

Legislative
Assembly
of Ontario



Assemblée
législative
de l'Ontario

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

No. 65A

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

N° 65A

1st Session
44th Parliament

Tuesday
21 April 2026

1^{re} session
44^e législature

Mardi
21 avril 2026

Speaker: Honourable Donna Skelly
Clerk: Trevor Day

Présidente : L'honorable Donna Skelly
Greffier : Trevor Day

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<https://www.ola.org/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7400.

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7400.

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

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Tuesday 21 April 2026 / Mardi 21 avril 2026

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Protecting Ontario's Workers and Economic Resilience Act, 2026, Bill 105, Ms. Khanjin / Loi de 2026 pour protéger les travailleurs et la résilience économique de l'Ontario, projet de loi 105, Mme Khanjin

Hon. Andrea Khanjin	3889
Hon. David Piccini	3893
Ms. Peggy Sattler	3898
Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon	3898
Mr. Matthew Rae	3898
MPP Wayne Gates	3898
Mr. Anthony Leardi	3899
Mr. Terence Kernaghan	3899
Second reading debate deemed adjourned	3899

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉES ET DÉPUTÉS

Valley Heritage Radio

MPP Billy Denault	3899
-------------------------	------

Ontario Mine Rescue

MPP Jamie West	3900
----------------------	------

Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis

MPP Tyler Watt	3900
----------------------	------

Water and sewage infrastructure

Mr. Will Bouma	3900
----------------------	------

Government jet

Ms. Jennifer K. French	3900
------------------------------	------

Grand River Malayalee Association

Ms. Jess Dixon	3901
----------------------	------

Freedom of information

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam	3901
----------------------------	------

Collinda Joseph

MPP George Darouze	3901
--------------------------	------

Philip Gosling

Mr. Mike Schreiner	3902
--------------------------	------

Paralympic curling team

Hon. Laurie Scott	3902
-------------------------	------

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEUSES ET VISITEURS

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto	3902
Mr. Aris Babikian	3902
Mr. Matthew Rae	3902

Ms. Peggy Sattler	3902
MPP Catherine McKenney	3902
Ms. Sandy Shaw	3902
MPP Billy Denault	3902
Hon. Sylvia Jones	3903
Hon. Laurie Scott	3903
Hon. Stan Cho	3903
Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens	3903
Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon	3903
MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam	3903
Mme France Gélinas	3903

QUESTION PERIOD / PÉRIODE DE QUESTIONS

Government jet

Ms. Marit Stiles	3903
Hon. Steve Clark	3903
Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy	3904

Government jet

Ms. Marit Stiles	3904
Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy	3904

Government jet

Mr. Stephen Blais	3905
Hon. Steve Clark	3905
Mr. Tyler Allsopp	3906
Mr. John Fraser	3906

Public safety

Mr. John Fraser	3906
Hon. Michael S. Kerzner	3906

Highway safety

Mr. John Vanthof	3907
Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal	3907

Crime prevention

MPP Andrea Hazell	3908
Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy	3908
Hon. Michael Parsa	3908

Ring of Fire

Mr. Stéphane Sarrazin	3908
Hon. Greg Rickford	3909

Assistance to flood victims

Mr. Peter Tabuns	3909
Hon. Mike Harris	3909

Public safety

Mr. John Fraser	3909
Hon. Michael S. Kerzner	3910

Tenant protection

Ms. Aislinn Clancy	3910
Hon. Doug Downey	3910

Housing

Ms. Jess Dixon	3911
Hon. Graydon Smith	3911

Laboratory services

Mme France G�elinas	3911
Hon. Sylvia Jones.....	3912

Public safety

MPP Tyler Watt	3912
Hon. Michael S. Kerzner.....	3912

Seniors' services

MPP Monica Ciriello	3913
Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho	3913

Notice of dissatisfaction

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly).....	3913
--------------------------------------	------

DEFERRED VOTES / VOTES DIFF ER ES**Time allocation**

Motion agreed to	3913
------------------------	------

Notice of dissatisfaction

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly)	3914
---------------------------------------	------

**INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS /
PR SENTATION DES VISITEUSES
ET VISITEURS**

Hon. Stan Cho	3914
---------------------	------

**INTRODUCTION OF BILLS /
D P T DES PROJETS DE LOI****Protecting Ontario by Upholding Honesty and
Integrity Act, 2026, Bill 108, Mr. Shamji / Loi de
2026 pour prot ger l'Ontario en respectant les
principes d'honn tet  et d'int grit , projet de loi
108, M. Shamji**

First reading agreed to.....	3914
Mr. Adil Shamji	3914

PETITIONS / P TITIONS**Highway 69**

MPP Jamie West	3914
----------------------	------

Autoroute 69

Mme France G�elinas	3914
---------------------------	------

Post-secondary funding

Ms. Chandra Pasma.....	3914
------------------------	------

Health care workers

Mr. Tom Rakocevic	3915
-------------------------	------

Health care workers

Mr. Guy Bourgouin.....	3915
------------------------	------

Pharmacare

Mme France G�elinas	3915
---------------------------	------

Ontario economy

Mr. Anthony Leardi.....	3915
-------------------------	------

Health care workers

Ms. Chandra Pasma.....	3916
------------------------	------

Ontario economy

Mr. Deepak Anand	3916
------------------------	------

Health care services

Mme France G�elinas	3916
---------------------------	------

Entretien hivernal des routes

M. Guy Bourgouin	3916
------------------------	------

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR**Better Regional Governance Act, 2026, Bill 100,
Mr. Flack / Loi de 2026 pour une meilleure
gouvernance r gionale, projet de loi 100, M. Flack**

Ms. Aislinn Clancy.....	3917
Ms. Laura Smith.....	3918
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong	3918
Mr. Lorne Coe.....	3919
Mr. Deepak Anand	3919
Mr. Tom Rakocevic.....	3921
Mr. Ted Hsu	3922
Hon. Stan Cho	3922
Mr. Tom Rakocevic.....	3922
Mr. Ted Hsu	3923
Ms. Aislinn Clancy.....	3923
Ms. Jennifer K. French.....	3923
Hon. Sam Oosterhoff.....	3926
Mme France G�elinas	3926
Mr. Stephen Blais.....	3927
Mr. Anthony Leardi.....	3927
Ms. Chandra Pasma.....	3927
Mr. Stephen Blais.....	3928
Mr. Lorne Coe.....	3929
Ms. Jennifer K. French.....	3929
Mr. Ted Hsu	3929
Hon. Rob Flack	3929
Ms. Jennifer K. French.....	3931
Hon. Sam Oosterhoff.....	3931
Mrs. Karen McCrimmon.....	3932
Mr. Anthony Leardi.....	3932
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong	3932
Mr. Ted Hsu	3932
Mr. Tom Rakocevic.....	3933
Mr. Ted Hsu	3934
Hon. Rob Flack	3934
Mr. Guy Bourgouin.....	3934

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy	3935
Mme France G�linas.....	3935
Ms. Laura Smith	3935
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong.....	3935
Mr. Ted Hsu.....	3936
Ms. Jennifer K. French	3937
Mr. Lorne Coe	3937
Mr. Anthony Leardi.....	3937
Hon. Todd J. McCarthy	3937
Ms. Jennifer K. French	3939
Mr. Lorne Coe	3939
Ms. Jennifer K. French	3939
Mr. Lorne Coe	3939
Second reading debate deemed adjourned.....	3940

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 21 April 2026

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 21 avril 2026

The House met at 0900.

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

Let us pray.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

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 second 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 modifiant diverses lois.*

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

Hon. Andrea Khanjin: Before I begin, I just want to state I will be sharing my time with the Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development, who will be joining us shortly, but is most likely talking to workers like he does every single day.

Speaker, what brings me here today is to represent my constituents of Barrie–Innisfil but also, to the great extent, all Ontarians. Today we're talking about the Protecting Ontario's Workers and Economic Resilience Act, 2026, also known as the POWER Act—and, Speaker, this is a powerful act to get the economy moving.

It wouldn't have been possible, this act, without our whole team Ontario approach, whether it's Captain Canada, Premier Ford, whether it's the parliamentary assistants that I get to work with, from my colleague from Wellington county to my colleague in Markham to, of course, my deputy minister, Maud Murray, her whole team—and Shaloma, who has moved on to another ministry, but I want to thank her again in this House for her exceptional work to get the permit review moving. It's exciting to see the progress we've made to date, the fact that we are ahead of schedule, and we can deliver results for Ontarians.

Because that is what they expect, Speaker: Since day one, our government made it clear to Ontarians that we need to reduce red tape and make it a priority, because we

understand that regulatory burdens and slow productivity discourage investment and hold back economic growth.

Speaker, capital is portable, and the last thing this province, this country, needs is for that capital to leave this great nation, to leave Ontario, and go elsewhere. So we need to seize the moment to do everything we can to reshore that investment, bring those businesses here and make it easier to do business, hire workers, start an idea, raise a family and work in this province.

That is why our government has heard clearly from businesses, employers and employees alike. They need more certainty in an uncertain economy. They need convenience, not red tape and delays and bureaucracy. They need a government that moves faster. They need a government that moves as fast as the people ready to seize opportunities. That is what protecting Ontario means, and that is what the POWER Act delivers.

Protecting Ontario means being clear-eyed about the world around us. Global uncertainty, supply chain disruptions and economic pressures beyond our borders have real consequences here at home. And we've listened, Speaker—we've listened to all Ontarians when it comes to representing what is in this bill. They know that when our closest trading partner imposes illegal tariffs, Ontario families, workers and businesses feel impacted. This is why our government is focused on certainty—protecting jobs, supporting investment and ensuring Ontario remains a competitive and a reliable place to work, do business, raise a family and be competitive.

We're fortifying our economy by eliminating needless red tape, boosting our competitive advantage and strengthening our economic resilience in the face of global uncertainty. This bill is about removing barriers that hold people back. It's about giving Ontario the tools it needs to respond decisively to global economic headwinds. Red tape reduction is about building modern, resilient systems that can support growth over the long-term and keep pace with how businesses, industry and workers operate today.

Since 2018, close to 700 actions taken across government to cut red tape have generated approximately \$1.3 billion in cost savings and have resulted in 1.8 million hours—that's 1.8 million hours that we have eliminated—of administrative burden saved.

I know our minister of small businesses has been working hard talking with small businesses in terms of what they need. Not only do they need our government to continue on its red tape reduction agenda, but we also need to keep on our plan to reduce taxes. Since this government got elected in 2018, there's not a single tax we have raised. Instead, we have lowered the small business tax thanks to

her leadership, thanks to Premier Ford, and now it's a 30% reduction.

What does this mean for the economy, Speaker? Less red tape, more money in the pockets of our small businesses. It means they can grow their business, hire more workers, grow our economy, spend in their community and really celebrate the power of supporting local.

Let's compare ourselves to others around our nation. Here in Ontario, we now have the lowest regulatory burden per capita compared to other provinces. Those are real results, and they are the result of many Ontarians who have brought ideas to us. This bill is an example. In this bill, we see measures that are brought to us first-hand by Ontarians, ones that are tired of regulation, that want to compete globally and want to hit the ground running. They don't want to have their capital stuck in burdensome red tape.

The results speak for themselves. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business said that Canada is losing businesses faster than they can create new ones. This is a national problem, but here in Ontario, we recognize this problem. We're boosting up and celebrating our small businesses, but also, we're reducing that red tape. As a result, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business has upgraded our province in terms of our red tape reduction excellence. We went from a C- under the Liberal government to an A- under Premier Ford's government. And now, as of a few months ago, Ontario received, thanks to the leadership of Premier Ford and this government, the first ever A grade from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business for reducing red tape.

I want to thank my colleagues, because they've also contributed to red tape reduction ideas while hosting different types of community events, round tables and really speaking to their constituents about what impacts them and how government can get out of the way and let businesses do what they do best, which is run their local shop, run their local manufacturing economy, run innovation, start a new business and really embrace that entrepreneurial spirit that has always been a fabric of our Canadian identity.

That's why we're bringing forward the Protecting Ontario's Workers and Economic Resilience Act. The POWER Act, if passed, is the next chapter in our mission to protect Ontario. This bill is built around two complementary pillars. The first is streamlining permits and approvals; and strengthening the support for workers is the second. It shows that our government is focused on supporting stability and strengthening protections, and doing it all while protecting worker safety and ensuring Ontario remains a competitive and attractive place to live, work and invest.

At its core, the POWER Act recognizes a simple truth: Protecting workers and supporting economic growth go hand in hand. Strong worker protection gives people security and confidence and a competitive economy gives workers opportunity. Together, they give Ontario the power to grow.

The POWER Act would help important projects move forward faster by reducing unnecessary delays and regulatory burdens, and without actually weakening protections.

0910

This bill is focused squarely on improving outcomes—for job creators, for businesses large and small and for workers who are the engine of Ontario's economy. It's about ensuring regulations are focused, effective and easy to understand and navigate so that good projects are not stalled by paperwork that adds cost but no value.

The proposed changes in the POWER Act are designed to protect Ontario by making us the most competitive in the G7.

I will elaborate on the first pillar, the streamlining permits and approvals pillar. It focuses on reducing duplication and accelerating approvals to support economic growth. The work the government has been doing on streamlining permits and approvals has been recognized nationally by the Prime Minister. For example, they are now embarking on their own review on how to get projects off the ground faster, to build Ontario, to create one economy. That's because Ontario has always been a leader. We've always set the bar high in terms of examples we need to keep the economy roaring on all cylinders.

It's because we've heard from the people of Ontario. They've told us the system often moves too slowly. It's fragmented, it's unpredictable and it limits economic opportunity. We heard them, we saw them, we embraced their ideas, and we've created the POWER Act. They expect to see measurable progress.

Right now, businesses still face longer approval times than peer jurisdictions for key areas of economic activity, including advanced manufacturing and resource development. These delays increase risk, raise costs and can make Ontario less competitive.

It's a simple concept, Speaker. This bill, and our government's agenda, is going to continue to give businesses what they need, and that is certainty. When costs and timelines are known, investors and job creators can make decisions with great confidence. It means they can hire more and create jobs.

Businesses also have to navigate a web of overlapping requirements across multiple government ministries and bodies, which creates confusion and inefficiency. That is unacceptable. When people pay taxes, they expect outcomes. They don't expect complexity, burdensome red tape and things that mire them from keeping progress moving.

Not only are we working with Ontarians, we're working with all our partners. We also recognize Indigenous communities, who are engaged repeatedly with our government across different regulatory processes. They've also said that it's a siloed approach. We're breaking down those silos and listening first-hand to all of our partners across this great nation.

Compounding this challenge, of course, is what we've heard from many Ontarians: the lack of accessible, comprehensive digital tools to help businesses clearly understand and navigate approval pathways. Simply put, too many things are still done on paper in a digital world. That takes up time, it takes up resources and it makes our system fragmented.

There's also a lack of transparency and accountability when it comes to approval timelines and requirements.

Many businesses, when they're dealing across different, multiple—when you're a small business and you have multiple franchises, it's easier for you to talk to one another. But we've heard that when it's time to talk to government, it's too fragmented. Things are slow and progress is slow, so it's time to embrace technologies and time to embrace modernization.

Red tape reduction has embarked on that modernization with our partners across government, across the enterprise, and with many ministries involved. Getting digital, Speaker, is one of our first approaches to reducing red tape, with ways that we can look at what is being done on paper-based applications, what we can do to digitalize them, and the work is ongoing.

I want to thank the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery and Procurement, who is going to be embarking on great work when it comes to allowing more people to review things digitally.

For instance, if you have a great project, you have a great idea in this province and you want to get it off the ground, you know you have to get a certain amount of permits. But there is no way, there is no platform right now where you can go and actually look up to see where you are in the process. This stagnates their ambition, it stagnates their certainty, it stagnates capital and, frankly, it may mean they move somewhere else where it's easier to do business and there's more predictability.

That is now changing under this government. We're creating a platform where any person—just like you would look up your driver's licence status or your passport status, a system where investors, businesses and small businesses alike can see where they are in the process on permits. This is the certainty that they've asked for. This is the certainty our government will deliver.

That is why we're continuously working on our permit modernization work that we started back in 2025. That work helped us identify over 150 permits that are economically driven permits in this province. Before that exercise, the government did not know how many economic permits they had. Similar jurisdictions like Alberta have done a similar exercise.

But what do we do with that information? This information armed us with the ability to look at those 150 permits and transform how we interact with businesses. Whether it's improving service delivery standards, whether it's getting rid of permit duplications, whether it's putting in guarantees or using policy tools, like shot clock or "permit by rule" or code of practice—all things that have been done in other countries—we're borrowing great ideas and bringing them here to Ontario. This will help make our economy more agile and help us respond quickly to global challenges and emerging opportunities.

We've heard clearly and consistently from businesses of every size in every sector on the need for a clearer and more coordinated approach to permitting. We listened. Ontario now has an ambitious, structured plan to read permits in bundles, reducing duplication, accelerating timelines and creating consistency across ministries. This approach gives businesses and project proponents a clear

road map, with permits that have been reviewed and modernized on a defined schedule.

We are moving permits online, starting with mining, to create a modern, single-window digital system that is easier to navigate and faster to use. Before, as we talked about "one project, one process"—it has become a success story that also has been borrowed by the national government. Many permits were not digitalized, as I mentioned earlier. So this is the work going forward: making sure it's a seamless approach, a single window, and we're using technology to our advantage and to the advantage of Ontarians.

By the end of 2028, every economic development-focused permit will be reviewed. Our goal is to eliminate or streamline at least 35% of over 350 permits, focusing on those with the greatest impact. Again, this is about modernizing the system, so it's guided by consistency. It's evidence-based analysis, and it balances risk and opportunity and ensures clear service standards when operational.

As I mentioned, we're seeing early success. "One project, one process" is a coordinated approach on advanced exploration, mine development and cutting timelines, while also maintaining environmental safeguards. We've also seen special economic zones in effect since January 1, 2026, which establishes clear criteria for trusted proponents in eligible projects. We've seen the work of species-at-risk permitting: Timelines have been reduced significantly from roughly one year to an average of three months, without compromising the environment. And a new duty to consult coordination division is strengthening consistency and accountability across our government, so we continue to work and coordinate with all partners.

Today, we are bringing forward additional initiatives to build on that momentum. Together, these measures modernize outdated permitting processes, strengthen safeguards and create a more responsive and competitive regulatory environment.

Under the streamlined permits and approvals pillar, the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks proposes to further modernize Ontario's environmental assessment framework. These changes are designed to shorten timelines and improve efficiency while preserving strong environmental oversight. This is about ensuring environmental protections remain robust while also ensuring good projects are not stalled unnecessarily.

