

sought community mental health services, a 45% increase in a single year. However, the sector has received only one base funding increase in over a decade. Wait times for anyone accessing mental health care are almost 23 months for treatment.

When I talk about young people and what they are going through in Ontario, it makes me sad, because I have three. They can't buy a house. There are no jobs. They're doing everything we're asking them to do: to go to school, to finish their post-secondary education, to find a job, to save, to get married, to buy a house, wanting to start a family. This government is failing the young people in Ontario. They are leaving Ontario in droves. Because they are suffering, they're going through a mental health crisis, and this government is still failing them on the mental crisis and the mental illnesses that they are experiencing. Guess where the government is throwing them? Into jail. Let's stock up the jails.

Speaker, it hurts, and I will die fighting for young people in Ontario, Scarborough–Guildwood and Scarborough.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Questions?

Hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: I just wanted to begin by saying hi to my grandmother, who's watching from Poland.

Remarks in Polish.

And my question is for the member from Nepean—and he's a registered nurse, just like me, and I know he takes up shifts. I was actually in my local ER—Etobicoke General—this past Friday, and it just happened to be that there were no hallway patients that day, but of course that's only one little sample.

As the member knows, we are investing \$1.1 billion into hospitals in this budget, as well as over \$60 billion to hospital infrastructure. My question is simple: Does the member support these investments into our hospitals?

MPP Tyler Watt: Thank you to my colleague for that question. It's so great seeing another RN here in the House.

I've also recently worked in emerg, and, unfortunately, I had the complete opposite experience, where the hallways were packed. What really concerned me was that it felt almost normal to them. I noticed a lot of them were on their phones and they didn't notice all of the traffic that was going through the hallway, and I just felt like there was no dignity there. It's just chaos, but chaos that we're used to.

To your question: Yes, I absolutely support more funding in hospitals, 100%. They need it. But to me, it's like putting a band-aid on a massively bleeding wound. That's why I talked about the much-needed investments in the community. We need to be investing in prevention and access and things like mental health care that my colleague spoke so greatly about.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Questions?

Mr. Chris Glover: I appreciate the comments today from my Liberal colleagues over here.

I'll ask the member from Nepean: You were talking about hallway medicine and your experience with hallway medicine. Mine is that my brother went to the hospital two

years ago, and he spent the first 12 days in the hallway. They even had numbers on the wall. For each of the gurneys, they had a number. It's not like this is a temporary thing; this is where people are actually being treated. And the lack of dignity—eventually, he got into an alcove, and there was some curtain so that when he needed some help, he could have a little bit of privacy.

Can you talk about your experience as a nurse with hallway medicine and why this government needs to address the thousand patients who are currently in hallways in Ontario right now?

MPP Tyler Watt: Thank you to my colleague for that question and sharing that really sad story. It's unacceptable that anyone is ever treated in a hallway, let alone 12 days. There's absolutely no dignity there. It's certainly not a place for nurses or care workers to be able to provide quality and good care. We do our best with the little resources that we have.

But the fact that yes, hallway beds—not so much a temporary thing anymore. In fact, they are numbered, but they're also in the charting system now. Those are now beds that are in the system because that's the norm now. There is no room. So we need to be expanding emergency rooms, but we also need to be investing in those solutions to prevent people from getting there, like your brother.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Questions?

Mr. Jonathan Tsao: My question is for the member from Scarborough–Guildwood. I want to start by thanking her for so accurately and vividly describing the failures of this budget and the failures of this government to support young people across our province, and specifically in Scarborough.

As she mentioned, young people are being let down at record levels by this failing government. They can't afford a house. They can't get a job. They have done everything right, but this government refuses to support them. So my question to my honourable colleague would be, considering this budget doesn't spend anything on these young people who are doing all the right things, why do you think the government felt it was okay to spend \$30 million on a private jet plane for the Premier?

MPP Andrea Hazell: Thank you to my colleague for that amazing question. I love it. As I said in my presentation, we now know where this government's priorities are. It's not with the people in Ontario, and especially it's not with the young people.

We have seen all across Ontario that every system that should be giving us a quality life is failing—failing big time, with a capped F on there—on every file that this government is taking care of.

We look at unemployment: Unemployment in Scarborough alone makes up 17% of the unemployment rate in Toronto. Young people cannot find jobs. Young people are not getting a fair shot at opportunity. This government has left them to continuously fail year over year over year. We now see droves of young people leaving Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Questions?

Mr. Joseph Racinsky: Thanks to the members for their comments on the budget this morning.

My question is for the member from Scarborough–Guildwood. The member mentioned a few topics in her remarks. One thing she didn't really talk about was infrastructure—public transit, specifically. In page 16 of the budget, we're building the Scarborough extension subway. I just want to ask the member if she supports that, and will she support the budget?

MPP Andrea Hazell: I want to thank my colleague across the floor here for the question. It's a very good question. I always stand up and debate and support transportation where it's needed. Scarborough has been left behind where connectivity is concerned. So I will support a government that is transparent, that is accountable for the monies that they are overspending on every transit project while all the files in this year's budget have been cut.

0950

So we don't know where this government's priorities are. It took how many years to open the Eglinton East LRT? The ridership is down. The government opened it and never looked back.

So I do support transportation where it is needed but not the waste of the people's tax dollars.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Questions?

MPP Alexa Gilmour: It's always a privilege and honour to rise on behalf of the people of Parkdale–High Park. I want to thank my Liberal colleagues for their comments on the budget.

For me, I'm very worried about the changes to the freedom-of-information laws that are in this budget, just tucked in there like a surprise Easter egg. I mean, transparency is key to democracy regardless of which party is in power. It helps ensure that the government is acting in the best interest of all Ontarians, not just wealthy donors behind closed doors. And now that the Premier has lost his court case on his phone, which he gives out publicly all the time—he's shielding himself.

My question to my colleagues is, in what way does hiding behind closed doors in any way serve the people of Ontario?

MPP Andrea Hazell: Thank you for that question. It's always surprising to me that the government, this Premier, thinks that they can always get away with anything that they've tabled. Or, as my colleague said, sweep it in the budget like an Easter egg.

We are reading. We are making sure that we are here representing Ontarians. So we don't know what's hiding from the greenbelt. We don't know what's in there that is hiding from Ontario Place. This government has so many yellow tapes around it that we do not know what this government is hiding.

So we will push for that FOI to be reversed, just like how we've pushed and he is selling back that \$28.9-million jet.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I recognize the member from Don Valley North.

Mr. Jonathan Tsao: Speaker, I want to thank my honourable colleague, because I don't think Scarborough has had such a great champion in this House ever before. So thank you for everything you do, and I look forward to

having another Liberal member in here representing the Scarborough area soon.

Speaker, I looked through the numbers. Scarborough is represented by four PC MPPs—

Interjections.

Mr. Jonathan Tsao: No, it's great. You won those seats.

But we have to wonder—and this is my question to my honourable colleague: Considering the PCs have four seats and four representatives in Scarborough, why does this government continue to ignore and neglect this entire part of the city?

MPP Andrea Hazell: I love that question because—I'm going to educate my colleagues across the floor. Food banks in Ontario are up 86%. Food banks in Scarborough are up 38%. So 8.7 million food bank visits across Ontario—1.9 million of those are from Scarborough, okay? So that's how high the number is.

In my colleague's riding, 32% of children in Scarborough–Agincourt are going hungry, 31% in—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further debate?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: It's always an honour to rise today and speak to the government's budget motion.

Speaker, budgets reflect values, and the values of the Ontario Green Party are to build an Ontario that cares for each other. But unfortunately, when you look at this budget, it fails to invest in our systems of care:

—inflation-adjusted cuts to the Ministry of Community and Social Services of 2.4% next year, 1.3% the following year;

—inflation-adjusted cuts to post-secondary education: 1.9% next year, 10.6% the following year, including a major cut to OSAP, which will put a mountain of debt onto young people;

—our health care sector: a slight increase of 0.5% next year and then a 1.6% inflation-adjusted cut the following year;

—education: a 3.6% inflation-adjusted cut next year, 1% the following year.

Over and over again, this budget fails to invest in our systems of care so that we actually build a caring Ontario, which I think is one of the primary responsibilities of government.

What this budget does talk a lot about:

—a tunnel under the 401;

—a fantasy island for a new convention centre;

—expansion of the island airport, which we now know will help—well, would have helped—facilitate the landing and takeoff of the Premier's private luxury jet; and

—subsidies for a spa on Toronto's waterfront.

If you live in Toronto, a lot of money is being thrown around for things that even people in Toronto really don't want, but for those of us who live outside of Toronto, we're saying, "What about rural communities that are seeing hospital emergency departments closed? What about reducing levels of homelessness? What about roads and bridges in communities across the province that aren't

getting the funding they need to keep them open and maintained?"

I want to remind the Premier and the government there's a whole other province out there that desperately needs investments in order to build our economy and their communities and to take care of people. The number one issue people come into my office about is the housing affordability crisis and how it's driving the affordability crisis. People tell me they're so tired—tired of working hard and still struggling to buy groceries, pay the mortgage, pay the rent, put food on the table and make ends meet. This budget fails the moment.

Housing starts are at 64,500 next year, when we need a minimum of 150,000 just to build enough homes to house the people in this province. Maybe the saddest component of this budget is that at a time when 85,000 people are experiencing homelessness in the province of Ontario—an unprecedented number—this budget builds 425 supportive housing spaces over three years, 141 a year, when there are 85,000 people desperate for a safe, affordable place to call home.

Now the government is going to spend billions on building jails, and if you look at the numbers, it costs \$3.5 million to build a bed in a jail. Do you know how much it costs to build a bed to house somebody who's homeless? Just \$125,000 a year. Imagine what we could do with that money for the people of Ontario.

When it comes to operating, do you know how much it costs to operate a bed in a jail on an annualized basis? Some \$180,000 a year. Do you know how much it would cost to provide housing with mental health and addictions supports for a person in a year? Just \$10,000. Why doesn't the government just do the fiscally responsible thing and the humane thing and actually invest in housing people?

Housing starts are at all-time lows, housing prices at all-time highs, yet the government continues to say no to legalizing multiplexes and mid-rises—as a matter of fact, their own housing task force says it's the fastest way to quickly build homes that people can afford, in the communities they know and love, without paving over our farmland and our wetlands in the places we love in this province. As a matter of fact, we're losing 319 acres of farmland each and every day in this province, primarily due to expensive, low-density sprawl. Why don't we protect that land and protect our \$52-billion agri-food sector? The Ontario Federation of Agriculture is here today, and one of their asks is for this province to invest in agri-food processing.

Now, there's a lot of investment and support for the auto sector, so I'll give the government credit. I'll tell you, the largest employer in my riding is in auto parts manufacturing, so I will support the auto sector. But why don't we support the agri-food processing sector that contributes \$15 billion to the provincial economy? That's 15% of the manufacturing GDP. It employs 116,700 people, 15% of our manufacturing sector jobs. That would help secure our food security, our food sovereignty. I would argue that at a time when our economy is under attack from south of the

border, protecting our food security and food sovereignty is more important now than ever.

So let's build homes that people can afford in the communities they know and love, close to where they work, close to where they spend time with their family, by legalizing gentle-density missing-middle housing; and protect our farmland, which is so critically important to our economy.

1000

Young people are wondering if they'll ever be able to own a home due to this government's housing crisis. But now they're wondering if, financially, it's even going to be possible, because this government now has cut OSAP, which means students are going to graduate with more debt.

The Premier has money for his tunnel. He has money for his private luxury jet. But he doesn't have money to support young people graduating without mountains of debt on their back, who would be the workers who are going to drive our economic prosperity, moving forward. I can't think of something better to invest in than investing in our young people, their future and how it will benefit our economy.

Speaker, this past weekend, I was at a Community of Hearts fundraiser in my community for people with developmental disabilities. People with developmental disabilities, people living on ODSP, people with autism are begging this government for support—60,000 children with autism on a wait-list.

We have group homes for developmentally disabled adults being sold off, and yet there'll be an inflation-adjusted cut to the ministry. I always say the minister has the biggest heart, but we need the finance minister to give him a wallet to actually invest in caring for people in our communities.

It's the same thing with mental health: 28,000 young people on a waiting list to access mental health services that can be as long as two and a half years.

Interjection: Shame.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Yes, it's shameful. The member is right. Yet this government wants to spend billions on a tunnel under the 401 instead of investing in our children's future.

People are struggling right now, especially with gas prices going through the roof. I'll give the government credit: They brought in a gas tax that will save people \$115 a year. But why don't they actually bring back electric vehicle rebates to make electric vehicles affordable for people so they can save over \$3,000 a year by not having to go to the gas pump? They can fill their vehicle up with electricity at the price of a cup of coffee.

We have solutions to the affordability crisis. We can make driving and transit cheaper, housing affordable. We have solutions to the crisis in caring if this government would actually invest in our systems of care.

But unfortunately, this budget fails to deliver. The Ontario Greens will continue to fight to put people over the wealthy and well-connected.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Questions?

Mr. Matthew Rae: I'm really eager to ask the member from Guelph questions this morning, Speaker. I appreciate the member from Guelph for his speech. I get along with member from Guelph. I know he was mentioning a variety of things included in the budget and stuff he would like to include in the budget.

Obviously, in the budget, there is a lot of mention of the Ring of Fire and the Critical Minerals Strategy in northern Ontario. I know I represent a southwestern Ontario riding. People may not think it doesn't benefit Perth–Wellington, but it actually does because there are a lot of companies now switching from maybe providing auto parts to providing parts for some of the big machinery used in the Ring of Fire.

So will the member opposite support our government's initiatives to unlock the Ring of Fire, make Ontario stronger and Canada stronger?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I certainly appreciate questions from the member for Perth–Wellington. We share parts of Wellington county with the member from Wellington–Halton Hills and appreciate the fact that we're able to work across party lines to get things done for people in our ridings.

The Ontario Greens absolutely recognize the importance of critical minerals as we invest in the green energy transition. We're just calling on the government to do it right: to have free, informed prior consent with First Nations before moving forward; to actually have a comprehensive land use plan in place as we develop the Ring of Fire to ensure that it's done in a sustainable way that doesn't negatively affect the peatlands and the waters of that area.

If you want to move fast on the Ring of Fire, you have to do your homework. I don't think the government has done their homework yet, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Questions?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I appreciated the comments from the member for Guelph. I wonder if he looked through that 250-page budget document that the Conservatives presented and if he found any mention of a \$30-million jet that was going to be purchased and outfitted for the Premier.

The other thing that was missing from that document is any mention of "grocery" or "groceries" at a time when grocery prices have increased 30% in just the last five years. We will be soon debating a motion about ending predatory pricing.

I wondered if the member could talk about what measures the government could take to deal with the rising cost of groceries.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I appreciate the member from London's question. I saw no mention of the private luxury jet in the budget. There was mention of extending the runway at Billy Bishop airport, which would have accommodated the Premier's private luxury jet. Maybe that's why we also have in the budget a cancellation of the freedom-of-information process, because this government has had a number of scandals, like the \$8.3-billion

greenbelt scandal, the \$2.5-billion skills development scandal, now planegate, and I think the Premier wants to hide that from us.

So I would call on the government: Let's have open, transparent and honest government by maintaining freedom-of-information access so that people of Ontario—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Questions?

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: Mr. Speaker, for the member from Guelph: While other provinces are running record deficits while raising taxes and cutting public sector jobs, Ontario has chosen a different path. Thanks to prudent fiscal management, Ontario is one of the few provinces in Canada with a path to balance: one of the lowest deficits relative to GDP and it has received two credit rating upgrades, maintaining AA ratings across all four major agencies for the first time in two decades.

So while the NDP opposite was supporting the Liberal government in an infrastructure deficit, we're investing in infrastructure like never before to build the Ontario—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I recognize the member from Guelph.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Speaker, I believe the member opposite—I appreciate the question—is reading a completely different budget than I'm reading.

Record deficits and record under-spending: Ontario is dead last for per capita funding for health care, dead last for per capita funding for post-secondary education, dead last for per capita funding in social services.

This government spends more and delivers less for the people of Ontario because their priorities are out of whack. They would rather spend billions on tunnels, on fantasy islands for convention centres, on airport expansions rather than on actually investing in the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further debate?

Hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Good morning. It is an honour to rise in the House today in support of the 2026 Ontario budget, A Plan to Protect Ontario.

This is a reflection of how our government chooses to respond in a moment that matters and share our plan with the people of this province, the plan for our economy and for the future that we are building together—because the reality is clear: The world has changed, and Ontarians can feel it in every aspect of life.

We feel it when we pay our bills. We feel it when we think about our future and the future of our children. Economic pressures are not abstract concepts discussed in reports and on the news. They are real, they are immediate and they are being felt every single day by families across Ontario.

In moments like this, people are not looking for hesitation; they are looking for leadership, and that is precisely what this budget delivers: a plan built on one idea—the idea that protecting Ontario means protecting both our economy and the services we all rely on, because one cannot exist without the other. You cannot have strong hospitals without a strong economy. You cannot have strong long-term care without a strong workforce, and you

cannot build a strong future if you are not prepared to invest in it, and that is exactly what this government is doing.

Mr. Speaker, many families, including mine, came to Canada from other parts of the world and made Canada our new home. Many settled in Mississauga, one of the most culturally rich, vibrant and thriving cities in Ontario. We came here with an aspiration of a better life. We came here often with just a few dollars in our pocket, a suitcase or two, but a heart full of hope and a mind full of dreams. We came here for safety. We came here for opportunity. We came here for the ability to worship freely and without persecution. We came here with the idea of working hard so that our children could have a better future and more opportunities and freedoms than we did. And we came here with gratitude for these opportunities Canada afforded us with an honest and sincere commitment to the true north, strong and free, to work hard each and every day to build a Canada we can all be proud of.

1010

Let's talk about that Canadian dream: For many, that dream starts with getting an education. For our young people, that means working hard, yes, showing up to class, studying, learning about personal finance and responsibilities, and yes, investing into your future. With a good education comes a good, well-paying job with a strong paycheque, whether it is in health care, in entrepreneurship, the trades, the service industry or manufacturing. The sky is truly the limit when it comes to opportunities our province has to offer.

But Mr. Speaker, one of the most important aspects of that Canadian dream is what? It's the dream of home ownership, and, unfortunately, housing continues to be one of the biggest challenges facing our province today. That is why this government is taking action, because housing affordability is not just about prices; it is about growing the economy and protecting construction jobs across the province. It is about giving people the chance to build a life here in Ontario.

One concrete way that this budget helps Ontarians do that is by removing the HST on new-home purchases valued up to \$1 million, with rebates available for higher-priced homes or condominiums. This means putting up to \$130,000 back into the pockets of homebuyers, relieving young families just trying to break into the housing market. This is real support for working families who need our support making the dream of home ownership more than just a dream but a real possibility. Through this initiative, we aim to stimulate roughly 8,000 needed housing starts and create 21,000 construction jobs.

I am going to now pivot to long-term care since I only have a few minutes left. Long-term care is not just about numbers on a page, compliance statistics and various reports, the numbers of beds and homes that we are building. Long-term care, at its heart, is about people. It is about creating memories and meaning. It is about purpose and passion. It is about care, and it is about love.

Long-term care is the staff working tirelessly every day, from nurses to personal support workers to other support personnel, who make sure our loved ones are safe and taken care of in the most vulnerable years of their lives.

It is about the parents, grandparents and loved ones who shape our lives, who deserve to be treated with dignity and respect. When families entrust their care to the wonderful staff at long-term care, they expect all of us to work together to deliver. That expectation is not only reasonable, but something we have a duty to meet. As a nurse and as a minister, I feel personally responsible for all 80,000 residents that have been entrusted to my care.

I recently visited three homes and wanted to share some anecdotes with you to illuminate the progress that we are doing. Berkshire Care Centre in Windsor, where I met with a number of incredible staff, including nurses and social workers, who gave me a presentation about the success that they have seen with our expansion of behavioural specialized units: Through their work and the increased funding, they are able to treat and stabilize residents with difficult responsive behaviours that could not otherwise live safely in a traditional long-term-care home.

With tears in their eyes, they told me a story of a resident who had severe and unmanageable behaviours upon admission, and now, after a few months of being treated in the BSU, their spouse is able to come and actually take them home for the weekend. They told me that we have returned the wife to that spouse: "She was lost, and now I found her again." Those were the words of that family member.

I also visited Extendicare Riverside Place in Windsor, where I met Dickie, a former nurse and a president of the resident council. It is true: once a nurse, forever a nurse, so Dickie jumped on the opportunity to advocate for other residents and give me some great advice. She told me about a great number of residents coming in with complex mental health issues who need specialized care and training to deliver that care.

But I know that we're running out of time, so to conclude, I'm just so proud to continue leading this ministry that provides excellent care—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I am very sorry to interrupt. The time is now 10:15. There has been eight hours of debate on this motion. Pursuant to standing order 61(d) I am now required to put the question.

On March 26, 2026, Mr. Bethlenfalvy moved, seconded by Mr. Ford, that this House approves, in general, the budgetary policy of the government. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

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

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

Vote deferred.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

STELLA JURGEN

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: It's not every day that I get to recognize a remarkable Oxford-based artist whose work now hangs on the walls at Queen's Park. That's why I'm excited that Stella Jurgen's piece, titled *Autumn Leaves*, was selected to be on display in the Dining Room as part of the 2026 Art à la Carte Program. The painting features a foggy scene with a canoe floating on the waters of Tillsonburg's Lake Lisgar around all the fall colours. It really shows off the beauty of one of Tillsonburg's most well-known landmarks.

While Stella is relatively new to Oxford, she has already made a big mark. Born in Argentina and raised in Portugal, she came to Canada later in life, moving around the GTA with her husband, Norm, until settling in Tillsonburg three years ago. Although she has painted most of her life, it was only after she arrived in Tillsonburg that she began to create landscapes, inspired by the natural beauty around her. Since then, she has become known for depicting scenes from around the town. Her work can be found throughout the community: a mural on the wall at Tillsonburg airport, another in the town library and several pieces in the permanent display at the Tillsonburg Town Centre.

It's great to see a piece of Oxford featured in the dining room, where people gather every day. Congratulations, Stella, on this well-deserved recognition, and thank you for capturing the beauty of our community.

SESQUICENTENNIAL
OF ST. CATHARINES

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: In 2026, we mark 150 years since St. Catharines was officially incorporated as a city on May 1, 1876. While that date is significant, the story of this community reaches far deeper. Long before incorporation, this land bore the footsteps of the first Indigenous peoples whose connection to the land continues to guide us today, and a powerful place in history as a refuge for freedom seekers on the Underground Railroad, offering safety, dignity and a chance at a new life.

As the city grew, it became known as a hub of industry and hard work. From its roots along the Welland Canal to its legacy as an automotive town, generations of workers helped build this city into what it is today. It is the blue-collar spirit, the people who show up every day, work hard and look out for one another that truly make St. Catharines tick. From our waterways to our vineyards to our thriving small businesses, our iconic Meridian Centre and our fine performing arts centre, St. Catharines stands as the largest economic hub in the whole Niagara region, a true testament to the strength and the resilience of our community.

As we celebrate 150 years, we honour the people who built this city and recommit to building a future that is inclusive, that is strong and full of opportunity. Happy 150th birthday, St. Catharines.

KEW BEACH LAWN BOWLING CLUB

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Good morning, Speaker. I always like to showcase beautiful Beaches—East York at Queen's Park, and today is no different.

Kew Beach Lawn Bowling Club is located in the heart of the beach, nestled between majestic Lake Ontario and glorious Kew Gardens. This year, we are all very excited to celebrate the club's 125th anniversary. With this kind of incredible history, it's no wonder they rank sixth-largest out of the 107 clubs in Ontario.

In addition to lawn bowling and croquet, the 177 energetic and enthusiastic members also enjoy darts, table tennis and tai chi in the winter months because they can never ever sit still. A warm welcome, a smiling face, a vibrant atmosphere and an idyllic setting are all key ingredients that make Kew Beach Lawn Bowling Club the absolute best in Ontario. Doubling of the membership since 2018 proves how vital these low-impact social hubs are for people looking to stay active and learn a new skill.

1020

The club's competitive side shone through with Mark Pearson's 2023 novice singles championship win.

Come on down for Doors Open May 23 and 24, and see for yourself what I'm talking about. Help us top last year's record of 170 visitors. See you there when I roll the first bowl on opening day, May 9.

We love you, Kew Beach Lawn Bowling Club.
#UpTheBeach!

RIDING OF MISSISSAUGA EAST—
COOKSVILLE

PARKINSON'S AWARENESS MONTH

MPP Silvia Gualtieri: Speaker, I am proud to rise today to share that, supported by \$30,000 of investment through the Ontario Sport Hosting Program, our community will host the 2026 World Table Tennis Canada Youth Contender competition this May. This event will welcome young athletes to Mississauga and support local businesses and showcase our wonderful community.

I also want to recognize Amanda Kapo, a legislative page from our riding who was just here days ago. Speaker, it is truly inspiring to see young people from our community shine here in the Legislature.

April is Parkinson's Awareness Month. I want to acknowledge constituents Frank Sgarlata and Bruno Bellissimo for their dedicated advocacy for Parkinson's patients. Our office continues to support their vision for an integrated neurological care hub in Mississauga. Meetings have taken place across all levels of government, and Trillium Health Partners and Parkinson Canada are working together to better understand patient needs—and our work continues.

EDUCATION

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate the opportunity. As you may know, Speaker, I canvass in my riding on an

ongoing basis every week. I have to say, increasingly, in the last few weeks, education has been coming up at the door. There's tremendous frustration over pending layoff of teachers in Toronto, frustration over layoffs of vice-principals, over lack of support for special-needs children.

In the past, this government has used trustees as the scapegoat for things not going well. It's blamed trustees, and, frankly, those trustees who fought to protect services, fought to protect our children, were slapped down.

Well, there's no scapegoat now. If people are upset about layoffs of teachers in schools, layoffs of vice-principals, it's on the Premier's head. If people are concerned about safety in our schools, it's on the Premier's head. If people are concerned about the schools crumbling, it's on the Premier's head. The Premier may think that with his new bill—which leaves trustees in place but takes away all their powers—he's going to escape being held accountable for the state of education in this province; he needs to think again.

BROOKLIN SPRING FAIR

Mr. Lorne Coe: I rise today to recognize the upcoming 115th Brooklin Spring Fair. The long-running fair is now one of the biggest spring fairs in the province, attracting at least 30,000 fans or more over its four days each year. People come from miles around to enjoy the midway, the truck and tractor pull and the popular demolition derby, along with blue-ribbon livestock competitions, activities for children of all ages and daily entertainment.

Speaker, in Durham region, agriculture is not just an industry; it's a way of life and a vital part of our local economy. Our government is proud to support the farmers and businesses who drive our nearly \$52-billion agri-food sector forward each and every day. Expanding markets for Ontario food products ensures farmers and food processors in the hamlet of Brooklin and other parts of the region have more reliable export opportunities.

Together, we're building a stronger, more resilient future for agriculture by improving market access and leveraging our shared strengths.

The Brooklin Spring Fair and parade on June 6 are celebrations of these accomplishments and the people behind them. I'm proud to recognize their contributions and look forward to joining residents as I walk in this year's parade with Team Coe.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

MPP Lisa Gretzky: There's an affordable housing crisis across this province, including in Windsor-Essex, yet the Premier spent \$30 million in public dollars to buy a jet for his personal use. Let that sink in.

A growing number of people in my community are living in poverty because of this Conservative government's policy decisions. In 2024, more than 2,600 people in Windsor-Essex experienced homelessness at some point during the year. That's an increase of nearly 20% from the year before, and those numbers continue to climb.

The supply of affordable housing is not keeping pace with the need. The wait-list for affordable community housing in Windsor alone is over 10 years long and the situation is becoming even more alarming across Windsor-Essex. A recent CBC report highlights that the Essex non-profit housing corporation intends to sell 53 of its 122 affordable units in order to fund critical repairs to the remaining homes. This puts vulnerable tenants at risk of losing their housing.

The municipality has little that it can do to intervene, yet it's committed to supporting anyone affected as best as it can—which raises the question: What is the Premier doing and where do these families go?

We should be protecting and building more affordable housing, yet we are losing it because of this government's inaction. We need sustained investment, protection of existing affordable units and coordination between all levels of government.

Housing is not a luxury, Speaker; it's a basic human right. Far too many people in Windsor-Essex are being left behind by the Premier, and they deserve so much better.

JUNIOR HOCKEY TEAMS IN SIMCOE-GREY

Mr. Brian Saunderson: While hockey fans turn their attention to the Stanley Cup playoffs—and we are again reminded that Toronto is the only city in Canada where the Leafs fall each spring—I want to recognize the accomplishments of the local junior hockey teams in my riding.

Simcoe-Grey has a long and proud hockey tradition. In fact, while at an event in Beeton this weekend, I learned that Beeton is known for having produced the most NHL players per capita of any town in Canada.

At the Junior A level, the Collingwood Blues concluded another successful season as division finalists in the highly competitive eastern conference championship series, losing in seven games to the Toronto Patriots. Two years ago, the Blues won the Buckland cup as Ontario champions and the Centennial Cup as the best Junior A team in Canada.

Not to be outdone, the Collingwood Lightning women's hockey program that was established in 2017 continues to thrive and had over 375 skaters this year. The Collingwood Lightning's under 23 team won bronze at the provincial championships this year.

In Wasaga Beach, in just their second season, the River Dragons captured first place in their division and were finalists in their league championship series.

At the Junior C level, the Stayner Siskins won their league championship, beating the powerful Alliston Hornets, making it an all Simcoe-Grey final before losing to the Fergus Whalers in the next round.

Speaker, the players, coaches and volunteers are true examples of the power of sport and represent our community with heart and pride and relentlessly compete every single night. A big thank you and congratulations to each and every one of them.

HABITAT FOR HUMANITY

MPP Paul Vickers: It is a pleasure to rise today to recognize the impact that Habitat for Humanity has in communities across this great province, especially in my own community of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Everyone knows that Habitat for Humanity builds homes for deserving families in need, but few understand the true impact this organization really has. They promote volunteerism, provide key opportunities to those curious about the skilled trades and, most importantly, they provide their supported families with not just a place to live, but opportunities to advance their lives.

Speaker, with us today in the gallery is Greg Fryer, the executive director of Habitat for Humanity for Bruce–Grey. Since 2018, his organization has built 37 new homes in the Saugeen Ojibway Nation, while completing over 200 critical repairs to existing homes in that same community. This year they're planning five more new builds with the support of over 400 volunteers.

I had the pleasure of presenting this organization with an Ontario Trillium Foundation grant earlier this year to support enhanced accessibility to their ReStore location, a second-hand store where proceeds help fund their activities. Keep up the great work, Habitat for Humanity for Grey–Bruce.