It gives Ontario the power to grow responsibly. Environmental assessments play a critical role in protecting Ontario's air, land, water and communities, but over time, the process has become more complex, longer and harder to navigate, without always delivering better environmental outcomes. That is why Ontario is proposing targeted legislative regulatory changes to modernize the comprehensive environmental assessment process, so projects that are environmentally sound can move forward faster while strong oversight is maintained. These changes are designed to remove unnecessary or duplicative steps, shorten timelines and improve efficiency without weakening environmental safeguards.

0920

Speaker, the proposed changes would streamline the comprehensive environmental assessment process. Let me tell you how: for starters, removing the requirement to publish and consult at the ministry review stage, where feedback rarely changes outcomes, while preserving public and Indigenous engagement at earlier and more meaningful points in the process. This is feedback we got directly from people, directly from Indigenous communities, who said they want to be engaged earlier in the process—at the beginning—and that is what we're doing. Rather than duplicating steps, adding burden to many communities, our resolve is to consult early, at the beginning, and ensure everyone is heard and projects can move forward.

We're also removing the requirement for cabinet approval of a minister's environmental assessment decision. Speaker, we shouldn't have bureaucratic delays delaying projects from moving off the ground just to duplicate paperwork—another stamp from another level of government. So as a result, the minister will still maintain the ability to refer applications to cabinet, where broader consideration is appropriate, but we're not going to mire the work in red tape and more delays and bureaucracy.

We're also removing the automatic public ability to request a tribunal hearing while preserving the minister's discretion to refer applications or specific matters to the tribunal where warranted. Speaker, matters can still be given to the tribunal, but straightforward applications—ones that are very, very low risk—can keep moving in their progress and trajectory.

Across all these changes, the focus is clear: We're removing procedural delay, not environmental protection. Indigenous communities, stakeholders and the public will continue to have multiple opportunities to provide input, from the development of terms of reference, for instance, to consulting during the EA preparation, to a full public comment period on the environmental assessment itself. This is where the meaningful engagement will happen. This is the feedback we've received.

The POWER Act also proposes changes to streamline approvals for waste disposal sites, and I can go into that in length later in my speech.

We're also considering complementary changes under the environment act and Clean Water Act to allow septic systems for on-farm worker housing to be established more quickly and more predictably. This is something I've heard across the province over the summer months and over the years where, if we're going to get more of our goods, more of our food to market—we just had the Ontario Federation of Agriculture here the other day—they need to actually house the workers on site. That cannot happen without this particular amendment that we heard directly from the farmers who feed our cities.

Many of us drive around, whether it's in Toronto or across the province, and we gloriously advocate: "Farmers feed cities." But farmers can't feed cities if they don't have a place to house their workers. Farmers can't feed cities if capital is fleeing this province. Farmers can't feed cities if they are stuck and mired in red tape.

So we've heard, whether it's from the manufacturing floor to the farmer to the agricultural workers to everyone across this province—we've heard them loud and clear that these are red tape reduction measures that will help them not only get their products and goods faster to market but also eliminate burdens that they've encountered and help them grow this great province and create more opportunities.

Of course, Speaker, by reducing approval timelines, Ontario is not only supporting our farmers' ability to house these workers safely and appropriately, but we're also strengthening food production and the agricultural food supply chain, which has never been more important than it is now. This will help us reduce operational delays and help ensure Ontario's agricultural sector remains competitive and resilient. This is specifically important at a time when supply chain stability and domestic food production are more critical than ever.

Health, environmental integrity and neighbouring property interests remain central to this approach, but overcrowded or inadequate housing, as well as insufficient sewage treatment, are recognized as risk factors for public health outcomes. That is why safer housing is necessary; proper design of a septic system is necessary. That and stronger compliance are all part of protecting the dignity, health and well-being of the people who contribute so much to Ontario's food supply. This is yet another example of how the POWER Act gives Ontario the power to grow responsibly.

Speaker, another important proposal under this pillar is focusing on making it faster and easier for businesses to obtain permissions to take water, while maintaining strong environmental oversight. Together, many projects require both an environmental compliance approval and a permit to take water. This is duplication. While it does serve important purposes, we have two separate processes that result in duplication, in longer timelines and add administrative burden for proponents without actually delivering stronger environmental outcomes—in fact, it confuses those environmental outcomes.

That is why Ontario is exploring targeted changes under the Environmental Protection Act, the Ontario Water Resources Act and the Ontario bill of rights to enable a more streamlined, coordinated approach when both approvals are required. These proposals would allow for a consolidated approval process for the environmental compliance approvals, which has strong and rigorous oversight, and the permit to take water.

Rather than navigating actually two parallel systems, this approach will reduce administrative burden and cost for businesses; support faster project delivery; make requirements easier to understand and comply with; and allow for more coordinated public and Indigenous engagement, rather than fragmented consultation across processes.

Speaker, there's a theme to all these changes, as I'm sure you've noted: The system is fragmented, and we need to make sure that we are aligned across all the different processes.

There's no denying access to water is critical for many sectors of our Ontario economy, including manufacturing,

agriculture, food processing and resource development. When approval processes are slow or duplicative, timelines stretch, costs increase and investment decisions can be delayed or, frankly, lost. I don't know about you, Speaker, but I'd rather have these jobs here in Ontario—growing our local food, growing our local economy—rather than losing them to other jurisdictions.

That is why we're doing what we're doing in this particular bill. We're going to be reviewing not only the permissions that I've currently outlined, but we have a broader commitment to modernize the regulatory system so we stop that fragmentation. These changes that we're proposing, as I mentioned, will bring clear service standards that are fair and within the ministry's oversight.

I also want to turn to how we're streamlining the At Your Service Act reporting, moving it from quarterly to biannual reporting. This might seem like a small change, Speaker, but it actually will help the government and businesses move with more predictability, so that we have permitting timelines that we can actually publish and outline to the greater public. It will help us clarify when service standards apply, and we're ensuring transparency without creating unrealistic expectations or unintended pressure on the consultation process.

This means we're publishing timelines on terms of what the government of Ontario can control, and we're eliminating those timelines that are out of our hands or that we cannot control. Frankly speaking, it's actually giving more autonomy to the public, but also expectations of how we get projects moving. This is clarity that is needed. It will clearly improve the system, and it will not change how applications are assessed. It will not reduce transparency. In fact, it will increase it to be more accurate on an annual basis rather than biannual.

The government will continue to publish reports in terms of ministry performances and will move to clear communication. I'll emphasize that reporting continues, timelines are accurate, and it aligns with broader modernization efforts. This work supports a more transparent, efficient and accountable permitting system that aligns with modern realities.

Next, Speaker, I want to turn to the changes that are going to be done by the Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism. They are proposing a series of service delivery improvements to the heritage framework transformation. Speaker, this minister has actually cleared the heritage backlog from something like 330,000 applications to zero. He's continuing that important work. The important work he's doing is to improve accountability and transparency while delivering faster, more predictable approvals to support housing, infrastructure and economic development projects. This work recognizes Ontario's archaeological framework, which has not undergone actual significant review or updates in more than a decade. That's what we're doing here. We're modernizing the process to better reflect the current environment, development realities and expectations around this province.

0930

Speaker, there is so much in this bill that I would need another half an hour to explain our framework, but I know

I did say I was going to share my time with the Minister of Labour. So let me just highlight a few other last items before I turn it to my colleague to talk about the second pillar of this bill.

Overall, transforming the permitting process is about results. It's about driving our economy so we do not lose capital and we do not lose jobs that could flee our province because of economic uncertainty.

We're also strengthening the ability to recruit more doctors and medical students here in Ontario by doing some changes when it comes to having access to medical residency spots.

We're also recognizing the strong francophone fabric of our province when it comes to the Ombudsman, ensuring there is a component that recognizes that that position needs to be bilingual. Again, this actually does help with red tape reduction since we have someone who is able to communicate in both languages so there's no confusion or misinterpretation in terms of the needs of the Ombudsman.

I want to thank the Minister of Francophone Affairs, who has advocated for that community and has brought this change forward.

In everything we do and everything we build, we may speed up the processes to help businesses get off the ground, we may provide certainty when it comes to the permitting process—none of that would be possible without skilled labour. I will turn to the second pillar of this bill, the POWER Act, in terms of what we're doing to strengthen our labour force, bring them the certainty they need and the protections they need and build on this government's work to protect Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I recognize the Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development.

Hon. David Piccini: It's an honour to rise, as always, to represent the good people of Northumberland—Peterborough South. It's been a while since I've spoken, so I really appreciate the opportunity to speak today in support of the Protecting Ontario's Workers and Economic Resilience Act, 2026.

I want to just first start by thanking my colleague Minister Khanjin—my first seatmate in this place—who I had the privilege of working so closely with on this piece of legislation that really encompasses a whole suite of measures we're putting in place to support workers in Ontario.

This one, for me, is a real personal one, Speaker, because there are a number of measures that we have in this that we've been working for quite some time on. Again, thank you, Minister Khanjin, for bringing forward this package of legislative and regulatory changes that are truly reflective of what we've heard from Ontarians.

It recognizes that worker protection and economic resilience are not competing goals, but mutually reinforcing ones. Under the leadership of Premier Ford, we're confronting the real challenges facing Ontario's economy—from global economic pressures and supply chain disruptions to rising costs and trade uncertainty.

This package speaks to a broader expectation that Ontarians have of their government, that we respond to economic challenges with clarity, stability and fairness.

People want to know that the rules reflect today's realities, that protections keep pace with how work is changing. They want to know that the economy we are building is one that works for everyone, not just during times of growth but during times of uncertainty as well.

We believe in a simple yet powerful idea: that Ontario's economic backbone is really a measure of the strength of its workers. At a time when families, businesses and entire sectors are being tested by economic challenges, it's our responsibility to ensure that workers are protected, supported and, most importantly, treated fairly.

The reality is that we're living through a period of unprecedented change. We know that for employers it means tighter margins and difficulty planning ahead. It means government needs to act decisively. In times like these, people look to their government not for words but for action, and they look for practical measures that protect their paycheques, their safety and their ability to keep contributing to their communities and our economy. That's exactly what this package is designed to do. It's a comprehensive plan that would ensure Ontario workers are protected, supported and equipped for opportunity and I'm proud to speak in support of it today, Speaker.

I want to start by thanking the incredible team at the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development who have worked on this. I want to say a special thank you to the team in my ministerial office. I have the privilege of working with them every day and they have to put up with me, which is not an easy task—something we can all agree on. They've worked with incredible professionalism and diligence many a late night, working with various sectors of our economy to implement these measures. I'm grateful for them and the work that they do every day.

We recognize that when workers are protected, businesses are stronger, and when businesses are strong, Ontario grows. This is an approach we've taken from day one. This package focuses on three key pillars: protecting workers' paycheques, supporting injured workers and strengthening worker protections and economic resilience.

I've sat down with workers and I've sat down with employers, and the message has been consistent: The system needs to work better. Workers are asking for fairness, for clarity and for a system that they can rely on. This is what good public policy looks like: identifying gaps, closing them and evolving systems so that they work better for everyone. That's exactly what these measures do.

Let's start with the principle that guides much of what we do: Work should pay, and pay should be protected. You'll recall we implemented a number of measures in previous Working for Workers bills that helped workers take home more of their hard-earned paycheques, from making sure they take home their tips to making tips in instances like dine-and-dash that workers aren't footing the bill for that irresponsible patron.

For too many employees, especially those in lower-wage or precarious jobs, the ability to take home a full paycheque can mean the difference between stability and stress. For many families, a single reduced paycheque can

trigger serious consequences: late rent, unpaid bills and possible choices between essentials. These pressures are felt most acutely by employees who already have the least margin for error.

Our responsibility as legislators is to ensure that employment standards evolve with today's economy and reflect the realities people face. No employee should have to pay out of pocket just to show up for work, Speaker. Yet, for far too long, that has been the reality. Think about the server at your favourite restaurant, a hotel housekeeper or a retail worker stocking shelves. Right now, some of these workers are being asked to pay out of pocket for a uniform that they're required to wear on the job, clothing they can't use anywhere else. No one should have to pay to go to work. That's money coming directly out of their paycheque before they've even settled into their job. As one worker put it to me, "If I'm required to wear it, my employer should be paying for it." That's why we're taking action, Speaker.

I recall one of my first jobs. I was a university student, and I had settled in at the University of Ottawa. I worked long before it. But when I was off on my own, I got a job at a local deli, La Bottega in the ByWard Market. I had the opportunity to slice prosciutto—no stereotype there, with the vowel at the end of my last name, but I got to do that. I got to work with an incredible team. I remember they're a fantastic small employer. They gave me the first T-shirt we had to wear, a La Bottega T-shirt, and they paid for it.

That's what we're doing here: standardizing that, a good practice that a good small business like La Bottega already does, enshrining it across Ontario, Speaker—simple changes. It means no more deductions for branded or employer-specific uniforms, and no more employees effectively paying to start earning a living. These are common-sense, simple changes that have a real reality for people trying to crack into the job market. For young people today, with record youth unemployment, every dollar, every cent matters. We want to make sure they take home more of their hard-earned dollars.

Speaker, this is reflective of a measured approach that protects employees while recognizing the realities facing employers. Work should not come with an upfront price tag.

Beyond that, we're ensuring that employees are receiving what they are owed, because that money is not theoretical. Time and time again in this place members have brought up the issue of unpaid wages. This is something that this government has taken action on—

Interruption.

Hon. David Piccini: You seem so excited; there's a ghost there moving things around—because this is an issue that I've heard from members opposite and members on this side of the House as well. We've brought in place in previous Working for Workers acts some of the toughest fines for bad-actor employers who withhold wages from their employees. We've protected some of the most vulnerable workers through regulating temporary help agencies, among the number of things that we've done.

This bill is taking it yet another step forward in the right direction by making sure that those wages we do recover, Speaker—I acknowledge that government constantly has to strive to do better, to recuperate those unpaid wages. But when we do recuperate them—I didn't realize this—there's an administrative charge that goes to the government first, so the first person to settle on that is government, not the worker, and that's wrong. That's why a common-sense measure in this bill makes sure—that has existed through successive governments, and it's crazy that we haven't fixed that, but this government is taking action to fix it so that when unpaid wages are recuperated, we make sure an employee is whole first. It's a common-sense change, Speaker.

0940

I mentioned temporary help agencies just a moment ago. One of the measures we're implementing here is the Strengthening Talent Agency Regulation Act, known as the STAR Act. We know that Ontario's arts, culture and creative industries are a major economic driver, generating more than \$26 billion annually and supporting tens of thousands of good jobs, but for too long they have operated without clear and consistent protections.

Here's what I've been hearing when I sit down with the people who actually make this industry run, who bring it to life, who tell our stories, who bring that story to life on screen or in a theatre, just to name a few. These are some of our fondest moments. Mine, growing up, was sitting down and enjoying a film, going to our local theatre. Now, having the opportunity to take on this portfolio—it really shouldn't become taking on the labour portfolio, but I truly have a profound sense of the challenges that this talent, our creative industry, has to endure, and so I'm really proud of one of the measures that we've implemented in this bill.

Performers who complete their work, who brought the role to life, wait weeks or sometimes months for a paycheque, or sometimes they're never paid at all. In one case, a talent agency, a real scumbag—Compass? I don't even know the name; the guy is a real bad actor—left more than 60 performers stranded, a cumulative owing of over \$1 million for workers.

ACTRA brought in those workers to our ministry, and I had the chance to sit around a table with them. I heard a story of a bright young woman, cracking in to become an actor who worked hard, who had a gig and whose talent agent promised them they had work. They got work, and they did the work, had a bit of savings from that work and had made plans to purchase a home, but they never got paid, Speaker. They never got paid for that work that they did. Imagine the instability of those life plans—starting a family, buying a home. That's just one of the many stories I heard from the actors who were not paid for the work they did.

Full stop, and a principle I think we can all agree on, is that you should be paid for the work you do. I really valued and appreciated the opportunity I had to sit down with those workers because I've always said, at its core, our legislation should speak to the stories of the people we have the privilege of meeting in this role. That's what

keeps getting me up in the morning: getting to see them every day and hearing different stories, different vignettes of what is the real life that everyday Ontarians live. We're fleeting; politicians come in and out of it, but it's what you do with that, and I think we've had the opportunity to work collaboratively to act.

Right now, talent agencies in Ontario are unregulated—no requirements for how they handle performers' money, no deadlines for when they have to pay, no stability for that creative sector. For an industry of this size, this importance to our economy, to the Canadian economy, it's simply not good enough. When we see what's going on in the world, we cannot and will not lose our creative industries; we can't. As a country, it's so important that we take measures to protect it. Our province is a global destination for film and television production because of our talent, our infrastructure and our world-class reputation.

We have the best performers and entertainment workers in the world, and I think clear and transparent rules don't just protect them; they protect their paycheques and strengthen that reputation, making Ontario an even more attractive place for productions to invest, grow and create good-paying jobs. The good actors in this industry—and there are many—want a level playing field as well: rules to ensure everyone is playing fair.

We had TAMAC at our announcement the other day. This is codifying and enshrining many good practices that already exist in the industry.

If passed, this new act would include a cap on agency commissions and a ban on any other fees on top of that; a 10-day business guarantee for agencies to pay performers, subject to regulations; and a requirement to hold performers' funds in a separate bank account in trust for those workers, bringing transparency and accountability to a previously unregulated sector. These are the kinds of protections that will positively impact tens of thousands of performers across Ontario.

At its core, it's about protecting workers. Performers deserve the same basic protections as any other worker. They deserve to know when they'll be paid and that money that they earn isn't misused or delayed. And that separate bank account provision, I think, is common sense. It makes sure that there is clear accounting and clear numbers behind what they've earned. The talent agent deducts whatever that fee is—again, we're regulating and providing some assurances around that, but making sure that creative professional gets paid, because if you did the work, you should get paid.

I want to take a moment to acknowledge some pretty amazing people. We, as I said, hold these roles for a fleeting moment, but if you can do the work with them—and they fought. They've been in this chamber before—they're no strangers—and that's ACTRA members who are here today: the Toronto president, Kate Ziegler, she's here with us today. Thank you, Kate, for being here.

Paul Constable—thank you, Paul, for being here today as well.

I know we have our executive director, Rob Halpin, who's here today. Welcome and congratulations, Rob, on your new role. We've had the privilege of getting to know each other in a prior capacity, and I know this role is even better, so I can't wait to keep working with you, Rob.

I'm not sure if Amy, Mercedes, Jinny, Jameson and Elana are here as well—yes, they are up there. They're all from ACTRA, and vice-presidents who are here. Thank you all for being here today. I really value the opportunity to work with you.

Kate, I appreciate you bringing those creative professionals into my office and sharing those stories. I appreciate their advocacy. I think this is what happens—good public policy—when you work together and collaboratively. I look forward to continuing to work with creative professionals as we continue to grow that sector and strengthen worker protections for those workers. It's my hope—and I know from the member opposite who went up that this is surely something we can all wrap our arms around and support, this piece of legislation.

The second theme I'd like to cover is something even more fundamental to worker safety: It's the principle that every worker deserves to come home safe at the end of the day.

On top of job sites that we see across Ontario, I had the privilege of being at the Coleman mine site with steel workers just last week: up early, down the mine shaft at 5 in the morning—the opportunity to speak with Dave Lisi and a number of others. Dave and Sean have been strong advocates for USW 6500.

We had the opportunity, just prior to that day in the mine, to speak with widows. I sat around the table, and they put pictures of lost loved ones on the table. It's real chilling to see that. There's a real price to be paid for economic prosperity and for what we do, and I think it's our role as public policy-makers to make sure that their stories are heard and that they're told.

So two measures in this bill that I believe are really paramount, that are reflective of the will of those workers and so many more, are to make sure that we protect workers, and this act proposes significant changes to Ontario's workplace safety and insurance system.

First, we're proposing to increase the WSIB, Workplace Safety and Insurance Board, loss of earnings benefit from 85% of pre-injury earnings, to 90% of a worker's lost income. This is the first substantive increase in 30 years—30 years, we've been talking about bumping it up. This government did it.

0950

Speaker, for nearly three decades, as I said, hard-working Ontarians were ignored when they brought that forward. This change is long, long overdue. It will provide greater income security, fewer impossible trade-offs between recovery and paying the bills and greater piece of mind during recovery.

We're also proposing an additional measure with the WSIB: the discretion of loss of income earnings benefits beyond age 65 and getting rid of that age cap. This is something that many members of this Legislature have

spoken to, getting rid of that age cap beyond 65 for workers who are going to continue working. We know there's almost half a million workers, and there's probably more—but half a million we know, according to Statistics Canada, who work beyond the age of 65. Speaker, the dangers faced by those miners, by many others, don't just stop at 65 if you're working, so those protections should continue with them. I'm proud that we're doing that.

To give you an example of the measures that we're introducing—I've spoken about Sandee Green's story, the story of so many here today. Sandee is a worker at Choices, and Sandee's been fighting for 30-some-odd years to extend WSIB protections for workers in congregate care settings, for workers in long-term care, retirement homes etc. This is what this bill is also doing for workers like Sandee.

We had her here yesterday for lunch with SEIU union, Ty Downey and the incredible team there who've been amazing. Good things can happen when you sit down at the table with government and find solutions. I had the privilege of sitting down with Ty and with those workers, and then Sandee said, "We fought for this, but I just realized I'm over 65. I'm about to be"—and I don't want to get into the weeds on her age, but she said, "I'm not going to be covered."

Surprise—in this bill, we're also extending those benefits beyond the age of 65. And so, what a nice conversation that was with Minister Khanjin yesterday and a number of other ministers and some members opposite that popped in to say hi too. I really value that collaborative relationship.

These changes wouldn't be made possible without a financially healthy WSIB. I recall a time when it was an underfunded liability, yet we're in a strong position today where premiums are among their lowest in the last 50 years. We're working hard with the WSIB to make sure it's in a strong fiscal position, and—I think this is something that's reflective of some of the conversations I've heard—a WSIB where the culture is there to support workers. It's not there to deny a claim but to support those workers.

MPP Wayne Gates: What about deeming?

Hon. David Piccini: Speaker, to the member opposite: You'll have a chance to ask questions. Just let me finish my speech and then you'll have a chance.

This package also addresses a long-standing gap in worker protections. As I said, under the current system, publicly run residential care facilities and group homes require WSIB coverage, yet those protections aren't extended to many private and not-for-profit facilities. That's simply not right, and we're fixing that wrong that's existed for far too long. A member opposite spoke yesterday about pushing for that with previous labour ministers, but we're getting the job done, Speaker.

I again want to thank Sandee Green, who works at a residential care facility. I want to thank Sandee for her advocacy. This measure is for you, Sandee, and the countless other workers like you who deserve that protection.

Speaker, we know that today, giving those workers clarity, dignity and the support they need to care for others is going to have an impact. That's approximately just shy of 30,000 workers who will be impacted by this measure. This change recognizes the essential work that these caregivers perform every day supporting some of the most vulnerable in our community and caring for them. And I think many of us would admit that in our own lives and in the lives of those we've cared about, we've had the privilege of getting to know many of those care workers and the incredible work that they do.

One of the measures I also wanted to talk about, and there's so many in this bill, was targeted regulatory improvements to modernize Ontario's health and safety framework. Some of these measures in this bill also include recognizing CSA-approved respirators in regulation to cut red tape and make it easier to use respirators made to a Canadian standard. A great example: I had workers at LIUNA 183 reach out to me in the tunnels, talking to me. They do incredible work in tunnels. They were talking to me about an employer requirement relative to respirators. This is what happens when our regulations don't make sense and when we don't harmonize to national standards. Well, that's what we're doing here with this measure on CSA-approved respirators, giving workers the confidence to know that what they're using to keep them safe is CSA-certified and is held to a high standard across Canada. Certainly we want to adopt that and I value the work that the CSA team do each and every day to make sure workers are safe on the job site.

We're also improving workers' ability to keep track of their exposure through the occupational exposure registry. This is a Canadian first. Government is not traditionally very good with technology. Yet in this instance we've worked hard as a team—the great officials in our ministry—to launch this exposure registry to empower workers with reporting, because I've heard from injured workers groups about clustered exposures, and the ability for us to empower workers with documenting those exposures is only going to help us in the long run. Again, I appreciate the work that countless injured workers groups—unions, worker advocates—have done on that exposure registry.

In addition, we're mandating type 2 hard hats on construction projects where workers, we know, are exposed to side impacts. Working at heights continues to be one of the leading causes of fatalities and worker injuries. Many of our large general contractors are already going that way, and I think responsible government is at times to come in in a strong way, as we've done with the Employment Standards Act changes in the past for fatalities on job sites, to really target bad actors. But also, I believe in limited government that comes along and nudges folks in the right direction. As I said, general contractors are already going that way on some of the largest job sites today. From Union Station to the new nuclear plant that we're going to be building in Wesleyville, these will already be the requirements with many of our large GCs.

In fact, all of the large GCs came together on that, supported by Canada's building trades unions and Ontario's building trades: Marc Arsenault and Jim Hogarth, who are going to join me later today for lunch, and Sean Strickland, who was there and who advocated for this. We brought all the labour ministers together in Quebec City the other day on health and safety harmonization for working at heights, for mobile elevated work platforms, for hoisting and rigging. And we really finally—instead of the pithy, nebulous language that happens at these FPT meetings, where you really just argue on verbs and don't actually agree to much, we did. Labour ministers united on a common path and vision for action to keep high standards across Canada, to make sure workers are trained to that standard and that they can move from province to province to work on nation-building projects in a far more expeditious manner. Rising tides raise all ships. That's what we're doing.

In addition to this, type 2 hard hats—I've been going back and forth on some of the measures we're doing, and type 2 hard hats are a step in the right direction. It builds on previous work that we've already done.

Defibrillators on job sites: We met that GFL worker who woke up lying on the street, had had chest pains, was going to drive himself to the hospital, didn't make it across the street. Thankfully an ambulance was going by and he woke up with a defibrillator on him. Now that's on large construction sites, where we know we have an elevated risk of cardiac events.

What's really exciting is we're going to train workers in how to use those defibrillators. That's just one of the many things we're doing in this bill—

Interruption.

Hon. David Piccini: I'm getting the look, I think. I thought I had three minutes, but I think we have to wrap up, Speaker—or it's my phone, sorry. They're buzzing me.

The defibrillators: Those measures are important measures that we've put in place to support workers in this province. The type 2 hard hats, harmonizing health and safety standards, clearer rules on the job site are better for everyone.

1000

Speaker, we know that, as I mentioned, when we set our sights to building at a national level—as we've seen unanimity between this Premier, who's working collaboratively with Premiers of all different party stripes and our Prime Minister, to really set our sights on nation-building. I've often reflected on my grandfather's journey immigrating here. He was very much part of a generation who prided themselves in building this country. That's the case for so many of us. Whether it's starting a convenience store—or a shoe store, in my grandparents' case—or working in the steel factories in Hamilton, this is nation-building and this is the fabric for a strong Canada.

We lost our way, Speaker. We stopped building in the past, and this government is setting our sights—\$220 billion to infrastructure. That means a new hospital in Campbellford for people in my community. That means a new school in Newcastle in my own community. That

means a new long-term-care facility in Brighton, in Norwood. In every corner of our riding, we're investing after decades of neglect in the past.

But to do that, you've got to protect workers. As we set our sights on new nuclear, on pipelines, on Churchill, on so many large projects, we want to make sure workers are able to move freely. We were the first province to pass as-of-right legislation, letting workers work as a right in over 50 regulated professions and countless other certification bodies, and now we've added health and safety harmonization to that to make sure workers are safe as they move.

Again, I want to thank the incredible work of our ministry team, who have worked hard on that. We worked with other ministers at a national level—the minister from Nova Scotia, federal Minister Zerucelli, who's been really collaborative, all working together to make sure we have high standards for training for our workers as they build Canada. We're uncompromising in that—and that we get the job done and we build.

Every year, we've introduced progressive pieces of legislation that recognize that none of that happens without people. From what's on our TV screens, in our theatres, our buildings, none of that happens without people, and I'm proud to introduce measures today that would better protect those people.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Minister of Labour. I was really struck by the contrast between the measures included in this bill and the Premier's decision to spend \$30 million on a luxury private jet, which is just so completely out of touch with the needs of Ontario workers, and low-wage workers, in particular, that the minister talked about. We know that everyone in the province is struggling with cost of living, worried about paying the bills, whether they'll have a job to keep going to, and it's astonishing that the government decided that purchasing a luxury jet was an appropriate use of public dollars.

Can the minister tell us if he supported the Premier's decision to buy a \$30-million luxury private jet?

Hon. David Piccini: Speaker, I'm glad the member spoke about low wages and protections. We've introduced countless pieces of legislation to support retail workers, to support hospitality workers keeping their tips, to get rid of the practice of dining and dashing that is on the backs of workers. We actually indexed our minimum wage to provide guaranteed increases instead of the previous practice of that party when they held the balance of power, which was to use that as a political tool to target low-wage workers at election time with over-the-top increases without consulting business or workers. We've annualized that, providing stability for low-wage workers, enshrining protections in legislation like we've introduced today. None of that would happen without the leadership of this Premier.

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

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: My question is about schedule 6 in this bill. I'm wondering: If French proficiency is so important to this government, why, at the end of April, are you bringing this legislation, schedule 6, the

Ombudsman Act—why are you bringing it forward, when the process began, when the selection committee began and was formed in November? Shortly thereafter, job advertisements went out. In December, résumés were received, and in January, interviews started. Currently, as you know, the current Ombudsman retired.

So why the urgency? Why now? Why is French proficiency important to you at the end of this process?

Hon. Andrea Khanjin: I really want to thank that member opposite for her great question. It sounds to me like we have support for this change in this legislation. I hope she supports the entire bill as we do make this change to the Ombudsman for French proficiency, which actually builds on this government's investment when it comes to the francophone community.

I look at Collège Boréal in my riding of Barrie and how they've actually strengthened the francophone community in Simcoe county. But also, it was this government that stepped up to actually make the francophone flag an Ontario national symbol for that community.

I see here a lot of words, but I hope they're measured with actions when it comes to supporting the Franco-Ontarian community here in Ontario by supporting this change.

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

Mr. Matthew Rae: Thank you to the Minister of Red Tape Reduction and the Minister of Labour for their remarks this morning. My question is to the Minister of Labour.

I know he briefly talked about it on some of the harmonization that our province, under the leadership of Premier Ford, is making across Ontario and Canada. I was wondering if the Minister of Labour can elaborate on that, and why that's important to make a stronger Ontario and a stronger Canada around some of those labour harmonization initiatives.

Hon. David Piccini: It is really important, Speaker, because this Premier has set his sights on building public transit. We're actually building the Ontario Line that's going to move over 400,000 people every day. We're building highways and roads. Folks that never wanted to build another road again—we actually have to build these roads, these highways. We have to invest in public transit to help better move—to improve our grid of public transit that moves people in the GTHA and beyond, like the Northlander in communities like ours.

But behind all of it and behind massive investments like the Stellantis plant in Windsor—\$14 million in payroll a week that was happening there—are workers. Those workers, Speaker, undertake health and safety training, working at heights, mobile elevated work platforms. We're harmonizing that across Canada so that Ontario workers can work on large nation-building projects in other corners. They can work here, and we're all held to a high—

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

MPP Wayne Gates: You can't talk about WSIB without mentioning Willy Noiles, who gave his entire adult life to WSIB.

I could tell you that workers have fought really hard to get the retirement benefits past 65. I'm a firm believer that it should be retroactive. It's something that we could support, but it should be retroactive.

My question to the labour minister has been clear. You've had seven Working for Workers bills. The biggest issue for WSIB is when a worker, through no fault of his own, gets hurt on the job and then WSIB deems them. Then they end up having to live in poverty. About 75% of those workers are living in poverty once they've been deemed. That means they lose their family. They lose their homes.

So my question to you is clear: You can continue to do these bills and talk all you want about WSIB—when, and finally when? I've talked to you about this many, many times. When are you finally going to eliminate deeming so—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I recognize the Minister of Labour.

Hon. David Piccini: Speaker, for those injured workers, for 30 years, including when that member held the balance of power, they could have increased loss of earnings. They didn't; we did. They could have expanded benefits and gotten rid of the discriminatory age cap. They didn't; we did, Speaker.

You know what we'll keep doing? We'll keep looking at issues like deeming to make sure we actually had it done—

Interjection.

Hon. David Piccini: He talks. He shows up for the photo op, Speaker, but we're the ones actually doing the work. We're building the hospitals. We're supporting injured workers. It's no thanks to the photo op member opposite. We'll keep fighting for those workers—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): The opposition will come to order.

Hon. David Piccini: —that includes iterative changes that have increased loss-of-income earnings and—

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

1010

Mr. Anthony Leardi: The Minister of Labour talked about branded uniforms. We all know what those are. We've seen them before in workplaces. We go to a workplace and we see an employee wearing a branded uniform, and it's proudly displaying the enterprise, most commonly a restaurant or a chain or a franchise, and that's a good thing.

Sometimes the situation arises where there's a cost associated with that uniform and there's a question as to who should pay that cost. I think that's a fair question to ask. So I would like to ask the Minister of Labour is there something in this legislation that's being proposed which deals with the question of the cost of branded uniforms and how that will be treated going forward?

Hon. David Piccini: I appreciate the question from the member and the work he does to fight and support workers

in Windsor—a city where we're fighting for large investments to create opportunities for workers.

We know that when those workers go to work, they often go to restaurants, for example. I told the story in my speech about one of my first jobs. You get a branded uniform, and you fight hard to get that job. In my case, it was tough paying for school and also working. Those first few dollars shouldn't go towards paying for that uniform; you should have that branded uniform. That's really a common-sense change that we're proposing. Most businesses already do that, Speaker.

I want to be very clear, it's not multiple; it's that first uniform, and I—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): A quick question.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: The Minister of Red Tape Reduction spoke about operational delays and competitive resilience, especially in terms of agricultural processing capacity, yet information processing is the only type of processing that shows up in this bill.

It's nonsensical that our agricultural products are sent to the United States for processing, only for us to have them be purchased back. Does it make sense to the minister that Ontario is not investing in our agricultural processing capacity?

Hon. Andrea Khanjin: That actually addresses the point I made. I talked about capital fleeing this great province and this government's work to reshore that capital, including investments in our agricultural sector.

Speaker, we need to welcome in these businesses. If you're a processing plant and you want to start here, we need to be able to roll out the red carpet, not the red tape. Far too often have governments made us the regulatory capital of Canada. We've changed that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Thank you.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Given the time, we will now move to members' statements.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

VALLEY HERITAGE RADIO

MPP Billy Denault: This past week I had the pleasure of once again joining Ottawa Valley's voice, Valley Heritage Radio, for their annual Radiothon, alongside Art Jamieson, Andrew Cartwright and station manager Jason Marshall.

Valley Heritage Radio is a staple in our community, broadcasting across the valley and bringing people together every day. A tradition in my own family is to listen with my grandparents every Thursday night for Radio Bingo.

Whether you love gospel, country, bluegrass and fiddle, rock and roll, folk, east coast and much more, Valley Heritage Radio truly has something for everyone.

But more important than the music are the laughs, the characters and the stories that come through the airwaves.

Each broadcast leaves a stitch in the fabric of our community, capturing and sharing what it means to truly be from the valley.

A key part of the station's success is that it truly is a community project. Valley Heritage Radio is supported by its members and listeners, and in turn gives so much back: supporting Hospice Renfrew, promoting community events and sharing all things Ottawa Valley. It is in every sense the people's radio station.

With its 20th anniversary approaching in 2027, I know it will continue to be a strong voice in our region for many years to come.

Lastly, Speaker, I want to wish station manager Jason Marshall a very happy belated birthday, which was on April 18. Happy birthday, Jason.

ONTARIO MINE RESCUE

MPP Jamie West: Speaker, the most important thing to come out of the mine is the miner, and Ontario Mine Rescue makes that happen. For those who aren't aware, Ontario Mine Rescue is who miners call when there's an emergency.

It's hard to believe, but when things go wrong, a small crew of mine rescue volunteers swings into action. Let me give you an example: In 2021, there were 39 employees trapped 1,800 feet underground at Totten Mine. Vale and USW Local 6500 worked non-stop with Ontario Mine Rescue teams so that 39 miners could safely climb a secondary egress ladder system. That's a ladder system, Speaker, almost the same height as the tip of the CN Tower.

It wasn't luck. It was the training and preparedness of the 58 volunteer OMR responders working in shifts over four days to ensure that the miners, the most important thing coming out of the mine, could get to the surface.

The good news, Speaker, is that Ontario has invested \$125 million to build a permanent mine rescue training facility in Sudbury. The facility will ensure specialized training such as high-angle rescue, fire response, hazardous materials, confined space and structural collapse. Soon, Sudbury will be training about 540 responders annually. So my thanks to the minister, to Workplace Safety North, to Ontario Mine Rescue for investing in the most valuable thing to come out of Ontario's mines: our miners.

AMYOTROPHIC LATERAL SCLEROSIS

MPP Tyler Watt: Today I'm honoured to welcome members from ALS Canada to the gallery and to the Legislature and talk about ALS.

ALS is a disease that has touched far too many lives, and it's not just a disease to me; it is my father. My father, Randy Watt, was diagnosed with ALS in December 2022, and just two short years later, we lost him. I watched this incredible man—strong, independent, full of life—slowly lose the ability to do the simplest things: to walk, to use his hands, to speak and eventually to breathe.