1030

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Kevin Holland: I'd like to welcome, from my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan, Mr. Bill Groenheide, who's joining us today with OFA. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Today I'm pleased to welcome representatives from Edwards Lifesciences to Queen's Park. Joining us are Patrick Hupe, general manager and vice-president, and Richard Lech, senior manager of market access. We welcome you to Queen's Park, and thank you for the important work you do to advance cardiac care across Ontario. Welcome.

M^{me} Chandra Pasma: J'aimerais souhaiter la bienvenue aux membres de l'Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens, y compris la présidente, M^{me} Gabrielle Lemieux et, de ma circonscription d'Ottawa–Ouest–Nepean, Monesson Baurice Zaha. Bienvenue.

MPP Silvia Gualtieri: Today I'd like to acknowledge a valued friend and steadfast counsellor to our family: Father Keith Wallace, who has stood with us through both moments of sorrow and times of joy. Thank you for your guidance, compassion and quiet wisdom.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: It's a pleasure to welcome to the House today Julie Ryan. Her son Lucas is page captain today.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I want to wish a warm welcome to Fiona Coughlin, the CEO of Habitat for Humanity Windsor–Essex. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Jessica Bell: I'd like to invite Regan Sorensen, who attends Howlett Academy. She is the page captain

today. She's joined by her parents, Leiane Cooke and Sean Sorensen. Thank you so much for being here today.

MPP Lisa Gretzky: I'd like to welcome Fiona Coughlin and the team from Habitat for Humanity in Windsor–Essex. Thank you for all the work that you—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Niagara Falls.

MPP Wayne Gates: I'd like to welcome the CUPE health care workers' coordinating committee. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Mary–Margaret McMahon: I'd like to welcome the charismatic Kew Beach Lawn Bowling Club, run primarily by many of them, but here's Steve Ashby and Heather Harvey. Also with them are Lisa, Doug, Cheri, Jill, Christianne, Paul, Ron, Don, Katherine, Owen, Marlene and Patty.

Hon. Rob Flack: I want to welcome everyone from Habitat for Humanity throughout this great province. They're here today. I'm looking forward to meeting with them later on.

Mr. Dave Smith: I'd like to welcome Susan Zambonin, the CEO of Habitat for Humanity for Peterborough.

Mr. Jonathan Tsao: I want to welcome my dear friends and former colleagues from Habitat for Humanity Canada. Welcome to your House.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Our Daryush is doing an amazing job as one of our legislative pages. I'm happy to welcome his proud family from Orléans: mom, Neha; father, Asher; sister Amaya and brother Mishka. Welcome to the Legislature. I look forward to seeing you this afternoon.

Ms. Laura Smith: I'd like to welcome a soon-to-be graduate of University of Waterloo and fine resident of York region, Mr. Raphael Chang.

Ms. Lee Fairclough: It's my pleasure to welcome former Deputy Premier and MPP for London North Centre, the honourable Deb Matthews. She's here today because her niece is also a page this week. Welcome.

Applause.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I'd also like to welcome the ambassador and consul general of Serbia, who are here, joining us today. Thank you for being here.

M. Anthony Leardi: J'aimerais souhaiter la bienvenue à M. David Matenda avec l'Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens. Merci.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I want to welcome the CEO of the Waterloo region Habitat for Humanity, Philip Mills. Welcome to your House.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'd like to welcome the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. They're in the Legislature today, and they're having a reception tonight in the dining room.

MPP Paul Vickers: I'd like to welcome the people from OFA, the hard-working farmers. They keep us fed every day. Welcome to your House.

Hon. Nolan Quinn: I'd like to welcome Sam McDonnell, who is here with the OFA from my beautiful riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to welcome members of the Ontario Mutual Insurance Association. They're hosting a reception at noon in room 230. I encourage—

Failure of sound system.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: I'd also like to extend my personal welcome to all the good folks of Habitat for Humanity, especially the GTA chapter, and Ene Underwood, who is their extraordinary CEO.

Mr. Ted Hsu: On behalf of my Ontario Liberal colleagues, I want to welcome the Ontario Federation of Agriculture here, and I really look forward to continuing our ongoing conversation.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'm pleased to see Waterloo Habitat for Humanity here. I'd also like to welcome Karen Coviello, who sits there, who works there. She's on her way to this House.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Members, if I could draw your attention to the Speaker's gallery today.

Joining us in the Speaker's gallery, we have Ambassador Extraordinary of Serbia to Canada, Stefan Tomašević; First Counsellor of the Embassy, Aleksandar Vidojević; and Consul General of the Republic of Serbia, Dejan Eraković. Welcome to Queen's Park.

As mentioned, also joining us in the Speaker's gallery is the Honourable Deb Matthews, who represented London North Centre in the 38th, 39th, 40th and 41st Parliaments.

Buckle up folks, because this one is a long one. Also joining us in the Speaker's gallery is Gilles Bisson, who represented the riding of Timmins in the 42nd Parliament; the riding of Timmins–James Bay in the 41st, 40th, 39th, 38th and 37th Parliaments; and he represented Cochrane South in the 36th and 35th Parliaments. Welcome back to Queen's Park.

I think that's the longest one. You get the record, Gilles.

I'd like to recognize the leader of His Majesty's loyal opposition on a point of order.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, I seek unanimous consent of the House that, in the opinion of this House, the Premier should inform the public about, and personally pay for, any financial losses arising from the existing contracts, purchase, outfitting and reselling of the government's recently purchased private jet.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): MPP Stiles is seeking unanimous consent of the House that, in the opinion of this House, the Premier should inform the public about, and personally pay for, any financial losses arising from the existing contracts, purchase, outfitting and reselling of the government's recently purchased private jet. Agreed? I heard a no.

It's now time for question period.

QUESTION PERIOD

GOVERNMENT JET

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, this question is for the Premier. A strip club, a luxury spa and a private jet: What do these things have in common? No, this is not the itinerary for a bachelor party. These are items that appear

in the province's books. It is so ridiculous, but, unfortunately, it is true.

While the Premier was obsessing over what colour leather would go in his private luxury jet, he was lecturing Ontario's post-secondary students, telling them to work harder and make better choices.

To the Premier: How come when it comes to OSAP there's no money, but when it comes to shiny toys for the Premier there's plenty?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the government House leader.

Hon. Steve Clark: Speaker, through you to the Leader of the Opposition: Over the weekend, the government heard from the public. We heard from the people, and we made a decision regarding this purchase. Again, Speaker, through you to the Leader of the Opposition: I don't care what political stripe you are; no government makes it correct every time. No government is perfect.

But I'll tell you this again, Speaker, through you to the Leader of the Opposition: It shows leadership when our Premier recognizes that a decision needs to be changed and he changes it. We heard a tremendous amount from the public. We made the right decision yesterday in terms of not moving ahead with this purchase. Again, the people gave us that message, and the Premier acted upon it.

1040

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: I would love to know if that minister was at the cabinet table when this was discussed, because to say this was just a minor error is absolutely absurd.

Ontarians deserve transparency from their government. The Premier's emergency landing—reselling his brand new luxury jet—is raising more questions than it has answered. We deserve to know how every dollar was spent on this greedy scheme, including the penalties, including the resale losses.

Last time the Premier tried to purchase a souped-up man cave with taxpayer dollars—as I recall, it was a man cave on wheels—he spent nearly \$50,000 getting a mini fridge, a 32-inch TV, a Blu-ray player—I'll leave it there—and a leather recliner. How much did the Premier spend on decking out his private jet?

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

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and through you to the member opposite, I think the House leader's comments stand.

This is an opportunity for the members across the aisle to vote and support the budget. There is a small business tax cut in the budget, helping 375,000 businesses, many of which are run by one, two or three people in their jobs. This is helping with affordability—a 30% tax cut—and an opportunity for the opposition to actually, for once, vote for putting more money back in the pockets of families, individuals and businesses.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, I would like to know from the finance minister, where was this luxury private jet in

your budget? Is this one of the miscellaneous items? What is that?

At the time when we have teachers who are receiving layoff notices, hospitals cutting nurses, families struggling with gas, with groceries, this government was focused on buying their Premier a luxury—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I apologize to the member. Would the member for Niagara Centre put the prop down?

Back to the leader of His Majesty's loyal opposition.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Families are struggling. They're struggling with gas. They're struggling with groceries. And here you are, obsessed with buying your Premier a luxury jet. If there was ever a government more out of touch, I don't know when.

The people of this province are outraged, and rightfully so. Will the Premier come clean and disclose the total cost of this private jet?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: I think the Premier was—and it was clear in the press release on Friday, the cost of the plane.

But the member opposite mentioned the gas tax, which led me to think about the fact that prices are up at the pump. This government moved quickly in 2022 to cut the gas tax, and when we put it in that budget, did they vote for it, Madam Speaker? They did not—5.7 cents back in the pockets, and we continued.

We were the first government, I believe, in Canada to acknowledge the pressures that families are feeling at the pumps—feeling the pinch, feeling the affordability. That's why, four years ago, this government moved to cut the gas tax. I've got to tell you: These folks, they were nowhere to be found.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Before the Leader of the Opposition begins, I would like to remind the opposition I understand that you may be passionate this morning, but I have no problem warning people.

GOVERNMENT JET

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, I'm going to go back to the Premier again. Maybe the finance minister has some information for us about how much it costs to fill up a jet. How much does that gas cost? Because I have a feeling that the people of Ontario have already paid for that, a few times, maybe.

This Premier's mid-air U-turn is not going to get him out of this mess. "I promise I'm going to return it" is not going to cut it, and it certainly won't make the \$30-million line item disappear from the province's books.

I have to say, I am a bit out of my element when it comes to conversations about luxury private jets, so I don't know if there's a 30-day return policy on luxury jets, but I do know that, ultimately, Ontarians are still going to be on the hook for the penalties and the resale losses and whatever money this province and this government have already spent on souping up the jet plane.

So will the Premier come clean and tell us how much cancelling this deal will actually cost the people of this province?

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

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Thank you, Madam Speaker, again, through you to the member opposite, for that question.

I think I heard also the member talk about the price of fuel, the price of gas, the price of many things in this province. Let me remind the members opposite, to that budget that they referred to, that we cut the HST for new houses in Ontario, helping many with the dream of home ownership—they forgot about that—helping people have that dream of home ownership, helping them up to \$130,000 at a time when every penny counts. Many families have that dream of home ownership in this province. It's this government that's acting. Again, I would ask the members opposite: You have an opportunity to support that affordability measure and support the budget.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: You know what, Speaker? I'm not going to support their budget with a luxury private jet for the Premier somewhere in there, under "miscellaneous." What on earth?

This government have shown us who they are time and time again. People are worrying about groceries while this Premier is fuelling up a private luxury jet, wondering if he can get a Blu-ray in that this time. I don't know.

I was talking to a retiree yesterday in Scarborough who was telling me how worried she was about whether or not she was going to lose her apartment because of the above-guideline increases. Meanwhile, this Premier is obsessed with how cushy the leather chairs are on the private jet.

Speaker, how can this Premier's priorities be so out of touch with the people of Ontario?

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

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: I'm very proud to work with and alongside the Premier of Ontario, who has the guts to make these types of decisions. That shows true leadership. You look across this land to see a politician who stands up like that.

Madam Speaker, there's also the issue—let's talk about the budget, because she raised it. Health care, for example: We increased the health sector budget from \$91 billion to \$101 billion to support primary care, acute care, mental health care and addiction care all across the region—all across Ontario. We increased education by—wait for it—\$55 billion is the total spent for education, K to 12 and universities, in this province. You've never seen investments like that in our education system. Finally, in our social services, under the leadership of this minister, we've increased the budget to \$22 billion.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: I have to ask the Minister of Finance and every member of that government: Are your constitu-

ents okay with having to pay the bill for a private luxury jet? Let's be clear: I think the Premier said he got it second-hand. Well, this wasn't like thrifting at Value Village, okay? This was a private luxury jet and a government consumed with that decision instead of thinking about how they're going to fix health care, how they're going to stop the layoffs at our hospitals and in our schools and how they're actually going to address the rising cost of everything.

People in this province are really struggling right now, but not this government. Oh, no, they're thinking, "How can we get to Florida faster? On a private luxury jet." Maybe it's only the front bench that was promised a lift. I don't know. But I've got to tell you, Speaker, this really speaks to how out of touch this government is. Why does the Premier of this province give crumbs to the people while he gives himself—

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

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Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: I'll need a little audience participation, a clear yes or no from everybody in the House.

Did the opposition vote for the gas tax cut?

Interjection: No.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Did they vote for One Fare?

Interjection: No.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Did they vote for taking off tolls?

Interjection: No.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Did they vote for the personal income tax cut?

Interjection: No.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Did they vote for the tax cut for small business? We'll find out. Do you think they'll vote for it? Or the HST cut? Yes or no?

Interjection: No.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: I ask the members who support this great province, are you going to vote for the budget, yes or no?

Interjection: Yes.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Thank you. I rest my case.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. John Fraser: My question is for the Solicitor General. Now, last week, we learned two things. One thing is, the Premier bought himself a luxury private jet, and the second thing is, the Solicitor General can't keep criminals behind bars.

The Solicitor General was aware of the mistaken release of 150 criminals for more than a year. On Thursday, when we asked the Solicitor General, he told this House that the criminals were apprehended—and I want to get this right—"immediately," "instantaneously," "within minutes" at least half a dozen times. Now, we know that this is not true because the FOI shows that some of them were missing for as much as six months.

Speaker, can the Solicitor General explain this contradiction?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: Let's set the record straight: Inmates must stay in jail until the courts decide otherwise, and, as I said last week, it's unacceptable when a corrections or a court staff makes an administrative error about the date of the release. When these releases happen, inmates are returned to custody as soon as is possible, and we said that.

But the Liberals have the audacity to scream, so let's put on the record what happened in the years before they were voted out of office. They had almost 250 improper releases, but they didn't have a system in place.

Madam Speaker, we're working hard every day to make sure that we have extra administrative staff, that we have digitization and that we will make the investments to correct this problem that they couldn't do.

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

Mr. John Fraser: I think last week the Premier should have spent less time pimping up his private jet and spending more time keeping his eye on public safety and the Solicitor General, so let's try something else: When a prisoner escapes or is mistakenly released, local police are notified, the deputy minister's office is notified, and the Solicitor General's office is notified.

Speaker, the Solicitor General would have been notified each time—150 times—that it had happened. But last week, and even today, he's behaving like this is all news to him. Speaker, just what exactly is going on in the Solicitor General's office?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Solicitor General.

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: Again, I'll set the record straight. When an inmate is ordered by the courts to leave jail, that's when they leave jail. The improper releases were improper, and we have made changes to make sure that this matter is being dealt with.

We take the record of the Liberals, almost 250—think about it, because their population count was a lot less—and they had no systems in place. We're working, as the Premier said, to bring the number to zero. That's what we're doing. We're going to have the administrative supports which we've put in place.

But there's something else; we're making the investments that they didn't make: 3,300 new correctional officers are now working, thousands of spaces are brought online, and we're renovating jails and correctional systems that they abandoned.

At the end of the day, our record and their record are totally different. We're protecting Ontario.

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

Mr. John Fraser: The minister told us they were re-apprehended instantaneously, and it's not true, and he hasn't explained that. So maybe he can in the supplementary.

Let's recap: The Premier and his Solicitor General lost 150 criminals. Last week, the Premier and his government acted like it was news to them. The Solicitor General knew

about the 150 criminals set free for more than a year. The Solicitor General told us all the criminals were apprehended immediately or instantaneously. Now we know that's not true. And now we know each time it happened, 150 times, the Solicitor General knew. And he made it sound like it was the first time he'd ever heard about it.

So Speaker, how is it that the Solicitor General still has his job?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: Our record speaks for itself. You know why? Because we are fixing a problem that we inherited. We're doing it proactively, hiring 3,300 new correctional officers, making the administrative oversight supports that are important, bringing in digitization to reduce further the amount of improper releases.

But let's put on the record the seven jails that you closed that you don't want to talk about: Chatham-Kent, closed; Brantford Jail, closed; Owen Sound, closed; Walkerton, closed; Renfrew, closed; the Burtch, closed—and almost the Sarnia Jail, if it wasn't for the member of Sarnia-Lambton that fought hard.

That's your record. It's not ours.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. John Fraser: The minister is probably not aware, because they closed 400 beds in the Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre and southern Toronto detention centre, and now they're announcing them as new beds because they're rebuilding them. They closed them, and now they're saying they're new. So obviously the minister really doesn't know what's going on in his ministry.

Back to the Solicitor General: We only have information on these mistaken releases since September 2025, and we know that he knows each time it happens.

So can the Solicitor General tell us exactly how many criminals have been mistakenly released by this government since September 2025? It's a simple question.

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: Our record of protecting Ontario is very, very important to raise here in the Legislature. It's about hiring the over 3,300 new correctional officers, and when we said we would bring over a thousand spaces online in the shortest of order, for the first time in Ontario, we said where and we said when. When we said we would bring in more renovations to the existing facilities that they dilapidated, we told people where and when.

But at the end of the day, Madam Speaker, we're not going to have a society where they accept having a murderer, a drug trafficker, a rapist on our streets. Ontarians have demanded that their fulfillment of rights to feel safe is sacrosanct, and we're going to deliver on a promise to protect Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Question?

Mr. John Fraser: We always hear the Premier saying, "Crime is up. Crime is up. Be afraid." Well, no wonder it's up, because they can't keep criminals behind bars.

And the minister made my point. He can't answer a simple question. He's had four days to be briefed, and he

can't answer that question. It's not to us. It's to the people of Ontario. You're not doing your job, Minister.

So can the minister tell us how many are out right now? What are they charged with? Were the victims notified? Because if I was a victim, I think I'd want to be notified. Can the Solicitor General answer maybe one of these questions?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: We've come a long way from over 230 improper releases just in the final years the Liberals were in office. That's their record.

We've come a long way, because we've made investments to fix the system. We're doing it by bringing in the digitization. We're doing it by making sure we have extra administrative oversight. And we're doing it because we believe in protecting Ontario by hiring more correctional officers, by making sure that improper releases go to zero. That's our goal. We will get there.

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But Madam Speaker, at the end of the day, the investments that we are making—we will not stop. We will not stop in building more correctional spaces, hiring more officers and sending a message across Ontario: We are a government that takes their safety seriously—

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

Mr. John Fraser: Imagine this: You're the victim of a violent assault, a victim of a carjacking, a victim of a home invasion, a robbery, a personal crime, and you just heard the minister's answer. What do you think? You know what you think: "He's not doing his job; he's not protecting me."

I'll ask once again: How is it that the Solicitor General still has his job?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: People have had enough of this grandstanding from the member opposite, who forgets to mention that in the final years of their reign, almost 250 improper releases occurred—no investments in the correctional system, very few police officers graduating the college. They weren't even meeting with the associations; they didn't call back the chiefs. We've come a long way to prioritize our public safety.

And specifically to the member's comment, we acknowledge that the system that they broke we are fixing by making sure that we have the administrative supports, the digitization, and we will work to make sure that the number of improper releases is as low, as close to zero, as quickly as possible.

YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is to the Premier. Youth unemployment in Ontario right now is at 17%. That's the highest in Canada. At the same time, the government has gutted OSAP, forcing students to take on more debt and making it even more difficult for them to find a job. And while young people are struggling, this Premier decided to buy himself a \$30-million jet with taxpayer dollars.

Instead of spending money on a jet, can the Premier explain how many thousands of Ontario youth could have had a summer job if that money had been invested in youth employment opportunities?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The minister of colleges and universities.

Hon. Nolan Quinn: Let's talk about the \$6.4-billion investment we just put into post-secondary—the largest investment not only in Ontario's history, but Canadian history.

Interjections.

Hon. Nolan Quinn: She was speaking about youth unemployment, so this was the question that was posed.

We are adding another 70,000 funded seats so that there's accessibility for all students to be able to go into the program they so choose. That's on top of the 20,000 STEM seats we added last year that the member opposite voted against. They have an opportunity to vote for our budget and vote for the historic \$6.4-billion investment funding 70,000 new seats so our youth are able to have easy accessibility into the courses they want to take.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: It is indefensible. We're talking about Conair here with this government.

Some neighbourhoods are seeing youth unemployment rates above the provincial average. Scarborough, for instance, has reported rates as high as 17.6% unemployment. Racism and postal code discrimination in hiring disproportionately affect youth in Scarborough, factors that they cannot control.

Organizations like East Scarborough Works and the YMCA Scarborough hub are doing good work in connecting youth to jobs, but they cannot do the heavy lifting alone.

Can the Premier explain why this government has failed to target supports for youth jobs in Scarborough and across the province, and why has he chosen a jet over jobs?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity.

Hon. Charmaine A. Williams: You know, I think, in the face of the economic uncertainty, President Trump's tariffs, the economy that we are currently in, it is our government that has taken action to ensure that small businesses have the support they need to thrive and to ensure they're able to hire young people—our youth.

The investments that we've made in small business—because we know small businesses are the lifeline of our economy here; 3.5 million jobs, or two thirds of the private sector, are here because of small businesses. That is why we've cut the small business tax to 2.2%: to see more small businesses being able to open. This is helping women start businesses. This is franchises. Those are the jobs that young people are getting in our province.

We're going to continue to make those investments, because small business means so much to us, and the youth and women who are able to grow their businesses deserve it.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms. Lee Fairclough: Speaker, this government has a pattern of secrecy and mismanagement that is failing the people of Ontario. We all misplace things from time to time, but losing 150 prisoners since 2021 is not like losing your car keys. Worse yet, once briefed on the problem, the minister neither disclosed the information to the public, fixed the problem, nor could he tell us last week if there's an ongoing threat to public safety.

My riding includes the maximum-security Toronto South Detention Centre. Can the minister tell us how many inmates have been improperly released from that prison and how many are currently unlawfully at large?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Solicitor General.

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: Thank you again, Madam Speaker, and I thank the member opposite.

When an individual is improperly released, the police are immediately notified and steps are taken to notify victims, if they are registered. An incident report is generated and sent to senior individuals and key personnel for ministry awareness.

Let me clarify something I said in my prior answer. We're moving from a paper-based system—that's, in fact, probably why they had almost 250 improper releases under their watch—to using computers and digital sharing of information, making sure we have more personnel available to make sure this doesn't happen.

We're not going to accept even one improper release as being acceptable. We're going to work to correct a problem we inherited. We're working every day. We're not going to accept the 250 as being acceptable.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

Ms. Lee Fairclough: Speaker, Ontarians have a right to know when prisoners are mistakenly released into their communities, but these numbers only came to light through freedom of information requests, and even then, key details like who was released and where remain unclear.

With the government pushing through legislation that undercuts freedom of information laws and shields it from public scrutiny, will the Solicitor General commit today to full public reporting, including real-time disclosure of improper releases and inmates who are still at large, or is this government going to hide matters of public safety behind its new secrecy laws?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: Again, when an individual is improperly released, the police are immediately notified. They're notified immediately and steps are taken to notify victims, when they're registered. As I said before, very, very quickly people are re-apprehended and brought behind bars where they belong.

The member opposite from Etobicoke–Lakeshore forgets the fact that almost 250 individuals were released improperly when the leader of the third party was part of the government, and he forgets to tell people they had no system in place—they had no plan to expand our correc-

tional system. Their record of closing seven jails speaks for itself.

That's not the standard we're going on. We're going to work hard to protect Ontario every day.

HOUSING

Mr. Lorne Coe: My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Amid global economic uncertainty, rising construction costs and pressure on families seeking home ownership, our government has been clear it costs too much and it takes too long to build in Ontario.

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That's why we've taken decisive action to reduce costs through targeted tax relief, including cutting the HST on new home builds alongside development charge relief measures that lower upfront costs and improve project viability. These actions are already helping to restore confidence with renewed housing market activity and home sales reaching their highest levels in over a year.

Speaker, can the minister explain how Bill 98 builds on these efforts and works together with our tax reductions and development charge relief to accelerate housing construction and get more homes built faster across—

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

Hon. Rob Flack: Thank you to the great member for Whitby, my friend and colleague, for that great question.

Bill 98 complements Bill 17 and Bill 60. Why? Because it's standardizing things like the building code across this province, official plans. We're getting rid of unneeded studies. Red tape: We're lowering the time it takes and the cost it takes to build a house in this province. Add to that, Speaker, the HST rebate and the DC reduction plan, and we have a game changer in the housing industry in this province.

Last Friday night, I was at the Guelph home builders along with my colleague from Guelph, and we heard it first-hand: We're seeing tangible efforts, tangible results. More homes are being built, deals are getting closed.

It's exciting, Speaker. The plan is working. The best is yet to come.

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

Mr. Lorne Coe: Back to the minister: When governments lower financial and regulatory barriers, it helps restore confidence and get projects moving again. With home sales gaining momentum and reaching their highest levels in over a year since these measures were introduced, this progress shows that reducing costs is driving renewed market activity.

Our government will continue cutting development barriers, strengthening coordination with municipalities and local partners and ensuring these cost-saving streamlined measures deliver more housing supply.

Speaker, can the minister expand on how Bill 98 will build on this momentum and get more homes built for Ontarians quickly and efficiently?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member for Simcoe–Grey.

Mr. Brian Saunderson: Thank you to the hard-working member for Whitby for that question.

Speaker, we've been very clear that this is not about one measure in isolation; it's about a comprehensive plan to get more homes built faster across our great province. Bill 98 builds on our cost reduction measures by further streamlining processes, improving coordination with municipalities and removing outdated barriers that are dragging construction down. When combined with our HST cut and our development charge relief, we are creating the conditions for faster and more predictable approvals across Ontario.

We are also ensuring that municipalities have the tools and the flexibility they need to support the growth while maintaining accountability and keeping critical infrastructure moving. The early increase in home sales is clear evidence that our approach is working. By lowering costs and improving certainty, we are restoring confidence, driving economic activity and helping to get more homes built for Ontarians faster and more efficiently.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

MPP Robin Lennox: Speaker, the Premier may have forgotten the value of a dollar, but the Ontario NDP have not. Now that the Premier is being forced to return his \$28.9-million jet, here are some things that money should go to instead: 1,150 new nursing positions, 960 new PSW positions, 140 new long-term-care beds, or we could get 1,000 people into supportive housing for a full year—and by the way, Speaker, that would be half of Hamilton's total population who are currently unhoused.

So will the Premier show some accountability and redirect his gravy plane money into something that will actually benefit Ontarians?

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

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Speaker, it's wonderful to see the NDP actually doing some math over there. We've actually had a 15% increase in the number of nurses that are practising in the public health system in Ontario. We've actually seen over 100,000 nurses who are licensed in the province of Ontario since Premier Ford took government. Those are the priorities we started in 2018.

We have 30,000 nurses who are currently in our post-secondary institutions training for those critical seats and positions across Ontario. We have directed the College of Nurses of Ontario and the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario to quickly assess, review and ultimately license appropriate individuals from other parts of the world who want to come to Ontario, because we have world-class health care and they want to be part of that system.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Hamilton Centre.

MPP Robin Lennox: Speaker, the Minister of Health seems to have forgotten the 700 nurses who've been laid off in the past year because of their budget cuts.

But back to the jet money and why the Premier is doing this right now: This week, the Conservative government is planning to bypass public hearings on the freedom-of-information changes and rush it to a vote. When that happens, Ontarians won't be able to know where their tax dollars are going or why they're being used.

Through the Speaker: What is the Premier hiding in his cellphone records that is so bad he's willing to buy a \$30-million jet just to distract from it?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): We're going to move on to the next question.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

Mr. John Fraser: My question is for the Premier.

We know that this government has been around for eight years. They're tired, out of touch. Apparently they can't keep criminals behind bars, and apparently the Solicitor General can't answer simple, basic questions about people's public safety. The only reason that we know about the 150 criminals who were lost or mistakenly released is because of freedom of information—that's right: because of an FOI, the same thing that the Premier is gutting. Two or three weeks from now, we may have never known. Ontarians may have never known that this was happening.

How can Ontarians feel safe when the Premier of this province is gutting freedom of information?

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

Hon. Stephen Crawford: The member opposite knows that's factually incorrect. Over 95% of information available to the public, including government outcomes and decisions, are still available to the public. That is a fact, Speaker, so the member opposite should correct that fact.

Speaker, what we are doing is modernizing Ontario's privacy and legislative framework. It's been over 40 years since this legislation has been updated, and 40 years ago, there was no cloud computing, there was no artificial intelligence, there were no cyber attacks. What we are doing, Speaker, is focusing on modernizing the privacy and access to information act for the people of Ontario.

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

Mr. John Fraser: The only thing that you're doing is protecting the Premier and his cellphone records. That's why this is happening. The failed Ford Conservatives are out of touch and asleep at the wheel. Freedom of information protects the public. That's why it's there.

Something that the Conservatives are struggling with is protecting the public from criminals. They can't keep them behind bars.

The FOI change is buried in the budget, and now the government is trying to hide it from scrutiny. They're trying to cover up the cover-up, all because the Premier doesn't want us to know what's on his phone the week he cracked open the greenbelt.

Speaker, how can Ontarians feel safe and informed if this Premier is going to gut freedom-of-information laws?

Hon. Stephen Crawford: I don't think the member opposite was listening to my question. I just had mentioned how over 95% of what is available through freedom of information—including, most importantly, government outcomes and government decisions—is still going to be available through freedom of information. There is no change there, Speaker.

What we are doing is aligning our legislation with most of the other provinces in Canada, be it Quebec, which is run by the CAQ; be it the NDP provinces of Manitoba and British Columbia; be it the Liberal province of New Brunswick or your Liberal cousins in Ottawa. What we are doing is aligning our legislation with other provinces, with other Westminster democracies, ensuring people still have access fully to information in terms of government decision-making. Nothing is changing.

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LONG-TERM CARE

Mrs. Michelle Cooper: My question is for the Minister of Long-Term Care. Speaker, we are seeing new long-term-care homes being built and expanded in communities across Ontario, and residents are taking notice. Families are now able to place their loved ones in safe and modern long-term-care homes, closer to their own homes. This is improving people's peace of mind. These projects are not only strengthening care options, but they're also creating opportunities for people to work closer to home and remain in their communities.

Through you, Speaker: Can the minister share how long-term-care development is helping to create job opportunities across our province?

Hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Thank you to that member for her important question and her advocacy on behalf of her community.

Speaker, the member is absolutely right: Long-term care is not only a critical part of our health care system, but also a major source of stable employment and economic opportunity. That's why, in last year's budget, I was proud to announce the new capital funding program, the most generous and ambitious building program across any jurisdiction. Ontario is an absolute leader in this space, bar none. With over 160 projects in the pipeline, I do feel like Oprah sometimes because—"You get a long-term-care home; you get a long-term-care home; and yes, so do you, you get a long-term-care home."

And every new home that is open also needs what? It needs staff. That is why I always say—and it bears repeating again—long-term care is hiring. In order to hire, we have very generous incentives. If you are a PSW, you can get a \$10,000 incentive. For registered nurses, it's a \$25,000 incentive.