The hardest part is, you don't wait to grieve with this disease. You grieve while they're still there. You grieve

every milestone you know is coming—the last time he walked, the last time he hugged me, the last time I heard his voice—and you carry all of that while still trying to be strong for them.

That's what active grief feels like. It's being their loved one, a caregiver, and grieving the inevitable, while knowing you watch them lose their independence piece by piece. Even after they're gone, that grief stays with you. It shows up in quiet moments, in memories you wish you could relive just one more time, in all the things you left unsaid.

That's why organizations like ALS Canada mean so much to me: because when families are going through the unimaginable, they don't have to do it alone. They also give me hope in the research that they do. It gives me hope that one day we will never have to see someone go through this terrible disease.

And to my dad, I carry you with me every single day.

WATER AND SEWAGE INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Will Bouma: Speaker, every day many of us use clean water, and we do so without thinking about it. Fresh water is essential for life. In this province, and especially in my beautiful riding of Brantford—Brant, we are blessed to have an abundance of water. When we waste it or when we take it for granted, we ignore how precious it truly is.

Speaker, my motto has been to leave things better than I found them. That's why I am so proud to announce that on April 10, our government, under the leadership of Premier Ford, is investing \$12.5 million for a new waste water treatment plant upgrade, including a UV disinfection and phosphorus removal system in the city of Brantford. This is a safe and instant sterilization method that occurs without changing water taste or creating by-products. Currently, chemicals such as chlorine treat the effluent that is released back into the Grand River. With this new system, the waste water is even cleaner than at intake.

This upgrade will not only secure clean drinking water, but enable new home construction and attract even more private sector investments and new jobs in our region. Speaker, the mayor of Brantford, Kevin Davis, said it best: "Together, we're protecting public health and building for the future."

GOVERNMENT JET

Ms. Jennifer K. French: This Premier set his sights on Billy Bishop airport so jets would be allowed to fly into the Toronto harbour, and now we know why: This PC government bought Doug Ford a private luxury jet for \$29 million. Ontario is understandably furious, so the Premier has pulled the chute and now says he'll sell the plane. This folksy, elitist Premier needs to get his head out of the clouds and do his job, which is governing the province, not jet-setting to the States.

We, the people in Oshawa, have thoughts to share. W.E. says, "It seems to be a very extravagant expense when we

should be putting the money to better use, such as in health care.”

Alexander P. says, “If the government is prioritizing luxury air travel while front-line services like education and health care are under strain, the public deserves to see the receipts.”

John is a student in Oshawa who shares, “Students are being told to accept more debt, work harder, struggle more, and somehow be grateful for it. Meanwhile, his government can spend nearly \$29 million on a plane for his travel. Students are expected to scrape by, but there always seems to be money when it is for him, his image, or his priorities.”

1020

Clare wants to know, “Who was involved in approving funds for the plane?” Great question, Clare. Since it wasn’t in the budget but had to go through cabinet, it seems these cabinet ministers are enablers who can’t say no when the Premier wants a pony.

While the celebrity Premier is mad he lost his jet plane, the rest of Ontario is mad they have to beg for scraps. Next week, he might want a yacht, but real people want health care and affordable housing. Shame on this Premier.

GRAND RIVER MALAYALEE ASSOCIATION

Ms. Jess Dixon: On Saturday, I went to one of my favourite events, which is any event that is held by the GRMA, the Grand River Malayalee Association. I feel like GRMA events mark my calendar through all the years I’ve been elected: the Spring Show, Onam, the New Year’s show, the South Asian sports day. This is a community that, right after I was elected, I went to one of their events and they welcomed me with open arms in a way that has been distinctive, and I’ve been so connected to them ever since. I love going to all of their events. I’m looking forward to Onam in August. I have been promised a new Onam sari on its way from India, so I’m very excited about that.

But thank you so much to this community for always making me feel so incredibly welcome. To the president, Rayees Nishad; we had a wonderful emcee at the Spring Show, Priyanka Madhukar; to Nitin, the secretary; Balu, the director—our relationships just keep growing. One of the secretaries, Jo, his son was a page here just a few weeks ago.

Anyway, thank you so much, again. I’m looking forward to seeing you all at Onam and perhaps finally participating in a cricket practice, which I keep promising to do. Thank you. Nandi. I’m looking forward to seeing you at all the events in the future.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Speaker, being an elected official, having the support of my constituents, is the honour of a lifetime. I know you understand this personally and I know you also understand why I’m enraged that

the Premier and this government disrespect the same trust that Ontarians have placed in them. They breach that trust by screening themselves from freedom-of-information requests, all in a desperate attempt to keep the Premier’s phone records hidden from public scrutiny.

If the public wants to know what the Premier is doing or who his cabinet is meeting with or which lobbyists are whispering into their ears when they dole out billion-dollar contracts, that is simply now too bad under these newly weakened FOI rules.

FOI requests are the cornerstone of transparency and accountability. Without FOI requests, we would not have uncovered the greenbelt giveaway, the corruption with the Skills Development Fund or the fact that the Ontario Science Centre’s roof was not at risk of imminent collapse. Under the new restrictions on FOIs, unless they’re reversed, we may never know how many inmates will be accidentally released from jails because of this government’s incompetence.

Protecting and strengthening the public’s right to information means defending the public’s right to know. It means ensuring that no government is above scrutiny and that accountability is not optional. Because at its core, freedom of information is about power and accountability, and in a democracy, that power belongs to the people and not any single government, and certainly not Doug Ford.

COLLINDA JOSEPH

MPP George Darouze: I rise today to recognize an extraordinary athlete from Stittsville in my riding of Carleton, who is joining us right here in the chamber today: Collinda Joseph, alongside her husband, Euan Mackellar, and her two children, Sara and Hannah, who are watching from home.

Collinda represented Canada on the world stage at the 2026 Paralympic Games in Italy, where she achieved an incredible accomplishment: winning a gold medal in wheelchair curling. This achievement is a reflection of not only her skill and determination, but her resilience, discipline and strong commitment to excellence. Competing at the highest level of sport requires years of dedication, and Collinda has made her community and our entire province and our country proud.

Her success also serves as an inspiration to so many, especially young people and individuals with disabilities, showing that with dedication and passion, anything is possible.

Today, we are honoured to have her here with us at Queen’s Park. I ask all members of this House to join me in congratulating Collinda Joseph on her remarkable achievement and in thanking her for representing Canada and Carleton with pride.

I know Collinda and I will both share the same thing: We’re cheering also for the Senators. Go, Sens, go! Thank you very much for being here.

PHILIP GOSLING

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I rise today to honour the late Philip Gosling, a man who made remarkable contributions to our province and the city of Guelph. Inspired by his deep love of nature, Phil co-founded the Bruce Trail, Canada's oldest marked footpath, in the early 1960s. As trail director, he organized volunteers and walked hundreds of potential trail routes. In the first year working on the trail, he also met his late first wife Jean.

Phil's love of nature inspired so many of us, and his philanthropy had a big impact. He and Jean funded the Gosling Wildlife Gardens at the Guelph Arboretum, which opened in 1988. A donation from him and his second wife Susan made it possible to double the size of the Gosling Pollinator Gardens at Hospice Wellington. He and Susan also created the Gosling Research Institute for Plant Preservation at the University of Guelph, and the Gosling Foundation has funded many organizations to protect and restore biodiversity.

Phil was widely recognized for his work, receiving the Order of Canada, an honorary doctor of law degree from the University of Guelph, and he was named honorary chair of the Bruce Trail Conservancy, among many awards.

My heartfelt condolences to the Gosling family, and I encourage everyone to attend the Bruce Trail Conservancy's reception here at Queen's Park on May 5 so that we can celebrate Philip's legacy together.

PARALYMPIC CURLING TEAM

Hon. Laurie Scott: We are all aware I love a rhyme theme, so here is a poem about our Paralympic curling team:

They called them the Cardiac Canadians—oh yes, that's the name—

For the way that they win a heart-stopping game.
Not easy, not breezy, not simple or slow,
But, wow, when they're in the rink, you're in for a show.

In March, on the ice with the whole world to see,
Team Canada curled with fiery bravery.
And our very own Jon Thurston—calm, steady and bright—
Made shots that felt like magic, that felt just right.

My friend Carl Rennick, with his watchful eye;
The coach who said, "Jon, let's give this a try."
From early days on the grand golden scene,
Carl helped shape this champion team.

Then in a game against Norway, remember that play?
That viral, wild, jaw-dropping day.
A whisper of weight—blink and you might miss,
As the cheers burst out in a moment of bliss.

And up in the stands—oh, what a delight—

Jon's mom danced with joy. It was a beautiful sight.
She twirled and she smiled. She clapped with such cheer,
You could feel all her pride from far over here.

Back home we were watching, all buzzing with glee,
From couches to schools and on local TVs,
A whole town together, all hoping, all bold,
All dreaming right with them of a bright, shining gold.

And oh, when they won, what a grand feat,
With hearts still racing and joy at its peak.
The Cardiac Canadians did what they do:
They thrilled us, they dazzled us and they made history too.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Welcome to Queen's Park.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: Today, I would like to welcome Father Lucian Azoitei, a priest and president of the board of directors of the Romanian Orthodox Church of St. Apostle Andrew in Mississauga, as well as Father Sergiu Andrasco, monastic name Corneliu, president and pastor at St. George Romanian Orthodox cathedral in Windsor, as well as my executive assistant Codruta Rosca. Thank you for being here at Queen's Park today.

1030

Mr. Aris Babikian: I would like to introduce Hagop Gokchenian, today's page captain who is a resident of Scarborough—Agincourt. Here with Hagop today are his parents, Natalie and Sarkis, and his sister Melanie. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Matthew Rae: I want to introduce someone who's no stranger to this place, a man from Dublin, Ontario, George Goettler and his partner, Ally, who are in the Speaker's gallery.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I am so proud to introduce Mark Ideson, who is a resident of London West, here with two other members of Canada's gold-winning Paralympic curling team.

Mark has been skip of Team Canada since 2018—winner of two Paralympic bronze medals, two gold medals, most recently at the 2026 games in Milan.

Welcome to Queen's Park.

MPP Catherine McKenney: I'd like to introduce and welcome to the House Trulee Love, the constituency assistant to my friend Lisa Lachance, who is a Nova Scotia MLA for Halifax Citadel—Sable Island. Welcome to the Legislature.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I am very happy to be able to introduce Kris Noakes from my riding of Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, a proud board member for ALS Canada. Welcome to Queen's Park.

MPP Billy Denault: I want to introduce, in the members' gallery today, Amy Scholten, a representative from

my riding for the Renfrew County Legal Clinic who's here on business in Toronto. She's a strong advocate for my community and her clients. Amy, I want to welcome you to Queen's Park.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: I'd like to welcome CEO Tammy Moore and members of the ALS Society of Canada who are joining us today for their advocacy day. We thank them for their important work and welcome them to Queen's Park.

Hon. Laurie Scott: Of course, our Olympic curler from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock Jon Thurston is here; Carl Rennick, the coach at home; Larissa Simone, Curling Canada media; Jon's mum, Marilyn Warner; his stepdad, Roger McCrindle; his uncle, David Warner, former Speaker here; Pat Warner, his aunt; Barb Warner, his cousin; Julian Warner Eaglestaff, his cousin; and Sherri Warner, his cousin. Welcome to Queen's Park.

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

Hon. Stan Cho: On behalf of Minister Lumsden and I—between us, by the way, we have four Grey Cup rings—I just want to welcome two visitors: first of all, Kevin Vallier and the Agritourism Ontario Association, of course. We had a record-breaking tourism year in Ontario last year, and it's a lot in part thanks to the hard work of the Ontario Restaurant, Hotel and Motel Association delegation, led by Tony Elenis.

Welcome to the Legislature. See you at the reception tonight.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): My apologies, it was Minister of Tourism—you're not that athletic.

The member for St. Catharines.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Today, I'd like to welcome Chris May. Chris May is a resident of St. Catharines. He's here with the ALS society today. Looking forward to meeting you today, Chris, and have a great day—and to all our ALS members in Canada: Thank you.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: It is my pleasure to introduce surveyors from the Canadian Institute of Quantity Surveyors: Seán Hollywood, Mykola Pulnyev, Brandon Roy. My dad was a surveyor, so they're equally important to me.

Welcome to your House.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: I'd like to introduce Julie Nobert-Demarchi from Fierté Timmins Pride, Kiel Hughes from Hamilton Pride, Callie Metler from Capital Pride, Kojo Modeste from Toronto Pride and Jacob Gal from York Pride. The Pride associations of Ontario are in the House today.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to welcome Tammy Moore, the CEO of the Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis Society. I invite everybody to meet them in room 230 at lunch.

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

Mr. John Fraser: Madam Speaker, I seek unanimous consent of the House that the Standing Committee on Justice Policy be authorized to conduct a study on the mistaken release of prisoners from Ontario correctional

facilities and that the Solicitor General and the Deputy Solicitor General, correctional services, be invited to appear before the committee for questions and answers on Monday, May 4, 2026.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The leader of the third party is seeking unanimous consent of the House that the Standing Committee on Justice Policy be authorized to conduct a study on the mistaken release of prisoners from Ontario correctional facilities and that the Solicitor General and the Deputy Solicitor General, correctional services, be invited to appear before the committee for questions and answers on Monday, May 4, 2026. Agreed? I heard a no.

It's now time for question period.

QUESTION PERIOD

GOVERNMENT JET

Ms. Marit Stiles: Good morning, Speaker. "No one is as scrutinized as I am." Those are the words of the Premier of this province yesterday. He could have used the opportunity he had speaking with the media and the public to apologize to the taxpayers of this province for setting their money on fire. Instead, he decided to throw a tantrum. He was very upset, apparently, about having to return his shiny, new toy to the toy store, and then he abandoned his entire cabinet. It looks like maybe he's doing it again today. He told them, "You guys can take the heat for this."

He told his caucus they had to stand up and defend his choices, which begs the question, Speaker: Who else knew about this luxury jet? Who signed the paperwork and who compared the fabric samples for the recliners and who decided what kind of caviar and champagne was going to be kept on board? Who curated the Blu-ray selection, Speaker—

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

Hon. Steve Clark: Good morning, everyone. Speaker, through you to the Leader of the Opposition, I was very clear yesterday and I will say again today: There's no government that is 100% perfect. Governments make decisions; governments change their decisions.

I watched the Premier yesterday, and I again compliment the Premier on his leadership. Clearly, Speaker, the Premier heard from Ontarians. He made a decision. And while we won't be going ahead with the procurement, I can assure the House of what the Premier will do. He will continue to stand up to build relationships across Canada and with the United States. We will continue to grow jobs. That's the Premier's commitment to the people of Ontario.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, I've got to say, I think this Premier and this government need to stop feeling sorry for themselves, okay? They are not victims for not getting a

free pass to blow taxpayer dollars on a private luxury jet, all right?

We heard the Premier yesterday talk about how he feels overly scrutinized. He said, “If only people didn’t look so closely at my affairs.” If only they just let him do what he wants. If only they let him buy what he wants, spend their money the way he wants. Life is so unfair for the Premier of this province and this government.

The reality is, Speaker, I don’t know if he’s the most scrutinized man or that this is most scrutinized government in Canadian history, but they are certainly the most worthy of scrutiny.

So will the Premier apologize and commit to personally paying the difference on any financial loss from this boondoggle?

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

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Good morning.

Interjections.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Thank you, colleagues. And good morning, Madam Speaker. Through you, thank you to the member opposite for the question.

You know, what this Premier is not going to apologize for is working every single day to create the conditions for more jobs that will boost the employment in this province and the economy.

When we took power in 2018, the economy was about \$800 billion. It’s now over \$1.2 trillion. A million more people are working because of the leadership of this Premier and this government. Every single day, every one of us gets up every day so that we work hard for the people of Ontario, set the conditions for good jobs in this province—food on the table, security of an income.

And Madam Speaker, we are not going to relent as we boost the productivity, the economy and good jobs for every single Ontarian.

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

1040

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, what is this? The Premier’s private jet pity party? Please. Making a mistake is like, “I parked in the wrong parking spot.” It is not, “I wasted \$30 million on a private luxury jet that I don’t need and the people of this province won’t get any use of.”

I have to say, what I’m hearing from people is very different than what the Minister of Finance is hearing, apparently. Ontarians are wondering why it is that there’s never any money left for the things that they need to make their life better. Yet there is this bottomless wallet when it comes to the Premier’s luxury purchases.

Yesterday he said he should have “made the case” and that he is held to a “double standard”—oh, poor Premier. He is the one who stood here and bragged about never using the Premier’s fancy planes, and now he has been caught with his hands in the people’s pockets.

So, again, will the Premier apologize to the hard-working people of the province of Ontario and admit that he was putting himself first with the purchase of this gravy—

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

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Interjection.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Thank you, Minister Parsa.

Do you know what we won’t apologize for? She mentioned our wallet, the \$210 billion of infrastructure that we’re using to build this province, putting hundreds of thousands of people to work to build subways so that we can move people faster and where they need to go, to build the highways to move the goods and people, to build the hospitals to take care of 16.2 million Ontarians, to build the schools for our children and our students, to build the long-term-care facilities to help our seniors—all told, \$210 billion of infrastructure. That’s what we won’t apologize for.

We’re going to continue to support the workers of this province and build Ontario.

GOVERNMENT JET

Ms. Marit Stiles: Again, yesterday—and I’ll go back to the Premier here—what I heard the Premier say is that he wants people to feel sorry for him. I don’t know. He wants the students—who he cut OSAP for—to feel sorry for him? He wants the burned-out teachers and health care workers to feel sorry for him? He wants parents who can’t afford groceries to feel sorry for him because he doesn’t get his \$30-million private luxury jet? Well, boo-hoo. I think that’s why people are so frustrated with the Premier’s decision and with the way that his government is defending this. It is nauseating.

I don’t know how this government—the Premier, the finance minister, the President of the Treasury Board, each of these people who were elected, ostensibly, to be responsible stewards of the public purse—I don’t know how all of them don’t owe us an explanation. So I want to know—maybe I’ll go to the Minister of Finance on this one—did you sign the cheque?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Just look at the budget. I signed the cheque for \$227 billion of investments for the people of Ontario, which includes \$6.4 billion for the Minister of Colleges and Universities to make sure we have sustainable colleges and universities, \$100 billion for the Minister of Health and the Minister of Long-Term Care so they can continue to take care of the good people of Ontario, and another \$22 billion for the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services so we take care of the most vulnerable people in Ontario.

Madam Speaker, I am not going to apologize for supporting the investments to take care of all Ontarians.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Well, we know that they’re taking care of one specific Ontarian, and that is the Premier.

I will say, I’ve gone through the budget a bunch of times—we’ve all been going through it all—there’s no mention of the Premier’s private luxury jet. I mean, there

are other things in there. There are cuts to OSAP. There's a lot missing; we talked about that before.

On Sunday, I was in Scarborough at a town hall of renters—people who are struggling to make their rent and worrying whether they're going to lose their homes altogether, parents who talk to me about the really tough choices they are making every day and a lot of families who are telling me that they can't afford for their kids to go to university or college now because of this government and this finance minister's plans. What they asked for is a government that was willing to step up, and what they got instead is a private jet for the Premier of this province.

So when will the Premier start putting Ontarians ahead of his own personal interests?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Madam Speaker, let's take a look at this budget. We've got:

—some \$43 billion for our Minister of Education, who's doing a great job supporting parents, supporting students, supporting teachers, making sure the money that we give flows directly to the teachers and all those supporting our education system;

—the \$14 billion by this Minister of Colleges and Universities, including the \$6.4 billion to make the colleges and universities sustainable;

—the \$64 billion in just health care capital costs to build hospitals, to renovate hospitals, to build long-term care—Madam Speaker, \$64 billion—it's in the budget, which I'm sure the Leader of the Opposition has read, but she fails to mention it, because she knows that is good governance, that is good investments for the people of Ontario.

Our economy has grown. We're the only province to have attained two credit rating upgrades in an environment where all the others around the world are getting—

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, the week before last, I was in Windsor and I was at a shelter for women and families and children. We were figuring out where they're going to make cuts next because they can't even get any kind of increase.

Anyway, I was there, and I met a woman, who came running out to me, actually, in the parking lot to say, "I'm a single mom of three children, and because of this government's cuts to OSAP, I am going to have to stop going to school. I've been going to school so I can make life better for me and my kids."

Do you know who can't hold a pity party because life isn't going her way? That woman. She doesn't have time to do that. This Premier held a pity party yesterday, made everybody—"Oh, you should feel so bad; I don't get my private luxury jet." Are you kidding me? Give me a break.

This is the same Premier who used to stand here and say he was against excessive government spending. He said he was going to stop the gravy train. Remember that? Well, he has actually become—

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

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Madam Speaker, if the Leader of the Opposition really wanted to support the people of Ontario, she would vote for the \$12 billion in the budget to support affordability. Let's examine where that \$12 billion is going: It's going to the most vulnerable by indexing inflation for Ontario disability support payments and low-income seniors—never been done by any government until this government, that is helping the most vulnerable. It's going to a 30% cut to 375,000 small businesses and helping a lot of our communities right across the province.

It's an opportunity for this leader to show real leadership by getting her caucus to vote for this budget, by putting money back in the pockets of families and individuals and the great businesses in Ontario.

GOVERNMENT JET

Mr. Stephen Blais: Families in Ontario are cutting back. They're cancelling vacations, they're putting groceries back on the shelf and they're wondering how they're going to pay the mortgage. What has this tired eight-year-old government been doing? Buying the Premier a \$29-million private business jet. The same Premier who said he would end the gravy train is buying a gravy plane.

Now, Madam Speaker, before you make a purchase like that, you might take a test drive or two. So can the President of the Treasury Board tell us how many times she has authorized the Premier to fly private, and did she authorize the purchase of this private plane?

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

Hon. Steve Clark: Speaker, through you to the member: There was a time I remember a past Premier said to this House, "It's never too late to do the right thing." I think the member opposite knows who I'm talking about in terms of the former Premier Dalton McGuinty.

Our Premier made a decision yesterday in your city. I hope you watched the press conference, because I think the Premier articulated very well, Speaker, the facts of the matter. The government made a decision, and again, governments aren't right 100% of the time. The Premier took responsibility, and he was responsive to the public.

Speaker, through you: The Premier was incredibly responsive. I felt that he captured in his press conference in the member opposite's city, and I think we all support the Premier in the decision. It was not in the government's best interest—

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

1050

Mr. Stephen Blais: Yes, the Premier was in Ottawa yesterday for a photo op for a news release the government issued almost a year ago for this photo op. This was not a negotiation with the Prime Minister; this was not because of the flooding that's happening in Ottawa; this was for a one-year-old photo op.

My question for the President of the Treasury Board: How often has she signed off on the Premier flying private? And did the Premier fly to Ottawa yesterday on a government-owned private business jet?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member for Bay of Quinte.

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: Well, Madam Speaker, I'm not surprised that the party of work from home and the party that mailed it in for 15 years doesn't understand the importance of a face-to-face meeting. I'm not surprised that the party that can't run a lemonade stand and the party that chased 300,000 manufacturing jobs out of our province doesn't understand how to do business in 2026.

Ladies and gentlemen, since we took office, we've brought in \$222 billion of foreign direct investment, creating over—

Interjections.

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

The member for Orléans will come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The government side—

Mr. Stephen Blais: I'm not the one who lied, buddy.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): You've been warned. The member for Orléans has been warned. I'll ask you to withdraw.

Mr. Stephen Blais: I withdraw, Madam Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I apologize, and I will let the member have a few extra seconds. I recognize the member for Bay of Quinte.

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I was just wrapping up.

Just last year alone, because of our efforts, we attracted 750 international companies that invested \$35 billion, creating 64,000 jobs for the people of Ontario. That is the type of travel we were looking to do, that is the justification for the purchase of that jet, and I am thankful that we have a Premier that's capable of the—

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

Mr. John Fraser: For eight long years, we've been watching the same thing: "I reverse my decision;" "I am only human, I make mistakes;" and, "Boy, do these people ever treat me badly. I'm so hard done by. They're so tough on me." I am tired of the schtick.

The Premier bought a jet when there's half a trillion dollars on the province's credit card. When people can't afford groceries and gas, the Premier bought himself a private jet. It's at some undisclosed location here in Ontario. The thing is, he's not just the one who made the decision; there are a whole bunch of people over there who did that as well.

So I'm asking the President of the Treasury Board to tell us: Did she approve the Premier buying a private luxury jet?

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: Thank you to the member from Ottawa South for that question.

The member, the other day in debate, referenced the fact that, as he said, he used to be a pack boy for Loblaws. But that wasn't the only time—you also packed up 300,000 manufacturing jobs and shipped them out of the province of Ontario.

Ladies and gentlemen, the selective outrage on that side of the House is unbelievable. The Prime Minister spends \$753 million on six private jets and we hear crickets from that side of the House. You name me six people in the federal government who move the needle like Premier Ford when they show up in person and I'll buy you lunch at the Legislature today.

We absolutely made the right decision acquiring that jet on every single business case possible, but I appreciate that the Premier went to the people of Ontario, heard directly from them and he understood that maybe, though this was the right decision, it wasn't, perhaps, the right time.

It's this Premier who has constantly stood up for the people of Ontario. Maybe you guys should try it sometime.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Your responses through the Speaker.

I recognize the leader of the third party.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. John Fraser: Speaker, I know; it's, "Poor, poor pitiful me. I didn't get my jet and they're all so hard on me and I do the best. You can get me on my phone any time."

My question is for the Solicitor General. Yesterday, the Solicitor General apologized unreservedly for telling us that criminals were apprehended instantaneously and immediately. It shouldn't take four question periods and a week to get there. Quite frankly, Ontarians, they're not looking for an apology; they're looking for answers.

To the Solicitor General: Can he tell us how many prisoners have been mistakenly released since September 2025 until now?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: I appreciate the question. I said yesterday, and I'll repeat it again, that inmates must stay in jail until the date set by the court on their release, and any administrative error is totally unacceptable. I said that too. When an error happens, the police are notified right away.

Madam Speaker, we inherited a system that was broken, and we pledged to Ontarians that we would fix it. We said that we would hire thousands of new correctional officers and we've hired now over 3,300. And what does that mean? It means that we now have the additional administrative supports to make sure that these errors do not occur. It means that we have modern technology implemented where the courts speak to our jails in real time to minimize it.

We take this matter seriously and we're correcting a problem that we inherited, but we'll correct it.

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

Mr. John Fraser: The numbers don't lie. In 2024, the government lost 30 criminals—they lost 30 criminals—and in the first nine months of 2025, they lost 39. So,

Minister, by my math, it's getting worse, but you might want to check that. Maybe ask your office or your deputy.

Speaker, I'll ask this again—a simple question: How many prisoners have been mistakenly set free since September 2025, and how many are still out there?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: What my colleague opposite doesn't say is that in the last few years before they were kicked out of office by the voters of Ontario and reduced to just a handful of seats, there were almost 250 improper releases. We are not accepting that as the barometer that we will live by. We are bringing the number to as close to zero as quickly as possible by making the required investments; by having modern technology; by having the courts speak to the jails in real time; by having additional administrative resources; and by making sure that Ontarians know, as they did in February 2025, when they had a chance to stand up to say, "We want somebody to stand up to protect Ontario"—and do you know who that is? That's Premier Ford and the PC Party.

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

Mr. John Fraser: If the minister checked with his ministry, he would know that the problem is twice as bad as it was before, and he would know that they lost more criminals in the first nine months of 2025 than they did in 2024, and by anybody's math, that means the problem is getting worse.

The Solicitor General said the police are notified—the Deputy Solicitor General is notified and so is the Solicitor General. So he knows how many are out and he's not telling Ontarians. Why is that? It's a simple answer to a question. Why can't he tell us that? What do victims of crimes think when the minister can't actually tell us how many people they let out of jail and whether any of them are still out? How is it, Speaker, that the Solicitor General still has his job?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: Speaker, I'm proud of my record that, for almost four years, I have travelled the province extensively; that I have visited fire halls; that I have visited almost every municipal police service, minus one in Deep River—I'm going to get there; that I have visited First Nations' police services; that I have travelled and listened. But when I look across the aisle, when the largest class ever graduated for Ottawa Police Service, the member from Orléans was not there; the member from Nepean was not there; the member from Ottawa-Vanier was not there and the leader of the third party was not there. They don't stand with our public safety people that keep us safe. They know it. You should be ashamed of yourselves.

1100

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Premier. Last month, the official opposition did a bit of a tour across northern Ontario to talk about what they thought about highways and about highway safety. The one thing that

shocked me, kind of, was how fearful people in the north are of some commercial truck drivers—

Interjection.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: I will use an example: We had several people—including one contractor—who refused to unload a transport because the driver, who was fully licensed and supposedly trained in Ontario, could not back up a truck. How does that happen, that people who can't drive trucks somehow are licensed in Ontario?

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

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: Thank you to the member for that question. Our Ministry of Transportation, led by Premier Ford and our great minister, considers road safety as our absolute top priority. When we take a look at our road network across the province, from Highways 401 and 410 and across this province, especially in the north, Highways 11 and 17, we always ensure that we have the necessary number of enforcement officers travelling to ensure that we protect every driver that is on the road.

Especially in the north, we've built a new inspection station that I've personally visited and saw the great work that our inspection officers do. We've increased the number of enforcement officers that are travelling along those roadways, and we're working to make sure that we continue to do that great work.

Officers now have expanded capacity where they can travel throughout the north. We've posted blitzes across that region, Speaker, and we're going to continue to make sure that we have the best road safety across the province.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the member for Timiskaming-Cochrane.

Mr. John Vanthof: I appreciate the answer. I highly doubt that northerners who fear for their lives on 11 and 17 would agree.

In 2024, 11 was closed 363 times. Many of those times were due to accidents, many of them fatal. That continues to happen now.

Last Thursday, I spoke in this House about an accident, expressed people's condolences, but I didn't know it was fatal at that point. Three people died last Thursday on what are supposedly the safest highways in North America.

When is the government going to do their job and actually treat this as the crisis that it is?

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: On behalf of the government of Ontario and alongside the great people of this province, our heartfelt condolences go out to the families who have had to endure the loss of a loved one.

This government will do everything we can to keep motorists and road users safe as they drive through our great province. Our government continues to expand Highways 11 and 17, making the investments necessary to support safety along the corridor. We've widened the corridor by more than 50%, and, to date, through the northern highways program, we've invested \$650 million to support the expansion of Highways 11 and 17.

Our government recognizes that Highways 11 and 17 are not only important to northern Ontario but they're critical components of the Trans-Canada network that supports the national supply chains and economic growth and development of critical minerals throughout this province. That's why our Minister of Transportation has written to the federal Minister of Transportation asking them to accelerate the continued widening of Highways 11 and 17.

Road safety is a non-partisan—

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

CRIME PREVENTION

MPP Andrea Hazell: My question is for the Premier. Today I want to urgently sound the alarm on crime rates with young people in Scarborough. Let me be clear to all the members sitting here today: Scarborough is a strong, resilient community, but we have been consistently overlooked and underinvested since this government took office. Scarborough continues to be grossly underinvested in community programs, jobs and training, and our community centres are on the brink of collapse.

The consequences are now showing up in real time. When a young person ends up in jail no one wins, not the family, not the community, not the future of this province. The only one who benefits from this is the government: "I'll build as many jails as we need;" "I don't care if you stack them 10 high."

Madam Speaker, to the Premier: Why is this government investing \$4 billion in building more jail cells instead of investing in youth crime prevention?

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

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Madam Speaker, another highlight of the budget is the record investments that the Solicitor General is making on behalf of expanding correctional facilities in Ontario, providing the resources to make sure that our correctional facilities are properly resourced.

And by the way, every time I hear that member, who is a good member for Scarborough—whenever she gets up, she says, "What have you done for Scarborough lately?" Are you kidding me? What have we done for Scarborough lately? Well, I'll tell you what wasn't done for 15 years: building long-term-care beds in Scarborough—virtually none built; building health care and a hospital in Scarborough and adding it to the capacity of acute care beds in Scarborough; and, oh, by the way, getting around Scarborough—a subway for the first time. Talked about it for 50 years—this government's getting it done.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the member for Scarborough–Guildwood.

MPP Andrea Hazell: To the minister: Transportation does not decrease crime. I'm talking about crime here today.

Let me educate you. In the ridings of the four members from Scarborough sitting across the floor, child poverty is at an average of 34%.

And while this government talks about being tough on crime, crime in Scarborough has significantly increased. A family woke up on April 9 to find their home with bullet holes. Police arrested 10 people, laid 203 charges and seized four guns tied to multiple shootings, including a Scarborough pub—listen to this—mass shooting. A young man was found shot dead in an STC washroom. A student was killed at the University of Toronto. A 16-year-old was shot in his father's arms—I went to that funeral; I had to face the mother and father. Two 15-year-olds were stabbed and robbed by a group of young people as young as 12 years. An elderly woman in her late eighties was stabbed in her own home.

Through you, Madam Speaker, I ask the Premier again—it's a simple question—why is this government investing \$4 billion in building more jail cells instead of investing in the young people to prevent these crimes?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The Minister of Children, Community and Social Services.

Hon. Michael Parsa: Speaker, quite the contrary: I think we're investing in youth in this province, and we've made it very clear they're the future of this province and we will not waver in our commitment to making sure they have every opportunity to succeed and thrive in this province.

If you look at the programs that we've enrolled, none existed in the past: the Youth in Policing Initiative, which provides them with the opportunity to not only get that life experience but also an employment opportunity that sets them up for success.

If you look at the Ready, Set, Go Program that we enrolled—of course the opposition didn't support that initiative that comes with a \$170-million investment—in youth starting at 13, Madam Speaker, right up until their 23rd birthday.

Madam Speaker, all of these upstream supports that are available to youth through this government never existed before. So when it comes to the youth—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell.

RING OF FIRE

Mr. Stéphane Sarrazin: My question is for the Minister of Indigenous Affairs and First Nations Economic Reconciliation. Speaker, we know that the Ring of Fire is a generational opportunity. With the potential to generate over \$22 billion for Ontario's economy, fortify a made-in-Ontario supply chain and secure a self-reliant economy, the time to act is now. That is why our government continues to advance the Ring of Fire, working in lockstep with First Nations communities every step of the way.

We've heard the minister speak about the progress to date and how partnerships with First Nations communities will see the construction on the roads to the Ring of Fire completed ahead of schedule.

Speaker, can the minister explain our accelerated plan for the construction on the roads to the Ring of Fire and what it means for communities in northern Ontario?

Hon. Greg Rickford: I want to thank the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell for his awesome work in his riding and as part of our caucus.

Listen, these timelines, which have been dramatically sped up, have put First Nations communities in the unique position of putting out requests for proposals and partnering with major road construction companies. This is an important exercise in developing critical mineral supply for the world over, but it also means prosperity. It means economic partnerships with companies that these communities have never known before.

1110

Madam Speaker, across the province, in fact, we are seeing small businesses owned and operated by First Nations. We're seeing companies from other provinces coming here to understand how they can partner with First Nations and meet the demand of opportunity.

We're so excited about the kinds of things that are developing—aggregate, accommodations, restaurants, commercial activities—in the region of northern Ontario and particularly the Ring of Fire. There's lots of—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell.

Mr. Stéphane Sarrazin: Thank you to the minister for highlighting our accelerated timeline for getting shovels in the ground.

Speaker, beyond infrastructure, we're also seeing new economic opportunities and development of a skilled workforce take shape in the Ring of Fire region, with First Nation communities playing a central role. The Ring of Fire is about more than just responsible mining and development—it's about strengthening economies and long-term prosperity. With the potential to create more than 70,000 jobs in industries across Ontario, the Ring of Fire represents an opportunity to provide lasting and meaningful employment to communities throughout this province.

Speaker, can the minister tell us about the exciting economic development opportunities in the Ring of Fire?

Hon. Greg Rickford: The member is right. Look, the community partnership agreements have set a foundation for community assets to be able to support training and daycare for young First Nations people to participate in the kinds of economic activities being contemplated through their community partnerships and their economic partnership agreements.

They're already coming to fruition, Madam Speaker. As the request for proposals recognized large-scale companies forming businesses with First Nations, we've already seen in different parts of northern Ontario attached to legacy resource development some important developments. The Migizi Plaza in Greenstone is partnering with Tim Hortons, A&W and Esso. That may not sound like a big thing to some of the big-city folk, but when that moves into a place like Greenstone and surrounding First Nations communities, that's good for business, Madam Speaker.

When Omekanahkay in Vermilion Bay has four First Nations communities partnered together for an economic commercial plaza leading up to Red Lake and parts beyond—

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

ASSISTANCE TO FLOOD VICTIMS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, as you're well aware, people in northeastern Ontario are being hit hard by dramatic floods. In Sudbury, North Bay, Mindemoya, many other places, people's lives are being upended, their businesses are being swamped out, their homes are being swamped out.

It was very clear that we were going to have a tough flood year. Why did the government not take steps to protect the people of northeastern Ontario?

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

Hon. Mike Harris: It's a bit surprising coming from the member opposite, but we are doing exactly that. We work with municipalities across the province. We work with First Nations communities across the province. We have a 24/7 monitoring centre. We've put \$5 million a year into flood forecasting.