We will continue investing in our people as we continue to build, baby, build.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Member for Eglington—Lawrence.

Mrs. Michelle Cooper: Thank you to the minister for her response. Speaker, it is encouraging to hear how these investments are supporting both care and job creation in Ontario communities. In many cases, they are allowing people to stay in their communities, contribute locally, and support their families while doing meaningful work. At a time when many Ontarians are looking for stable, good-paying jobs, these investments are making a real and tangible difference in people's lives. As more homes are built, even more opportunities are being created across our province.

Through you, Speaker: Can the minister share how these jobs are leading to long-term, stable careers that people can pursue?

Hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Thank you again for that question. Long-term care is not just about good-paying jobs with powerful paycheques; it is also about building a long-lasting and rewarding career. Having hired over 16,000 staff into long-term care over the last four years—and many more to come—we are also supporting workers at every stage of their journey, from the moment they enter the sector, through training and into long-term careers. We're investing in education, in hands-on training, and in professional development so that workers have the tools they need to succeed. Programs like the Living Classroom are helping students gain real-world experience directly in our long-term-care homes so they are ready to step into the workforce on day one—or our BEGIN program, which allows PSWs to ladder into RPNs or RPNs to ladder into RNs, with their tuition fully paid for.

Our investments are supporting excellent care provided by passionate people with purpose.

LUTTE CONTRE LES INCENDIES DE FORÊT FOREST FIREFIGHTING

M. Guy Bourgouin: À la suite d'une des saisons de feux de forêt les plus dévastatrices, ce premier ministre a promis l'achat de six avions-citernes. Mais le budget de 2026 n'en fait aucune mention et il coupe plutôt 121 millions de dollars dans le budget de base pour combattre les feux de forêt.

Ma question au premier ministre : au lieu de vendre son avion privé de 28,9 millions de dollars, le premier ministre prendra-t-il une leçon de Bill Davis qui, après des critiques publiques, a échangé son avion privé contre des avions-citernes?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Minister of Natural Resources.

Hon. Mike Harris: I'm very proud to stand up here today and say that Ontario is procuring six brand new water bombers, to the tune of \$500 million. So I'm not sure where the member from Mushkegowuk gets his information from. We're doing everything we can to support our forest firefighters here in the province.

We will take no lessons from the NDP and Liberals who gutted these programs. We have invested more in our

forest firefighting services than any government in the history of Ontario, and we'll continue to do that.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The member for Thunder Bay–Superior North.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Last summer, water bombers sat on the tarmac while fires raged across Ontario. While the Premier makes plans to jet around the world in his own private gravy plane with his own private pilots, wildland firefighters are worried that once again, there won't be enough water bombers, and even if there are, there won't be enough pilots to fly them.

Will the Premier finally put the people of Ontario first and hire the pilots needed to fly our water bombers?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Minister of Natural Resources.

Hon. Mike Harris: The member opposite will be happy to know we have a full complement of pilots this year to be able to fly our various equipment. We'll be making sure that we have contracts signed with our supplementary pilots and helicopter pilots. And we've actually been able to reach an agreement with the unions to be able to pay our firefighters and our pilots more.

It's great that the opposition is actually taking notice in northern Ontario because we've seen for far too long what they do when they have called it a wasteland—sorry, I believe it was “no man's land” that the Liberals propagated. But we'll continue to make the necessary investments in the north and all across the province to make sure we protect Ontario.

PRESENTATION TO SCHOOL OFFICIALS

Mr. Rob Cerjanec: My question is for the Minister of Education. In Peel region, a police presentation on student safety and gangs to school administrators at the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board included materials that Black principals and community members say reinforced racist stereotypes about Black youth. One Black principal reportedly walked out of the session. Others were uncomfortable about the content.

The next day, the director of education apologized. Peel police also apologized. Those are important steps to acknowledge the harm that was created, how the presentation was handled and how to rebuild trust with Black community members.

It could have been left there, but the school board walked back its apology, and the Minister of Education doubled down on content and a failed approach that Black students I'm speaking with at that board have told me will further perpetuate the racism that they've experienced there.

Did the Minister of Education or his ministry direct his appointed supervisor or influence any effort at the school board to walk back that apology?

Hon. Paul Calandra: The presentation by Peel police was an accurate, unvarnished reflection of some of the challenges that are being faced in Peel schools right now. What it did was reflect the symbols that a particular gang

is using to recruit students in that school board. This comes a week or so after that school board faced a situation where a student pulled out a gun on another student. That was the whole point of the presentation.

So if a grouping of top executive educators within a board are unwilling to understand the challenges that are being faced within their school board so that they can help teachers and educators identify the symbols, the recruitment process of this particular gang and those students that are vulnerable, then how the heck are we supposed to take violence out of our schools?

What the opposition is suggesting is that our teachers are police. That's not their job. Their job is to help police identify who might be at risk and—

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

Mr. Rob Cerjanec: The police apologized. The police walked it back and said they are going to review the approach that they took. I wonder why the minister is undermining those efforts of folks in the community by defending materials that are described as racist.

This example shows clearly you can't run the province's education system out of an ivory tower at Queen's Park, disconnected from local realities, students and educators. The minister isn't an emperor.

I strongly believe that the police, the school boards and the community together must work to create safer schools and address crime, including the root causes.

This province's approach is failing the very same people they say they want to protect. Members in this House from all parties have acknowledged that anti-Black racism exists. This minister's actions and what's taken place—in my view, I think it shows otherwise.

Does the Minister of Education acknowledge that anti-Black racism exists, and does he believe that this government should be addressing it?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Of course, Madam Speaker, and the government is addressing it on multiple levels. But when it comes to this particular presentation, I acknowledge that the Peel police apologized to an educator or educators who might have felt offended by it. I also acknowledge that the material that they presented might have been difficult for them to see. But these were 20 top educators whose job it is to understand and to help the rest of the education team in Peel understand the symbols of gangs that are terrorizing some of the schools, understand the recruitment processes that these gangs are using, so that those teachers can identify vulnerable students and then report that to police so that police can intervene if necessary. I will not apologize for that.

1130

This is just a continuation of the Liberal-NDP agenda, which says that police are bad, that they should be removed from our schools, and that our teachers should functionally be police officers.

What our teachers should be is educators. They need the tools to identify people who are causing challenges in the system. And police should get—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member for Windsor–Tecumseh.

NUCLEAR POWER FACILITIES

Mr. Andrew Dowie: My question is to the Minister of Energy and Mines. Speaker, around the world, countries are turning to nuclear energy as a reliable, cost-effective source of baseload power to meet growing demand. From the United States and the United Kingdom to Japan and across Europe, governments are recognizing that nuclear energy is essential to supporting families, creating jobs, and strengthening energy security.

At a time when global energy systems are under pressure and power-intensive industries are at risk, jurisdictions that can deliver reliable, affordable electricity will have a clear advantage in the global economy.

Ontario's nuclear energy industry is a global leader. Through you, Speaker: Can the minister outline how our government is building on this leadership to keep Ontario at the forefront of nuclear energy?

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

Mr. David Smith: I would like to thank the member from Windsor–Tecumseh for the question.

The world is turning back to nuclear energy, and Ontario is leading. While other jurisdictions are just beginning to rebuild their nuclear capacity, Ontario has spent decades building one of the most reliable and diverse energy systems in the world. Today, nuclear energy provides roughly half of Ontario's electricity, delivering stable, affordable power for families and businesses. But that leadership was not always guaranteed. Under the previous Liberal government, nuclear expansion was cancelled and long-term planning was put at risk, creating uncertainty when Ontario should have been moving forward.

Our Premier and the government of Ontario are making historic investments in nuclear energy—refurbishing existing stations and advancing the first small modular reactors in the G7. These investments are creating good-paying jobs, strengthening our energy security and positioning Ontario. Speaker—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Member for Windsor–Tecumseh.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: We know that nuclear energy is not only critical for reliability, but also for long-term economic growth and energy security. As more countries invest in nuclear power, there is growing opportunity for jurisdictions like Ontario to lead in technology, innovation and expertise. For Ontario, this means more than just generating electricity; it means creating good-paying jobs, supporting workers and families, and strengthening entire communities. From skilled trades and engineers to the local businesses and services that rely on them, the economic impact of this sector is significant and far-reaching. At a time when global competition is increasing, it is critical that Ontario continues to attract investment and build on this advantage.

Can the minister explain how Ontario's leadership in nuclear energy is helping to create jobs, strengthen our economy and position our province as a global leader in this growing sector?

Mr. David Smith: Ontario's leadership in nuclear energy is creating real opportunities for workers, businesses and communities across the province. Our nuclear sector supports tens of thousands of good-paying jobs—from skilled trades and engineering to manufacturing and advanced technology. And the impact doesn't stop there. These jobs support entire local economies, from small businesses and service workers to the shops and restaurants that rely on these workers every single day. These are real people, real families and real communities that depend on a strong and growing energy sector.

By investing in new nuclear technologies like small modular reactors, we are not only meeting our energy needs; we are creating long-term opportunity across the entire supply chain. Unlike the previous Liberal government, which cancelled projects and created uncertainty, our government is choosing to invest in these workers—

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

LAND USE PLANNING

Mr. Chris Glover: Three weeks ago, the Premier threatened to seize ownership of the Billy Bishop airport from the people of Toronto. And he went further: He said that he was going to apply Bill 5 so that it would become a lawless zone where he could break any environmental, labour and even safety law.

My question to the Premier is, is he still planning to seize Billy Bishop airport now that he won't be needing it to land his gravy plane?

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

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: I'm not sure why the members opposite would be opposed to the expansion of Billy Bishop. Let's take a look at what it means for the consumers of this province. It means more options for Ontario travellers across not just Toronto but all of Ontario. It services underserved regions in this province, across Ontario and the rest of Canada. It increases competition. What does that mean when you increase competition? Lower flights, lower cost of travel for families across this province and across this country.

Billy Bishop is an important asset, not just for the city of Toronto, but for Ontario and for Canada. It's one of the busiest airports in the entire country. We're going to continue to make sure that we ensure its longevity, and we're going to continue to work with the federal government to ensure that happens.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The member for Toronto Centre.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: This Premier wants to take over the Billy Bishop airport and pave the lake to land noisy, polluting jets over Toronto's waterfront.

I'm sure he's upset by the embarrassing backlash that forced him to wake up from his private jet dreams. Now that the Premier can't even land his gravy plane, will he also back off from the island airport expansion and invest the money in public transit, including rapid buses for Scarborough?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Let's think about the benefits of Billy Bishop one more time: more options for consumers across Ontario to travel all across this country and others. Why would the NDP be opposed or the Liberals be opposed to that? I'm not sure. It means more competition, Madam Speaker, which means lower cost of flying for families, not just in Ontario, but across Canada and many other jurisdictions.

When it comes to investing in transit infrastructure, there's no government that has invested more, including the Ontario Line, which will move 400,000 people every single day once it's completed. That's the plan this government has put forward. Whether it's the Billy Bishop airport expansion or whether it's public transit, we are moving people every single day and we're transforming the way people will travel across Ontario.

DEFERRED VOTES

2026 ONTARIO BUDGET

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): We have a deferred vote on government order number 44 that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Call in the members. This is a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1138 to 1143.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Members, please take your seats.

On March 26, 2026, Mr. Bethlenfalvy moved, seconded by Mr. Ford, that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

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

Ayes

Allsopp, Tyler	Gallagher Murphy, Dawn	Pierre, Natalie
Anand, Deepak	Grewal, Hardeep Singh	Pinsonneault, Steve
Babikian, Aris	Gualtieri, Silvia	Pirie, George
Bailey, Robert	Hamid, Zee	Quinn, Nolan
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Hardeman, Ernie	Racinsky, Joseph
Bouma, Will	Harris, Mike	Rae, Matthew
Bresee, Ric	Holland, Kevin	Rickford, Greg
Calandra, Paul	Jones, Sylvia	Riddell, Brian
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Jordan, John	Rosenberg, Bill
Clark, Steve	Kanapathi, Logan	Sabawy, Sheref
Coe, Lorne	Kerzner, Michael S.	Sandhu, Amarjot
Cooper, Michelle	Khanjin, Andrea	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Crawford, Stephen	Kusendova-Bashta, Natalia	Saunderson, Brian
Cuzzetto, Rudy	Leardi, Anthony	Smith, Dave
Denault, Billy	Lecce, Stephen	Smith, David
Dixon, Jess	Lumsden, Neil	Smith, Graydon
Dowie, Andrew	McCarthy, Todd J.	Smith, Laura
Downey, Doug	Mulroney, Caroline	Thompson, Lisa M.
Dunlop, Jill	Pang, Billy	Tibollo, Michael A.

Firin, Mohamed
Flack, Rob

Parsa, Michael
Piccini, David

Vickers, Paul
Williams, Charmaine A.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): All those opposed to the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.
Bell, Jessica
Blais, Stephen
Bourguin, Guy
Bowman, Stephanie
Burch, Jeff
Cerjanec, Rob
Clancy, Aislinn
Collard, Lucille
Fairclough, Lee
Fife, Catherine
Fraser, John
French, Jennifer K.

Gates, Wayne
Gélinas, France
Gilmour, Alexa
Glover, Chris
Gretzky, Lisa
Hazell, Andrea
Hsu, Ted
Kernaghan, Terence
Lennox, Robin
McKenney, Catherine
McMahon, Mary-Margaret
Pasma, Chandra
Rakocevic, Tom

Sattler, Peggy
Schreiner, Mike
Shaw, Sandy
Smyth, Stephanie
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Stiles, Marit
Tabuns, Peter
Tsao, Jonathan
Vanthof, John
Vaugeois, Lise
Watt, Tyler
West, Jamie
Wong-Tam, Kristyn

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day): The yeas are 63; the nays are 39.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I declare the motion carried.

It is therefore resolved that the House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): This House stands in recess until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1147 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It gives me great pleasure to welcome my friend Johnny Fansher from the Ontario Mutual Insurance Association. Welcome to Queen's Park. I hope you enjoy your visit.

INTRODUCTION OF GOVERNMENT BILLS

PROTECTING ONTARIO'S WORKERS AND ECONOMIC RESILIENCE ACT, 2026

LOI DE 2026 POUR PROTÉGER LES TRAVAILLEURS ET LA RÉSILIENCE ÉCONOMIQUE DE L'ONTARIO

Ms. Khanjin moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 105, An Act to enact the Strengthening Talent Agency Regulation Act, 2026 and to amend various Acts / Projet de loi 105, Loi édictant la Loi de 2026 visant à renforcer la réglementation des agences artistiques et modifier diverses lois.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Hon. Andrea Khanjin: The Protecting Ontario's Workers and Economic Resilience Act, 2026, would, if passed, help cut red tape and streamline permits and approvals so projects can move forward faster and with greater certainty. It will also support businesses and help workers transition more quickly into high-demand jobs.

By reducing unnecessary delays and regulatory burden, Ontario is creating a more predictable, investment-ready environment that supports job creation, economic resilience and long-term growth.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES AWARENESS WEEK ACT, 2026

LOI DE 2026 SUR LA SEMAINE DE SENSIBILISATION À LA DÉFICIENCE INTELLECTUELLE

Mr. Pang moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 106, An Act to proclaim Developmental Disabilities Awareness Week / Projet de loi 106, Loi proclamant la Semaine de sensibilisation à la déficience intellectuelle.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. Billy Pang: Speaker, I rise today to introduce my private member's bill, the Developmental Disabilities Awareness Week Act. This bill proposes to designate the last full week of May each year as Developmental Disabilities Awareness Week in Ontario.

At its core, this is a simple but meaningful step. Its purpose is to strengthen public awareness, promote inclusion, and recognize the contributions of individuals with developmental disabilities, their families, caregivers, and the organizations that support them.

Awareness is the first step towards inclusion. Inclusion is what builds stronger, more compassionate communities across Ontario.

I'm proud to introduce this bill, and I look forward to its consideration by the House.

BASE31 COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION ACT, 2026

Mr. Allsopp moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr46, An Act respecting Base31 Community Association.

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

First reading agreed to.

2343967 ONTARIO INC. ACT, 2026

Mr. Anand moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr49, An Act to revive 2343967 Ontario Inc.

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

First reading agreed to.

STOP HARMFUL GAMBLING
ADVERTISING ACT, 2026LOI DE 2026 VISANT À METTRE FIN
À LA PUBLICITÉ NUISIBLE SUR LE JEU

Ms. Fairclough moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 107, An Act to amend the Gaming Control Act, 1992 / Projet de loi 107, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1992 sur la réglementation des jeux.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Ms. Lee Fairclough: I'm pleased to present this bill, the Stop Harmful Gambling Advertising Act, 2026, that is being co-sponsored by MPPs for Orléans, Ottawa South and Kingston and the Islands. The bill is in response to the growing public health crisis associated with gambling addiction in the province that has exploded following the province's 2022 decision to open the online gambling market to private operators. Since that time, there are 50 private gambling companies advertising and promoting their sites across platforms. We've also seen a substantial increase in the number of people accessing health services through ConnexOntario for gambling problems.

The bill would make it illegal for licensed, online gambling operators to advertise or otherwise promote their sites across broadcast media, social media and paid sponsorships. The penalty for a breach of the law would be a fine of up to \$1 million for the first time and loss of licence in Ontario for further breaches.

PETITIONS

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

MPP Catherine McKenney: We all know that Ontario social assistance rates here fall well below what is needed for a market basket that measures poverty. When we think about OW—\$733 for individuals; \$1,408 for ODSP—people simply can't get by. There's not a municipality in this province where you could rent a one-bedroom unit for these rates, let alone try to feed yourself and your family.

So I am very happy to sign this petition that was provided to us, asking that the Legislative Assembly double the assistance rates for both OW and ODSP to give people a fighting chance at rent and food.

I am happy to send it down with page Catherine.

1310

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: I am pleased to rise today to present a petition from people who are worried about class sizes. They see their kids being in larger class sizes, and we know that that has resulted in increased violence and inadequate special education and mental health supports for our students, that it negatively affects the quality of education for our students, reduces access to teaching resources and significantly diminishes teacher-student interaction.

I know that we want to maintain our strong public education system here in this province, and so I'm happy to support this petition, sign my name to it and give it to page Saasana.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I'd like to thank Mary Brown of Amherstburg, Ontario, for sending in this petition.

This petition talks about how the government of Ontario should adopt regulations which essentially would put Ontario first. It talks about how the government of Ontario should adopt regulations which would make Ontario goods and services the premier and primary source of supporting Ontario's economy and workers in the course of government procurement projects.

It gives some justification for doing this as well. The justifications mentioned are and include the fact that Donald Trump's tariffs have been declared illegal by the United States Supreme Court, and furthermore that both houses of Congress—both the Senate and the House of Representatives—have voted against Donald Trump's tariffs, and furthermore that Ontario is the number one market for 15 American states, meaning that Ontario purchasers are employing millions and millions of people in the United States, keeping Americans working.

Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to support this petition. I will sign the petition and give it to page Owen and request that he bring it over to the Clerks' table.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

MPP Alexa Gilmour: It's my honour to rise on behalf of the people of Parkdale–High Park and to bring this petition to the House. This one is called "Reinvest in Post-Secondary Education."

As we know, with this government, it's a race to the bottom, the lowest per-capita funding for post-secondary schools in the entire country. As the individuals here rightly point out, post-secondary school is the backbone—colleges, universities—of a ready, resilient, strong workforce. It is, along with things like OSAP funding, a way to increase equity in our workforce.

I am very pleased to sign my name to this petition, which asks for the stabilization of the sector with strong base funding so that we have a post-secondary system that

is excellent as opposed to the bottom of the barrel. Thank you. And I'm going—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I recognize the member from Don Valley West.

HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: I'm pleased to rise today to table a petition to stop privatization and support staffing ratios in our hospitals. We know that the understaffing is negatively affecting the quality of our public health care system, that it's causing longer wait times, so much so that the government wants to stop tracking that. It's creating unreliable access to care, unmanageable workloads, burn-out amongst nurses and other health care professionals, which is driving them out of the profession.

So this petition asks the government to stop taking money away by giving deals to private, for-profit corporations and to support nurse and health care professionals with staffing ratios.

I support this petition, will sign it and give it to page Nihaal.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I'm in receipt of a petition calling on the Legislature to adopt stronger pro-Ontario procurement policies, given that we have international trade and we have other jurisdictions with that trade that are not procuring Canadian and from Ontario. Even though we have had a long-standing and very fulsome side-by-side relationship over the years, we have seen that the tariffs that have been imposed by President Trump have been declared illegal, and senators and representatives from both sides of the aisle have voted against those tariffs, nonetheless they stay in place, and yet Ontario's purchase of American products has kept millions of Americans working.

Likewise, we're going to keep Ontarians working with what's called for in this petition, by ensuring Ontario companies are procured from, rather than American companies.

I'm very happy to affix my signature to the petition. I'll send it with page Manuthi.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: This petition is directed at stopping the privatization of our health care system, so people can get medical care without having to use their credit card.

As you may well be aware, Speaker, more than two million people do not have access to a family doctor, and that is driving things like people paying \$2,000 a year to a company like Medcan to get on the roster of their physicians. People I talked to just recently in my riding are paying \$100 per visit to see a nurse practitioner.

These impacts are having real effects on people's health and well-being. The government needs to stop putting tons of money into private clinics. In fact, they need to stop

putting money into private clinics, and put it into hospitals, put it into the health care workers—the doctors, nurses, PSWs—and ensure that everyone in this province has access to the medical care they need.

I support this petition. I've signed it, and I give it to page Aadyant to turn over to the table.

HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Mr. Ted Hsu: This petition is from the Ontario Nurses' Association, and it's entitled "Stop Privatization and Support Staffing Ratios."

It is asking the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to mandate staffing ratios for nurses and health care professionals. It is asking for developing staffing ratios in consultation with nurses and health care professionals through their unions, and it is asking that we use health care funding to ensure that Ontarians can access care within the public system, rather than privatizing health care and outsourcing services to private and for-profit corporations.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Steve Pinsonneault: This petition is about supporting Ontario's economy and workers. In my riding, there's a lot of machine shops which depend on the aluminum, steel, everything that's being affected by tariffs.

"Whereas Ontario is the number one export market for 15 U.S. states" and keeps millions of Americans and Canadians working, "senators and representatives from both sides of the aisle have voted against Trump's tariffs. The U.S. Supreme Court has declared President Trump's tariffs to be illegal.

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

"That the government of Ontario should adopt a regulation or regulations and issue procurement directives as appropriate that would prioritize Ontario-made goods, services, supply chains, and public sector procurement, including capital infrastructure and construction projects, supporting Ontario's economy and workers."

I support this. I'll affix my name to it, and I will send it with Charlotte.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I have a petition here signed by thousands of students, people, families all across Ontario, who are very concerned about the increase in class sizes across our province. They're also concerned with the \$6.3 billion that has been cut from public education in this province, resulting in those larger class sizes. We know that we are seeing in the province the impact of that, which is the lack of the kinds of services students need and increased incidences of violence.

This comes in the wake of a government that is spending big, but they're just not spending big on things like education. This government spent \$103 million for government ads. They spent \$189 million for an early

election, \$2.3 billion for a spa at Ontario Place. And now, we have “Air Force Ford”—\$30 million on a jet. Instead of layoffs—like the 124 teachers, including 55 elementary teachers—that money could have been well spent to make sure our students receive the education that they deserve.

1320

So I am going to add my name to the thousands and thousands of people that have signed this petition, and I’m happily going to jet it down to the table with Navya.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Deepak Anand: It is great to see the people of Ontario supporting the people of Ontario. This is a petition I’ve heard from other members as well, and I have already spoken about this petition in the past. This petition is not only for the current generation, but it’s also for the next generation. I see a lot of students in the gallery—our leaders of today and tomorrow. It’s great to see them here, guys. So this petition is all about making sure that our province does well.

The people are saying Ontario is the number one export market to 15 US states—we keep millions of Americans working—and further state that senators and representatives on both sides of the aisle have already voted against Donald Trump’s tariffs. Even the US Supreme Court has declared President Donald Trump’s tariffs to be illegal. That is why many of the wonderful, amazing, hard-working Ontarians who support other Ontarians are saying to the government—the voice of the people—that they should adopt a regulation or a series of regulations, in fact, and issue procurement directives as appropriate.

They are saying that we should prioritize Ontario-made goods, services and supply chains, because we know Ontario is the engine of the economy for Canada. We have wonderful companies doing amazing jobs by hard-working Ontarians, so we should include public sector procurement, capital infrastructure, construction projects, and we should all come together to support Ontario’s economy and workers.

I think it’s an amazing petition, Speaker, and I heard it from other members as well. I absolutely agree with this petition and absolutely support this petition, and I’m going to hand it over to this gentleman, smart, young David—our page—for the table.

DIABETES TREATMENT

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I would like to thank Danielle Costello, who is a parent in London West and has a child with type 1 diabetes who is attending a school in London. The petition calls on the Legislative Assembly to implement Diabetes Canada’s guidelines for the care of students living with diabetes at school.

When I met with Danielle and her husband, they told me about the anxiety that they experience on a daily basis, because their child is in grade 2 and there’s inconsistency in terms of the kind of support that is available at schools across Ontario. Parents are trying to navigate a patchwork

system with no guarantees about the care that their children will receive during the school day. And the burden of managing that care falls disproportionately on families in our school system.

Other provinces—Nova Scotia, PEI, British Columbia—have already implemented these national standards. I agree with Danielle and her husband that Ontario should do so as well.

I affix my signature and will send this petition to the table with page Manuthi.

OPPOSITION DAY

CONSUMER PROTECTION PROTECTION DU CONSOMMATEUR

Ms. Marit Stiles: I move that, whereas the cost of basic groceries has increased by at least 30% in the last five years under this government; and

Whereas surveillance pricing allows corporations to use secret algorithms to take personal data, browsing habits, purchase history, and location to charge different prices to different people for the same product or service; and

Whereas companies like Uber are already taking advantage of surveillance pricing to unfairly inflate fares, and companies like Walmart are lobbying governments to expand the use of surveillance pricing for groceries; and

Whereas the federal government is monitoring the rise of surveillance pricing because of its impact on anti-competitive behaviour, but has not taken any action; and

Whereas the NDP government of Manitoba is taking leadership on consumer protection as the first province in Canada to take action against misuse of personalized data by banning surveillance pricing; and

Whereas Canadians overwhelmingly agree that surveillance pricing should be banned to prevent corporations from gouging consumers at the checkout;

Therefore, the Legislative Assembly calls on the Ford government to ban surveillance pricing practices that misuse personal data to unfairly inflate prices and ensure a fair and affordable price for groceries and other goods and services.

Addressed to the Premier.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): MPP Stiles has moved opposition day motion number 3.

I return to the member to start debate.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Good afternoon. First, before I get started, I really want to thank the member from Humber River–Black Creek for his leadership on this file and his incredible work in researching this. As well, I do want to point out his executive assistant, Angela Mammone, who has done extraordinary work on this. Thank you so much to MPP Rakocevic and his team.

As I rise today, I want to tell you I am thinking about all of the hard-working Ontarians who have had to make some really difficult choices this week—the ones who

were holding back tears in the grocery checkout line, realizing that they couldn't pay for everything in their cart; the ones who had to find a way to explain to their child why they couldn't grab their favourite snack or the new toy that they've been asking for for months.

But of course, we should also spare a thought for the Premier, because he had to make some tough decisions of his own this weekend. First, he had to decide what colour he was going to paint his new \$30-million private luxury jet. Then of course he had to decide to sell his taxpayer-funded gravy plane—not out of decency, mind you, but out of embarrassment.

The reality is that the Premier should be embarrassed.

Interjections.

Ms. Marit Stiles: That's right. He should be embarrassed that he thought he could live like a rock star while the cost of baby formula has gone up 81% since he came to power. Groceries are up 30%. The Premier should be embarrassed that, after cutting OSAP and telling students to tighten their belts, he tried to buy Air Ford One with their tax dollars.

Above all else, this Premier should be embarrassed by the fact that, after eight long years of his government, life has never been more unaffordable than it is right now in the province of Ontario. Rent is out of control, grocery costs are through the roof, and every time this Premier has a chance to do something about it, what do we get? We get a private luxury mega spa, funded by the people of Ontario, on Toronto's waterfront. We get booze in provincial parks. We get anything but addressing the challenges that people are actually facing today.

Last year, this Premier called a snap election because he said that he needed a mandate to protect people in this province. Since then, only one side has held up their end of the bargain, and it sure hasn't been this Conservative government. In fact, the only person that this government seems to be interested in protecting is this Premier. Ramming through changes to exempt themselves from the freedom-of-information laws just to bury his phone records—that is their priority, Speaker.

While Ontarians are treading water, this government is cruising by on a yacht. I've got to tell you, Speaker, I wonder if that's going to be the next thing: a superyacht. Because we've had the souped-up van, then we've had the luxury private jet. I guess the only thing left is a super-yacht.

But let me tell you, it has never been more clear how out of touch this government is than when you look at how they failed to take action on something like predatory pricing. American tech giants and grocery chains are using AI-powered algorithms. They're using electronic shelf labels to analyze shoppers' personal data and they are charging them different prices for the same product.

We've already seen companies like Uber, Booking.com, online shopping grocery apps and many more. Every time you search something online, you order an Uber or you use a grocery app, your information is being used to charge you more.

1330

Tech giants want you to believe that you can opt out, but you can't opt out of buying groceries. There are no rules to stop these guys. We need to get ahead of the problem. That's what this motion is about, Speaker. We need to get ahead of it, and we have to do it now. This motion to ban predatory pricing would mean that two shoppers are not paying two different prices for the same products at the same time in the same place, and that, by the way, is based, again, on their personal data. It would mean that these giant corporations can no longer spy on you to determine if they're going to charge you more.

But the Premier has come out, when he was asked about this just last week, and he said he doesn't support our motion. In fact, he called it "socialism." He said, "You know what? The markets are going to dictate better prices." Well, when is that going to happen?

This motion is about freedom, by the way. It is about freedom for the consumer from surveillance and predatory pricing. It is about freedom from being gouged. If this government doesn't support this motion, then apparently, they are fine with this practice. The Premier sees no problem with a secret algorithm from an American tech giant deciding how much Ontarians pay for eggs. He thinks it's perfectly okay for grocery giants to prey on people using their personal data and to squeeze them for their very last dollar.

Ontario elected this government—the government said it was to protect them, and instead, they have been served up on a silver platter to greedy corporations every single time. But while the Premier of Ontario is saying, "God bless Galen Weston"—my gosh, it warms my heart; I think of Galen Weston and all the hardship he faces. This Premier has his back.

Let me tell you this: New Democrats are leading the charge for a better future. In Manitoba, Premier Wab Kinew and his NDP government have taken a stand. They have made this practice illegal.

Interjections.