You can't stop Mother Nature, Madam Speaker, but what we can do is work with municipalities. We can work with people to help them get their lives back to normal after flooding events.

I can certainly tell you a little bit more about what we're doing in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the member for Toronto–Danforth.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, this government had a study done in 2019 after dramatic flooding in northern Ontario. The Auditor General took a look at what the government had actually done in response to that recommendation. Most of the recommendations that the Auditor General put forward were not implemented by the government.

Why is it that the government has decided to leave people to their fate and not put in place the protection measures to keep their homes, their businesses and their lives safe?

Hon. Mike Harris: I'm certainly very happy to respond to the question.

Listen, every year, flooding happens here in the province, but we do our best to make sure that we are monitoring the situation. Like I said, we have a 24/7 monitoring situation. We are consistently working with municipalities across the province.

Our MNR officials are out removing logs, adding logs to dams across the province. I was very excited just last week to be in Leeds–Grenville–Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes to announce \$11.5 million in dam-repair infrastructure. So we are doing everything we can to protect Ontarians, and we will continue to do that.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. John Fraser: Speaker, after eight long years, this failed Ford Conservative government is out of touch, out

of ideas and when you lose 150 criminals, I think you can say asleep at the switch.

I've asked the Solicitor General multiple times the same question. But I want him to think about the people who are victims of crimes, of assaults or robberies, violent crimes. This minister has not been able to answer one question as to why they keep losing criminals, and he can't even tell us what's going on right now. How is it that anybody in Ontario can have confidence that this minister is protecting public safety if he can't answer a simple question?

Once again, can the minister tell us how many prisoners have been released mistakenly since September 2025 and how many are at large right now?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: Please let me highlight some of the achievements that our government, led by the Premier, has made in public safety. Just last year alone, we graduated 2,150 new cadets, who are new-batch police officers throughout our province. Why is this number important? Because, on average, during the Liberals' 15 years, the highest they were able to graduate on average was 650. We have tripled that number.

We have a plan to build, aggressively, more spaces in our jails. We told Ontarians exactly where we would build it and how much. We said we would hire thousands of correctional officers; we're now at 3,300.

We said, Madam Speaker, we would put measures in place so that improper releases don't happen. We're working as soon as possible to get it to zero and we will not stop to protect Ontario.

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

Mr. John Fraser: After four days of questioning, you would think this minister could say, "There is nobody out" or "There are three people out" or "Five people got lost." He doesn't even know. It's incredible. He can't answer a simple, basic question. He gets informed every time it happens. So is he not listening? Is he not paying attention? What's going on?

Folks deserve to know, Ontarians deserve to know, when a criminal is mistakenly released, what's happened and, if there's anybody out at large right now, how many are at large, who they are, what did they do—all that stuff.

I'll ask this question again and anybody can answer: How is it that the Solicitor General still has his job?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: I believe that Ontarians have trusted one government to keep them safe and the proof is in the pudding: more boots on the ground, more correctional officers hired, more spaces in our jail system.

We have advocated—something the member opposite doesn't like to talk about—for meaningful bail reform. Who was it that led the other Premiers and the other provinces to call on the federal government to do it? It was our leader, our Premier, Doug Ford.

When it comes to public safety, our record speaks for itself. We will not stop in protecting Ontario, making the investments and making sure that, at the end of the day, our fundamental rights to live safely in our own homes and communities will be top of mind. Nothing is more important than this.

TENANT PROTECTION

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: My question is for the Attorney General. Just last week, I met a family struggling to pay for a roof and food. Their landlord asked them to vacate their unit to treat for bed bugs and while they were out, she changed the locks. They had no help. They have lost everything. Now they pay \$3,000 a month to rent somewhere else.

They are not alone in the fight for affordable housing. Every one of us knows that it has never been like this. We have never had so many encampments, so many seniors sleeping in their cars and so many people lined up at food banks.

Kitchener is a city where if you live in an affordable unit, you have a target on your back. Corporate landlords are buying up all the older buildings, issuing renoviction orders just to slap on a coat of paint, because this government doesn't have their backs.

1120

So, Speaker, my question to the Attorney General: Will he join me and listen to the tenants who are being tortured by these cruel tactics?

Hon. Doug Downey: Thank you for the question from the member.

There are very strict sanctions when it comes to improper renovictions, Madam Speaker. In fact, the fines are \$50,000 for an individual who breaks the rules—up to \$50,000 for an individual and up to \$250,000 for a corporation that she speaks of. There are rules around this and there is a forum to resolve them. The Landlord and Tenant Board hears these matters impartially, with independent adjudicators, to give people the course of conduct that they deserve. The system is working to protect people when they bring matters forward, and I would encourage them to do so.

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

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: Speaker, back to the Attorney General: News flash—it's not working. We have 85,000 people who are homeless in this province. That's because this Attorney General is out of touch and he doesn't realize what renters are up against. He sides with corporate landlords who pump through AGIs. He sides with bad-acting landlords who renovict tenants to make double-digit-percentage profits. He sides with people who make people homeless with zero consequences.

Renovictions are up 70%, personal-use evictions are up 120%, AGIs are up 50%. Why? You just print off a piece of paper and you scare somebody out of their home.

Has this Attorney General actually spent a day at the Landlord and Tenant Board? Has he heard seniors describe how they struggle to pay rent because of incessant AGIs? Both landlords and tenants agree the LTB is broken.

My question again to the Attorney General: Will you commit to sitting down with tenants affected by this broken LTB and stop the flood of people into homelessness?

Hon. Doug Downey: What the province needs and what the province is getting is more housing stock. Rents are coming down over the years because we're providing the housing that people demand. Histrionics will not help any of this, Madam Speaker. It is important that we deal in facts.

It is important that we make sure the fabulous Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing is working every single day to bring more housing stock online, to make sure that people have a place to rent. The Minister of Children, Community and Social Services is working hard to make sure that people have the supports that they need to stay in their supported housing.

Madam Speaker, we are doing everything across the board to help those who are in need, and castigating the landlords as evil people is helping absolutely nothing.

HOUSING

Ms. Jess Dixon: My question is for the Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. As we all know, families across Ontario are constantly feeling the pressure of housing costs and looking for real solutions that will ultimately make home ownership more affordable. In communities like mine, and I'm sure like all of yours, people are essentially doing everything right. They're working hard, they're saving, and they're still struggling to get into the housing market because the upfront cost of a new home is just too high. Our government has been clear that protecting Ontario means lowering costs and making it easier to get more homes built.

Through you, Speaker, can the associate minister share how our government's plan is delivering real tax relief for homebuyers and helping more families ultimately achieve the dream of home ownership?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I will ask the members to come to order.

I recognize the Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Graydon Smith: Thank you to the member for Kitchener South–Hespeler for the question. In fact, we were just talking the other day about this very thing—housing in her area—and how our government has taken a step—probably the biggest in multiple generations—to get more people into new homes, and that is the removal of full 13% HST on new homes in Ontario. That is up to \$130,000 back into the pockets of new home buyers in this province. That will make a difference for families, for seniors and for anybody in the new home market.

We know that sales offices for home builders in this province are lighting up with that news—literally, the phones are ringing off the hook. So this is a game-changer. This is going to get more homes built in Ontario.

As a matter of fact, when many of us met with Habitat for Humanity yesterday, the first thing they wanted to talk about in their meeting was to say thank you to our government for the changes that we've made to get more homes built for more people in Ontario. We've got your back.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the member for Kitchener South–Hespeler.

Ms. Jess Dixon: Thank you to the associate minister for sharing that update. I certainly know that in my riding of Kitchener South–Hespeler and Waterloo region in general, people are very encouraged to see that our government is taking this significant step forward for homebuyers. I've certainly heard a lot of positive things from developers and home builders in the area.

Over and over again, the opposition talks about the housing crisis in Canada, but when it comes time to vote, they oppose the very measures that will lower costs and unlock supply. Industry leaders, municipalities, workers have all been very clear that affordability isn't just about demand, it's about making housing projects feasible in the first place.

Through you, Speaker, can the associate minister explain how our government is helping restore confidence in the housing market and ensure more shovels get in the ground?

Hon. Graydon Smith: If the removal of the full HST on new homes was the 1(a), the announcement that came soon after that, which is support for development charges for municipalities in Ontario—\$8.8 billion of support—is certainly the 1(b).

We know that high development charges are a barrier to getting new homes built in Ontario. We know that high development charges end up in the cost of that new home. So we've taken the step to work with municipalities, work with those that want to lower those development charges, lower the barrier to entry for families, seniors, those that want to get into the new home market. That is a win for all communities in Ontario.

This support that we are providing is paramount to help municipalities get the infrastructure built that they need in their communities. But more than that, Speaker, it leads to getting more homes built in those communities, and we have continually provided the infrastructure support to make that happen.

We continue to grow Ontario, continue to provide opportunities for families to get into that new home.

LABORATORY SERVICES

Mme France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé.

Quest Diagnostics, an American for-profit company, is closing the medical lab in Sudbury on May 17. Why? To make more money.

Over 10,000 people have signed petitions and hundreds have sent messages to the minister explaining the devastating impact of the Sudbury lab closure. This American company taking lab services away will impact training, recruitment, disaster prevention, job loss and put northerners' health at risk.

Why is the minister sitting idle while an American company takes health care resources away from northern Ontario?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: I'm happy to answer a question as opposed to pretend-running around the legislative chamber.

As I've said many times, there is a change that is happening in Sudbury. We've actually expanded the number of opportunities for individuals to be able to access the important laboratory services that we provide in the province of Ontario, and as I have said, we've been assured by the organization that patient service will not be impacted.

It is important for us to understand that as we move forward with expanding access to laboratory services, to primary care providers, to new long-term-care homes, we also make sure that the providers that are offering these services are continuing to maintain the level of service expectations that they have signed off on, and this organization has done that.

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

M^{me} France G elinas: The training won't happen in Sudbury anymore. The jobs are being lost. The prevention if there's another disaster—none of this will be available.

The minister is paying an American company who's taking resources away from northern Ontario, but she refuses to pay northern hospitals to do the exact same work: collect, transport and analyze samples from the community.

Let that sink in, Speaker. If you're an American for-profit company that does the work, they get paid. If a not-for-profit northern hospital does the exact same work, just faster, cheaper, better and closer to home, they cannot get paid.

Why is the minister refusing to pay small, rural, northern hospitals to do community lab services?

1130

Hon. Sylvia Jones: I know the member opposite knows and appreciates that urgent lab testing will continue to happen in local northern hospitals.

Having said that, we have also expanded to six new specimen-collection sites to make it, in fact, more convenient for northern residents in rural communities to get their lab test done closer to home. From Ignace in northern Ontario to Spanish River in northeastern Ontario, we are making it more convenient for people to access these critically important diagnostic services.

PUBLIC SAFETY

MPP Tyler Watt: My question is for the Solicitor General. We've been asking all day and we still can't get a straight answer out of this government. The minister's story changes just as fast as the Premier's jet was bought and sold.

Over 150 inmates were mistakenly released over the last five years. The FOI documents showed that they were unaccounted for months. And again, the Solicitor General's story continues to change. He even had to apologize yesterday here in the chamber. Now, at a time when front-line correctional and court staff are already stretched thin,

Ontarians deserve transparency, not the minister shifting the narrative and the blame.

So, Speaker, through you to the Solicitor General: Let's set the record straight. When was the minister first informed that inmates were released, and when did you take action?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: I said it before and I'll say it again: Inmates belong in one place, and that's in jail until the courts decide it's time to come out.

Improper releases that are caused by administrative errors are not proper; they're unacceptable. That's why, in spite of the mess we inherited, we're fixing the problem. We're fixing it by providing the extra technology and the extra administrative support to our correctional system. We're doing so where the jails speak to the courts to minimize any errors, and we're doing this in real time.

The member from the Nepean should look at the record that existed before 2018 and ask what efforts were made for the almost 250 improper releases. I'll tell you what efforts were made: nothing—and they know it.

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

MPP Tyler Watt: Again, there's just zero accountability with this government. Their answer might as well be, "Just look over there." They just are always pointing to either the feds or a government from a previous history. You've had eight long years to get stuff done.

You are soft on crime at this point—seriously. Crime is going through the roof; you know this. You lost 150 prisoners, and we only know it because of the FOI request. Thankfully they're still there.

Public safety is a growing concern in my riding of Nepean. Since 2018: four homicides, 1,200 assaults, 6,500 thefts, 119 robberies, 442 break-ins. In Nepean, constituents are worried about homes, family safety and businesses. So who is being held accountable for keeping Ontario's community safe?

Speaker, through you to the Solicitor General: Since you didn't answer my question last time, what specific actions has the ministry taken to ensure that failures like this do not happen again?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: I want to just say I appreciate the question from the member for Nepean. He asked us what steps we have taken to correct the problem. I'll say it again: We've hired more than 3,300 correctional officers, we brought in modern technology where the courts now speak to the jails, we brought in administrative supports to make sure that there's extra oversight and we've worked with our police every single day to make sure they are aware of any improper releases and return them.

But I would say to the member opposite, when the largest class in recent memory graduated from Ottawa Police Service, I was there. There was not one member from the Liberal Ottawa caucus. You could have joined me. It would have been great to have you there to congratulate the Ottawa Police Service. It's a flagship service, and I'll stand with—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Order.

I recognize the member for Hamilton Mountain.

SENIORS' SERVICES

MPP Monica Ciriello: My question is for the Minister for Seniors and Accessibility. Seniors in Hamilton and across this province have spent their lifetime helping build the Ontario that we are proud to live in today. They deserve to live with dignity and respect.

Whenever I visit the 13 senior active living centres in the great city of Hamilton, I often hear from people about how these centres have drastically reduced challenges like social isolation and increased their ability to connect with other seniors close to their homes. Our government is making significant historic investments to ensure that seniors are supported, so they can stay healthy, fit and active in their communities.

Through you, Speaker, can the minister please share how our government is helping seniors in my riding and throughout Ontario keep fit and active in their communities?

Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: Thank you for the wonderful question from the member for Hamilton Mountain.

Madam Speaker, our government and our Premier understand that seniors are the backbone of this province. That is why we are investing in senior active living centres to keep our seniors fit, healthy and socially connected. This past year, we made the largest expansion of senior active living centres in Ontario history. We increased the number of senior centres from 299 to 416 and increased the total funding from \$15 million to nearly \$23 million per year.

Seniors—including ones that attended the 13 senior active living centres in Hamilton—all over Ontario, are staying active, fit and healthy because of the leadership of the Premier.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Pursuant to standing order 36(a), the member for Nickel Belt has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to the question given by the Minister of Health regarding the closure of a medical lab in Sudbury. This matter will be debated today following private members' public business.

DEFERRED VOTES

TIME ALLOCATION

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): We have a deferred vote on 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.

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 April 20, 2026, Mr. Clark moved government notice of motion number 16 relating to allocation of time on Bills 97, 98 and 101.

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

Ayes

Allsopp, Tyler	Flack, Rob	Pirie, George
Anand, Deepak	Gallagher Murphy, Dawn	Quinn, Nolan
Babikian, Aris	Grewal, Hardeep Singh	Racinsky, Joseph
Bailey, Robert	Gualtieri, Silvia	Rae, Matthew
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Hamid, Zee	Rickford, Greg
Bouma, Will	Hardeman, Ernie	Riddell, Brian
Bresee, Ric	Harris, Mike	Rosenberg, Bill
Calandra, Paul	Jones, Sylvia	Sabawy, Sheref
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Jones, Trevor	Sandhu, Amarjot
Cho, Stan	Jordan, John	Sarrazin, Stéphane
Ciriello, Monica	Kanapathi, Logan	Saunderson, Brian
Clark, Steve	Kerzner, Michael S.	Scott, Chris
Coe, Lorne	Kusendova-Bashta, Natalia	Smith, Dave
Cooper, Michelle	Leardi, Anthony	Smith, David
Crawford, Stephen	Lecce, Stephen	Smith, Graydon
Cuzzetto, Rudy	Lumsden, Neil	Smith, Laura
Darouze, George	McCarthy, Todd J.	Tangri, Nina
Denault, Billy	Mulroney, Caroline	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Dixon, Jess	Oosterhoff, Sam	Thompson, Lisa M.
Dowie, Andrew	Pang, Billy	Tibollo, Michael A.
Downey, Doug	Parsa, Michael	Williams, Charmaine A.
Dunlop, Jill	Piccini, David	
Firin, Mohamed	Pinsonneault, Steve	

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

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gates, Wayne	Schreiner, Mike
Bell, Jessica	Gélinas, France	Shamji, Adil
Blais, Stephen	Gilmour, Alexa	Shaw, Sandy
Bourgouin, Guy	Gretzky, Lisa	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Bowman, Stephanie	Hazell, Andrea	Stiles, Marit
Brady, Bobbi Ann	Hsu, Ted	Tabuns, Peter
Burch, Jeff	Kernaghan, Terence	Tsao, Jonathan
Cerjanec, Rob	McKenney, Catherine	Vanthof, John
Clancy, Aislinn	McMahon, Mary-Margaret	Vaugeois, Lise
Fife, Catherine	Pasma, Chandra	Watt, Tyler
Fraser, John	Rakocevic, Tom	West, Jamie
French, Jennifer K.	Sattler, Peggy	Wong-Tam, Kristyn

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day): The ayes are 67; the nays are 36.

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

Motion agreed to.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Pursuant to standing order 36(a), the member for Orléans has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to the question given by the parliamentary assistant to the Premier regarding the Premier's jet. This matter will be debated today following private members' public business.

This House stands in recess until 3 p.m.
The House recessed from 1147 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Stan Cho: I didn't get a chance to introduce them this morning, but I had a school visiting from Willowdale: Prestige School, where I'll be visiting on Friday.

Thank you for coming to Queen's Park.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PROTECTING ONTARIO BY UPHOLDING HONESTY AND INTEGRITY ACT, 2026

LOI DE 2026 POUR PROTÉGER L'ONTARIO EN RESPECTANT LES PRINCIPES D'HONNÊTETÉ ET D'INTÉGRITÉ

Mr. Shamji moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 108, An Act to amend the Legislative Assembly Act / Projet de loi 108, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'assemblée législative.

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. Adil Shamji: I'm sure we all remember the day that we first took our seat in the Legislature. Prior to doing that, we made an oath of allegiance to the reigning monarch of our country. However, we did not have the opportunity to make an oath of office—an opportunity to state our values and our commitments to our constituents and the principles that will guide our service in this Legislature. This legislation, if passed, would allow us to do that for the first time.

PETITIONS

HIGHWAY 69

MPP Jamie West: This petition is entitled "Stop Putting Lives at Risk: Four Lane Highway 69 Now!"

I really want to thank Lisa Aho. She went to the farmers' market in Sudbury and collected almost 400 signatures in less than five hours. There were long lineups for this.