Ms. Marit Stiles: That's right. They cannot spy on consumers, they cannot exploit their data and they cannot, in turn, make life more expensive.

The Premier has expressed quite a fondness for Premier Kinew. He's done that many times. He likes to always tell the media, "Hey, it doesn't matter what party you're from. If you want to help Ontario, I'll work with you." He says that. I hope the Premier remembers those words today, because truly, this is not about party or partisanship. It is not about orange; it is not about blue, red or green. This is about doing the right thing. It is about giving the people of Ontario what they are absolutely desperate for: a break. Give them a break, a little bit of relief, a chance to lay their head on the pillow at night and not be worried about how they're going to afford their gas, their rent, their groceries. The people of our province surely have been through enough. There is a lot more work to do, but this really would be an important first step.

You heard the Minister of Finance this morning say, in response to one of my questions, "Oh, government some-

times makes bad decisions.” Well, the Premier certainly has made some very, very bad decisions. But today, he could make a good one. He could make a good decision. He and the members of his party could support our motion. They could actually do something that will protect Ontarians, and not just spend hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars on ads telling them that that’s what they are going to do, or the alternative is that they can side with the corporations that want to use them to rake in more record profits during a cost-of-living crisis.

The only thing I would ask of the Premier is, if he doesn’t support our motion today, that he explain why to the people of Ontario.

To the members opposite, I want to be very clear that you have a choice to make. Your constituents have been emailing you all week, thousands of them, telling you to vote “yes” to protect them from surveillance pricing, to stop corporations from using their data to gouge them. You’ve read those emails. I hope you have. I’m sure you have. You know what they’re asking for.

So the question is, who are you going to side with? Are you going to side with your constituents—the people who are struggling to afford groceries—or are you going to side with the Premier who thought it was a good idea to buy a \$30-million private luxury jet? You cannot have it both ways. You cannot have it both ways. You cannot go back to your ridings and tell people you are fighting for affordability while you vote to let these corporations spy on them and charge them more. You can’t stand up in question period and talk about supporting families while you vote “no” to protecting them from price gouging.

This vote will be on the record, Speaker. And when your constituents ask you why their grocery bill keeps going up and why corporations are allowed to charge them more based on their personal data, you’re going to have to explain why you voted to let that happen.

I am asking you: Do the right thing. Vote “yes.” Protect your constituents. Stand up to the corporations that are profiting off this cost-of-living crisis—or vote “no,” and, for goodness’ sake, own it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further debate?

Mr. John Fraser: I am pleased to stand today in support of this motion. I want to thank the Leader of the Opposition for bringing it forward. I also watched the Leader of the Opposition’s video; it’s pretty darn good. It’s out there. People are talking about this. It’s very important.

Last week, I introduced a bill, the Fair Grocery Prices Act, 2026. And, in full admission, I didn’t write the bill; I just saw a good idea in Manitoba and I said, “We should do this,” about six weeks ago. I put it to my staff and said, “Find out about this, get this, do the bill,” and we introduced it. It doesn’t have to have my name on it. If anybody wants it, they can join on or they can take it. More importantly, the government could do it. It’s what people need.

But here’s the background: I spent half of my life, from the age I was 15 until I was 39, working in grocery stores—managing grocery stores. I started as a pack boy

at Loblaws in 1976, which is a while ago. That’s 50 years ago—half a century. Things were a lot different then. But I learned a lot over those 24 years about the business and about how it works.

Here’s the thing I know: The big corporations have gotten a lot bigger than when I started 50 years ago and even when I left almost 30 years ago. There is a concentration of power that has allowed these businesses to do something like the bread price-fixing scam, where they were fixing the price of bread, not through an algorithm, not through a computer, but through another anti-competitive measure. They were fined for it, and they’re still actually sending compensation out.

We know what the minister—well, I’ve been talking about the minister a lot and didn’t mean the minister. But we know what large companies are capable of and what drives them. I spent a lot of time in grocery stores. I go into them now. I’m a cherry picker. I shop the specials. I know where the meat is good. I know where the produce is good. I spent a lot of time doing that. I also look at the grocery shelves. And the thing is, I see a difference in pricing right now. The item is five dollars in this store and seven dollars in their competitor. I see that a lot. It used to be that you’d see a discrepancy of 10% or 15%. That’s more than 10% or 15%.

What I’ve observed anecdotally—and we know grocery prices have gone up 30%; not anecdotally, that’s just the fact. But anecdotally, what it says to me is, these businesses are in a profit-taking mode. It’s not about competition; it’s not about market share; it’s about making more money from people.

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The thing about grocery stores is, when somebody says, “Ah, they can shop around”—I can shop around. I have a car. I live in an area where there are half a dozen grocery stores close to me. A lot of people might not even have one grocery store close to them—not one. People start to rely on things like Instacart, these online companies that deliver your groceries.

Consumer Reports did a study in the States that looked at Instacart and different customers, and they found differences of about 25% between what one customer and another customer were paying. It wasn’t based on where they live; it was based on their personal information. That’s unfair.

People should pay the same price for the same item. If there’s a special there, everybody should get the special, right? People shouldn’t be paying more based on the fact that we’ve given our information to these big companies. And now, these big companies that have been caught fixing bread prices in the analog world now have the ability to use your personal information to drive their decisions about what they’re going to charge you.

The Competition Bureau did a study on algorithmic pricing, which is what we’re talking about today, and what that means for our economy. The Competition Bureau, to sum it all up, essentially said that this could very easily become an anti-competitive process. It’s anti-competitive; it doesn’t allow people to compete. It will create an

environment in which it will be less competitive, like it is right now. It is less competitive in that market right now. I know that. I can see it. I can feel it. I can smell it.

What this motion is about today is saying that we aren't going let big companies take advantage of having our personal information. We don't always know that they have it. Just remember, folks: Your personal information—that data—is currency. That is now currency. It's bought and sold and traded like anything else, and it's valuable information.

The bill that came from Manitoba that is essentially the same bill that I put on the order paper, what it says is: "We're going to put guardrails around this. You can't do this. You can't use people's personal information against them so that two people pay different prices for the same item. It's not going to wash."

The question is, how do we fix that? How do we prevent it from happening? Somebody said the other day—I think it was in an interview—"Why don't we wait and see what happens in Manitoba?" It's like, why are we waiting? Why would we wait for anything that moves this quickly, that moves at lightning speed? Why would we wait?

By supporting the Leader of the Opposition's motion today, what you would be saying is, "No, we're going to address that. We're going to do something about it. We care about what people pay for their groceries. We know it's hard for families."

I know the government members on the other side—I think they understand that. I'd like to believe that. But what I do know is that the Premier doesn't fully understand that, because he bought himself his personal luxury jet. Now he says he's going to sell it—we still own it. The story was, "Oh, I've listened. I'm going to change my decision. I've listened," which is about the fifth or sixth time that he has listened and changed his decision.

The thing is, he hasn't listened. Because if the Premier of this province was listening to Ontario families, he'd know they're having a hard time buying groceries and buying gas, and he never would have ordered himself a private luxury jet. It doesn't get more disconnected than that. Families are hurting. They're struggling with the price of milk. Have you seen the price of eggs, bread, simple stuff? The Premier is so detached from that that he would buy himself a personal jet—one that he doesn't need, one that's not necessary, one that you can't land on a gravel runway in northern Ontario. There are about 12 airports the jet can go to.

We didn't spend a lot of time in question period talking about this jet today because it's really just a symbol of how out of touch and out of gas and out of control this government is. Can you imagine spending \$30 million, \$29 million on a plane? And that's not all. That's not all. You've got to pay the pilots. You've got to pay for a hangar. You've got to put fuel in it.

And now we've got to sell this plane at a time when Air Canada is cancelling runs because of the price of fuel.

The jet is a symbol of a whole bunch of different things. It's a symbol of how out of touch the government is in health care—ER closures, two million people not having

a family doctor; how out of touch they are with what is happening in our schools—not safe places to learn or to work—and out of touch with the price of a bag of milk or a dozen eggs; totally, completely out of touch.

The Leader of the Opposition's motion says very clearly that it's a problem that we need to address. I am encouraging the members across not to follow the Premier's lead—I'm not talking about buying a private jet, because you probably all can afford one. I thought his skin was as tight as—he was as tight as the skin on a grape; that's what the Premier said about the finance minister.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I didn't know where you were going.

Mr. John Fraser: I just wanted to wake you all up, okay? I'm sorry; that didn't come out the right way, folks.

But mister moneybags over here apparently had enough money to say, "It's okay, Premier. Get the plane. It will be good for you." And the Premier said, "Well, I want one just like Drake." Unfortunately, the plane has gone back.

I want to see the Treasury Board minute and who signed on it.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Yes.

Mr. John Fraser: Yes. Can we see the Treasury Board minute? That would be great.

I'd have liked to be the one who delivered that to Treasury Board and said, "Hey, guys, can you approve this? The Premier wants to buy a \$29-million plane." And of course, everybody goes, "Yes, that's okay," because he's the boss, right? You don't want to get in trouble with the boss because he wants the plane, because Galen has got a plane—actually, Galen has got more than one plane, so Doug deserves at least one.

I take that back.

Hon. Mike Harris: It's called withdraw.

Mr. John Fraser: It's called withdraw. I do withdraw. It just slipped out. We're so close, it just slipped out.

Speaker, families are hurting right now. Times are tough. Groceries are expensive. Every year, food bank visits go up by a million. Protecting people who may have no other choice than to shop through one mode or one store is an important thing to do. The concentration of wealth and power inside our food business has been getting tighter and tighter and tighter over the 50 years I have been observing it and working in it.

Our role as legislators is to protect people. It is to protect them from being taken advantage of. It's also to make sure that we keep criminals in jail, which this government seems to struggle with as of late. Speaker—

Hon. Mike Harris: Two hundred and 50, John. Come on.

Mr. John Fraser: Speaker—

Interjections.

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Mr. John Fraser: Thank you, Speaker.

Our job is to protect people, to make sure that we put laws in place that say to corporations, people who do business here in Ontario, "Here are the rules. You can't take advantage of people." That's why we have consumer protection. That's our job.

This motion doesn't say anything that anybody should vote against here. If they care about fair prices, if they care about people who are struggling right now to pay their grocery bills, to pay the rent; if they understand what the risks are for the future because of the concentration of wealth and power in these companies, then they're going to say, "We need to do something about this. We need to fix this. We need to put some guardrails on this."

I have no shame in having put forward the Fair Grocery Prices Act. It wasn't my idea. It was a great idea that they had in Manitoba, that Wab Kinew had in Manitoba. And great ideas should travel. I don't care if the government wants to take it and put their name on it and take all the credit for it. It doesn't matter whose name goes on it. What matters is that, as a collective group of 124 members, we say to ourselves, "It's our job to protect people against something that's coming right now and in the future that puts them at risk, that puts their existence at risk." Groceries are not a luxury item. People need food to survive.

Speaker, I'll just sum it up this way: I want to thank the Leader of the Opposition for putting the motion forward. I'm glad that we're debating it here. I'm glad that people are talking about it. And I encourage the government to take the Fair Grocery Prices Act—or something else, because something else might come—and put it forward, because our job is to protect people, to protect them from risk.

Interjection: Jets.

Mr. John Fraser: Yes. Sorry. I just heard "jets" again. The jets—I've resisted the jets this morning. I was just about finished, but we can talk about the jets, because I think I've got four minutes and nine seconds, because I've got 20 minutes.

Does Brockville have a runway that would accept the jets? I'm not sure. Maybe I could get that answer later on, in a response.

Hon. Steve Clark: It could.

Mr. John Fraser: There we go.

There are a lot of questions this morning—now that I have four minutes, now that I can talk about the jets, because I've got a little bit of time.

Who signed the Treasury Board minutes? I'd like to see that. It would be great if the President of the Treasury Board could explain how we actually ended up getting a jet and we all found out later; how the finance minister would think that's okay, because he's as tight as the skin on a grape—I got it right that time—at least that's what the Premier says. I got it right; that's much better. I find it hard to believe. I wonder, did he slide it past the finance minister? Was the finance minister—did he turn to go into his briefcase and they just slid it across and it got stuck in a bunch of papers?

I worked with and for two Premiers for two decades. They never needed a private jet; we always chartered.

And here's the irony of the whole thing: Has the Premier gone any farther than Texas? No. Has he gone to China? Has he gone to Asia? Has he gone to Europe?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Orlando?

Mr. John Fraser: No. Sorry. He only travels in North America, and it's not that much.

It's just so out of touch. When I heard it first on Friday, I said, "Hello? Do you not know that people can't afford groceries and gas? What are you thinking over there?" And the next thing I said is, "By Monday, it will be gone." I told that to one of my colleagues in Ottawa and he laughed at me, and he made a bet with one of his colleagues that it will be gone in a week. He called me on Sunday and said, "It's gone." I said, "I know." He said, "How did you know?" I said, "Because it was stupid." It was stupid, thoughtless and disconnected from what families are going through. It doesn't get much more disconnected than that.

For the Premier to say, "I listened; I repent"—no, it doesn't wash. It doesn't wash at all, Speaker. It's not right. If the Premier was really listening, he'd know that people are struggling to pay their bills, to buy groceries and gas, and this thought wouldn't have even crossed his mind. But he's not connected. He doesn't know because he travels in other circles. He's not worried about the price of bread, the price of milk or the price of health care, because he can buy it—or the price of education, because he can buy it as well too.

Ontarians deserve better than that. I encourage all members of the Legislature to support the Leader of the Opposition's motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further debate? I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Interjections.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Thank you, colleagues, for that robust round of applause.

Hon. Steve Clark: Spirited applause.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Spirited applause, yes. Thank you, House leader. You're doing a fantastic job, by the way, Mr. House leader.

I'm pleased to rise today to speak on one of the most important issues affecting the lives of workers, families, people and businesses right across the province: affordability. By the way, it does show itself multiple times in the budget—just do a word search there—because, Mr. Speaker, affordability is about real life. It's about the choices that people have to make every single day, what they can afford, what they have to cut back on and what gets paid off. It is a daily reality for people in every region of Ontario.

Speaker, the world around us has changed, and people feel it. Global economic uncertainty, ongoing trade tensions, inflationary pressures and volatility in international markets are having a direct impact on the cost of everyday life. These are forces beyond the control of any single jurisdiction, but what is within our control and what truly matters is how governments respond. Right now, Speaker, Ontarians are feeling the pressure. From groceries to fuel, to housing, to transportation, the cost of living continues to rise.

Ontarians are resilient, Mr. Speaker. They are hard-working. They adapt, but they should not have to pay more simply because government failed to act, delayed deci-

sions or chose ideology over common sense. That is why, from day one, our government has been clear: When times get tough, we do not pass the bill onto the people; we step up. We understand that families budget carefully, we understand that every dollar matters and we understand that behind every paycheque earned is effort, sacrifice and responsibility. That is the responsibility we take seriously on this side of the House.

That is why, Mr. Speaker, since day one, our government has taken bold, decisive action to lower taxes, reduce fees and put money back into the pockets of hard-working Ontarians. Lowering costs is not about ideology; it's about common sense. It's about recognizing when government can help and choosing to do so. And, Speaker, let me be very clear: Our government will continue to do whatever it takes to protect Ontario workers, families, businesses and communities from the economic impacts of these challenging times.

We know that now is not the time to sit back and wait; it is the time to act. That is why we are continuing to take unprecedented, targeted actions to help people keep more of their hard-earned money not only by never raising taxes, Speaker, but by cutting them. Many of our key economic projections outperform the targets set in last year's budget and fall economic statement. In fact, Ontario is one of the few reporting provinces with a path to balance. For the first time in two decades, Ontario received two credit rating upgrades, maintaining AA ratings across all four major agencies.

Interjections.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Thank you.

That's how we're able to lower costs without cutting corners and why we have never turned to higher taxes as the easy way out, as some others might choose to do. Because we have been responsible with taxpayers' money, and when we respect taxpayers' money, we free up more resources to boost our economy, and we invest in the services that matter most. That is the fundamental choice before this Legislature.

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Speaker, the choice this government has made on affordability is clear. This year alone, our government is supporting people and families across Ontario with nearly \$12 billion in money back in their pockets—\$12 billion going back into the hands of the very people who earn it. These savings are not theoretical. They are not promised for years down the road. They are tangible, meaningful and they are helping Ontarians manage the rising costs of living today.

When people save money, you know who benefits? Local economies benefit. Those dollars are spent in our communities, supporting local businesses, sustaining local jobs and creating a positive cycle of growth and stability. This is the environment we want to foster. As we have said many times before, when local economies and local businesses succeed, all of Ontario succeeds.

That's why we recently announced our proposal for an historic tax cut for small businesses that lowers the corporate income tax rate by over 30%, from 3.2% to 2.2%. This

provides an additional \$1.1 billion in income tax relief for more than 375,000 small businesses over the next three years.

I know there are many small business owners who have gotten elected to do public service and they left their small businesses behind, but they appreciate the value that small businesses provide in their community: hiring, jobs, providing support for families and engaged in every aspect of the community. My hat goes off to the small business members who are in this Legislature.

These savings of \$1.1 billion are real savings for those 375,000 businesses—businesses, as I said, that keep workers employed, keep food on the table and keep communities growing and thriving for future generations.

Affordability is not just compassionate policy; it is smart economic policy. Let me walk the House through what that looks like in practice.

First, we are taking historic action to make housing more affordable. Our government is removing the full 13% of the HST for eligible buyers of new homes, providing up to \$130,000 in relief. That's not chump change. For young families, first-time homebuyers and people struggling to break into today's housing market, this measure can make the difference between renting and owning, between uncertainty and stability. This policy does what governments should do: It lowers the cost of purchasing a home, supports new construction and helps grow supply. It is bold, it is decisive and it speaks to the reality facing Ontarians who want to put down roots and build a future.

Second, we are continuing to put money back into people's pockets every time they fill up their tank. We permanently cut the gas and fuel tax, saving 10 cents a litre. Since July 2022, that decision has saved households, on average, \$435—money that stays with families instead of being swallowed up at the pump. Those savings matter. It matters to people driving to work in their communities. It matters to businesses who are delivering goods. It matters to families juggling carpools, errands and responsibilities. Unlike the opposition, we did not make this relief temporary; we made it permanent because families need and deserve affordability action they can rely on.

Third, when people needed help immediately, we delivered. Starting January of last year, every eligible Ontarian received a \$200 rebate cheque, delivering \$3 billion in direct relief. No application, no bureaucracy, no red tape, just help—help fast—when families were facing rising costs from every direction.

Speaker, the role of government is not to add pressure. It is to relieve it.

Fourth, our government eliminated tolls on Highway 407 East, saving daily commuters an average of—wait for it—\$7,200 a year. That's real money. That decision keeps people moving, it keeps goods moving and it removes an unfair financial burden from commuters who rely on that corridor every single day.

But we did not stop there. We also removed tolls on highways 412 and 418, ensuring families and businesses have more travel options and more of their hard-earned

money left at the end of each month, because transportation costs matter and commuting costs matter. This government understands that.

That is exactly why we introduced One Fare. Our One Fare program eliminates double fares and expands transit integration across the greater Golden Horseshoe, saving daily commuters an average of \$1,600 a year. What do you think about that?

Interjection: That's great.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: I heard a "great."

For people who rely on transit to get to work, to school or to appointments, One Fare is not just a talking point. It is real relief that makes daily life more affordable.

Affordability is also about fair wages. That is why we are supporting more than 800,000 Ontario workers by increasing the minimum wage. Because workers deserve that, and people who contribute their time and skills to our economy deserve a fair return.

Speaker, affordability also means protecting seniors and the most vulnerable. That is why our government indexed the Ontario Guaranteed Annual Income System and expanded eligibility to 100,000 more low-income seniors. It is why we indexed the Ontario Disability Support Program and related programs to inflation, ensuring purchasing power is protected, not eroded. No other government before us ever did that. Think about that. We are the first government to support low-income seniors with their payments and people on the Ontario Disability Support Program with their payments indexed to inflation. That's helping the most vulnerable in society.

These aren't flashy announcements. They are meaningful decisions that recognize that every dollar counts, especially for those living on fixed incomes. Taken together, these actions represent one of the most comprehensive affordability measures and agendas in Ontario's history. They help families drive to work. They heat their homes and put food on the table. They help seniors maintain independence and peace of mind. They help workers keep more of what they earn.

And yet, despite all of this, the opposition still cannot bring themselves to support measures that put money back into people's pockets. When our government announced an extension to the gas tax cut, the NDP member from Niagara Centre told the media his party was for anything that provides relief to people. Looks great on camera, Mr. Speaker, but when the cameras were off, the NDP voted against delivering that relief. They voted against savings at the pump. They voted against commuters. They voted against affordability.

Words are easy; votes are what matter. When it came time to provide relief to Ontario families, the NDP chose ideology over affordability. The Liberals are no different. For 15 years, they drove up energy costs, created a housing crisis, drove away hundreds of thousands of jobs and failed to build the infrastructure Ontario needed. That is the record they left behind.

By contrast, our government made gas and fuel tax cuts permanent. We are delivering up to \$130,000 in savings for homebuyers. We have created over one million jobs

since 2018. We are delivering the largest capital plan in Ontario's history: over \$210 billion for health care, to build roads, transit, schools, hospitals and long-term care.

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Mr. Speaker, since day one, we have taken unprecedented action to put more money back into the pockets of Ontarians. Not only have we never raised a tax; we have cut them. Because affordability is not a slogan for the government, it is a responsibility. Unlike others, our government's fiscal plan has prepared us for whatever the future may hold, without sacrificing the well-being of our people, our services and our economy.

Ours is a responsible government, one that grows the economy by cutting taxes and investing in the industries, sectors, technologies and workers that will power our growth for generations to come. One that breaks down barriers instead of putting them up, and one that delivers better services to people without sacrificing efficiency and sustainability.

And looking ahead, Mr. Speaker, through our plan to protect Ontario, we're continuing to deliver historic support that ensures Ontarians can keep more of their hard-earned money at a time of global uncertainty.

Protecting Ontario is about making sure people can afford to stay in their homes. It's about getting to work without paying more to get there. And we will continue to act, we will continue to listen, and we will continue to deliver relief where it matters most. Because when global uncertainty rises, when families feel squeezed and when workers worry about the future, it's this government that will always choose action over inaction and relief over rhetoric. That is our record. That is our promise that we will continue to keep for the people of Ontario.

Ontarians have always stepped up when times were uncertain. They work hard, they look out for one another, and they never shy away from doing their part. Our job in this Legislature is to match that effort, to make smart choices, to ease pressure where we can and to make sure that this great province remains a place where people can not only get by, but they can get ahead.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further debate?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Groceries have never been so expensive in Ontario. Everyone is paying more, and so many are struggling to make ends meet—seniors on fixed incomes, whom this government just voted against last week; tenants paying skyrocketing rents; students who are squeezed by tuition and living expenses, which will now go up under this government; people who are on ODSP so far below the poverty line; and families with kids.

And now grocery chains like Walmart and Loblaws want to be able to charge you more—watching you, tracking you and using your data to charge different prices for the exact same product. Grocery delivery apps are already doing this and so are companies like Uber.

You need relief, but the Premier says he's not going to help because this is just capitalism. But somehow, it's okay when he uses your hard-earned tax dollars to buy himself a private jet. And when he gets caught, he doesn't

even say it's the wrong thing to do. He says it's not the right time for it. So what is the right time to use your money for a private jet, Speaker?

The NDP thinks that you are the one who deserves support, not the Premier. That's why we've tabled a motion to end predatory pricing in Ontario. Manitoba's NDP government has already done it, and we can do it here too.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further debate?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I rise today in support of the leader of the official opposition's motion to end predatory surveillance pricing. It's both important and timely.

In my riding of London North Centre, people are being squeezed by greedy grocery giants whose profits are through the roof. Almost one in three children in London live in poverty, and 17% of food bank users are working full-time.

Yet at this very time, the Premier decides to buy a private jet. Countless bureaucrats, ministers and government members signed off on this, on Ford's luxury gravy plane, at a cost of \$30 million. Now Ford, like the dictator from the south, is backpedaling or chickening out; not because he's listening, but because he was caught.

I strongly suspect that more than a few insiders are getting their palms greased in this shady deal, maybe even Ford himself. Or is this plane a paper plane, an in-and-out deal and the Premier and his buddies get a chance to skim yet more money? Perhaps that was always the intent with this ridiculous gravy plane plot.

This is a vote to stand up for regular people. But more often than not, Conservatives roll out the red carpet for their elite friends like Galen Weston—birds of a feather, Speaker.

Today's vote on stopping predatory pricing will show who is truly listening to their constituents and who will stand in their place, exposing themselves as disconnected, wealthy elites unable to see past the silver spoons in their mouths.

I want to thank the leader of the official opposition for listening to people. We'll see if the government votes in favour or votes to let people eat cake.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further debate?

Mr. Rob Cerjanec: I'm pleased to rise today to speak to today's motion calling on this government to ban surveillance pricing practices and ensure fair and affordable prices for Ontarians.

Families across Ontario are already struggling with rising costs. People deserve fairness at the checkout line. And right now, too many people are questioning whether the system is even working for them.

I want to be very clear: Any system that monitors Ontarians to figure out who it can exploit for more money is wrong. People should be able to trust when they buy groceries or other essential goods that they're being treated fairly. They should not have to wonder about whether their personal data—the data that we have on our phones or on our browsing history—is being used against them. They

should not have to ask whether they're paying more for who they are, what they search for or what a company thinks that they can afford. That's not fairness, Speaker; that's exploitation.

On this side of the aisle, and I guess this side of the House here, as Ontario Liberals, we're committed to stopping personalized algorithmic pricing. That's why, as Ontario Liberals, we introduced Bill 104, the Fair Grocery Prices Act. The purpose of that bill is simple: It would stop the misuse of personal data in pricing decisions. It would help ensure that personal information such as gender, economic status—that that browsing history is not used to put someone at a disadvantage.

Our goal is very straightforward: fairness, transparency and protection for every single person in our great province. This isn't about controlling prices or preventing businesses from making a fair return. Businesses can still set fair prices for goods. It's about making sure that those prices are not manipulated unfairly through personal data and hidden systems.

What does surveillance pricing mean, for those maybe watching at home or after? Surveillance pricing uses personal data to set individualized prices. That means two people can buy the exact same product and pay different prices because of hidden algorithms working in the background. Those decisions can be made without transparency or meaningful consent, and consumers are left in the dark about it. They don't know what data is being used. They don't know how the decision is being made, and they have no real way to challenge it. That creates a marketplace where fairness is no longer something that people can count on.

This practice can hit vulnerable people the hardest. People with fewer resources, less time or less ability to navigate digital systems are at greater risk of being targeted. It can turn everyday necessities into something even harder to access, and it can deepen inequality within our society and in the marketplace and make it harder for families to afford the basics of life.

We're seeing across our province right now so many people are already stretched to the limit, and even small increases at the checkout over time can make a really big difference, and a negative difference, within their lives. So it isn't theoretical. It's about whether people can afford groceries or whether parents can feed their children or whether families can get through the week with dignity. It is simple: It is about fairness.

One of the most disturbing questions we have to ask when we're talking about targeted pricing like this is when these systems are applied to essential goods—things like baby formula. These are black-box systems. Consumers can't see into them, regulators are struggling to keep up with them and ordinary families have no meaningful way to challenge them.

So we have to ask a very basic question: Are we building systems designed to calculate exactly how much they can extract from people when those individuals have no real or other choice? It isn't about luxury goods; it's about necessities. It's about feeding a kid, Speaker. Could a

system identify that a mother is struggling, that she has searched for help because breastfeeding isn't working, and then quietly raise the price of formula because the system has decided that that mother has no alternative? Even the possibility of that should alarm every single member in this House.

I think back to a long time ago when I was a kid. My mum was a single mum. We didn't have a lot of money. I remember my mum talking to me one day. She had a silver dollar from the 1960s when she was in school. It was something that they gave out at school, and that was what she had left, and she had to make a decision buying milk or not that day.

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Let's just look at where we are in today's day and age. Algorithmic pricing like this could mean a huge difference in impacting people's well-being, and it will not be a good thing. If we don't have transparency, if we don't have safeguards, then we don't have fairness.

The second concern that I have is algorithmic price coordination. If companies are feeding competitive price data into automated systems that react in real time, learn from one another and then adjust prices accordingly, what looks like competition may not very much be competition at all; it could be a system where you see prices rise together. No phone calls, no more smoke-filled rooms, no paper trail—just algorithms doing exactly what they were designed to do in order to maximize profit. And if we don't know how those systems are working, how do we know if families are getting a fair deal? So that's why transparency in this matters, it's why oversight matters and it's why government cannot afford to look the other way.

This issue that we're discussing today, Speaker, points to a broader challenge that Ontario can no longer ignore. The province needs a clear and responsible AI strategy. We need rules to make sure that data and algorithms are used to help people and not exploit them. Surveillance pricing is one example of how technology can be used in ways that deepen inequality and hurt consumers. Without proper guardrails, AI can become a tool that makes life less affordable for the people who are currently under the most pressure already.

That's why this conversation needs to be bigger than a motion today or a bill that, as Ontario Liberals, we've introduced. It has to be about building a framework for fairness in an economy increasingly shaped by automated decision-making. That's why, Speaker, I introduced a bill last year for the province to do just that: to bring together experts across fields, sectors and our entire province, so that we can come up with, as a province, what is the best approach and pathway to dealing with things like AI.

We can use AI to grow our economy. We can use AI to boost productivity, to lift the wages of people. But we also need to be aware of how the ethics of this and the other elements, just as we're debating today, about this bill—as I'm thinking most folks are understanding—could very well impact folks, where it's the difference between maybe taking your kids on a vacation or being able to put them in sports or not in the summer. It's not just about,

sometimes, "Can you pay the rent or not?" It's, "Can you do those other things with your children?" And if we continue to see costs go up like this, and things like algorithmic pricing contributing to that, it is going to make it harder for families in our province to do the things that they want to do with their kids.

So developing that framework around AI can't happen in isolation. We need to hear about the people most at risk of being harmed by those systems. That's what good policy is supposed to be about. It should be coming from listening carefully, asking hard questions and making sure that we get this right.

Let us be honest, Speaker. This government has not shown that it cares, in my view, about economic fairness for the people of our province—that opportunity to succeed. Because if it did, we wouldn't see families standing in grocery aisles right now, putting food back on the shelves and wondering what they can afford this week. If it did, food bank use in our province wouldn't be at record highs. If it did, it would not keep making decisions that benefit the well-connected, while everyday folks in our province continue to fall further behind.

This is the same government that oversaw a greenbelt process so flawed that its own housing minister had to deal with the ramifications of that. Decisions that could have handed billions to a select few did nothing to lower the cost of living for everyone else. So that's the pattern: access for some; pressure for everyone else in our province. No real plan to bring down grocery prices and create more competition within the marketplace itself—because if we have more competition within the market, that is actually one way that you can see prices go down. No meaningful action on affordability and no urgency even as more and more families are forced to rely on food banks just to get by.

In fact, we're seeing this government happy to stand by, watch more people struggle to feed their kids and then call that a fair market. If they don't think about those families, unless they're forced to by opposition parties in the chamber, we've got a long way to go in this province, Speaker.

Economic fairness means something simple: People who work hard should be able to afford the basics—food, housing, stability. That promise is slipping away for far too many people in our province. We're seeing this government not fix it because it's too busy looking at the few instead of fighting for the many. So the question remains: Who is this government really working for?

This debate today, in my view, is about fairness, about transparency and about trust—making sure that technology serves people instead of exploiting them, protecting Ontarians from hidden disadvantages within the marketplace, and making sure every single person in our province can afford the necessities and a life of dignity. That's all we're asking for here.

So we support protecting Ontarians from unfair pricing practices, but we need to see real legislative action. Bill 104 offers a clear and practical path forward on that. The government should work with all parties to strengthen

these protections and build a fairer and more trustworthy marketplace in the province. The people of our province deserve a system that works for them, not against them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further debate?

Ms. Catherine Fife: This motion is, essentially, we're trying to help you remember who you work for.

John Michael McGrath wrote an excellent piece on this issue. He asked the question, "Why are Taylor Swift tickets more important than groceries?"

You have to remember that Canada's grocery sector is extremely concentrated by global standards already—making up 75% of the industry's retail sales. Two of the largest grocers make up nearly half, so they hold all the power. This motion simply tries to level the playing field just a little bit for them. The decision by the government to already say no is mystifying for so many people, including the people we're elected to serve.

Remember, Ticketmaster has been overcharging customers, but you've made the decision already that you will not prohibit Loblaws from overcharging an exhausted new parent for diapers and baby formula. It says so much about who you are.

Finally, I just want to say, the position is mystifying. The big retailers continue to receive outsized benefits from this government, where there are tens of millions of dollars in dubious pharmacy building or moving ServiceOntario to a Staples store.

The voters understand what you are doing. Our data has been commodified and weaponized against us.

Remember who you work for.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Aujourd'hui, on a une opportunité d'arrêter l'exploitation prédatrice des prix. Durant les cinq dernières années, le prix de l'épicerie a augmenté de 30 %. Ça, c'est sous M. Ford.

La tarification basée sur la surveillance permet aux commerces d'utiliser des algorithmes secrets pour collecter des données personnelles, des habitudes de navigation en ligne, l'historique de nos achats, la géolocalisation, afin de facturer des prix différents à différentes personnes pour exactement la même chose—le même produit. Des entreprises comme Uber l'utilisent beaucoup.

Par contre, le gouvernement néo-démocrate au Manitoba, sous le premier ministre Wab Kinew, a fait preuve de leadership en matière de protection des consommateurs et a pris des mesures contre l'utilisation abusive des données personnelles en interdisant les prix basés sur la surveillance.

C'est tout ce qu'on demande aujourd'hui. On a une opportunité comme députés de protéger les consommateurs.

We have a chance today to ban surveillance pricing practices that misuse personal data to unfairly inflate prices, and ensure a fair and affordable price for groceries and other goods. Let's vote in favour.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further debate?

MPP Robin Lennox: If you are working full-time and can't afford groceries and rent in the same month, then your government is failing you.

We in the Ontario NDP are focused on finding solutions to reduce the cost of living for working people; to ensure that a parent working two jobs doesn't have to spend hours every evening poring over coupons and online sales, only to be silently ripped off by corporate grocers and other online platforms using algorithms to determine the highest price they can charge for the essentials that Ontarians need. Surveillance pricing uses consumer data and browsing history not to determine the best value that corporations can deliver to their customers, but instead to determine what is the highest profit margin corporations can extract from them. This means that a worried parent who has been up at night googling "fever in a toddler" the next day will be charged a surcharge just for infant Tylenol and a thermometer, not because the value of the items suddenly went up but because algorithms suggested that parent's concern could be exploited.

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This is all happening at a time when income inequality is widening, when the rich are becoming richer and the working class are left struggling to make ends meet. The Ontario NDP stands for fairness, for reducing the cost of living and for ensuring that we are protecting working people, not billionaire CEOs.

I hope the Conservative government will stand with us today to stand with working people and to vote to ban surveillance pricing in Ontario now.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further debate?

MPP Alexa Gilmour: I'd like to tell a true story about a mother who came into my office at the church a few years ago with her child in tow. I casually asked her, "Oh, why isn't she in school today?" and the mother, in a whisper, said, "I didn't have enough in the cupboards to make a school lunch."

Food is a basic human right. Groceries are a necessity, not something that we sell to the highest bidder. And yet grocery prices are now up 30% and infant formula is up over 80% since this government came into power. In Toronto, one in 10 Torontonians are using a food bank to keep themselves alive, and a quarter of those are children.

Manitoba has done the right thing. They've ended predatory pricing, that practice of using AI to track your spending, that charges you more than your neighbours for the exact same thing. But this gravy-plane-buying Premier says he's going to let the giants like Galen Weston, who are worth \$20 billion, and the market do its thing.

So the grocery tycoons will get richer by price fixing while hundreds of everyday families struggle to afford the basic necessities like a school lunch. When did the Conservative members become so unconscionably heartless?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further debate?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Surveillance pricing uses your data, your physical location, your neighbourhood and the things you search for online to analyze how much money

can be squeezed out of you and setting a price just for you. Grocery chains like Walmart, Loblaws, Uber, Shopify and Instacart are partnering with tech giants to use your personal data to charge different prices for the exact same product.

The Ford government has said that it will not protect consumers from gouging of any sort. After all, they are happy to take us for all we're worth by buying a personal jet and then spending billions of public dollars so the Premier can land his private jet at Billy Bishop airport. So we shouldn't be surprised when this government is unwilling to stop predatory corporations from also taking us for all we're worth.

Nova Scotia, Manitoba and 24 American states are working at prohibiting the use of surveillance pricing, and the federal NDP is leading the charge nationally. I urge all members of this Legislature to support the motion brought forward by Marit Stiles and the NDP to ban the use of predatory algorithms.

Let's stand for fairness. Vote in favour of this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I will remind all members to use the members' titles or ridings, please.

I go to the member from Don Valley West.

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: I'm pleased to rise today to speak on opposition day motion number 3, and I want to thank the official opposition for bringing it forward. I also want to acknowledge the good work of my great colleague the member from Ottawa South, who tabled Bill 104, the Fair Grocery Prices Act, 2026, which, if passed, would create a new provision in the 2002 and 2023 Consumer Protection Acts stating that it's an unfair practice to use personalized algorithmic pricing to inform a change in price for an individual consumer. Examples of this unfair practice would include price changes on electronic shelf labelling systems that are based on a consumer's personal information, attributes or behaviours, and similar price changes on online platforms.

It's really disappointing that even before this debate, the Premier laid his cards on the table about how he thought about this. He said, "I believe in capitalist society.... The market dictates.... That's what the true driver is, free and fair competition and let the market dictate" on food prices.

You know, Speaker, I didn't hear him saying all that when he gave a sole-source contract to Staples to take ServiceOntarios away. I didn't hear him talking about fair competition when he gave a \$100-million contract to Elon Musk, which he also had to cancel. I don't hear him talking about it when it doesn't suit him.

Here we've got a motion that would actually help the people of Ontario, and what does he say? "Oh, freedom, capitalism: We need that." Absolutely, we need capitalism, Speaker, but we also need protections and guardrails to protect consumers and the people here in Ontario.

This government is spending millions of taxpayer dollars on self-promoting ads trying to convince people that they're protecting Ontario, but we can see that they are just pretending to protect Ontario. They claim their plan is working, but just look at the facts: Unemployment

is actually up under this government. Speaker, when they took office, in 2018, unemployment was 5.9%. Do you know what's happened under this failed Conservative government? It's gone up to 7.6%. That's not a plan that's working for the people of Ontario.

In Canada, three big cities here in Ontario make the list of the cities with the highest unemployment in the country—the highest unemployment in the country, right here in Ontario, under this failed Ford Conservative government. We've got Toronto, we've got Windsor, we've got Oshawa: high unemployment rates because their plan is not working to protect the people of Ontario.

We also see food prices up 31% since 2020. We see shelter costs up 30%, 700,000 people out of work. And those 300,000 manufacturing jobs they said they'd create, just like the 1.5 million homes? They're not talking about those numbers anymore because they haven't delivered. They've actually lost manufacturing jobs and they've removed their target of 1.5 million homes because their plan is not working.

Not supporting this motion would be another example of this government just pretending to protect Ontario. They're more concerned about protecting their friends.

While we continue as Ontarians to feel the pain of their pretending, we're paying for these ads, and we're paying for those ads with borrowed money. The finance minister talked about sending people a pre-election cheque, \$200. What he didn't talk about was he borrowed that money to do it. We're in a deficit. So guess what? We're all going to have to pay back that \$200, and with interest. They are only pretending to protect Ontario.

The finance minister got up to debate this motion. I thought I was listening to an old recording. He wasn't talking about this motion. He didn't defend the Premier's position, that we should allow big companies to take advantage of new technology and allow them to use our personal data against us. I think it's because he knows voting against this actually would be indefensible.

New technology should improve our lives, and when it doesn't, government is who we need to rely on to protect us. We need guardrails. Big tech companies need guardrails. The use of our data to invade our privacy to take advantage of our data is something that governments around the world are talking about, but not this government.

The finance minister talked about keeping money in the pockets of Ontarians. He said the role of the government is not to add pressure but to relieve pressure. If this is true, why would consumer protection in the form of supporting this motion not be exactly what this government should implement?

I think it's because the Premier is listening to his friends at the big grocery stores, who tell him how great this will be—for them. But soon we won't even know about his meetings with those big grocery stores because the government is now hiding behind new changes to FOI rules, where we can't see who the Premier is meeting with. That just makes all of this even worse.

So I think the Premier needs a lesson in how this predatory pricing works. He needs to understand that you're actually surrendering purchasing power to an algorithm, and that means consumers lose their ability to make informed choices.

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Right now, we can survey the ads. We can even go online and look at the data and the prices that grocery stores are advertising for a particular product in a given week. Speaker, that will all disappear under predatory surveillance pricing. We will go to the grocery store, and you and I will get a different price—maybe based on, did we check out that item before? Do we come from a postal code that has a higher income level? That just doesn't sound right to me.

Let me reference one of Canada's greatest tech leaders, Jim Balsillie, one of the co-founders of BlackBerry. He wrote this in the *Globe and Mail* recently: "These new surveillance-based pricing and remuneration models are the antithesis of a free and efficient market because they undermine the core benefit of 'consumer surplus,' which is the extra value consumers receive when they buy a product for less than what they were willing to pay due to free-market competition and transparency."

Speaker, I'll use an analogy that maybe the government side can relate to. Let's imagine you're in the market for a private luxury jet, and let's imagine you start looking online to see what the prices of that jet are. And then let's imagine that, as you keep looking to buy that jet to fly your Premier around—and maybe some of his cabinet members and some of the other members—the price of that jet starts to go up and up and up, because you're searching for that jet, Speaker, and then the company that's selling that jet knows that you're in the market. So instead of getting a jet at a discount price—because guess what: Fuel charges, if anyone over there hasn't noticed, are kind of on the rise right now because of wars in the Middle East, so people will maybe be flying a little less—this government would pay more for that jet.

Speaker, they borrowed—let's talk about this. We're not flush with cash. This government is not flush with cash. They're operating like they are running their own kingdom, and they're borrowing taxpayer money to buy a private jet.

I'm glad he saw the light on that, Speaker. Maybe the Premier will see the light on this, because the Competition Bureau said that businesses use algorithmic pricing. They like it because it helps them optimize their pricing strategy. That's another way of saying it helps them generate more profits by basically using, as I say, the data of consumers.

The Competition Bureau knows that this can consolidate market power, especially for established retailers, and this could limit the entry of new firms into the market. They know from their consultations that people across the country, when it comes to algorithmic pricing, are worried about things like unfairness, discrimination, price fluctuation, exploiting vulnerable consumers, affordability. We're in the middle of an affordability crisis.

Speaker, I'm hearing from my constituents about this. They are worried as well. They are asking us to say no to predatory pricing, because they know that, under this government, supporting predatory pricing is not protecting Ontario; it is more of protecting their friends. We will be happy to support the NDP motion, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further debate?

MPP Lisa Gretzky: It's my pleasure to rise on behalf of my constituents to speak to our NDP motion to end predatory pricing practices in Ontario. Speaker, predatory pricing is when retailers charge different amounts for the exact same product based on the timing of a customer's purchases, where they live and other personal data. While common in travel and hospitality, the practice has expanded into retail; rental housing, even; and other sectors, like when you buy groceries online.

Surveillance pricing is the practice of monitoring individual behaviour to figure out how much you're willing to spend, and then they charge you more based on what they think you're willing to spend. It gives companies the power to charge you more for any reason they want. They can do it because they think you can afford it. They can do it because they know you're desperate for the product. They can do it because they think you're distracted. Or they even know when it's payday based on your on your buying habits.

Speaker, we're asking this government to take on these large corporations that charge predatory pricing. I know the government side said *Godspeed* to the Westons, but I want to point out that over a million people in this province visited a food bank last year. There were over eight million, almost nine million, visits to a food bank from people in this province. It is the highest that it has ever been in Ontario. And the government has an opportunity today—instead of buying a \$30-million luxury jet for the Premier's own use and the government side standing up and defending that, they could pass this motion today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further debate?

Mr. Chris Glover: A couple of weeks ago, I'm standing with a friend, and we're going to the same destination. It's a fairly long trip, so we both order an Uber. It's the same starting point, same destination, same time. Mine comes up to \$38. Hers comes up at \$54. That's surveillance pricing. That's what this bill is that we're talking about today with the NDP.

What we're trying to do is put a ban on surveillance pricing, because we are all being gouged. We're already being gouged when we're trying to buy flights online or when we're organizing tours online. When we're trying to order groceries online, we could already be facing surveillance pricing. This has to stop. It's grossly unfair that people are paying different prices for the same product.

What is proposed is that even when you go into the store—and you may notice that when you go to Walmart there's no price tags on things anymore. You have to go over and take the QR code or the bar code and take it and put it in the machine. And this is what this government is

supporting. This government has said that they are going to support surveillance pricing.

These companies are buying our data. They're looking at where we are, who we are, what we're buying, what we've bought and then they're gouging us. Only the NDP government in Manitoba—it's the only government who stood up for consumers across Canada and said that we will bring an end to surveillance pricing. We want to do it here in Ontario as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further debate?

Ms. Jessica Bell: Today we are debating a motion to ban companies from predatory pricing. This is when companies surveil customers so that they can charge different prices to different people to squeeze the most amount of money from us when we buy products or services: flights, Uber, hotels, meat, eggs, milk, baby formula, rent, bank fees.

It's actually happening to us already. Recently, myself and two other individuals went into the back. We each looked for a flight to the same destination at the same time, and we each got different prices.

It is happening to us whether we like it or not, and what is most concerning is that companies are deciding what price we can afford by surveilling us, by buying data about us, by tracking what we buy and what we search for, by using our computer or phone's location to assess our income or wealth. This invasive surveillance sinks to a whole new level of creepy when it's applied to rent and groceries during an affordability crisis—a whole new level of creepy.

I hear the argument from the other side, "You know, we don't get to control prices; it's about the war and oil and climate change impacting food production," but guess what? It's also about profit. I just took a look at how much Loblaws made in profit last year in 2025, and it was \$2.7 billion. That is our money.

Premier—the man of the private jet—you get to make a choice. You get to decide which side are you on. Are you on Galen Weston's side, or are you on the side of Galen Weston's customers? Make your choice.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further debate?

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Families in St. Catharines are already financially stretched to the limit. In just five years, the cost of basic groceries has skyrocketed 30%, forcing people to not only pay more for the same goods, but they're forced to cut back on necessities.

Instead of relief measures we are facing a new unfair threat, surveillance pricing. Let's call it what it is: corporations tracking your personal data, your browsing habits, your location, even your purchase history to figure out exactly how much you're willing to pay and then charging you more because of it. That means two people can stand side by side buying the exact same product and pay different prices, all because a corporation wants to squeeze a couple of extra bucks out of our seniors on a pension, a single parent or a family working three jobs just to get by.

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At a time when food bank use in St. Catharines has risen 148% since 2022, this government is doing absolutely nothing. Manitoba is leading by example, protecting consumers and banning these predatory practices. Ontario deserves the same leadership.

Speaker, people's private information should not be used against them in a checkout line. The Ontario NDP is choosing policy that protects people's hard-earned money. We urge this government to do the same and support this motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further debate?

MPP Wayne Gates: What we're talking about today is the CEOs are getting richer and we're getting poorer. Prices are up 30%. The Westons are making more money today than at any time in their history. A million people are using food banks—25% of them are doing it after they work full-time jobs all week, and they've got to go to a food bank.

And what did this government do? They went out and spent \$30 million on a plane. And then what happened the next day? They got caught. They said, "Oh, you know what we've got to do here? We got to hide this. Put that plane away somewhere." That's what they did.

I'm going to tell you a story. Last night, I was watching all the hockey games and the baseball on last night—sportsman's heaven last night. I ordered a pizza with a friend. The friend ordered the pizza from the exact same place at the exact same time. My pizza was \$31; that person's was \$34. That's what they're doing with surveillance pricing. It's wrong and it's got to be stopped.

That Premier said that if he caught anybody price gouging, he would be on him like an 800-pound gorilla. Well, he better find the 800-pound gorilla because it's happening every day in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further debate?

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Toronto Centre is a riding of extreme wealth and heartbreaking poverty. It is the child poverty capital of Ontario, and this has not changed under 23 years of both consecutive Liberal and Conservative governments.

Food insecurity is a daily struggle for many of my constituents, and yours as well. In 2025, Toronto food banks logged over 4.1 million visits—a 340% increase since 2019. This government has overseen the largest, massive increase in food bank use and has done nothing to stop it.

Our NDP motion today is an opportunity to stop food insecurity from worsening. This government needs to ban surveillance pricing now to ensure consumer fairness. What we are seeing is that this government is not doing anything to stop big tech corporations from using AI-facilitated algorithms, as well as from taking personal data to fix the prices to charge two separate prices to different consumers.

Constituents—yours and mine, Speaker—are struggling and being squeezed at the checkout counter. They can't simply take it anymore. Today, this government has

an opportunity to adopt a motion that will stop that. If you can adopt an NDP motion to stop the prices above the face value of tickets and the predatory pricing there, this is another opportunity for you to do that today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further debate?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Here we go again. Today, we've tabled a bill to ban surveillance pricing, and this government is voting "no." Yet again, this government is taking the side of greedy, billionaire grocery corporations to let them spy on people so they can rip them off even more.

But this government is always about, "Do as I say, not as I do." They won't protect your data, but they will hide theirs. They won't take on airline industries who are using surveillance and surge pricing to jack up rates on plane tickets, so they will buy their own private plane. But letting grocery corporations spy to rip people off—where does it end?

People are being charged more than others for the exact same thing, and only this government and their billionaire grocery buddies think it's fair. When you go online, you assume you're seeing the same price as everyone else, but chances are, you're not. It's not because of supply and demand or competition, it's because billionaire corporations are using our personal data against us.

They're using it to charge us the highest amount they think we will pay based on things like our browsing history, past credit card purchases, even the time of day. Apps are spying on your daily activity to predict things like whether you're about to have a baby or move across town, and they're always ready to gouge you. They can even tie prices to your neighbourhood, credit score, even the phone in your hand. They're not looking at what we buy; they're looking at who they think we are and what we're doing.

How can this government protect companies that are charging some people more than others for the exact same thing? When this government defends these companies and they're spying to drive up costs on people, they're making a choice about who matters. It's not the people of Ontario; it's their billionaire friends. By voting against our motion to ban surveillance pricing, this government is giving the green light for companies to gouge us. And you can't shop around; there's nowhere to hide when big tech is involved. This is not a free market; it's a rigged market.

We're tired of this government protecting mega-corporations and billionaires over us. This isn't about left and right; it's about right and wrong. It's about fairness and it's about time. It's time for this government to choose people over billionaires who are using technology to spy, manipulate, rig the market and rip us off. It's got to stop. It's time to stand up for people, support our bill and ban surveillance pricing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further debate?

MPP Jamie West: I want to thank the leader of the official opposition for bringing forth this motion on predatory surveillance pricing. Basically, what happens is, they

watch your purchasing patterns, and they jack your prices up.

I wanted to tell you about a story that happened to me recently. Josh and Coop from Pure Country do Camping for Cans to raise food for the Sudbury Food Bank. On the way there, I was picking up some cans from the grocery store, but because Josh and Coop also do one at Christmas-time for the Infant Food Bank, I decided to get some infant formula. It's been a long time since I've purchased formula. It's 50 bucks a can. I looked up the price of this, and I found out that in 2018, when the Premier was elected—it has since then risen over 81% for infant formula. The Premier talks about being an 800-pound gorilla and jumping all over this stuff, but he will not jump on the fact that grocery stores are gouging you.

And now, with surveillance pricing and predatory pricing, if you're a parent who's buying infant formula every week for your child, it won't be 50 bucks, like it was for me; it'll be \$60 or \$70. How much will you pay for your kids, especially formula? If your child is lactose intolerant, it's gone up 125%.

The Premier has to jump on this like a 900-pound gorilla, or he's got to admit that he cares more about wealthy grocers than he does about the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further debate? Further debate?

I go to the Leader of the Opposition for the right of reply.

Ms. Marit Stiles: First, I want to thank again the members of the official opposition caucus here for speaking in support of this motion and for making such great points.

I heard the Minister of Finance say that affordability is not a slogan to this government; it's a responsibility. Well, he's half-right about that: Affordability is their responsibility, but it is one that they have failed miserably on by every metric.

I can't believe that the people of Ontario, who are doing everything in their power just to get by, have to listen to the members opposite ignore the fact that life in this province is completely unaffordable for everyday people. It is astonishing. They say they listen to the people, but they never stop patting themselves on the back long enough to actually hear what Ontarians are trying to tell them. People can't pay for their groceries or fill up the tank with talking points. They need a government to act, and they need to know that the government understands the situation they are in today.

To the members opposite: You have all said that you heard loud and clear from the people of Ontario about the Premier's private jet purchase. Well, all we've heard today is how sometimes governments make mistakes. But it's the response that matters. Well, the people of Ontario are waiting to see how you respond today. They know that the cost of living has spiralled out of control. They feel it every single time they go to pay for their basic needs.

Thousands of them have reached out to each and every one of the MPPs in the government caucus. They've reached out to your offices. They're saying that they want to be protected from this kind of predatory surveillance

pricing. People know it's wrong that corporations can use their own personal data to charge them more.

1500

The choice on who to side with, Speaker, lies solely with each one of those members. They can fall in line, protect the king, continue allowing these corporations to take more and more hard-earned money out of their pockets and food off their tables, or they can side with their constituents—the hard-working people of this province, the parents who are trying to feed their kids, the students who are trying to keep a roof over their head while they get an education. These are the people that we are supposed to stand for. These are the people we're supposed to stand up for in this House, not the corporations who see all those hard-working people simply as dollar signs.

The members opposite, you have heard what your constituents need. You've heard it loud and clear. They are begging you for a lifeline—begging you. They saw the Premier reverse course and make an emergency landing on that terrible decision to purchase a private luxury jet, and then they heard him today defend that decision again—I mean, to stand there in Ottawa and have the nerve to defend that decision again, to say people just don't understand how hard it is for the Premier of this province. They just don't get how hard it is for the Premier.

In fact, he said—I have to say this. He said, “You can't get a charter to go up to northern Ontario.” My goodness, where has this man been? I'll tell you what else you can't do: You can't land a jet in most parts of northern Ontario on gravel runways. That's the thing.

So nobody in northern Ontario is buying this line that that's why this Premier needed that luxury jet. It just tells people, again, why he is so out of touch. They knew it, but it just reinforces that.

I'm telling you right now, if you don't support this motion, you're sending a big signal to the people of this province, in every corner of this province, that once again this government is completely out the touch.

Do the right thing. Stand up for the people. Stop the price gouging. Stand up to the big grocery giants and the tech bros. Let's do it.

Thank you very much, Speaker. Please support this motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): MPP Stiles has moved opposition day motion number 3. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

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

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

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1503 to 1513.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): MPP Stiles has moved opposition day motion number 3.

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

Ayes

Bell, Jessica
Blais, Stephen
Bourgouin, Guy

Gélinas, France
Gilmour, Alexa
Glover, Chris

Schreiner, Mike
Shaw, Sandy
Smyth, Stephanie

Bowman, Stephanie
Burch, Jeff
Cerjanec, Rob
Clancy, Aislinn
Fairclough, Lee
Fife, Catherine
Fraser, John
French, Jennifer K.
Gates, Wayne

Gretzky, Lisa
Hsu, Ted
Kernaghan, Terence
Lennox, Robin
McKenney, Catherine
McMahon, Mary-Margaret
Pasma, Chandra
Rakocevic, Tom
Sattler, Peggy

Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Stiles, Marit
Tabuns, Peter
Vanthof, John
Vaugeois, Lise
Watt, Tyler
West, Jamie
Wong-Tam, Kristyn

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

Nays

Allsopp, Tyler
Anand, Deepak
Babikian, Aris
Bailey, Robert
Bethlenfalvy, Peter
Bouma, Will
Calandra, Paul
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon
Clark, Steve
Coe, Lorne
Cooper, Michelle
Crawford, Stephen
Cuzzetto, Rudy
Denault, Billy
Dixon, Jess
Dowie, Andrew
Firin, Mohamed
Flack, Rob
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn
Grewal, Hardeep Singh

Gualtieri, Silvia
Hamid, Zee
Hardeman, Ernie
Harris, Mike
Holland, Kevin
Jordan, John
Kanapathi, Logan
Kerzner, Michael S.
Khanjin, Andrea
Kusendova-Bashta, Natalia
Leardi, Anthony
Lecce, Stephen
McCarthy, Todd J.
McGregor, Graham
Mulroney, Caroline
Oosterhoff, Sam
Pang, Billy
Parsa, Michael
Piccini, David
Pierre, Natalie

Pinsonneault, Steve
Pirie, George
Racinsky, Joseph
Rae, Matthew
Rickford, Greg
Riddell, Brian
Rosenberg, Bill
Sabawy, Sheref
Sandhu, Amarjot
Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Saunderson, Brian
Smith, Dave
Smith, David
Smith, Graydon
Smith, Laura
Thompson, Lisa M.
Tibollo, Michael A.
Vickers, Paul

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day): The ayes are 35; the nays are 58.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negated.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Mr. Steve Clark: I move that, pursuant to standing order 50 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 97, An Act to implement Budget measures, to enact, amend or repeal various statutes and to revoke various regulations; Bill 98, An Act to enact the Fare Alignment and Seamless Transit Act, 2026 and to amend various Acts; and Bill 101, An Act to amend various Acts in respect of education and child care;

That the order of the House dated April 2, 2026, referring Bill 97 to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs be discharged, and the Bill be ordered for third reading; and

That the Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy be authorized to meet for public hearings on Bill 98 on Monday, May 4, 2026, from 9:00

a.m. until 10:15 a.m. and from 1:00 p.m. until 6:00 p.m.; and—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I ask the government House leader to hold.

I will ask the room to be quiet. Please have order while we listen to this motion.

Hon. Steve Clark: That the deadline for requests to appear for hearings on Bill 98 be Thursday, April 23, 2026, at 4 p.m.; and

That the Clerk of the Committee shall provide a list of all interested presenters to each member of the subcommittee on committee business and their designate as soon as possible following the deadline for requests to appear; and

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That if all requests to appear cannot be accommodated, each member of the subcommittee or their designate may provide the Clerk of the Committee with a prioritized list of presenters to be scheduled, chosen from the list of all interested presenters for those respective hearings by 2 p.m. on Friday, April 24, 2026; and

That the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing be invited to appear as the sponsor of Bill 98 at 9 a.m. on Monday, May 4, 2026, and that the minister shall have 20 minutes to make an opening statement, followed by 39 minutes of questions and answers divided into two rounds of 6.5 minutes for the government members, two rounds of 6.5 minutes for the official opposition members and two rounds of 6.5 minutes for the third party; and

That witnesses shall be scheduled in groups of three for each one-hour time slot, with each presenter allotted seven minutes to make an opening statement followed by 39 minutes of questioning for all three witnesses, divided into two rounds of 6.5 minutes for the government members, two rounds of 6.5 minutes for the official opposition members and two rounds of 6.5 minutes for the third party; and

That the deadline for written submissions on Bill 98 be 6 p.m. on Monday, May 4, 2026; and

That the deadline for filing amendments to Bill 98 be 7 p.m. on Monday, May 4, 2026; and

That the committee meet for clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 98 on Thursday, May 7, 2026, from 9 a.m. until 10:15 a.m.; and from 1 p.m. until 6 p.m.; and from 7 p.m. until midnight; and

That on Thursday, May 7, 2026, at 5 p.m., those amendments to Bill 98 which have not yet been moved shall be deemed to have been moved, and the Chair of the committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments thereto; and

At this time, the Chair shall allow one waiting period, if requested by a member of the committee, pursuant to standing order 131(a); and

That the committee shall report Bill 98 to the House no later than Monday, May 11, 2026, and if the committee fails to report the bill on that day, the bill shall be deemed

passed by the committee and shall be deemed reported to and received by the House; and

That upon receiving the report of the Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy on Bill 98, the Speaker shall put the question for adoption of the report forthwith; and

That upon adoption of the report, Bill 98 shall be ordered for third reading, which order may be called the same day; and

That the Standing Committee on Social Policy be authorized to meet for public hearings on Bill 101 on Monday, April 27, 2026, from 10 a.m. until 12 noon and from 1 p.m. until 5 p.m.; and

That the deadline for requests to appear for hearings on Bill 101 be Wednesday, April 22, 2026, at 4 p.m.; and

That the Clerk of the Committee shall provide a list of all interested presenters to each member of the subcommittee on committee business and their designate as soon as possible following the deadline for requests to appear; and

That if all requests to appear cannot be accommodated, each member of the subcommittee or their designate may provide the Clerk of the Committee with a prioritized list of presenters to be scheduled, chosen from the list of all interested presenters for those respective hearings by 2 p.m. on Thursday, April 23, 2026; and

That the Minister of Education be invited to appear as the sponsor of Bill 101 at 10 a.m. on Monday, April 27, 2026, and that the minister shall have 20 minutes to make an opening statement followed by 39 minutes of questions and answers divided into two rounds of 5.5 minutes for the government members, two rounds of 5.5 minutes for the official opposition members, two rounds of 5.5 minutes for the third party and two rounds of three minutes for the independent member of the committee; and

That witnesses shall be scheduled in groups of three for each one-hour time slot, with each presenter allotted seven minutes to make an opening statement, followed by 39 minutes of questions and answers divided into two rounds of 5.5 minutes for the government members, two rounds of 5.5 minutes for the official opposition members, two rounds of 5.5 minutes for the third party and two rounds of three minutes for the independent member of the committee; and

That the deadline for written submissions on Bill 101 be 6 p.m. on Monday, April 27, 2026; and

That the deadline for filing amendments to Bill 101 be 12 noon on Tuesday, April 28, 2026; and

That the committee meet for clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 101 on Thursday, April 30, 2026, from 10 a.m. until 12 noon; and from 1 p.m. until 6 p.m.; and from 7 p.m. until midnight; and

That on Thursday, April 30, 2026, at 4 p.m., those amendments to Bill 101 which have not yet been moved shall be deemed to have been moved, and the Chair of the committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments thereto; and

At this time, the Chair shall allow one waiting period, if requested by a member of the committee, pursuant to standing order 131(a); and

That the committee shall report Bill 101 to the House no later than Monday, May 4, 2026, and if the committee fails to report the bill on that day, the bill shall be deemed passed by the committee and shall be deemed reported to and received by the House; and

That upon receiving the report of the Standing Committee on Social Policy on Bill 101, the Speaker shall put the question for adoption of the report forthwith; and

That upon adoption of the report, Bill 101 shall be ordered for third reading, which order may be called the same day.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): The government House leader has moved government notice of motion number 16.