The petition basically talks about what the Premier said, having gone from Sudbury down to the city: that two lanes is like white-knuckle driving there. If the transport is off by two inches, you're done.

There has been a lot of renewed interest in four-laning Highway 69 since the two fatal accidents that happened two weeks ago, where three people were killed. The Premier has been promising to complete the four-laning of Highway 69 in every election since 2018. However, he has not tendered a single kilometre of the remaining 68 kilometres that are there. Also, in the budgets, you don't ever see any money toward this project.

The people of northern Ontario are getting very frustrated with the situation, and I've got to say, honestly, I'm a little frustrated too. It's not in Sudbury. It's about 70 kilometres from Sudbury.

They are petitioning the Legislative Assembly to follow through on the commitments that were made to Ontario to save lives on Highway 69 by completing the four-laning of the remaining 68 kilometres on Highway 69.

I obviously support this petition. Two of the people who were killed were my neighbours. I'll affix my signature and provide it to page David for the table.

AUTOROUTE 69

M^{me} France Gélinas: J'ai une pétition qui s'appelle «Mettre l'autoroute 69 à quatre voies maintenant». Comme vous le savez, Madame la Présidente, il reste 68 kilomètres de l'autoroute 69—l'autoroute 69 va de Toronto à Sudbury—qui sont seulement deux voies. À chaque année, il y a de multiples accidents. L'autoroute est souvent fermée. Il y a deux semaines, trois personnes dans deux accidents séparés sont mortes sur l'autoroute 69.

Les familles et les communautés du Nord en ont assez. C'est depuis que le gouvernement de M. Ford a été élu qu'il nous promet que l'autoroute sera à quatre voies, mais on ne voit ni plan d'action, ni appels de services, ni budget pour le faire. J'ai 922 signatures; j'y inclus M^{me} Sherry St-Onge de Chelmsford dans mon comté. Les gens ont signé cette pétition et ils demandent au gouvernement de l'Ontario de financer immédiatement la construction, d'aller en appel d'offres, de commencer la construction des 68 kilomètres restants et d'établir un calendrier clair et public pour déterminer quand le projet sera terminé.

J'appuie cette pétition. Je vais la signer, et je demande à Livy de l'amener à la table des greffiers.

POST-SECONDARY FUNDING

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I'm honoured to rise to present a petition on behalf of my constituents entitled "Reinvest in Algonquin College."

Because of this government's severe underfunding of the post-secondary sector, Ontario has the lowest per-student funding in the entire province for our college sector, and for institutions like Algonquin College, that means serious challenges for stability.

Last year, Algonquin College closed 37 programs and the Perth campus, which we heard from the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus at the finance committee hearings in January has a serious impact on the economy of all of eastern Ontario. There are lots of towns and municipalities that depend on those programs that were happening at the Perth campus.

This year, Algonquin is cutting another 30 programs. This includes high-demand programs like the music industry, journalism, tourism and horticulture.

There are many employers who say they don't know where they're going to get skilled workers now that these programs won't be available in eastern Ontario at all. The government's budget does not fill this funding gap for post-secondary institutions even though these cuts are harming our local economy and employers, students, staff. We're seeing layoffs to both staff and faculty.

Algonquin College is such an important part of our local economy in Ottawa that we deserve to have a well-funded college that provides all the programming that our students and our local employers need.

The petitioners are calling on the Legislative Assembly to direct the Minister of Colleges and Universities to increase permanent base funding for all universities and colleges in Ontario, to stabilize the sector and ensure equitable access for all.

I wholeheartedly endorse this petition. I will add my name to it and send it to the table with page Navya.

HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Mr. Tom Rakocvic: I'm proud to rise today and table a petition. It's from the Ontario Nurses' Association. It's entitled "Stop Privatization and Support Staffing Ratios."

If you want the health care system to work—and this is what they're asking for—you need to have the right number of staff, you need to have the right number of nurses, because right now across the entire health care system our incredible nurses who are out there saving lives every day are burning out. They're leaving the profession, taking sick leave because they can't handle the unimaginable burden on their backs and stress of having to do the work without the support and respect this government owes them and they're not getting.

So, of course, I certainly support far better staffing ratios. We need to get more nurses into hospitals.

I'm going to be definitely signing this and giving this to page Henry.

HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Mr. Guy Bourgoin: I am tabling the following petition: "Stop Privatization and Support Staffing Ratios," from ONA, the Ontario Nurses' Association.

This petition calls on the Ontario government to mandate safe staffing ratios for nurses and health care professionals across the health care system.

Current understaffing leads to burnout and unsafe working conditions, forcing nurses and health care profes-

sionals to leave, pursue other jobs or retire prematurely. Understaffing has devastating impacts on patient care and forces emergency department closures.

Safe staffing ratios are a proven solution to reduce burnout for nurses and health care professionals. They reduce incidence of violence and improve quality of care.

I am proud to support this petition. It is time that Ontario joins other provinces and mandates safe staffing ratios for nurses and health care professionals.

I am proud to put my name to this petition, and I'll give it to David to bring to the Clerks' table.

PHARMACARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I thank Marty Larocque from my riding for these petitions. They're called "Pharmacare."

Basically, we all know that prescription medication is a basic and essential part of health care. The Ontario government has many different programs that give some people some access but leave way, way too many people behind. That means that a lot of families are forced to make decisions between paying for the medications that they need or paying for rent and groceries. That leads a lot of patients to skip the medications that they're supposed to take, which, of course, has an impact on their health.

1510

So they petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to first negotiate with the federal government to bring pharmacare to Ontario. Manitoba, the Yukon, PEI, a number of other provinces have already signed on, which means that everybody who is diabetic is completely covered. People who need birth control are covered—including hormone therapy for women into their menopause years. But they also want the full pharmacare. The first step is to negotiate with the federal government so that we do what other provinces have done, but they want full pharmacare.

I fully agree with their request. I will affix my name to the signature and ask page Myra to bring it to the Clerk.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Anthony Leardi: This petition talks about putting Ontario first. It is a petition that calls upon the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario to adopt regulations that would protect our supply chains, protect various sectors and make sure that when it comes to public sector procurement, Ontario-made goods and Ontario-made suppliers are put first. In part, it calls upon us to recognize that Ontario, of course, is a fantastic trading partner for the United States in that we help keep millions of Americans working every day because we are America's number one purchaser. It calls upon us to recognize that both houses of Congress have voted against the illegal tariffs that have been slapped against us by Donald Trump. Furthermore, it calls upon us to recognize that the US Supreme Court has even ruled Donald Trump's tariffs to be illegal.

I support this petition. I will sign it and give it to this fine young page to bring to the Clerks' table.

HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I am pleased to rise to table a petition entitled “Stop Privatization and Support Staffing Ratios” that is from the Ontario Nurses’ Association and collected from nurses, health care workers and patients at the Children’s Hospital of Eastern Ontario.

What we’re seeing within the health care sector is understaffing that’s leading to burnout and unsafe working conditions for nurses, which is leading to nurses and health care professionals leaving the sector early. In some cases, they’re going to work jobs even at IKEA or Chapters, because the working conditions are easier to bear. Even though they got into the profession because they genuinely want to care for patients, they feel at the end of a shift that they have not been able to do their best for every single patient, and that leads to burnout and a sense of moral injury. It also impacts patient care when hospitals are understaffed and nurses are not able to get to every bed. It also results in the closure of beds, reduction in emergency services, surgeries and treatments being cancelled—because a bed without a nurse is just furniture.

Safe staffing ratios are a proven solution that reduce burnout, reduce instances of violence, and ensure quality of care for every patient.

So the petition calls on the Ontario government to mandate safe staffing ratios for nurses and health care professionals across the health care system that are developed in consultation with nurses and their unions—people who actually understand the realities on the ground of health care every day.

I’m very proud to support this petition. I will join my signature to it because it’s time that Ontario joins other provinces and mandates safe nursing ratios. I’ll send it to the table with page Navya.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Deepak Anand: Speaker, this is—I call it the voice of the people—the petition talking about family first. When we talk about a global village and making sure that we work with everyone, we should have free trade—Ontario believes in that.

However, what do you do when you have President Trump, who’s putting in illegal tariffs—when even the court has declared that it is illegal; when both sides, senators and representatives of both sides of the aisle, said no to it?

As you all know, Ontario is the number one export market for 15 US states. Hard-working Ontarians are producing much of the stuff, which it sends to the US and makes sure millions of Americans are working based on that.

So the hard-working Ontarians who are looking out for their family members and other Ontarians are asking the voice of the people, the government of Ontario, that they should adopt a regulation or regulations and issue procurement directives, as appropriate, that would prioritize Ontario-made goods, services and supply chains in public

sector procurement, in capital infrastructure and construction projects, so that we can stand for each other and support Ontario’s economy and support Ontario workers.

Speaker, through you: I want to say thank you to all the members of Ontario who have signed this petition. Many of them live in southwestern Ontario. In fact, some of them are from the member from Essex’s riding, who has been working hard in his riding.

I absolutely agree with this petition, I believe in this petition, I support this petition, and I am going to give it to Charlotte.

Thank you, Charlotte, for your help as well.

HEALTH CARE SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Sue Dufresne from Hanmer in my riding for this petition. It’s called “Remove the HST from Massage Therapy Services.”

Massage therapy is a regulated profession in Ontario. Massage is used to control pain, rehabilitate injuries, and improve mental health and physical well-being etc. The services provided by regulated massage therapists are taxed in Ontario, but not in other jurisdictions.

So they petition the Legislative Assembly to remove the HST from the services offered by massage therapists. It’s as simple as that. It will make massage therapy more accessible to more people.

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

ENTRETIEN HIVERNAL DES ROUTES

M. Guy Bourguin: J’ai une pétition intitulée « Pour la sécurité des routes du Nord ». Écoute, c’est ce que la pétition dit: des routes du Nord sont des artères principales. On sait que tellement de collisions qu’on a vues sur nos routes sont à cause de l’entretien.

Les routes hivernales, la 11 et 17—c’est l’économie de la province et du Canada. On voit, très souvent, nos routes sont fermées. On pense aussi que les travailleurs ont de la difficulté à se rendre à leur emploi et ça l’affecte l’économie de la région. Et que les routes ne sont plus rendues fiables pour l’économie mais aussi pour les gens qui voyagent sur la route 11 et 17.

Fait que, les propositions qu’ils proposent c’est d’améliorer l’entretien hivernal, de le ramener à la province; de faire progresser le projet de l’autoroute 11 pour le 2+1. Ils disent aussi de classer la 11 et 17 comme une classe 1—le déneigement après huit heures et non 12 heures. Ils demandent au ministère de ramener le licenciement pour des conducteurs des camions à la province. Aussi, ils disent d’introduire leur propre législation—s’ils ne sont pas capables de supporter les projets de loi de l’opposition, qu’ils amènent leur propre projet de loi pour supporter les gens du Nord pour la sécurité des routes du Nord.

Je supporte cette pétition, et je vais la donner à Hagop pour amener la pétition à la table des greffiers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BETTER REGIONAL GOVERNANCE ACT, 2026

LOI DE 2026 POUR UNE MEILLEURE GOUVERNANCE RÉGIONALE

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 20, 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?

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I'm so privileged to rise today to represent the wonderful people of Kitchener Centre and speak in opposition of Bill 100.

1520

I live in an area where I've always voted for my regional chair, and I believe in this right to have democracy represented in my area, to have the voice of my constituents count, and to be governed by a government that we chose.

Around the world, we see governments moving more towards authoritarianism, backsliding and weakening of democracy, and I don't want to stand by and watch while this happens in Ontario.

My son is actually studying authoritarianism right now, and I see echoes of this in what this bill represents. It represents a centralization of power, where fewer and fewer people have more and more power to control the lives of others. We see donations being increased, so people with deep pockets have more freedoms and favours with this government. We see more and more that the Premier acts like a king and rules with fear. So many times, I've come across the aisle to advocate on behalf of my constituents, when I'm asked, "Who is it? What is their name?" I have to say that they don't want to share it because they're worried that there will be repercussions, that they'll lose their job, that their charity will lose their funding. And I worry that this type of appointment process will only make this deeper.

They talk about the new move toward authoritarianism—not as tanks going down the street to take over the government, but actually a coup from the inside, where people are democratically elected and then they change the rules to ensure that they stay in power for longer.

We already have a weak democracy in Ontario. Right now, the PC government has earned 43% of the votes, but they have 100% of the power. And it looks as though they're expanding that power even further, to have more power over the people of Ontario in areas where they don't have 100% of the power.

I believe in electoral reform, because we know that the countries that have strong democracies are the happiest places to live, they perform the best economically, and they're the most sustainable.

This is also not fair. This means that 5.7 million Ontarians have less democracy than others. So I want to say, why do people from the Waterloo region have less democracy than people who live in Ottawa and Toronto, where somebody who is elected governs how much property tax is paid; when someone who is elected decides what our attitude is towards homelessness; when someone who is elected decides how much we invest in fire and policing and who is in the top brass of our cities?

Also, the argument being made is that this is going to expedite and streamline housing—this was the argument said for giving mayors strong powers. This hasn't happened. We have less housing starts this year than ever before. So if this is the argument, I hope that the population of Ontario realizes that they're getting misled, because we know that this hasn't been something that has transformed into truth when we gave mayors strong powers. Why we think it will happen—we'll get more housing because we have strong regional chairs who are appointed—I'm not sure. What I believe in is that we legalize housing, that we get rid of exclusionary zoning and cut red tape to building missing-middle housing where we already have roads, we already have infrastructure.

What we see in this government is this push to believe in strong mayors, who end up doing things for folks who have made donations and have been speculators.

In my riding, we had the countryside line—people are gobbling up farms, who aren't actually farmers. They're folks who are hoping that they'll have a government change the zoning so that their land, just like in the green-belt, will be worth much more.

So that's what worries me, because we know that these appointees are not being chosen by their constituents. We see in Niagara that the chair who was appointed was a failed candidate. His own neighbours didn't pick him to be the regional chair. They didn't pick him as an elected official. Instead, he was appointed by the government, which shows that you don't even have to win an election to be in charge; you have to make your donations and be the favourite one of the government. This is called nepotism.

And we see from the school boards that these supervisors have no background in education. I studied business. I didn't learn about education in business. I learned about education by working in the education sector. That's how you gain experience—not because you maxed your PC donation, not because you're the favoured one who gets appointed. And we know it's not cheaper. We look at the way in which supervisors to our school boards are operating, and it's costing taxpayers much more. There's no evidence that this is going to make things any cheaper. In fact, these folks will be earning very fat paycheques without actually having to earn the positions that they're filling.

One of the things I also worry about is that it will shift the way we deal with homelessness. Right now, we see that the government has downloaded much of the responsibility for addressing homelessness onto the municipalities.

This government likes to say that they don't raise taxes. What I see is somebody I went out for dinner with, and instead of paying their bill, they gave it to me. So the way that person saves money when they go out for dinner is just by passing the buck on to somebody else.

In my region, our municipality pays between 55% and 60% of the cost of homelessness. We are doing more than our fair share, and if you talk to AMO, they'll say the same—that municipalities can't keep up with the downloading of expenses. So while the government likes to talk about not raising taxes, what I see as a former city councillor, what I see as a constituent in my area, is that property taxes are going up because this government isn't doing their job when it comes to addressing homelessness in this area.

What I see, too, is that I live in a riding that believes in a countryside line—that we can build housing, but there has to be a limit. We have to protect our spaces. We can't just have sprawl development without a leash. So I would like to see us building in that countryside line—but do you know what? I think this government doesn't agree with the philosophy of my region. This countryside line is an important policy measure that keeps us from paving over the land that feeds us, and it protects our groundwater.

Right now, in the Waterloo region, we have stopped development. Waterloo region is closed for business. We are losing billions and billions of dollars because of the moratorium on building. We need this government to be a partner with us, to help us unlock new housing, unlock new development. Help us fund these pipes-and-pumps infrastructure projects. Help us do long-term planning. Be mindful of climate change. We need that water to go into the ground. We need the government as a partner. We don't need somebody mandated upon us telling us that they know better than we do.

When I talk to the people in my riding about who they want to be governed by—somebody they chose who shares their values or somebody sent to them by someone in Toronto—what do you think their answer is? Their answer is that they want to pick somebody who shares their values.

I want to close by saying that two or three years ago this government commissioned a report on regional reform. We spent hundreds of thousands of dollars—taxpayer money—on a report to say, “What's the best way we can improve governments at the regional level?” And guess what? Just like the FOI, just like all the other blocks, that report remains hidden. My constituents have paid for a report. They've brought in experts. They were asked their opinions. They were consulted. And that report, to this day, remains hidden. And every time I open up my newspaper to see if we talk about regional reform, again, the public of Waterloo region is asking to see, what does that report recommend?

Let's try to make decisions that are based on evidence, that are based on reports from experts, like your own housing reports on how to get housing starts up. Let's see how to do regional reform based on experts instead of making it a tantrummy decision in the moment.

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

Ms. Laura Smith: I thank the member opposite for her statements. I know we both have a passion for housing—and I'm always attentive to listen to colleagues in these discussions.

The fact of the matter is that there are a lot of inefficiencies and regions where council sizes are massive. Let's be quite honest. They're significantly above the provincial average.

Does the member opposite believe that larger, more complex and more fragmented decision-making bodies improve the ability to deliver housing and infrastructure at the speed that Ontario now requires? I believe that a larger structure is not optimal in most situations, especially in areas that are very problematic. I'm wondering if the member can explain if she believes larger structures in regions are going to help reduce approval timelines and accelerate the—

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

1530

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: Of course, authoritarianism is more efficient. Of course, it's easier to have one person with a lot of power. Democracy is messy.

Do we need regional reform? Yes. But let's look at the report that remains hidden to this day. There's a report that we spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on that talks about regional reform. I want to see what that report says.

With all due respect, if we want more housing, let's do what the report says and get rid of exclusionary zoning and provide legal zoning measures to allow for multiplexes in our centres of town, so we can build it where we already have infrastructure.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: This is not the first time—I go back to when this government first got elected in 2018. When I'm talking to someone, I often will ask them, when the politics discussion comes up about this government, “What was the first act that this government passed in this Legislature in 2018?” I don't know if anybody remembers in this House, but if you do—I'll refresh your memory: It was the Toronto municipal act. That was the first act that this government brought in, and it pulled the “notwithstanding” clause on it. He threatened to pull the “notwithstanding” clause. That was the first power grab type of democracy erosion of this government. Then they changed the strong-mayor powers, then the education school board act—and now Bill 100, Better Regional Governance Act. By the way, don't forget, they also decided that London, who had ranked ballot—they passed that municipally. They decided that that wasn't allowed.