I return to the member to start debate.

Hon. Steve Clark: As I've said in the past, standing order 50 is a procedural tool that is available to ensure legislation doesn't get bogged down. I wanted to let our government bills run naturally through the Legislature. I had indicated to all the opposition House leaders that that was our desire. I have been true to that promise. I haven't shortened debate using time allocation during this session. Second reading has been, on all of our bills, to nine hours.

My plan continues to have third reading of bills be six hours, as has been past practice, and can be verified, Speaker, through you to the table. I've indicated, too, committee is possible for all of the government bills. I've been very collaborative. I've been very open with the opposition, the third party and the independents, sharing our schedule, accommodating speakers, working through the procedure.

I had a letter from the Leader of the Opposition. To be honest, the gallery had it before I had it, but no matter.

I've tabled this motion because we have some uncertainty. We've got some threats. Our budget is a very important document. It's a very important document for every government; governments rise and fall on a budget motion. And I wanted to make sure, for clarity, that all three bills will continue to move through this House naturally through third reading.

We've committed, as I promised the opposition, that Bill 98 and Bill 101 will go to committee. The budget is the most consulted document that any government has. Our budget has gone through a host of pre-budget consultations—about 35 pre-budget meetings, where we heard first-hand from approximately 900 Ontarians.

We also accepted responses from the public through an online portal, and some 12,400 individuals actually completed the online survey to share their recommendations. We received over 1,000 written submissions from Ontarians about our budget. And, Speaker, I want to be very clear: I'm not quoting our pre-budget consultations that the all-party Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs held across the province; these are specifically pre-budget meetings that the parliamentary assistants

and the minister dealt with, so it was very much a consultative document.

1530

Bill 97 is going to protect and grow our province. It's going to attract jobs, attract investments, and it's got some very important clauses in it. The minister has talked in this House many times about his announcement regarding the HST on new home purchases—I think every member on the government benches has talked about that measure. I know I've also talked about the small business corporate income tax cut by 30%. I was able to have a number of small businesses and businesses that we support through the ministry through the Starter Company Program very pleased with the measures that were in the budget, as well as the WSIB coverage to our front-line workers—very, very important.

I happen to think one of the great pieces of our budget is the four-year investment to continue our primary care action plan to \$3.4 billion by 2029. I know people are looking forward to the announcements for some primary care hubs which have been applied for both in Brockville and in Kemptville in my riding, the Ontario Autism Program increases in the budget by nearly \$1 billion annually.

So those measures are very, very important, especially the HST. I can't go back to my constit office without having someone asking me how fast we can get the budget passed. So, again, with certainty—this motion provides certainty for that budget.

Bill 98 builds on our progress we've made to reduce delays in getting shovels in the ground faster, helping families find a home and helping us build a stronger, more self-reliant Ontario.

In Bill 98, obviously, I'm excited about the clear regulatory framework for communal water and waste water systems that include very strong oversight, huge safeguards and provincial backstops to ensure that those systems are safe, financially stable and properly maintained.

Bill 101, as the minister has said in the House many times, puts students first. It refocuses our education system on students, teachers and parents and ensures that every dollar spent on education is going where it belongs: in classrooms.

So, again, those three bills will move naturally through the House at third reading. Bill 98 and Bill 101 will go to committee. I've given the reasons why the budget, which is so important for this government, needs to move forward.

Again, if you go back and look at some of the speeches from all members—in this case, I won't just target the opposition parties. But many of the times, they railed against me stopping debate at six and a half hours, and I've given the House leaders the assurance that I'm not going to do that. They asked for bills to go to committee, and the majority of bills, except for one, will, again, move forward as I promised.

Again, I look forward to continued co-operation with the opposition, the third party and the independents, and

I'll just leave it at that. I look forward to any amendments that might be put forward and the debate for this afternoon. Thanks for giving me this opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Deepak Anand): Further debate?

MPP Alexa Gilmour: As always, it's an honour to rise on behalf of the people of Parkdale–High Park. I want to thank my colleague across the way for this motion.

This is a motion to time-allocate a number of important bills: first, Bill 97, the Plan to Protect Ontario Act—that's the budget, but, of course, there are some things tucked into this budget, including a jet, apparently, that we didn't know about until Friday; Bill 101, the Putting Student Achievement First Act; and Bill 98, the Building Homes and Improving Transportation Infrastructure Act.

Speaker, the people of Ontario believe in a democracy. That's why they go to the polls whenever they are called, and they vote having discerned who they feel should represent them in the House. Those individuals—I don't need to tell you too much; you're here—come to this House, and they stand on their feet to speak to the bills that will eventually become law, that will eventually change the province, for good or for ill.

When we time-allocate a motion like the government is proposing, we curtail that democratic process and we do not give enough time for the bill to spend in committee being debated properly. The member across the way has said that he's done this in good faith, but he has given us just a matter of days—days—to invite people to come to the committees to speak to these bills, to improve them.

Why on earth would this government not want the best minds working on this together? It simply astounds me, because either there's some sort of inability to comprehend the process and how good it can be or an arrogance that believes it doesn't need to, that its minds have already been made up, that it is the best of the best. The voting public has determined that there need to be more robust protections and more robust conversations, and this government continues to ignore that.

What's perhaps the most troubling is, not only in this particular case are we shortening the debate on these three bills, but on one of these bills, we're changing the future of our province forever—forever, Speaker. In refusing to take the budget bill through its full process, time-allocating it, ripping it out of committee and putting it back onto this floor, this government has decided that the freedom of information act, which has been a staple of democracy, the ability to see what goes on behind the closed doors in a transparent, accountable way—this government is suggesting that we should vote and, because they have a majority, pass that change in the next few days without robust discussions, without the opportunity for people of Ontario to really fully understand how fundamentally this changes our democracy.

Speaker, we know that when decisions are made behind closed doors, it leads to government corruption. When decisions are made with only one or two minds, it leads to decisions that often privilege those individuals and not the common good, not the rest of us. For this bill to not go to

committee with such a fundamental change to our democratic system is egregious. Frankly, it is arrogant and it is clearly not about the best interest of the public.

There must be something terribly upsetting in the Premier's cellphone records for him to go to this length, to face the wrath of the public, because the wrath of the public will be there once they understand how fundamentally shifted and eroded our democracy is. The people will object.

So clearly, there must be something so secretive that the Premier is willing to go the lengths of changing our democracy not just for this government—this Premier and these ministers will be able to hide behind closed doors without decisions being aired and accountable—but for all Premiers going forward. This means no matter which political party you vote for, you will no longer be able to know with certainty where your taxpayer dollars went, who got the discussion, how that discussion and decision came about.

Speaker, this is a moment in time where everything shifts. We know it, here in the opposition. The government members know it. They are willing to roll the dice that protecting the few is worth losing democracy over. And quite frankly, Speaker, the people of Ontario will rise up and say no.

1540

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Deepak Anand): Further debate?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I'm rising today to speak on another time allocation motion from this government, which the government uses to shut down the voices of the public in Ontario, ensuring that people are not able to come and participate in the legislative process where they normally would in committee and that MPPs are not able to fully bring the voices of our constituents to debate.

And what we're seeing with this motion, Speaker, is that once again, the government isn't allowing their budget to go to committee. No citizen of Ontario is going to have the opportunity to come and share what their perspectives are on what's in the government's budget. They haven't allowed that to happen for a single budget in this Parliament, and even for the last few in the last Parliament, which really speaks to a government that trusts that its ideas are what reflect the needs of the people of Ontario.

It really shows that the government doesn't care—that they hold the people of Ontario in contempt. They do not care what we think. They do not care what we have to say. They do not care what we need. And I think that there's nothing more evident about that, Speaker, than the fact that this is a budget that doesn't even say the words “groceries” or “rent,” but somehow, it did manage to include \$30 million for a private jet which nobody in Ontario was asking for. But millions are asking for help with groceries, with rent, with the costs of living, with health care, with education, with long-term care and so much more.

The government also managed to shoehorn into that budget changes to freedom-of-information laws. So when the government buys a jet in the future, we might not even know that they did it. We certainly won't know who the

Premier was texting about it or who the Premier was taking phone calls about before he decides to buy a jet.

But I want to talk about Bill 101, the Minister of Education's education bill, which is also in this time allocation motion and is going to have a single day of committee hearings. And so once the minister has had his opportunity to speak once again—because we've already heard from the minister in the House last week, Speaker. But once the minister gets his second kick at the can, there will be only five hours for students, parents, teachers, education workers, principals and community members to come and share their perspectives on this bill, which will have a massive impact on our children's education.

You know, our kids are in schools that are underfunded, in classes that are too large, without mental health and special education supports, with a violence problem—student transportation that can't be counted on to get them to and from school and crumbling school buildings. This minister thought that the appropriate response for that was not to fund our schools but to grab more power for himself.

He spent his speech in the Legislature last week telling us all about how he's doing this because this is what parents, teachers, education workers and community members are asking him for. He has said it again and again: People are asking him for the changes in this bill. So why does he not think that people will come to committee and tell him that they want these changes? Why wouldn't he want to give several days of committee hearings for people to come and share that?

You know, in five hours, the way that the committee is set up, there will be five panels. Each one will get three individuals or organizations, so in the course of that one day, we'll get to hear from 15 people about what this bill will mean for our children's education. That's 15. So if the minister truly has people knocking down his door to ask for these changes, if he's receiving an overwhelming response, then why does he not want to allow multiple days of committee hearings for people to come and talk about how great his changes are for education and how they are going to transform the lives of our children?

The only conclusion to be drawn, Speaker, is that the Minister of Education is afraid. He's scared about what parents, he's scared about what educators, he's scared about what community members are actually going to come and tell him.

Because when you look at the text of this bill, it's pretty clear the minister is afraid. It says "liability" 43 times. A minister who thinks he has the right approach does not need to talk about liability for 57 clauses. He does not need to shut down public scrutiny in committee. This clearly demonstrates that the Minister of Education is scared to hear from the people that he is supposed to be representing in this role, the people that he is supposed to be fighting for.

I will say to the government members, just because the Minister of Education is a scaredy cat doesn't mean that you need to be. You can vote against this bill. You can allow your constituents to come and talk. You can allow parents from your communities to come and share what

this bill will mean for them. You can allow teachers and education workers and administrators to share their perspectives.

Don't be like the Minister of Education; be brave. Support democracy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further debate?

MPP Lisa Gretzky: I am pleased to rise to speak to the motion that was put before us from the government House leader. Maybe "pleased" is not the correct choice of words, because what we're seeing is the government, once again, moving time allocation.

For the folks that don't know what time allocation is, that's a tool the government uses in order to shut down debate and shut out the voices of not only opposition member MPPs, but our constituents that we represent and, frankly, the constituents that the government side represents.

But this isn't just them shutting down debate on one bill. Today, they're shutting down debate on three separate bills, one of the bills being around housing and transit. The other one is around the education system and the terrible changes that this government is doing to the public education system. It's very clear they just do not support publicly funded education. That's become very clear through this. But they don't like dissenting voices. They don't like to be challenged for their decisions, and so they're going to attack others that are in decision-making positions.

But I think the most egregious is the fact that they are shutting down the debate. In this motion before us, they are also eliminating committee meetings for the budget bill. What this government is saying, as they have often said, is, "We know best. We're going to do whatever we want, whenever we want, as long as the taxpayer is footing the bill, and we don't want to hear about it. We don't want to hear from constituents. We don't want to hear from opposition MPPs."

Speaker, they have moved a motion to not only shut down debate on the budget, but to not do committee meetings—so no public hearings—which always begs the question: Why? What are they hiding? Because if you bring a bill forward and you're proud of that bill, you're going to want to talk about it more. You're going to want to talk about it often. You're going to want to talk to lots of people out there about it. You're going to want to hear from people because this government loves to talk about how great they are. So if the budget bill, or any of the three bills that they're time allocating today were so spectacular, why don't you want to hear from your constituents? Why wouldn't you want to hear from people, from the public, how great it is?

The fact of the matter is, there's very little for this government to be proud of within these three bills, but specifically the budget bill.

Speaker, I talked earlier about the number of people—over a million people last year visited food banks in this province, which was an increase year over year over year since this government formed government eight years ago. There were nearly nine million visits to food banks, yet

there is nothing in the budget bill that is going to address that.

I talked about housing—community housing, non-profit housing—in Windsor-Essex, and the fact that we have a non-profit housing agency that is going to shut down 52 homes—sell 52 affordable housing units—just to be able to fund the maintenance and upkeep to the other units they have. There is nothing in this bill that is going to help keep those houses affordable.

But what is in the bill is the changes to the freedom of information act. Now, you see, the government side got caught red-handed when it came to the greenbelt. The court has ordered the Premier to turn over phone records pertaining to that because this government tries to kind of, you know, snow the people of this province by saying that what we're looking for, what the public is looking for, what the court was saying was something—peoples' personal information. That is not accurate. That is not a fact.

1550

What happened is, the Premier still doesn't want to turn over the records, the government doesn't want to turn over the records, and so they say, "Hey, we're just going to overrule the court by changing the law altogether. That's what we're going to do. We're going to protect ourselves." It's not protect Ontario; it's "protect ourselves." And now with that in the bill and the public backlash, the government is saying, "Woah, woah. We better shut down the debate on this bill altogether, skip committee altogether and try and hide even more."

The Premier bought a luxury jet for his own personal use using taxpayer dollars for nearly \$30 million. Where in the budget was that? Where in the budget? Where at any time did you say to the public, "We're going to buy a jet"?

You see, Speaker, that is the problem with this government. Those are the things they want to hide. For the Premier to come out and say, "Oh, my gosh, I am so hard done by because people got upset"—millions of people are going to food banks in this province. Homelessness is continuing to be on the rise, and the Premier had the audacity, when the public pushed back and were furious about this government spending nearly \$30 million on a private luxury jet for the Premier—when the public did that, the Premier had the audacity to somehow make himself the victim by saying, "Well, there's other Premiers that have planes. Jeez, you know what? I'm the one that—people are most critical of me."

Well, news flash, Premier: If you weren't wasting money on privately owned luxury spas in downtown Toronto, on a fantasy tunnel under the 401 in Toronto, on building some fantasy island that apparently you wanted to land your luxury jet on; if you weren't caught red-handed doing exactly the opposite of what you said, which was trying to sell off the greenbelt; if you weren't caught red-handed over and over again; if you didn't have numerous charges against you in courts and court challenges on unconstitutional bills you bring forward then maybe, just maybe, if you acted with some form of integrity and with the best in mind for the people of this province, then maybe people wouldn't be so darn critical

of you. People aren't buying the "Woe is me, I made a mistake, but look, I'm doing better now" because we've seen it time and time again.

That is exactly what we're seeing in this time allocation motion. That's exactly what we're seeing when the government refuses to do committee hearings for the budget bill that has the protections for the government when it comes to freedom-of-information requests. We see a self-serving government led by a self-serving Premier doing very, very little—if any at all—to actually put the people in this province first.

I would be remiss if I didn't, because I do have northern colleagues here—the Premier is so wrapped up in himself and how to get around on a private jet that he's not addressing the fact that people are still continuing to die on northern highways. He's not addressing the crisis that we have in our health care sector and the fact that people can't access health care in a timely manner. He's not addressing the housing crisis or the homelessness crisis. He's not investing in better access to mental health and addiction support, and he sure as heck is not making it so that people do not have to rely on food banks. They just voted down our NDP motion to end predatory pricing and surveillance pricing at grocery stores, with the Premier saying, "God bless Galen Weston."

So, Speaker, we can't support what this government is doing. And the one thing that I will say to the public is, when the Premier shows you who he is, believe him. He has a history of this behaviour.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further debate?

MPP Stephanie Smyth: I think it's just starting to sink in to me, some 14 months later, what this government is capable of. I'm speaking about the motion to bypass the hearings on the budget and, within that—buried within there, curiously, in section 7—the controversial freedom-of-information restrictions that it has proposed, which are so deeply troubling.

And if we didn't have enough evidence of that before with the greenbelt—now with the airplane—I don't know what more it will take for everybody to realize how dangerous this is. I think we have to say that while the Premier and this government might think nobody is paying attention to the FOI situation, you probably pay attention to a lot of polls out there, and there are recent polls that show people are very aware of the freedom-of-information restrictions being proposed, and very concerned about it as well.

So maybe the gravy train—or the gravy jet or the gravy plane—might have been a little distraction for a minute, but it's coming right back into everybody's mind, front and centre now, with this movement to stop any debate or any committee on this or any more examination of just what this government is trying to do.

Let's not forget that the Premier was ordered by the courts to produce his cellphone records, and this is showing now the measures that this government and this Premier will go to to prevent that from happening. How desperate are they to keep this information from the

public? To me, this is looking more and more like MAGA north.

Today, he's blaming the media for the coverage on the jet; blaming the media for how they're displaying or portraying him; for suddenly dropping on us, on a Friday—probably knowing the Premier wouldn't be here on this Monday—that they'd purchased this over \$29-million jet without any public knowledge, just saying, “This is the way we're going to do it. We're not going to have any debate about it.” And then he stands up and says, “Well, folks, I guess you're mad at me for this, and I listened to you.” It took some pretty nasty heat for this Premier and this government to back down on the purchasing of that jet. He can justify it all he wants, saying that he needed this, that this was integral for getting around the province, but how tone deaf?

But the point is, going back to the FOI: Who knows what else we'll be missing? Who knows who voted in cabinet to support this motion to buy this jet? Who knows what else was going on that we'll never know, because of this government trying to hide absolutely everything they do of any consequence from the public?

Before entering public life, I spent most of my career as a journalist, where I learned that access to information is not an inconvenience; it's not red tape; it is the foundation of accountability in democracy. And here they're going to this extra step now to make it even that much more impossible for us to find out exactly what decisions have been made, how they've been made, why they've been made and who benefits from how they were made.

Is this their priority? With everything else that's falling down or going sideways in this province, from education to health care, homelessness and addiction, this is the priority of this government, to make sure that we don't find out how the decisions they make are made? And not just going forward, but going back in time: That's what's so alarming as well, is this schedule, the FOI schedule, the creation of a blanket exemption. Everybody has to remember this at home: This government is trying to have a blanket exemption from freedom of information for all records in the custody or control of ministers and their offices. So it's not limited or carefully tailored, but it applies broadly—remember—to ministers, parliamentary assistants, political staff. And even more concerning is that the exemption is retroactive. Again, that means that the records created before the bill passes could suddenly be placed beyond reach. And that is extinguishing existing rights and validating decisions that have already granted access, which is not modernization, they say, but rewriting the rules after the fact.

1600

To me it looks like an act of—it is an act of desperation. We are all going to ultimately pay the price with this, for not knowing what our government is doing, why they're doing it and who benefits. That is the bottom line.

So I think all we can say, because we know where this motion is going, is that the truth always comes out.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further debate?

MPP Wayne Gates: It's a real pleasure to rise and talk about the budget and education and lumping three bills together. It makes no sense to me why we have a budget bill that's supposed to be one of the most important bills that we debate every year and now this government is going to time-allocate it.

They're trying to say, “Well, we got to get it through.” I don't know if anybody remembers; this year, we left on December 7 for Christmas break, and we didn't come back until March 23. We'd have no reason to rush through bills if we would have come when we're supposed to come, which is right after Family Day.

The finance minister talked today, and I happened to be here. He talked about the budget, which is fair. And he talked about all the great things the Conservatives are doing around the budget. Speaker, in my community, it's not great. This government's been in power for eight years. And I challenge anybody, other than the elected MPPs that are over there and some of their rich buddies, to tell me they're better off today than they were eight years ago, that their groceries are more affordable—and we heard how they're ripping us off and gouging with our groceries today with our motion—that your housing is better off.

You put a bill in in 2019. It wasn't the Liberals, so you can't blame the Liberals on this one. It came from you guys, from the Conservative government. And what did you do? You took rent control off new builds. And what's happened since then? Rents have gone through the roof. And people say, “You don't know what you're talking about.” Well, I happen to have a daughter that's looking for a place to live. She's got three daughters. And I've been trying to help her to find a place. And I am absolutely amazed at how much it costs to find a place to rent: \$2,500 a month is really kind of where you're at to get a place. In Toronto, it's higher than that. I challenge any of you guys who may have kids or grandkids: Who can afford \$2,500 for rent?

And why did rent go up? It wasn't because of the Liberals. It wasn't because of the NDP—because you guys always say we've got some kind of coalition. I think—when was it? In 1863 or something—you keep talking about the coalition. You continue to do that. It was because your government wanted to make sure your buddies, your wealthy friends, will be able to gouge people for rent.

And how do I know that? I pick up the paper all the time like this. And I read about you guys. That's the type of guy—I like to read about the Liberals and Conservatives. What I read about these guys all the time: They're having dinners for \$1,000. I just saw the other day that you're having a breakfast for \$1,000. What the hell are you serving for breakfast?

But you're taking care of your buddies. You're not taking care of people that are struggling to pay their rent, struggling to buy their first home, whether it's a single mom or a single dad, none of that. So when the minister stands up here today and talks about affordability, it's not true. They're not telling us the truth of what's going on in Ontario. You are not better off.

I have seniors crying in my office, just like everybody else here. I'm sure they get it too—that's if they go to their offices; I don't know. But I know when we go to our office, seniors are coming to our office. They're being renovicted. They can't afford their groceries. They can't afford their medicine. They're breaking down in our office, crying. This is at the end of their lives, when they should be enjoying themselves.

And I can tell you, some of our seniors are living in encampments. Speaker, I don't know you that well, but I can tell you, wherever your community comes—you've got encampments. We've got encampments all over Ontario. When I came here 12 years ago—no such thing. I didn't even know what an encampment was. I knew there was homeless. I knew there was shelters. I'd never heard of an encampment. They're everywhere.

And what we're doing in Niagara Falls—and I disagree with it—they're tearing them down. Well, where are they going? And what started it? I'm telling you, it was this government, because he cared more about making money—making profit—at the expense of people who go to work every day.

People say to me, “Gatesy, what are you talking about?” I could tell you our food banks in Niagara—and I know my colleague here has talked and other ones have talked about food banks across the province of Ontario. A million people go to food banks, and out of that, 25% of them have full-time jobs. The first place they go, instead of going to the bank—or however you get your cheques nowadays—and going out, maybe taking your family for dinner, do you know where they're going? They're going to a food bank because they can't afford their rent, they can't afford their groceries, they can't afford anything in this province anymore. And the minister stands up and says everything's wonderful. It's not wonderful; it's absolutely disgusting.

So what do we do? Thursday, I guess—was it Thursday or Friday of last week?—had this breaking story that I thought, “No, there's no way this is happening,” about how the Premier bought a luxury plane. I went, “That's crazy. What's going on here?” We have all these other challenges, whether it's in education, whether it's in health care—challenges everywhere—and you're worried about yourself with a luxury jet?” It made no sense to me. But as I looked into it, it was true.

So do you know what I did? I got a video—this is a true story—of when he was standing over there kicking the heck out of the Liberals because they had a jet; at one time it was “jet king” or something. And he said, “There's no way I would ever do that. I would never use taxpayers' dollars and spend hundreds of thousands of dollars on a jet. I'm going to go see the people because I'm the Premier of the people.” So I put the video up after he purchased his jet for \$30 million.

Do you know what happened? When they say, “People aren't paying attention. People aren't listening. Your popularity's going down”—I had 1.4 million people view that video, and they were not happy. That's why he changed his mind. He didn't change his mind because, “Well, you know, I'm a good guy. I pay attention.” He changed his

mind because he got caught. There's no doubt about that. Because we've debated the budget, and not one person stood up and said, “Hey”—none of those ministers that signed that piece of paper, because they all agreed. They all went to the cabinet meeting. You probably were there, too; I don't know, Speaker. I'm not going to name your name in front of all these people that are here. But at the end of the day, you signed your names. You approved it. How did you approve it?

I'd like to know the names of every one of the cabinet ministers that agreed to the plane, because it's not just Ford; it's the finance minister who's supposed to be the guy that cares about Ontario. How you could sign that off—and I would like to know when it was signed off. All those things should be done, because this is what they're doing.

So what did they do in the budget? We talked about the plane. I think everybody knows it just wasn't very smart on behalf of the government, but equally not very smart by all the cabinet ministers, that's for sure.

So what did they do? We've got to figure this out. “My cellphone—I've got all kinds of stuff in the cellphone. I can't let people know what's going on with my business buddy and the greenbelt and the Skills Development Fund, so we've got to put it in the budget with the FOIs.” Think about it: in the budget. It has nothing to do with the budget. So we're no longer going to be able to get the freedom of information. There's no press here right now, but they're not going to be able to get it and hold them accountable like they did on the jet, like they did on the greenbelt.

You know what? The greenbelt would never, ever have been exposed if it wasn't for the freedom of information. It would never, ever have been exposed, but it was—the Skills Development Fund. That is going to go down as one of the worst things they've ever done, because you've got to have a democracy; you've got to be able to hold governments accountable.

1610

I want to talk a little bit about education quickly because I don't have a lot of time. I don't know how much time I've got here. But we've got lots of problems with the education. The minister wants more power. Do you know where we found that? In Niagara, where the government is now going to appoint a chair of the region. Not that he's just going to appoint them—we can argue that. We can argue whether that's—

Interjection.

MPP Wayne Gates: How much time are you going to give me, two minutes? I've got 12 minutes left. How can I do it in two minutes? Anyway.

In Niagara, they're going to appoint the chair. They're going to do it in Simcoe. They're going to do it in Durham. They're going to do it all over the province. It's not about what's best for those communities; it's what's best for this government.

And that's what they're doing with education: appointing CEOs. I don't know how much they're going to pay them, but it's going to be a lot of money.

Class sizes—too big. My daughter’s a teacher. Violence in the school, schools are falling apart—you buy a jet for \$30 million.

In Niagara, you’re going to appoint the chair, but you’re also going to give them strong-chair powers. That means he’ll be able to overrule—overrule—elected officials, elected mayors. It’s absolutely ridiculous.

I’ve got one more thing I want to get out quickly. John, I’m going to grab 30 seconds of your time because this is important.

Health care: a major, major issue in Niagara. They’re closing my urgent care centre. They cut the hours down from 24/7, 365 days a year to 10 hours a day. Most of the people—it’s almost 30%—are seniors when they need to go to long-term care.

We had a rally on Saturday in Fort Erie, fighting like hell to keep our urgent care centre open. Most of them—I’d say 75%—were seniors because they’re scared. Some of them don’t drive, some are in their eighties, and this government is saying that we’re going to close them. It makes absolutely no sense.

This government should make sure that urgent care centres, not only in Fort Erie but right across the province of Ontario—because every study says, if you want to fix your ER crisis in our hospital and big hospitals around the province, invest in urgent care centres.

Thank you very much for giving me a few minutes of our time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I will remind all members to address members and ministers by their titles. Thank you.

I recognize the member from Nepean.

MPP Tyler Watt: It’s good to be here once again debating another time allocation motion. I feel like I spend more time debating time allocations than I do actual bills. You would think, with something as important as a budget with another year of record spending in this province, that we would have time to actually consult with stakeholders, people in our riding.

I’ve gotten a ton of emails and I’ve met with constituents about this year’s rinse-and-repeat budget. They have a lot of concerns, particularly the FOI that was slipped in there as if we wouldn’t notice. The Premier likes to say no one’s paying attention. I beg to differ. You talk to people actually on the ground, and you don’t need immense public backlash to know you shouldn’t buy a \$30-million private luxury jet.

I fully support the two bills that are going to committee, but I don’t support this being lumped in with the budget that’s being yanked out of committee and is being time-allocated and thrown back to us here. I remember all I heard from 2018 onwards was, “transparency, accountability, never going to waste a taxpayer dollar.” Well, here we are, eight long years later and we don’t even have the proper time to debate the budget that includes something as significant as changing the FOI laws in this province.

Without the FOIs, we wouldn’t know things about the greenbelt, perhaps this jet, the skills development scandal. And people are not okay with this change, so why is that

in there on top of everything else that we should be debating? Look at how much money we spend on health care, but there’s not enough being invested in access to primary care, in prevention, in investing in community health and home care. We can keep slapping funding increases on hospitals, but if you put a Band-Aid on an open wound, it’s not going to do much.

We should have time to be meeting with stakeholders from health care, from hospitals, from the community, with teachers, with education workers, with people who work in disability services, social workers, construction. There’s so much that should be consulted that just hasn’t been done. It is almost a carbon copy of last year’s budget.

Ask yourself: Is your life any better in this province after eight long years of this government? This budget shows how out of touch they are, and it’s not reflecting the actual needs of Ontarians—certainly not the needs of people in Nepean. Ottawa is barely mentioned in this budget. Promises from the election about uploading the LRT are nowhere to be found in this budget.

That’s where opposition plays an important role. We’re here to keep this government accountable. Our voters, our constituents, expect that the government actually work with their elected officials, regardless of what party that they come from.

So when the government is time-allocating bills and something as important as the budget, it’s a slap in the face to ridings with MPPs that are not from this government. We are there to represent our constituents. We are there to bring their voices to Queen’s Park, and when you time-allocate bill after bill and something as important as this budget, it’s an insult to our constituents.

While we have to listen to the Premier muse about buying the jet, not buying the jet, trying to make up excuses for why prisoners are being lost, we should be focused on asking these tough questions and debating this budget in committee. I don’t understand why this has been lumped together with two others—throw them into committee; yank this one out.

It seems that this government is getting a bit chaotic. It’s okay to pump the brakes on this, actually sit down with members and sit down with stakeholders. Let’s get this budget right.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: It’s always an honour to be able to speak in the House, today on a time allocation motion. I won’t read the motion because that would be the whole seven minutes.

Basically, when a bill comes in the House, it’s like a municipal council: first reading, second reading and then it usually goes to committee and then third reading. Committee is where you get people who know something about the issue, and local people make their presentations.

This time allocation motion has two bills that are going to committee and one that is not. The budget bill is not. That’s not news. That’s not new. This government keeps doing this.

Why it's important: Whenever we ask questions of the government, they always say, "Yes, but the member voted against this." Basically, usually, it's "voted against the budget bill" because there's a lot of bad things contained in Conservative budgets, but in this one especially.

I notice a few people looking. I don't think anyone runs for public office to do bad things, regardless of party. We have philosophical differences. I respect that—I really respect that.

For most people in Ontario, they will likely never directly use the freedom-of-information legislation. The Premier said the only people who care about freedom of information is the opposition and reporters. Well, that's because it's the opposition and reporters' job to hold the government to account. It's obvious that the Premier doesn't like to be held to account.

But I don't believe that the majority of his members agree with that. The majority of the members of this Legislature believe that all governments should be accountable. I firmly believe that.

What really needs to be focused on with the changes in freedom of information is that they're retroactive. Whenever someone changes the rules in the middle of the game or after the game is over—when you buy a car and you agree on a price, and then the dealer comes back a year later and says, "Well, no, we've changed the contract. That no longer works." You would never, ever deal with someone who tries to change the rules after the game. The handbook is pretty important in the game.

1620

So when a government uses their power to change the rules retroactively, that just screams that something is wrong; they're trying to protect something.

In some ways, we know what this government is trying to hide—

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I recognize the Solicitor General on a point of order.

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: Last week in the House, I was imprecise in my language relating to the immediate re-apprehension of those individuals improperly released. I'd like to correct my record without reservation.

I inadvertently referenced the immediate re-apprehension of improperly released inmates rather than clarifying that the local police of jurisdiction were notified immediately.

I apologize unreservedly to the members of this House for providing them with information that was not fully accurate.

Hon. Zee Hamid: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I recognize the associate minister for bail reform and auto theft.

Hon. Zee Hamid: Speaker, last week in the House, I was imprecise in my language relating to the immediate re-apprehension of those individuals improperly released. I would like to correct my record without reservation.

I inadvertently referenced the immediate re-apprehension of improperly released inmates rather than clarifying

that the local police of jurisdiction were notified immediately.

I apologize unreservedly to the members for providing information that was not fully accurate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I return to the member who was speaking.

Mr. John Vanthof: Speaker, there's a really good example of why we need freedom of information—because without freedom of information, some of the information that they just talked about would never, ever have been released.

And now the members here are going to vote to make freedom-of-information laws retroactive. So you know, especially the new members here—please remember that you're voting to hide things from a government that you weren't even involved with. At one point, it will come out, because do you know what? You're not going to be the government forever. Surprise, surprise. I'm telling you that as soon as a government makes laws that are retroactive—because there's not one person in this House who would do business with somebody who changes the rules after. You buy something with a warranty from a hardware store, and the warranty changes after you buy it? No. You would never, ever deal with them again. And here you have a government that is saying, "Do you know what? These are the rules."

This is the freedom of information—the Premier lost the case in court, and do you know what he's doing right now? He's changing the rules after the fact. Why? Because he can. Why? Because he has a majority. All of you members on the government side are all members of that majority, and you will all someday wear it, whether you're here for two years, five years or 30 years.

Somebody asked, "John, why? You're a conservative deep down at heart, John. Why are you on that side?" I am. I'm a PC. I'm a principled conservative. And that's why I would never, ever, ever, ever vote to make freedom-of-information rules retroactive.

You all know it's wrong. You all know, and you're all turning your heads. The jet is going to be the least of your problems. Please, reconsider that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Hsu: Let me start by saying nobody's perfect. Then why does this government think it tabled a perfect budget bill? The government should not act as if it is infallible.

Parliament does not move at the speed of light because it should check for mistakes, because it should try to find improvements. That happens at committee stage. Substantive bills should never skip committee stage.

In our unicameral Parliament, with one of the most powerful executives in any Westminster democracy and no second chamber of sober second thought, it is even more important to respect the committee stage so that the people and their elected representatives have a say on the details of substantive legislation.

We are considering a very substantive bill today: Bill 97, the budget bill. It has 17 schedules. Any vote on this bill is a confidence vote.

Moreover, Bill 97 guts the freedom of information act, shielding the Premier, his ministers, parliamentary assistants and political staff. Preventing this bill from going to committee is ridiculous. It is shielding the PC government's bill from scrutiny—the bill which, in turn, shields the PC government itself from scrutiny.

With the motion we are debating today, the PC government is undermining committees. They are undermining Parliament.

Let's examine the state of committees today. Parliamentary experts, like the late Professor Ned Franks and the former Speaker of the House of Commons Peter Milliken, have written papers about how committees in Canada's Westminster Parliaments should be reformed. It continues to be an area of concern for Canadians who want good government.

Committees are very partisan and they are whipped and they can be shallow. But in the federal Parliament, there is a check: There is the Senate. The Senate, given recent reforms, is providing sober, less-partisan second thoughts. Senate committees tend to have subject matter experts. Witnesses at Senate committees should be prepared to answer difficult questions.

We do not have a second chamber; on the contrary, Ontario's executive is considered one of the most powerful, compared to the Legislature, of all Westminster democracies. Therefore, it is even more important for us to respect the committee process for any substantive bill.

Committees were created in the early 1600s, starting with the Committee of the Whole. The original purpose of committees was to have elected members meet and deliberate out of the reach of the power of the crown. Committees were where representatives of the people could work out of the control of ministers, and even out of the control of the Speaker, who—at that time, in the beginning—was still influenced by the King. That is why today, the Speaker does not preside in the Committee of the Whole. That is why ministers are not committee members. That is why speaking lists for the chamber, controlled by the party leadership, are not used in committees.

When committees were created, they were a way to create a space where the King had less control. Today, of course, the King's reserve power is almost never used, but we do need protection. We do need protection from a Premier who could act like a king. Just think about this, Speaker: personal jet; makes his own law to hide from public scrutiny; hosts \$1,000-a-plate dinners; has a "nation" named after himself. Does that sound like a Premier responsible to the commoners, or a king?

Today, we still need a space—namely, committees—where representatives have some autonomy from ministers, party leaders or any other powerful interest. Parliament exists so that people can govern themselves. Parliament exists to prevent government by only the powerful. Every part of Parliament, like committees, which enable the people to govern themselves and not be controlled by

the powerful—everything that does that should be respected.

So let me give you an example of how fundamental this idea is. Parliament, as we all know, starts with a throne speech; that's the crown telling us MPPs what to do. Then the very next thing that happens is that Bill 1 is tabled. Bill 1 says, in effect, that the throne speech does not constrain what we, the representatives of the people, may do and work on. By tabling Bill 1, that's proof that we can do something that's not in the throne speech.

1630

This practice was codified in 1604—it is such an ancient practice—four centuries ago, and we keep that practice because it is so fundamental. Here is the everlasting democratic principle behind it: Every part of Parliament which enables the people to govern themselves and not be controlled by the powerful should be respected.

That is why I say that substantive bills should never skip committee stage. That is why so many scholars of Parliament and people who have experience with Parliament, like the former Speaker Peter Milliken, are calling for reform of committees in Westminster Parliaments, in Canadian Parliaments—all Canadian Parliaments.

Let's turn now to the specific bills in this motion. Bill 97, the budget bill, is one of them. It is substantive because it's the budget bill. Every vote on this bill is a confidence vote.

Schedule 7 of Bill 97 guts the freedom of information act, or FOI. Now, FOI helped to uncover the greenbelt giveaway of \$8 billion to friends of the government—something which is still under criminal investigation by the RCMP.

FOI helped to uncover how the Solicitor General was told over a year ago about how 150 criminals were released by mistake over the last five years—how that happened under this government. We know the minister, the Solicitor General, stumbled, misspoke, changed his answer when quizzed about it last week, and just now had to correct the record—credit to the Solicitor General. But we wouldn't have been able to do this if not for freedom of information.

Freedom of information helped to uncover how up to \$2 billion was committed to help an Austrian company build a new spa, and how that money was committed to redeveloping Ontario Place and moving the science centre.

Freedom of information helped to uncover how money was distributed from the Skills Development Fund to friends and donors of this government, instead of sticking completely to objective criteria for choosing where the Skills Development Fund money could be best used.

If anything needs detailed clause-by-clause examination and public hearings at committee stage, it is this schedule 7, which, if passed, would gut the freedom of information act.

Speaker, these are all the reasons why this motion must be defeated.

I want to make an appeal to my colleagues across the way: I know that the PC government MPPs believe that their time and work here at Queen's Park are worthwhile

and cannot be replaced by an AI speech writer or a seal trained to clap on command. I know they believe that what they do is worthwhile. So I'm asking them today to affirm that belief and vote against this motion: Allow the budget bill to go to committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further debate?

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: It's an honour to rise, as always, to represent the views of my constituents in Don Valley West. And I really do mean that, Speaker. It is an honour to have this job. I know we all feel that.

But there are also times when you feel like you can't hit any more lows, and then things like this happen. Let's just talk about what has happened in the last couple of days.

We have a government that, during an affordability crisis, during a time when a million people are visiting food banks, during a time when people are worried about being evicted because of high rents and above-guideline increases—we have a government that has yet to table a balanced budget. Eight years, Speaker, they've been in office. They have yet to table a balanced budget.

They are soaring to new heights now on a private plane, or they were going to, to half a trillion dollars in debt. And yet what does this Premier and his cabinet do? They decide to buy a private jet—almost \$30 million of taxpayer money. People work hard for their money, Speaker—I'm sure you believe that—and this government has taken \$28.9 million from them to buy a jet for the Premier's comfort in travel. It really is a new low.

Of course, the Premier didn't see the light; he felt the heat—from opposition parties, from the public, from people speaking out in all platforms, at the dinner table, the dining rooms across the province on the weekend—and they have now reversed course. But let's not forget that this will still cost taxpayers of Ontario money, and this Premier is only retreating because he got caught.

Now we have another new low. We've got a government that is clearly obsessed with power, right? They're consolidating power at every level. We've got municipalities who will now be governed by an appointed chair—appointed and anointed regional chairs. We've got conservation authorities being shrunk—unless you live in Huron and Lake Superior, where you've got a government member who can say, “Yeah, no. Don't touch mine. Everyone else's, yeah, sure; consolidate them. Just don't touch mine.” The minister knows how much harm is done when local voices are taken away, but yet this government continues to move on consolidating conservation authorities.

We have the takeover of school boards. We've got a government who doesn't think that parents and elected officials should have a real say in what goes on in their children's schools, that Queen's Park knows best, that the emperor of education knows best.

So, Speaker, it is not a big surprise, given all of these new lows that this government continues to take us to, that we find out that now the most important bill—this government says it themselves: The most important bill a government tables is the budget. You would think that that

important bill would deserve some time at committee. And they were going to take it to committee, or they said they were, but I'm not sure they ever really intended to, because of course we were waiting and waiting to hear when the bill would get discussed at committee. And so what do they do today with this motion, Speaker? They are discharging the order to send the budget bill to committee. I think there's only one reason for that. It's because of the FOI changes.

Let's just talk about that. Schedule 7, which affects the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, or FIPPA, is basically being completely dismantled. And it's kind of funny because this morning the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery and Procurement stood up in question period and tried to say, “No, don't worry. Nothing to see here; nothing is going to change. You'll still have access.” Well, if that's true, Speaker, why is this schedule in the budget bill? It's because this government is hiding something. And guess what? We might never find out what that is, because they're not just going forward with these changes, which of course are damaging and remove transparency—it protects all the ministers, their PAs, basically every member of the Conservative caucus. So, it doesn't just go forward in removing our ability to access information from them; it goes backward. It goes back decades. We don't know why they would do that, except because they're trying to hide something, whether it's what is on the Premier's phone records or meetings that they had with stakeholders who then, again, benefit from the government's strong majority, and can appoint them to positions or send business their way, maybe even talk about what the value of surveillance pricing is.

We didn't actually hear any government member say why the opposition day motion was a bad motion. They actually couldn't even defend their position to not support it, because it's indefensible. We won't know if the minister or the Premier were meeting with grocery magnates to discuss why they should allow or keep the predatory surveillance pricing that we know is coming.

So, Speaker, the budget bill, as they say, is one of the most important bills the government tables. This government—if they were true to their word—would say, “We are proud of this bill. Let's bring it to committee. Let's have hearings about it.”

1640

But no, Speaker, because they might get people like the privacy commissioner, who put out a very strong statement about what these changes to the FOI rules do. These are experts, right? We hire them because they have expertise in these rules. We know that personal private information is not going to be shared; that's, again, just fearmongering among the Conservative government.

This is what the privacy commissioner, Patricia Kosseim, had to say about these changes: “Taking away Ontarians' access rights—retroactively and into the future—denies them the information they need to understand government decision-making at the highest levels and hold their governments to account. Such a change would not mod-

ernize access laws, strengthen privacy or enhance security; it would weaken transparency and accountability for generations to come. This should be concerning for all Ontarians, regardless of political affiliation. We urge the government to reconsider its proposal and keep public trust outside.”

If this government was really concerned about accountability and transparency as they often want to say that they are, they would be quite happy for this bill to go to committee and to have it debated, have it discussed by experts who know about these kinds of freedom of information and protection privacy laws.

Speaker, it’s really disappointing—again, another new low by this government. I’m very disappointed that they will not be sending this bill to committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further debate?

Mr. John Fraser: I would like to say it’s a pleasure to speak to this motion. There shouldn’t even be a motion. For the government not to actually bring their plan for Ontario to a committee is incredible. I don’t know what it is they’ve got to hide. If they’re proud of the work that they’ve done—and they boast about the budget all the time; the finance minister boasts about the budget all the time, and they’re not going to bring it to committee.

Now, we knew this before we found out about the private jet. I’m not sure we would find that in the budget. I would like to see the Treasury Board minutes as to who brought it forward and whose name is on the dotted line. I know the President of the Treasury Board’s name will be on that, but it’s like, who approved that expense? Hello, people can’t afford groceries and gas. What were you thinking?

I’ve got to say this now because I just read a news article where the Premier is whining about a double standard. He didn’t get his jet plane like Drake, so he’s whining about not getting the plane, about there being a double standard. You know what? He’s right. There is a double standard. It’s the way that the Premier lives his life and the Premier thinks he can spend taxpayers’ money, and what he thinks everybody else should live like. I don’t think he even knows. I’m not sure he knows the price of milk or bread or eggs—maybe gas. He probably doesn’t fill up because he gets driven around.

But for him to whine about a double standard and somehow say, “Oh, I heard from Ontarians. I’m changing my ways”—I think this is half a dozen times he has told the same story, put on this same act, pretended to actually be contrite. He’s not. He did it again. If he was really listening, he would hear people saying, “I can’t find a family doctor. I can’t afford gas in my car. I can’t afford groceries.” If he was listening—he’s not listening; tired, out of touch, out of gas, asleep at the wheel. When people tell you who they are, believe them, and when the Premier bought a private luxury jet, he told us who he is, so believe him. Right now Ontarians are hurting, and to do that is not unconscionable, it’s stupid.

I would like to speak to schedule 7, since we’re talking about the budget. Schedule 7 is not going to get to com-

mittee and, of course, that’s about freedom of information. It’s also totally about the Premier’s phone, right? The Premier doesn’t want us to know what’s on his phone the week he opened the greenbelt, way back when. There’s something on his phone that he doesn’t want people to see. He shouldn’t be doing business on his phone—he does that. He shouldn’t be doing business in his living room—he does that. He shouldn’t be doing government business without record-keeping, but he does. And then he wants to hide everything from people. What’s he got to hide? He’s covering up the cover-up?

Freedom of information protects all of us. It’s to make sure we know how people are spending our money, how people are taking care of us.

Freedom of information protects all of us, which seems to be a problem for this government since they have a hard time keeping criminals in jail. We found out that 150 criminals have been set free. How did we find out? Did the minister tell us? Did someone on the other side tell us? No. An FOI request told us. An FOI request told us, and if we hadn’t had that FOI request, maybe we never would have heard about this. We probably never would have heard about this. Right? No, we never would have heard about it.

When the FOI request exposed the fact that there were 150 criminals set free, the government’s reaction was that it wasn’t a problem. They didn’t acknowledge it. They attacked the opposition. They looked in the rear-view mirror. Then the next day, when asked, we got told a different story. Now, I understand that members can correct their record, and I’m really glad that the members did, but they told us that those escaped criminals were apprehended immediately and instantaneously.

I know that’s corrected now, but I want to tell you a story. I’ve got kids, and I have this story about one time one of my kids—I won’t say which one because they’ll be embarrassed. They were teenagers. They went out and came in around 12 o’clock. I started talking to them and I said, “Were you drinking?” They were underage. They said, “Well, Dad, somebody spilled a beer on me.” We hung out for a little while longer, and I kept questioning. Then it got to, “Well, I had a sip of beer.” It took about four steps to get to what really happened. I call them the kings or queens of the progressive truth, which means it takes you a while to tease out what’s really the case.

It shouldn’t take five days to tease out what the truth is, but that’s what we had to do. We finally got it out. After probably a couple of dozen questions, we got it out that actually, no, it wasn’t instantaneous or immediate.

But that still leaves us with another problem that the FOI helped to point out for us, and that is that the minister knew for more than a year. The day that it got brought up, it’s like it was news to the minister; it was news to the Solicitor General.

How did we know? We knew because of an FOI. We knew about the greenbelt because of an FOI.

It’s not actually about the government of the day; it’s about government in general. How do we make sure that people are accountable? How do we make sure that

government is open and transparent? How do we make sure that people can have confidence in the decisions that are being made on behalf of them by their government? How do we make sure that people know and can have confidence that the top law official, policing official, in this province is looking out for their safety?

I just have to say I'm—"frustrated" is not the right word. It's hard to see light at the end of the tunnel when you have a government that doesn't want to act like a government, that doesn't want to be accountable to people. I know this thing is so hard for people on the outside to see and it's all about process, but that process protects people. It protects people from governments that will take advantage of them, that will take advantage of their power and their position either to benefit themselves or to not do their job, not do the things that they're supposed to do to protect people—to protect them from criminals, to protect them from predatory pricing, to protect them from all sorts of things. That's our job here. People have to know what they see is real, and that's what freedom of information does.

1650

You know what? I've been on both sides of it; I've watched it. I've watched it for 40 or 50 years, and I'm glad that it's there. It should be there; it needs to be there. It keeps all of us accountable because then we know the things that we say and do on behalf of people are going to be recorded. They're going to be seen; they're going to be visible. Not sending schedule 7 to committee is wrong. Not bringing the budget bill in total to committee is wrong. What has the government got to hide?

We're only sitting about half the time we normally sit, and the House leader on the other side has created what I like to call the legislative autobahn—no speed limit, as fast as we can. As fast as we can and if something crashes, who cares? Let's take for instance how many pieces of housing legislation we've had. I think we're in double digits. There's been a few crashes on that autobahn with housing legislation. It's not necessary.

Our jobs—all of our jobs—are to ask the right questions, and we can't ask the right questions if we're not all together here. I think the legislative calendar as it normally sits is reasonable. I don't think it's too much. Sometimes you can shave off a bit at the end, maybe a bit at the beginning. What it shows, though, is the government doesn't really have an aggressive agenda. No, no, don't confuse an aggressive agenda with wanting to go a million miles an hour on the few pieces of legislation that you have, right?

The travesty of the whole thing is that most folks don't get the process; they're too busy. They don't need to get the process. That's our job. Our job is to get the process. Our job is to know why. Our job is to have the time to ask the right questions. Our job is to have the time to think about things, to deliberate on them, to debate them, to have them out in the open. That is the purpose of this place; that's why we're here.

Freedom of information is a really important piece of that. It's been that way for more than four decades. Before

that, people got away with all sorts of stuff, all sorts of stuff—

MPP Jamie West: Tell us.

Mr. John Fraser: I'm not going to do it; it came close. And it was bad. It was really bad. People could do whatever they wanted, but with freedom of information, it put guardrails on things. It made things transparent. It forced people to be more accountable.

It's not our money, folks. The Premier bought a private jet. It's not his money. It's not his money, and if he wanted to buy one, he should have gone and asked everybody. He should have probably asked the finance minister, who would have told him no, I would hope, but maybe when the boss asks for something, you don't say no. You don't say no because he's the boss. Sorry, I'm thinking a lot about this private jet because it's sitting in a hangar at some undisclosed location right now, and I know the Premier was pining about it. Maybe he had a chance to go out and see it, have a seat in the plane. It's emblematic of what's wrong with this government. They're tired, out of touch, out of gas, out of control, and they're not taking the budget to committee, although most people out there don't understand that not taking it to committee is just the wrong thing to do.

I'll leave 21 seconds on the clock.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further debate? Further debate? Further debate?

Pursuant to standing order 50(b), I am now required to put the question.

Mr. Clark has moved government notice of motion number 16 relating to allocation of time on the following bills: Bill 97, An Act to implement Budget measures, to enact, amend or repeal various statutes and to revoke various regulations; Bill 98, An Act to enact the Fare Alignment and Seamless Transit Act, 2026 and to amend various Acts; and Bill 101, An Act to amend various Acts in respect of education and child care.

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

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

Vote deferred.

BETTER REGIONAL GOVERNANCE ACT, 2026

LOI DE 2026 POUR UNE MEILLEURE GOUVERNANCE RÉGIONALE

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 16, 2026, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 100, An Act to amend the Municipal Act, 2001 and the Municipal Elections Act, 1996 / Projet de loi 100, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2001 sur les municipalités et la Loi de 1996 sur les élections municipales.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further debate?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: I'm delighted to stand here and talk to Bill 100, Better Regional Governance Act, 2026. And Mr. Speaker, as I have done many times, please let me—as part of discussing my enthusiasm for this bill and why it is so important now to talk about my love for my province and my respect for my country.

Last week, I had the incredible opportunity of welcoming back Professor Janice Gross Stein, the founding director of the Munk school at the University of Toronto. And ironically, over 40 years ago—almost to that day—I had the privilege of learning from Professor Stein when she was a visiting professor at York University, my alma mater. That day, I was joined in my office by people who work in the office of the Solicitor General, who were most recently taught by Professor Stein—40 years apart. We talked fundamentally about our country and about our province, and she remarked to me—a phrase that just lingers with me to this day: “Our country has given us everything.”

When we approach this concept that our country has given us everything, regardless of whether we're a firefighter or a police officer; a corrections, probation or parole officer; an animal welfare inspector; a paramedic; or anybody else who, in public safety, works hard every day so we can utter those words, “Our country has given us everything,” it really puts into perspective how special this place is.

I've learned in this house of democracy that you can agree and disagree with the members on the other side. On a good day—as we know from many opposite—we will meet together in the lunchroom and check in on each other and see how their families are, as they do on our families.

Mr. Speaker, when we look historically as to the development and the growth of Ontario, I can go back, as many of us do—the member from Timiskaming—Cochrane, many times, told us about his story, growing up on a farm. I really appreciated his story, because we understand that what was produced on their farm is something that enabled us to have sustenance, that enabled us to eat. That's why, as we've listened to our minister of agriculture and agri-food and the predecessor ministers, who are now in other portfolios, it really shines a light on things that we take for granted. This last year and a bit, the unfair tariffs that have been levied against our country have wreaked havoc and uncertainty in a place where the waters were calm—when we knew, if we traded with somebody in the US, what it was like, what we could expect. We wanted to do more business with them. This was the way that it was.

1700

Premier Ford has been specific in saying that the kinship that exists with our American friends has not changed. We have to get past what has been imposed on us with very unfair tariffs. I think the Prime Minister has it absolutely correct when he says we have to look inwards. We can't look at the past as a road map to the future. That's why Premier Ford, together with the other Premiers and territorial leaders, has prioritized how we can reinvent our Canada, how we can unleash innovation and imagination, how we can tell a story not only to our chil-

dren but one day to theirs—that in our generation, we seized the moment, we met the moment and we effected change to make sure that there would be a Canada and there would be a province that we will leave to another generation, not only intact but strong and resilient.

Bill 100, the Better Regional Governance Act, takes an important conversation and places it in discussion and debate today and on other days that we will debate it. It is important for a specific reason. When we go back to when Ontario was building and transforming itself as it has through the generations—I think of Premier John Robarts and the things he accomplished and the legacies that he built in his generation. There isn't a time that I walk in this building and not think about the late Premier William Davis, who sat in this chamber for a long time. I was a young student at the time when he was Premier, but I remember his effervescent optimism and his belief that anything is possible. When we go back to many things on how we planned, how we established regional forms of government, how we had the operations of municipal councils, Premier Davis's time in office set the measure for that to take place.

And over time, it is undeniably true on both sides of the aisle, as different governments came and went, everybody tried to leave their mark on one further etch, one further rung on the ladder that allowed the process to run that much more efficiently and, most importantly, meet the moment and the times that they were then in.

Earlier today during question period, I talked of how on the corrections side of our ministry, as an example, we have moved from what was once just an exclusive paper-based way of operating to a digital-based, to a real-time-based way because those are the times that we are in. The technology aligns with everything that we can do to not only keep Ontario safe but protect Ontario economically and to make sure that we grow our country and our province.

Bill 100 matters because local governments are absolutely essential partners in delivering on Ontario's top priorities, especially building more homes faster and with more affordability. We all agree in this place that we want to have affordability. We don't have to look further—those of us who are from my generation, who have kids that they wish could move out of the home as expeditiously as possible, when they're ready. We want them to have a place so that they can have the pride of ownership, just like my generation did and my parents' generation. And thank God, Mr. Speaker, I've got both of my parents alive. They're up there; my dad will be 95 and my mom is following just behind. But in their generation, they saw that, especially in the 1960s, it was a way to acquire a home, a nice home, at a fair price, with a fair mortgage rate. All they did was strive to pay off the mortgage and own the home. That was important to them. It's the same for our generation.

Bill 100 modernizes the regional governance to improve results for residents and communities. This bill provides stronger leadership at the regional level. It enables the appointment of regional chairs across Durham, Halton,

Muskoka, Niagara, Peel, Waterloo, York and Simcoe, and the chairs will be equipped with strong-chair powers, similar to strong-mayor powers. It creates clear accountability and consistent leadership across regions. We believe, on this side of the House, that this will deliver faster decisions, clearer priorities and better alignments with provincial goals.

Bill 100 will also address the powers to get housing built. I can't help but look at the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing when he cites the expression, "It takes too long, and it costs too much." Perhaps, Mr. Speaker, in his time—I hope he's here for a long time, the same as I hope I'm here for a long time—that's the expression that we should all know: It takes too long, and it costs too much. That's why we have to have the chairs having the tools that they need to set budget and priorities and to hire key senior staff and structure the organization. It's very, very, very important that we move forward, because we know exactly what the minister says all the time: It takes too long, and it costs too much.

Now, governments can take another tack if they want: They can do nothing. But our government, led by Premier Ford, is a government in action. We believe every day that we must look for ways to make life easier on Ontarians.

The Minister of Red Tape Reduction—she's a great minister, and I absolutely love the community she represents, Barrie–Innisfil. She's got a phenomenal fire service, and she has a phenomenal police service—two of them: South Simcoe Police Service and Barrie Police Service.

I want to say that we also have to be realistic at the type of sizes of councils that have to approve debate and discussion and representative of their communities. Niagara region has 32 members; Simcoe county has 32 members. We seek to reduce the number in Niagara region to 13 and Simcoe to 17. We believe that the smaller councils will improve efficiency and decision-making, reduce costs for taxpayers and better reflect the population size.

We have to have strong accountability and safeguards. That's why we believe the appointed chairs must have been elected locally within the past 10 years, must be vetted through Ontario's rigorous appointment process and be reviewed by an independent expert panel. This means more qualified leadership and strong oversight. I believe this exact comment on the strong accountability and safeguards will stand the test of time because of the vetting, because of the reviewing by an independent expert panel and because this person has to have had some elected local office within a 10-year period.

Modernizing regional government is important, because we want to have a way of having faster decision-making, stronger leadership and better alignment with provincial priorities. We want to see more homes built. We want to see this happen sooner. We want to understand that this dream of succeeding in Ontario can't be limited to the few.

I've said this before: In our Ontario—this is what gets me up in the morning at 4:30—we all have to understand, regardless of where we are in this House, regardless of what party we're affiliated with, that we all have to have

an equal place to belong and to contribute and to succeed. It can never matter where our families came from or how they got to this great province of ours called Ontario.

1710

Many times, I've shared my enthusiasm and my love for our province, going back to that famous song that I've cited many times. In 1967, at our centennial, some of us were around then. Myself, the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane and the member from Brock, our former Speaker, were all born the same year, so we were all little toddlers in 1967. But listen again to the words of the lyric: This is a place to stand and a place to grow.

How apropos now, in 2026, that in spite of the tariffs that were unforeseen; in spite of President Trump who, for whatever reason is coming after Canada, his closest historical neighbour and friend—in spite of that, we've stood tall. When others around the world said Canada has become irrelevant, that's not true at all.

I've seen in my own riding of York Centre, which it's the privilege of a lifetime to represent, an unleashing of pride. We look at our flag differently. We sing our anthem differently, and I'll tell you why. Go to the second verse in the anthem: "True patriot love in all of us command." Mr. Speaker, what are we commanded to do, and why is this important in tying back to the bill? We're commanded to love our province, to show respect to the people that are there, to govern well, to listen to the fact that the times find us where we are: that we meet the moment by not being afraid of the moment, by taking the challenge of the times that we're in and developing ways of making us stronger. Building homes across Ontario and streamlining regional governments are other examples where we meet a moment.

We meet a moment every day, because we're here with this underlying love of wanting to do good. We can do good from both sides of the aisle, by the way; that's absolutely true. Many times people will come across, as they did today, and ask me, "Read this, look at this"—even in a non-member-held riding; we don't show distinction for an Ontarian that needs our help.

One of the greatest privileges that I have is waiting for the phone to ring on the days I'm at the constituency office when we don't sit. I try to come in early, hoping that the phone will ring and I'll get to pick it up. I say, "This is your MPP speaking. How can I help you?" And the person says, "I never thought in a million years that the MPP himself would pick up the phone." I give out my number to help my constituents every day, and I try to attend as many events as God gives me strength to attend, just as we all want to do.

In my riding that's eight kilometres square, I try to walk the riding on the weekends east to west as often as I can, so I can get a pulse of what's going on. I see generations in my riding that are ready to pass the torch to their children and grandchildren. In some cases, Mr. Speaker, around the Roding Park area of York Centre, homes are literally being passed from grandparents to children and from children to the grandchildren, and sometimes the

home gets knocked down and rebuilt because that piece of property is sacred to that particular family.

I believe that we have to go further and faster. We have to do so as we are debating Bill 100, because local governments matter. It's essential that the local governments address their priorities, and the people of the province understand this.

In a number of months, we will have another municipal election throughout our province. We do so because it's so important—regardless of when we have a right to exercise our vote municipally, provincially and federally—that we show everyone how important it is, and I'll tell you why. This is our democratic right to do so. We have to do so, hoping that people will come to office on councils and regional councils that can steer the conversation further to protect Ontario and to act in the best interest. Now, more than ever, we can't waste time. Time is a luxury we don't have.

Just as we're reimagining our economy, thanks to the incredible leadership by Premier Ford, our Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade, and my colleagues that sit alongside me—from south to north, in the four corners of Ontario, eastwards to Ottawa, westwards to Kenora, south side to Windsor and LaSalle, north to Thunder Bay, north to Timmins and further north, to the far-reaching north of our province. Now is the time to come together and let every good idea come forward. I believe we need to strengthen now, more than ever, the ability of regional governments to deliver on the priorities that residents are consistently asking for: housing, infrastructure and efficient services.

I'll end as I usually do, Mr. Speaker, with an enthusiasm and love for my province. C'est notre terre : le vrai Nord, fort et libre. This is our country. If not now, when? Let us move forward with confidence, with innovation, with imagination and with a steel will that we will protect Ontario. Because at the end of the day, this gift of our province given to me is something I'm desperate to pass on to my children and theirs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Questions?

MPP Catherine McKenney: Thank you to the Solicitor General.

Interjection.

MPP Catherine McKenney: Yes, I know. Yes. I'm about to ask it.

Mr. Guy Bourgoïn: Sorry about that.

MPP Catherine McKenney: That's okay.

When I tell people about this bill—this past weekend, I was out at a couple of events and door-knocking and telling people about this bill. These are people who are also concerned about housing and the lack of forward momentum from this government around housing. And I tell them, “You know, they're about to appoint regional chairs and give them strong-chair power.” People, actually, for the most part, squinted at me. They didn't get it.

So, I wonder if the Solicitor General could respond to—I asked this the other day too. Is there a line that you won't cross? What next—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I recognize the Solicitor General.

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: I think, in the bill—and I spoke about it—there is a vetting process. There is a requirement that a person has to hold elected office, at least locally, in the last 10 years and there's an ability where people can participate in the process.

At the end of the day, what I feel is so important to me is that this bridges party lines. The best person has to come forward and serve their region. But what we have now is an unworkable situation. I spoke of it in a couple of the regions in Simcoe and Niagara, where there are just too many regional councillors. It's hard to get anything done. We need to streamline it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I recognize the member from Orléans.

Mr. Stephen Blais: I find it outrageous that a bill that is promoting the improvement of local democracy is going to actually appoint unelected quasi-dictators as chairs of these committees.

I'm wondering, Minister—you just mentioned that one of the requirements will be that the new chairs have recently held public office. Typically, people leave public office for one of two reasons: Either they lose an election, or they leave public office to pursue other objectives. So if someone has lost an election, you're saying you will then consider promoting them to be the unelected dictator of a region and give them strong-mayor powers.

I'm wondering how you justify appointing someone who either left because it was too much work or lost an election as chair of a region.

1720

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: I'll just repeat it again, that we believe in strong accountability and safeguards. That's why we will have appointed chairs that must have been elected locally within the past 10 years, must be vetted through Ontario's rigorous system of appointment, must be reviewed—and I think this would help my friend opposite—by an independent expert panel. This means more qualified leadership and people will come forward.

The fact that you win or lose an election doesn't matter. The fact that the vetting process is rigorous matters.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I recognize the member from Kitchener Centre.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I've heard in the past, when you came up with the strong-mayor powers, that this was supposed to create some boom in housing. We have the lowest housing starts ever, but we're doubling down on this recommendation. Meanwhile, we're missing out on opening up zoning, which is in your own report as being recommended. Why are you not following your own report and instead doubling down on measures that have proven not effective?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: At the end of the day, as the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing said in his quote, “It costs too much, and it takes too long.” That's why the strong chairs have to have the tools to set budgets and priorities, to hire key senior staff and structure the organization in a way that will get to the finish line.

The member knows that we are in a complicated world-wide economic time as a result of the US tariffs. We are reimagining our economy, and we have to reimagine a bureaucratic system that is not as cumbersome as it is today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Questions?

Mr. Anthony Leardi: Sometimes people in the House, when they're speaking, they make reference to things that happened in the past and I have to look it up, because I'm rather on the younger side, and they make reference to things that happened when I was too young, and I can't remember those things. Sometimes they make reference to, I don't know, some guy named—well, you know what I'm talking about.

The Honourable Solicitor General made reference to a song that came out some time ago. I think that he made reference to one of the lines in the song. I'm not entirely familiar with that song. I'm wondering if he might tell us what the song was about and maybe even sing a few bars if he's so disposed to do so.

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: Well, Mr. Speaker, the song was A Place to Stand, a Place to Grow. Why was that important in 1967? It unleashed an optimism that galvanized Ontario's patriotism, and here we are in 2026. When we look at our flag and we sing our anthem, we must feel that sense of pride. Premier Ford has helped us unleash a pride in ourselves to make us not afraid: to make us not afraid of being innovative or imaginative, to make us not afraid of seeing what we can do if we put our minds to it, to understanding that we can build anything in Ontario, and that the impossible is only impossible if we let it be impossible.

We are a place to stand. This is a place to grow.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I go to the member from Ottawa West—Nepean.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: The Solicitor General mentioned democratic rights an astonishing number of times speaking in favour of a bill that's actually taking away democratic elections, and for being part of a government that is reducing the support and advocacy that people can receive from their democratically elected trustees, including the right of those trustees to share information with them and, of course, being part of a government that is passing a budget that is taking away the public's right to information through freedom-of-information laws.

So my question to the Solicitor General is—you mentioned that you want to pass down a strong province to your children and grandchildren. Why doesn't that province include democratic elections?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: I said in my remarks that we are blessed in our democratic society to elect different levels of government and people from different parties to serve as our representatives.

But specifically, when I said the time has come to streamline councils—Niagara region, 32 people. Can you imagine how hard it is to navigate a ship with 32 people? So we said we want to bring it down to 13.

Simcoe county, 32—and when we look and when we study proportionate areas of like size elsewhere in our province, nobody has 32.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I'll go to the member from Orléans.

Mr. Stephen Blais: While the minister is quoting songs, I'd like to call the House's attention to a very popular and good song from Paul McCartney. It's called Band on the Run and it's a sprawling rock epic about a group, a band, breaking out of prison and evading the law.

I know the minister is quite familiar with people breaking out of prison and evading the law. The government is also very familiar with this concept, which is perhaps why they're changing the law to implement unelected strong-mayor powers in our regions.

I'm wondering how the minister can justify giving unelected appointees of the government, some of whom will have just lost elections to his own admission, sprawling powers to undemocratically impose budgets and other measures on some of Ontario's biggest and most sprawling communities.

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: Look, we need faster decision-making; we need strong leadership. We have to, as I said, make sure that we have a vetting process that does its job with an independent group of people. We've said it.

The status quo is not working. We know that people want to build homes and we know in the regions, especially in Niagara and Simcoe—32 members both on regional council; it's a lot of people. What we want to do is say, this is where we are in 2026. We want to go forward. We want to make sure that the next generation will see efficiencies by making fundamental changes to the municipal process for one thing: to build homes and to build communities and do it now.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further debate?

MPP Catherine McKenney: It is always an honour to rise and speak in this House on behalf of the good people of Ottawa Centre. Today I speak strongly in opposition to Bill 100, the so-called Better Regional Governance Act.

I want to start with that name—Better Regional Governance Act, especially the better part—because it's probably one of the more less honest titles this government has put on a bill, and that is saying something. Because there is nothing better about governance where the people most affected by decisions have no say in who makes them and there is nothing better about replacing someone you can vote out with someone who answers only to the Premier. Calling this “better governance” is like calling amalgamation a gift to the people of Ottawa, and we know how that story ends.

I'd like to start there, Speaker. I want to talk about Ottawa in part of my time because when the government members stand up and tell us that appointed regional chairs lead to good outcomes, I want to offer them a case study from my city—one they don't seem to want to remember. Before amalgamation, the regional municipality

of Ottawa-Carleton had an appointed regional chair. And for years, residents of that region experienced exactly what we're being promised today: They were promised streamlined decision-making; they were promised regional alignment, efficient delivery. What we actually got was a structure where the person at the top of the table owed their position not to the people who paid taxes but to the political process that put them there. It was unaccountable. It was undemocratic. And the communities in that region knew it. We all knew it. That is why we fought to elect our regional chair and we actually won that fight. It was back in the days of a much better government.

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And then, the Harris government arrived. The Harris government looked at the regional municipality of Ottawa-Carleton, made up of 11 area municipalities, an elected regional chair, a structure that people had actually worked to build democratic accountability into, and decided we were doing it all wrong. So what did they do? And they knew what they were doing. They knew full well what they were doing. They forced amalgamation on us. They told us it would be more efficient—they knew it wouldn't. They told us it would lower costs. That wasn't the point. And they told us it would deliver better services. Every single one of those promises turned out to be false. But it didn't matter, because that's not why they did it. They did it so that they would always maintain control over what is now the one city of Ottawa. And what did we get in the end? It's all on the record. We've got higher debt. We've got higher taxes. And we've got a city with communities that were amalgamated—communities like Gloucester, Cumberland, Orléans, Nepean, Kanata, Vanier, Rockcliffe Park, Goulbourn, West Carleton, Rideau, Osgoode, the former city of Ottawa still feel, to this day, like they lost something: the local accountability that people had built over decades; the sense that your representative knew your neighbourhood, understood your concerns, would be at your door if you needed them. That is what was lost when you forced amalgamation on the city of Ottawa. And I say this because Bill 100 is not a new idea; it is the same idea. It is dressed up in new language today. This government calls it "clarity of leadership." The Harris government called it "efficiency." But the effect is really all the same: Power moves up to an unaccountable, unelected strong chair. Accountability moves away from the people who should be electing that chair to oversee the region. And it really is people in those communities who lose.

I have no doubt that if every one of us went into our community today and said, "This is happening. This is what Bill 100 is going to result in," you would not get near the majority of your residents telling any of you that that was a good idea; that you were going to somehow, all of a sudden, make housing more affordable for people and you were going to make housing available for people because there was going to be an unelected chair, unaccountable chair. People would laugh at you; you know they would.

Let me be specific about what this bill does, because the government really has been careful to avoid that detail.

This bill, Bill 100, allows the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to appoint and remove the regional chairs of Durham, Halton, Muskoka, Niagara, Peel, Waterloo and York, and the warden, also, of Simcoe county—not elect; actually appoint. And not just for the current term—I believe that's the way that some of these powers have already been extended before—but for every municipal term going forward, the people in these regions will not be able to elect their chair. Their chair will be appointed by the Premier. And you can tell people, "Don't worry. We know what we're doing. We will elect good people. You'll actually be happy—wait until you see who we have in mind." But you know that that is not the case, because if it were the case, you would let people decide. You'd give them a mandate, but you'd let people decide. You'd let the regional chairs be elected.

And the strong chair powers, the same powers that have been extended to mayors, which have, I'll remind you, not produced the housing outcomes that you said they would—so first it was, "We need strong mayors so that we get housing." That hasn't happened. Then we needed Bill 60; we needed to take away all the rights from renters. It still didn't work. Then we needed Bill 17. It's one thing after another.

And yet you have a report. The Housing Affordability Task Force, your own experts, have told you what you should do, but you ignore that.

These appointed chairs will be given what the government calls strong powers, and they are the powers that will include the ability to set regional budgets. So an unappointed chair will set regional budgets. They'll hire and fire senior staff, those senior staff who may not give them the advice that they're looking for, that you want, and they'll pass bylaws with the support of just one third of council—one third.

So you're stripping away—when I ask, you're stripping away the powers of councils. And in what world is one third of council a mandate? In what world does the ability to override the other two thirds of elected representatives constitute democratic governance? It doesn't—only in the world this government is building, one failed bill at a time. But you know what you're doing.

And then on top of that, the minister can establish weighted voting for any upper-tier municipal council, with no requirement that votes be weighted based on population or any principle of fair representation. The minister can weight votes however he chooses.

Speaker, I just want to pause for a moment on that. Think about this. Think about going out and telling the people you represent, "Here's what we're going to do: an unelected chair, strong chair powers that let them override elected councils, voting weights the minister sets at his discretion, and residents of these regions will have no mechanism to remove any of it."

This is not streamlined government; this is control. I'm sure we could name a few strong men who would give up their orange makeup for this type of control. It is actually

shocking when I think back to better regional governance. It is so dishonest.

Speaker, I asked a question of my colleagues across the aisle earlier in this debate. I asked it earlier this afternoon and last week: Is there a line that you won't cross? Would you appoint city councillors if you thought it would make things more efficient for you? Because that's the question I got when I went out and tried to tell people, when I tried to explain, one of those, "You're not going to believe this. You're just not."

And they're like, "What's next? What's the line?" I'm like, "Well, I asked." I asked that last week and today, partly in frustration. But I want to be honest: It wasn't rhetorical, because the pattern of this government suggests that the answer is that there isn't really a line.

We've watched you. We've watched you cut Toronto's council in half in the middle of an election campaign. We've watched you impose strong-mayor powers on municipalities that didn't ask for them, then watched your mayor use those powers to block fourplexes—the very thing your experts told you that you need to get housing built.

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Mr. Tyler Allsopp: My experts?

MPP Catherine McKenney: That's your expert. It's your expert. It's all your experts. I'm going to bring you a copy of it.

We watched them announce the dissolution of Peel region and then reverse it when the chaos became impossible to ignore—because you do have a record of doing that. And we watched you try to force municipalities to transfer water assets to private corporations. So this bill is not separate from that pattern; this bill is the pattern.

Speaker, there's a specific history in Niagara that deserves to be on the record here, because it illustrates exactly how this government operates. When former regional chair Jim Bradley passed away, this government appointed Bob Gale as his replacement—Bob Gale, who had been part of a group of regional politicians. I didn't know him, but that group of regional politicians, they were known locally as "the cabal," whose backroom conduct was the subject of a damning Ontario Ombudsman investigation in 2019. I didn't know about this until I arrived here and all of this started bubbling up, so I looked it up. Nearly all of those politicians were voted out by voters in Niagara who were angry about what they had done—imagine that—and then Bob Gale then ran as a Conservative candidate in the 2022 election and lost. I didn't know that.

MPP Wayne Gates: To me.

MPP Catherine McKenney: So what did this government do? What did you guys do? You appointed him. Who appointed him?

MPP Lisa Gretzky: Who did Gale lose to?

Interjection.

MPP Catherine McKenney: Yes, exactly. This guy right here.

You appointed him to a chair with regional powers without consulting the communities that he would now

represent, and he proceeded to propose sweeping restructuring of the region. But then he resigned. He resigned—

MPP Lisa Gretzky: In shame.

MPP Catherine McKenney: —in shame, with his own personal copy of Hitler's *Mein Kampf*. But you'll be better prepared for the next ones. Come on.

Speaker, this is the record. That is the track record of this government's appointments, and now they want to institutionalize that appointment power permanently across eight regions with no requirement for merit and no mechanism for communities to hold those chairs to account.

I listened while the Solicitor General was telling us not to worry; they had it under control, and this is how they were going to appoint. Not once did he say the word "merit" and not once did he talk about a mechanism to hold them to account. Well, that's why we're here. We're here based on our merit; we are here and we are held to account, and that is the way it should be. And if the people we represent don't like what we're doing, they should vote us out. I've always felt quite comfortable with that: If I'm here and I'm not what people are looking for in Ottawa Centre, I'm happy to move aside and let somebody else take my place. But that's not what's going to happen here.

So when we asked about the line they would not cross earlier in this debate, the associate minister said we were venturing into "fantastical hypotheticals." The Niagara example isn't a hypothetical; it actually happened, and it was a disaster. And the government's response was to introduce legislation that would make more of it possible across the province.

Speaker, this government has tried to justify Bill 100 by citing the need for faster housing delivery, and I want to address that directly, because it is the argument that gets repeated most often. Ontario has the worst housing starts per capita in the country right now. Every bill they've passed that was supposed to unlock housing, streamline approvals, clear the way for development has resulted in the numbers going in the wrong direction. The Financial Accountability Officer confirmed it: 1.5 million homes—the promise that the Premier made, ran on—isn't even mentioned in his own budget anymore because there's no credible path to it, after eight years. Strong-mayor powers were supposed to fix housing. They haven't. Skipping regional planning authority was supposed to fix housing. Waterloo region is now in a situation where they can't build because they don't have the water infrastructure. This is the direct result of having planning taken away from them before the supporting systems were in place. The government's response to all of this failure is to give themselves more control and to insulate that control from the people with this province.

But the problem was never that elected officials had too much say; the problem is that this government's approach to housing has been wrong, and no amount of consolidating power in unelected chairs will fix a flawed strategy.

Speaker, I want to just close with what this bill means for communities—the community that I represent, com-

munities across this province—that will be affected by it. Regional governments exist to do things that cross municipal boundaries: transit, water and waste water, housing growth. Those are real responsibilities that require real leadership. Nobody on this side of the House is arguing that regional government is perfect or that reform is off the table. What we are arguing is that the solution to imperfect democratic governance is not to remove democracy.

When the regional municipality of Ottawa-Carleton moved from an appointed chair to an elected one—I was around—people didn't see that as a step backward; they saw it as accountability catching up to power—the ability to hold someone accountable, to look them in the eye at the door, and to vote them out if they fail. This government is tearing that foundation up, region by region, community by community, and they're doing it on a timeline designed to precede a municipal election without adequate consultation, a business case, and evidence that any of it will deliver what they claim: that it will deliver any type of housing.

I've seen this before. This is not a hypothetical. As someone who lives with the consequences of what former Premier Harris did to Ottawa—taxes went up, debt went up, trust went down. The communities that were consumed by that amalgamation spent years, are still spending years, trying to recover a sense of local voice that was taken from them.

This bill points us back down that road. I will be voting against it. I can tell you that if you, again, go out to your communities and ask your residents what you should do about unelected regional chairs, you would be voting against it, too.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Questions?

Mr. Stephen Blais: When the government brought in the strong-mayor powers, one of their rationales was that the mayor is elected on a citywide basis and, therefore, should have extra powers to deal with that, and he or she has a mandate because they are elected on a city-wide basis. Obviously, if the government appoints someone, there will not be an election. There will not be a mandate of any kind.

Earlier this afternoon, we heard that the government is open to, and perhaps even intending to, appoint people to these positions who are recently defeated candidates for council or for mayor, or maybe one of their own. We know that they regularly appoint defeated Conservative candidates to positions of authority in our community. The chief of staff or the deputy chief of staff to the Premier in Ottawa is a defeated Conservative candidate. The defeated Conservative candidate in Ottawa West-Nepean was appointed to a posh provincial appointment. The defeated candidate in Orléans, prior to my election, was appointed to a posh government appointment.

I'm wondering if you can give us some thoughts on the idea of appointed defeated candidates—losers, really—who have no mandate from the community at all, to a position where they would have ultimate authority over

planning, over land use planning and all the issues that the strong-mayor powers gives them.

MPP Catherine McKenney: Thank you to my colleague from Orléans for that. I actually was one of those defeated candidates. I'm pretty sure they would have never appointed me.

But I can tell you this much: When the strong-mayor powers were raised—it was two cities—I was actually running for mayor at the time. It was the city of Ottawa and the city of Toronto, and I was publicly adamant that I would never use strong-mayor powers. I would always ensure that people across the city had their say through their local, democratically elected representative, and that is the only way to run a region, a city or a province.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Questions?

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: Thank you to the member from Ottawa Centre for your comments today. I was listening very intently. You talked about the idea that defeated candidates could be positioned as chairs for some of these jurisdictions, and you referenced specifically defeated Conservative candidates. I thought that was strange because that's a rather small pool of individuals, considering we elected almost 80 members.

If we're appointing defeated candidates, wouldn't that give NDP and Liberal members a significantly better shot at being appointed because so many more of them were defeated?

MPP Catherine McKenney: That is an excellent question. I guess I have to answer it and not ask you one back, but I will say this: If that is the case, I'm still trying to think on my feet here about all of the Liberal and NDP candidates who you've recently appointed to anything, and there are none—yes, zero.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further questions, please.

MPP Wayne Gates: I'll talk about Niagara because I know it quite well. In Niagara, you're appointing—it will probably be a Conservative because that's what you did with Bob Gale. You're appointing, but—

Interjection.

MPP Wayne Gates: Yes, that's probably been asked. I can't cross this floor.

But I want to say, in Niagara—

Interjection.

MPP Wayne Gates: Let me talk.

In Niagara, they're going to appoint somebody to be regional chair, and they're going to give them strong-chair powers. That's the issue. That strong-chair power—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I recognize the member from Ottawa Centre.

MPP Catherine McKenney: Thank you to my colleague for that question, whatever that was—

MPP Wayne Gates: It's not a member's statement.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Order. We've only got seven minutes left, guys.

MPP Catherine McKenney: Speaker, I will say this: I understand very well why my colleague is very passionate

about this issue. We lived through this, and we lived through parts of this in Ottawa decades ago. But to have it happening again, to have it on repeat and fast-forward—what is going to happen in these regions, honestly, will be quite destructive. They will not see more housing built. And when people realize what this is happening, they will revolt.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Questions?

MPP Stephanie Smyth: I just wanted to ask the member from Ottawa Centre, if this bill passes, say, largely unamended, depending on what's allowed, what future legislative or regulatory changes would you try to enact to save us from it?

MPP Catherine McKenney: Thank you for that question. I said it in my comments: There's always room for improvement—of course there is—with any type of governance, councils and regional governments. But I think that it is absolutely essential that we have got elected chairs if we're going to have regions; that we ensure that people are consulted if we're going to amalgamate. If we're going to bring down the number of councillors, people have got to have a say, because people will often accept the outcome if they were part of the process. So most important is the process, and that's what's missing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further questions?

Mr. Matthew Rae: Thank you to the member from Ottawa Centre for her remarks this afternoon. I was listening intently, Speaker, and I've been listening to this debate.

I know there was an extensive consultation in the previous Parliament—and I know this member just recently joined us in this Parliament—around regional governance. We visited these particular regions multiple times in some cases, but seven total committee meetings. We heard the need for reform and change, and that's what this bill is bringing forward here today.

I know my colleagues are talking about democracy. It's actually moving closer to a county model, which I have in my riding—Perth county, Wellington county, for example. The previous warden—I didn't vote for them; I couldn't vote for them because I don't live in the municipality they represent. They're selected amongst their colleagues.

So why is it good for Perth–Wellington and other counties across this province, but not good for our fastest-growing regions to have efficiency?

MPP Catherine McKenney: You know what? Take it; go on out and consult. I'll go with you. We will go across the province. We'll sit down. We'll go into these regions, we'll sit down and we'll hear what people have to say about whether they want an elected chair who is overseeing their councils and who has strong-chair powers so they can pass anything with a minority vote on council. I put that out to you. I'm happy to go. I'm happy to tour the province and happy to go into these regions.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): One more question.

MPP Jamie West: Thank you to my colleague from Ottawa Centre. I know that the Premier thinks he always gets things right. But sometimes, he makes an impulse buy, like buying a luxury jet for \$30 million and then, two days later, having to return it when the province gets angry.

It is possible that this Premier has made another mistake, among others, with this decision to hand-appoint people. Could the member from Ottawa Centre just expand on why it would be important for the people of that area to make this decision, perhaps in a referendum vote or in other matters, rather than have the Premier decide that he's had another genius idea?

MPP Catherine McKenney: Thank you to my colleague for that question.

Yes, we have seen this Premier and this government make quick U-turns once people understand and there's an outcry over their decisions. We saw that over the weekend with their fancy jet. But that was something that people understood immediately.

There is a lot going on in people's lives. People are facing an affordability crisis, and I know for us, we don't face that in this House, many of us—if any of us. But people are, and they are paying their bills, they're paying their mortgage and they are worried about their day-to-day lives and they're not paying attention to Bill 100.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Further debate?

Mr. Rob Cerjanec: In Durham region, residents voted in a referendum in 2010 to have an elected regional chair. The current regional chair, John Henry, has said this change is a disservice to residents who deserve a direct voice in choosing their leadership.

So what does this bill mean locally within Durham region? Decisions about Durham will be made by somebody appointed, not elected. That person will not answer first to Durham region residents, but to the provincial government. Local priorities risk being replaced by provincial priorities. This isn't accountability. This isn't representation.

In fact, it's taxation without representation. My constituents in Ajax pay their property taxes and should have a regional chair that's directly accountable to them. The people should decide who works for them, not the Premier of our province.

This isn't just about Durham region. I have spoken to leaders and residents across Niagara region and there's some real concern because in Niagara, municipalities are already being stretched. They're dealing with pressures in health care, infrastructure and transportation. They're actually calling out and asking for provincial support, and they're not getting it as part of it. Instead of stepping up, this government is just trying to step in.

The bill will cut the size of Niagara regional council, but more than that, you'll likely see weighted votes by population in the hands of mayors. So while communities are asking for help, the province is focused on taking control in a way that representatives and voters in Niagara

have already rejected quite loudly and clearly, which is why you saw the government move away from their plan.

When I visited Niagara earlier this year, I heard directly from residents and community leaders about their opposition to amalgamation and having their concerns about smaller municipalities' voices being silenced. Those changes, to me, seem like a bit of a power play in Niagara region for some to get what they want and then steamroll the rest of them.

Speaker, there is a deeper problem: The province isn't strengthening municipalities; it's overloading them. Municipalities like Durham are being asked to handle housing,

homelessness, social services. Those are complex, costly, province-wide challenges, but what tools do municipalities have? Property taxes, user fees—that's really it. Property taxes aren't growing with the economy. They don't reflect income growth. They don't reflect consumption. Meanwhile, the province—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I'm sorry to interrupt, but the time is now 6 o'clock.

The House is deemed adjourned for the day until 9 a.m. tomorrow morning.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Stan (PC)	Willowdale	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Gaming / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et des Jeux
Ciriello, Monica (PC)	Hamilton Mountain / Hamilton-Mountain	
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Firin, Mohamed (PC)	York South—Weston / York-Sud— Weston	
Flack, Hon. / L'hon. Rob (PC)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Premier / Premier ministre Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Leader, Third Party / Chef du troisième parti
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Première Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn (PC)	Newmarket—Aurora	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gilmour, Alexa (NDP)	Parkdale—High Park	
Glover, Chris (NDP)	Spadina—Fort York	
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Grewal, Hardeep Singh (PC)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	
Gualtieri, Silvia (PC)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	
Hamid, Hon. / L'hon. Zee (PC)	Milton	Associate Solicitor General for Auto Theft and Bail Reform / Solliciteur général associé responsable de la Lutte contre le vol d'automobiles et de la Réforme relative aux mises en liberté sous caution
Hardeman, Hon. / L'hon. Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Hon. / L'hon. Mike (PC)	Kitchener—Conestoga	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Hazell, Andrea (LIB)	Scarborough—Guildwood	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Holland, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin (PC)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	Associate Minister of Forestry and Forest Products / Ministre associé des Forêts et des Produits forestiers
Hsu, Ted (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin—Caledon	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health / Ministre de la Santé
Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Trevor (PC)	Chatham-Kent—Leamington	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et de l'Agroentreprise
Jordan, John (PC)	Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston	
Kanapathi, Logan (PC)	Markham—Thornhill	
Kernaghan, Terence (NDP)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	
Kerzner, Hon. / L'hon. Michael S. (PC)	York Centre / York-Centre	Solicitor General / Solliciteur général
Khanjin, Hon. / L'hon. Andrea (PC)	Barrie—Innisfil	Minister of Red Tape Reduction / Ministre de la Réduction des formalités administratives
Kusendova-Bashta, Hon. / L'hon. Natalia (PC)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga- Centre	Minister of Long-Term Care / Ministre des Soins de longue durée
Leardi, Anthony (PC)	Essex	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Lecce, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)	King—Vaughan	Minister of Energy and Mines / Ministre de l'Énergie et des Mines
Lennox, Robin (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	
Lumsden, Hon. / L'hon. Neil (PC)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	Minister of Sport / Ministre du Sport
Mamakwa, Sol (NDP)	Kiiwetinoong	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
McCarthy, Hon. / L'hon. Todd J. (PC)	Durham	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs
McCrimmon, Karen (LIB)	Kanata—Carleton	
McGregor, Hon. / L'hon. Graham (PC)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism / Ministre des Affaires civiques et du Multiculturalisme
McKenney, Catherine (NDP)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
McMahon, Mary-Margaret (LIB)	Beaches—East York	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)	York—Simcoe	President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones
Oosterhoff, Hon. / L'hon. Sam (PC)	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	Associate Minister of Energy-Intensive Industries / Ministre associé des Industries à forte consommation d'énergie
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	
Parsa, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (PC)	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires
Pasma, Chandra (NDP)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	Deputy House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Piccini, Hon. / L'hon. David (PC)	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de l'Immigration, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences
Pierre, Natalie (PC)	Burlington	
Pinsonneault, Steve (PC)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	
Pirie, Hon. / L'hon. George (PC)	Timmins	Minister of Northern Economic Development and Growth / Ministre du Développement et de la croissance économique du Nord
Quinn, Hon. / L'hon. Nolan (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	Minister of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security / Ministre des Collèges et Universités, de l'Excellence en recherche et de la Sécurité
Racinsky, Joseph (PC)	Wellington—Halton Hills	
Rae, Matthew (PC)	Perth—Wellington	
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Indigenous Affairs and First Nations Economic Reconciliation / Ministre des Affaires autochtones et de la Réconciliation économique avec les Premières Nations Minister Responsible for Ring of Fire Economic and Community Partnerships / Ministre responsable des Partenariats économiques et communautaires pour le développement du Cercle de feu
Riddell, Brian (PC)	Cambridge	
Rosenberg, Bill (PC)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Sarrazin, Stéphane (PC)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Saunderson, Brian (PC)	Simcoe—Grey	
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Chris (IND)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Scott, Hon. / L'hon. Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	
Shamji, Adil (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Skelly, Hon. / L'hon. Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	Speaker / Présidente de l'Assemblée législative
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, David (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Graydon (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre associé des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Smith, Laura (PC)	Thornhill	
Smyth, Stephanie (LIB)	Toronto—St. Paul's	
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Tangri, Hon. / L'hon. Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	Associate Minister of Small Business / Ministre associée des Petites Entreprises
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

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
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	
Vacant	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough- Sud-Ouest	