So to what end is this level of government deciding, is it better—changing democracy for the people—

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

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: We don't have to look far. There's tons of evidence to show us that when we have a stronger democracy, it's better for long-term planning. We measure twice and cut once. I know we've all heard that adage, but it actually holds true, especially when it comes to the way we're governed and electoral reform.

So I am a big proponent of electoral reform, because I know it leads to a better life for the people of Ontario.

As a city councillor, I was there after Bill 23, and I know that all the bills that have come up since then that meddle with municipal governance create chaos. Our planning departments can't keep up. They are trying to address each change in their job titles every three months, and I've heard time and time again that it costs a lot and creates a lot of chaos in how they do their job every time—

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

Mr. Lorne Coe: Speaker, you will know from your time as a mayor in a municipal government that regional governance models were designed decades ago. Despite the fact that the province is now experiencing unprecedented population growth, infrastructure demands and housing pressures, if the member opposite is not supportive of modernizing these systems—and I think I'm hearing that—how do they propose Ontario addresses, through you, Speaker, the clear gap between current governance capacity and the urgent need to accelerate housing construction and infrastructure delivery?

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: We know the fastest way to get more housing on board is to legalize multiplexes; all this government has to do is do it. We already have the infrastructure—the sewers under the ground, the roads are built. We don't have to wait 10 to 14 years to build a new subdivision. We can legalize multiplexes right now.

When you talk about modernizing, I worry that we're copying jurisdictions around the world whose idea of modernizing is to erode democracy.

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

Mr. Deepak Anand: It's a privilege to rise today in support of Bill 100, Better Regional Governance Act, 2026. This is an important piece of legislation because it speaks directly to one of the most pressing challenges facing our province today: how we ensure our communities can grow, build and prosper in a way that is efficient, affordable and sustainable.

Speaker, I always start my remarks by thanking God for giving me the mental health and physical health to represent the residents of Mississauga–Malton. I always start by thanking the residents of Mississauga–Malton.

This month—it is way more important than others, because this month we celebrated Vaisakhi. I was born in Punjab. I do remember, while growing up, we used to celebrate Vaisakhi, the birth of Khalsa, a community committed to upholding justice, morality and service. As we all know, April is Sikh Heritage Month. The core principles of Sikhism are naam japo, meditation on God; kirat

karō, which is to earn an honest living; and vand keh chakko, which means sharing with others.

Speaker, I encourage everyone to learn more about the teachings of Guru Ji and the contributions Sikhs have made to our province and the world.

To everyone in Mississauga–Malton and across the globe, happy Sikh Heritage Month.

Interjection.

Mr. Deepak Anand: Thank you.

Coming back to the bill in front of us: As we all know, Ontario is growing rapidly. Families are choosing to live here, businesses are choosing to invest here, and municipalities are under increasing pressure to deliver the housing infrastructure and the services that people depend on every day. But growth requires more than ambition. It requires a system that works. It requires a government at every level that can make decisions clearly, quickly and responsibly. It requires structures that reflect the realities of today, not the realities of 50 years ago.

If I have to look at the realities of the 1970s—for example, the population was 7.7 million. Today, we are close to 16 million people in Ontario.

Why do people choose Ontario? Because Ontario is the engine of Canada—we are 42% of Canada's economy, and an amount of the growth that is happening and its impact.

What we're doing through Bill 100 is talking about modernizing regional governance so the municipalities can move faster, reduce duplication, improve accountability and better align with shared provincial priorities like housing and infrastructure. It is about making sure local governments have the tools they need to deliver results for the people they serve. Ultimately, it is about representing and respecting taxpayers by ensuring government works efficiently and effectively. As the Minister of Housing made clear when introducing this legislation—along with his parliamentary assistants, who have done an incredible job—those proposed changes would help local leaders speed up decision-making, reduce costs, and expedite housing and infrastructure.

Speaker, while I'm talking about this bill, you will hear the words “economic growth,” “economic support,” and “housing and infrastructure.” These are all interrelated. This is exactly the right objective.

Today, when we talk about the global village, we talk about trade across the world, not just between Canada and the US. We live in a digital age. If you look at what the province has done, this government, through the policies, has been attracting a lot of foreign direct investment—close to \$242 billion. The job creators are choosing Ontario, providing jobs to the people of Ontario. All those job creators had a choice. It's not that Ontario is the only place they could have gone and in isolation they had to pick one out of one and they chose Ontario. No, the slate was all open for them. They had a choice. But they chose Ontario because Ontario is providing them the ability to invest and grow. If we want that kind of investment coming continuously to us—and making sure that we serve them as a great customer, providing them good customer service—we have to make sure that there are no delays in decision-

making. Delays in approval mean delays in their investment. Delays in approval mean delays in providing them the infrastructure. Delays in approval mean delays in roads, transit, water systems, and economic investment. And delays cost money and the loss of opportunity.

1540

Through this bill, we're not only talking about—which is typical for every government—thinking short-term; we are thinking long-term. We are thinking about building an infrastructure so that coming generations have not just equal opportunity but better opportunities than what we have today.

I'll give you a few examples, Speaker. There is a company that is looking to manufacture urea. As you know, every truck needs DEF—diesel exhaust fluid—and to manufacture that diesel exhaust fluid, you need urea. Right now, we do not produce enough urea in Ontario or Canada. So somebody who's trying to build a plant would look for a place where there is less bureaucracy, where there's less red tape, where there is a government that is supportive. Another example is a pharma company that is trying to put together an alliance and they're looking to expand, or data centres—something which is the fastest-growing industry right now. All these organizations have a choice. For us to attract them, we have to make sure that we are there to serve them. And when the regional councils are too large, too disconnected from the provincial priorities, we all feel the consequences. That falls short of good governance, creates little value for the taxpayer. That falls short of what Ontario deserves.

Speaker, municipal governments are on the front lines of growth. In our office, we get a lot of calls, and many of those calls are actually for our councillors, for the mayor, because they are the ones who are responsible for planning, roads, water, waste water, public transit, emergency services, social housing, and the services that job creators and the residents rely on. If you want to build homes faster, we have to make sure—municipal governments must be part of that conversation. We have to address the housing crisis. We have to address employment. We have to address job creation. And as we all know, housing policy and governance reform form a single, unified conversation. If you're serious about building homes, if you're serious about attracting investment, if you're serious about our next generation, we have to be serious about how decisions get made.

Bill 100 recognizes a simple truth: Governance models must evolve. Many of Ontario's regional and county structures were designed decades ago. These were created for a different time with a smaller population, different economic pressures, and far less urgency around housing supply and infrastructure delivery. Today, we live in a digital, data time. Demands are entirely different. Everybody wants everything faster, easier, simpler.

Let's take an example. In 1970, if you had to ask somebody, "Do you have a laptop"—first of all, there was no word "laptop"; there was "computer." And computers would have cost—if you remember, Speaker, at that time. I'm not sure how old you were. You were probably in

elementary school. You wouldn't even know that. But maybe your teachers were talking to each other and they were saying that computers used to cost thousands of dollars and were limited to companies like IBM. Today, we all have supercomputers on our phones. Today it is accessible by every home, business and municipality. The cost of living, infrastructure demands, complexity of service delivery—everything has increased significantly, placing greater expectations on a municipal government to deliver faster and more efficiently.

Growth at this scale requires a government that is easier, faster, more data-driven—and that is what Bill 100 is doing. That is why this legislation matters. It reflects the practical and necessary modernization of how upper-tier governments function. It supports more efficient and effective regional council, improved alignment between municipal and provincial priorities, and streamlines and accelerates decision-making in local government.

What is Bill 100 doing? It would allow the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to appoint regional chairs in Durham, Halton, Muskoka, Niagara, Peel, Waterloo, York, as well as the warden of Simcoe county. These regional chairs would also receive strong-chair powers that mirror the strong-mayor powers already in place in municipalities across Ontario.

Speaker, regional governments involve multiple municipalities, multiple priorities and, often, competing interest. With clear leadership, councils can work together, and without clear leadership, councils risk becoming stalled by processes instead of focused on outcomes. A strong regional chair will help ensure that the important priorities like housing, infrastructure and economic growth don't get lost in endless procedural delays.

Another major part of this legislation is the streamlining of council structure in Simcoe county and Niagara region. This is an excellent example of government responding to real concerns from local leadership. In Simcoe county, for example, council would be reduced from 32 members to 17—the mayors of the 16 lower-tier municipalities, plus the county warden. In Niagara region, council would be reduced from 32 members to 13—the mayors of 12 lower-tier municipalities, plus the regional chair. These changes are deliberate and grounded in real needs. They respond directly to the concern that these councils have become too large, too costly and too difficult to operate effectively.

Speaker, let's take a look at it. I'll give an example. Compare the two different regions: Toronto with three million in population, and Niagara region—by the way, I love Niagara region, and I believe we are blessed to have Niagara Falls, one of the seven wonders. Well, when you look at Niagara region and look at the growth and compare it with other places, we need to do way more than what we have done today. But if you look at the number of elected officials, they have 126 locally elected officials, compared to 26 in Toronto.

This is a powerful example of why reform is needed. It strengthens governance and preserves democratic representation. It is about ensuring councils are focused, functional and capable of making timely decisions.

On the other contrast, I want to talk about Simcoe county, because it demonstrates exactly what provincial action is necessary. Simcoe county, for example, attempted to reduce its council size. I heard some of the folks on the other side saying, “If they want, they can do it themselves.” So let’s look at what happens when they try to do it themselves, what happened in that case. In Simcoe county, they tried to reduce their council size through existing municipal process. The proposal received support from county council and also received support from municipalities—but when the voting came, the vote among lower-tier municipalities resulted in an 8-8 tie. So the proposal failed to meet the triple majority requirement. In other words, the will for reform was there, the local support was there, but the legislative mechanism prevented the progress. That is exactly where the province has responsibility to step in.

This enables changes that municipalities themselves have asked for, rather than imposing it from above. In fact, the request came directly from the county warden. This reflects a partnership approach rather than a top-down model. This is listening to municipality leaders, listening to the voice of the people and acting responsibly.

A question often arises in discussion: Does reducing the size of council mean reducing the representation? This legislation addresses that concern directly.

Speaker, the representation of communities across regions is not determined by how many people sit; it is determined by whether the voices of those communities are reflected in the decision and whether those decisions can actually be made in a timely and effective way.

1550

Under this legislation, each and every municipality continues to have a seat at the table, every community continues to have its voice represented, and every resident continues to be reflected in the decisions that shape their region. Those changes focus on how clearly and efficiently the decisions are made while maintaining the representation.

A more focused council structure allows for clearer accountability, more direct responsibility and a stronger connection between the decisions being taken and the people those decisions are affecting. In that sense, this represents an improvement in how representation functions in practice.

Speaker, let’s be honest: Politics is not easy, governance is difficult, but when we all work together, we can achieve many things.

I just want to shift away from the bill for a second and talk about—my son actually lives in Sudbury, and on April 3, we were driving back from Sudbury to our home in Mississauga. We were looking at Highway 69 on the way, and it was dark and it was difficult to drive, and my wife and I were talking about how sometimes it could be troublesome.

On April 5, we got a call from one of our friends, Jay, in Sudbury. He talked about one of our good friends—Vinod Patel and Shilpa Patel, who were travelling on April 5 to Toronto because Vinod had a medical treatment done

in the past, and they were coming for their medical appointment. Shilpa was driving. There was an accident that happened in the riding of the Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and both Vinod and Shilpa died at the spot.

Those kind of things, when you look at it and you think about it and you say the decision—because the government has always been entrusted in twinning that highway, but because there are many complexities around the decision-making, those decisions sometimes take time. Thank you to the Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing for being a champion and continuously working with the community on that.

Bill 100 supports more effective coordination between municipalities and the province, reduces duplication in decision-making and helps ensure that key priorities, particularly housing infrastructure, can move forward without unnecessary delays. It also reinforces accountability by making it clearer who is responsible for decisions, and ensuring that those decisions are made in a timely and transparent manner. These are not theoretical improvements. They’re practical changes that will have a direct impact on how communities plan, build and grow.

Speaker, legislation like this is ultimately about ensuring that our institutions are aligned with the needs of the people we serve. It is about making sure that as Ontario grows, the systems that guide that growth are capable of keeping pace. It is about creating the conditions for municipalities to succeed so that together we can deliver the housing infrastructure, economic opportunities and something Ontario expects—we want to make sure faster, easier, timely decisions are made for generations to come.

For those reasons, I’m proud to support Bill 100. I believe it represents a thoughtful and necessary step forward, and I would encourage all members of the House to come together and support Ontario, support Bill 100.

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

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I want to thank the member for his research notes.

This is not going to speed anything up. Really, what this is doing is just replacing elected people with unelected people chosen by this government. So what this is about has nothing to do with speed. It’s about choosing people who will follow the rules of their boss and do as they’re told. Ultimately, what this is doing is reducing accountability and reducing democracy.

Who do you think these appointed chairs will be accountable to—do you think it’s going to be to the people they serve? They’re not being selected by them. They’ll only be accountable to one person, and that’s your boss.

So please tell us the real reason why you’re doing this.

Mr. Deepak Anand: Thank you to the member opposite for giving me an opportunity to clarify what we’re doing in this bill.

The intent of this legislation is not to diminish democratic accountability, but to strengthen the ability of regional government to deliver on the priorities that residents are consistently asking about: housing, infrastruc-

ture, efficient services. Municipal councils remain fully elected.

At the same time, you talk about accountability—each and every member of this House is elected, and we are accountable.

Everything we are doing is to make sure that we're not only providing support to the people of Ontario in the short term, but in the long term for the generations to come.

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

Mr. Ted Hsu: Speaker, if I could ask a supplementary question to my colleague from Humber River–Black Creek—our colleague on the government side talks about democracy and the fact that we're elected.

This legislation and the regulations behind it allow this government to give a higher weight to the vote of an appointed head of a regional council, somebody who could be fired at any time by the minister. In that kind of situation, when the minister says, “Jump,” the head of the regional council is likely to say, “How high?” How is that democratic?

Mr. Deepak Anand: Again, I want to remind the people of Ontario that, through this bill, what we're doing is making sure that decisions are made faster, easier and with accountability.

This characterization does not reflect what this legislation does. Every resident continues to be represented by their locally elected and municipal council, which remains the primary democratic voice for communities.

Speaker, we call it a vicious circle—when there is a delay, the delay will lead to a problem, and a problem will lead to a further delay, and we will lose the opportunity to serve the residents.

In this bill, it's exactly what we're trying to do—make sure that we have faster, easier, accountable governance so that we can continue to serve not just this generation but the generations to come.

Again, thank you to the member for giving me the opportunity to reply.

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

Hon. Stan Cho: My mom is 75 years old, and she's absolutely stunning—just as stunning as when she was 25. She's a beautiful lady—my dad, not so much. The only reason my mother agreed to marry him is because he's the only one out of her many suitors who said, “I can show you Niagara Falls.”

Niagara is a very special region, and we're building a giant tourism strategy to double the amount of tourists. But they have 126 municipal politicians in that region alone. That's more than the MPPs we have in this Legislature.

We've seen precedence through Bill 5 in 2018 of how more efficiency can come from fewer elected officials in these particular jurisdictions that can't accommodate so many.

My question, through you, Speaker, to the member is, what efficiencies can we expect from a more efficiently run council when it comes to tourism, building houses and all those great outcomes that the great people of Niagara region deserve?

Mr. Deepak Anand: Our member from the opposite side always talks about how Niagara is the honeymoon capital of North America.

I'll tell you, Niagara is an amazing place. I do remember, when my family was growing up, when my kids were growing up, we used to go to Niagara. We still love to go to Niagara. The best is yet to come, in my opinion.

I want to thank the minister for that question.

By reducing the regional council to 13 members and strengthening the leadership through an appointed chair, we are creating a more streamlined and effective governance model. This will improve coordination and reduce duplication to ensure faster decision-making.

Niagara is a region with tremendous potential, and these changes will help unlock that potential by ensuring decisions that are made quickly align with key priorities like housing and infrastructure.

To everyone who's listening: If you're looking to invest, invest in Ontario because we are the place. We are growing and we are booming.

1600

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

Mr. Tom Rakocvic: All right. I'm going to try and help the member, okay? I'm going to give a bit of an analogy. We have a Prime Minister, and the Prime Minister may not always get along with your boss, despite what they show on TV. And the Prime Minister says, “You know what? I can't control all these Premiers. They're not doing what we want. So I'm going to remove all the Premiers and I'm going to appoint a guy that could pull 70 votes out of his pocket in whatever Legislature he is sitting in.” This is a more fair comparison as to what is happening here.

This is an erosion of democracy. You are taking elected people that are accountable to the regions because they were elected and replacing them with a hand-picked person that your boss chooses on one condition: that he listens to them. Because, guess what, that's who's paying the cheque. That's who is keeping them there. Can you not see how this is an erosion of democracy?

Mr. Deepak Anand: I want to be crystal clear, Speaker: The only people who are paying the cheque to me are the residents of Mississauga–Malton. And to every one of us, it is the residents who are paying our salary. We are accountable to them. We are thankful to them and we are thankful to God for giving us the opportunity to serve them.

The member is talking about the strong-chair powers, so I just want to talk about what the strong-chair power is going to do. In this case, the strong-chair model is designed to address a practical problem that many municipalities themselves have raised repeatedly: the difficulty of moving major projects forward when decision-making becomes fragmented or stalled at regional levels.

Let's be honest. All the investments that are coming from the people looking for houses—they have many choices, but they pick Ontario because we believe that we are there for them, to serve them. That is what this bill is doing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I recognize the member from Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Ted Hsu: Along the lines of my very creative and thoughtful colleague from Humber River–Black Creek, and going back to the example of the Niagara region from our colleague on the government side: Why don't you let the people in the Niagara region decide among themselves, without interference from the Premier, how to organize local government in the Niagara region? Maybe they will come up with dividing it up into three or four municipal regions. It would kind of make more sense than the current situation.

Why should the Premier be able to control things with an appointed person who is not elected? Following along the lines of my colleague from the NDP, imagine if the King told Canada how to confederate instead of people in Canada sitting down and figuring it out among themselves. That's the analogy, I think, that's relevant here.

Mr. Deepak Anand: Thank you to the member from Kingston and the Islands for that question. Well, the question is very simple. He is saying, is the status quo doing okay or should we continue with the status quo? The answer is simple: No, the status quo is not okay. We already know. There are 126 elected officials and that is why, as a referee, as a government, as the voice of the people, it is our responsibility to make sure we deliver what is required for the province.

We need housing. We need infrastructure so that we can build that economic benefit for the people of Ontario. So that is what we are doing.

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

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I did want to thank the member for Thornhill. She came to my riding and we talked about supportive housing; I appreciate that.

My question for the member for Mississauga–Malton: Under this new change, 5.7 million Ontarians will not have democracy in their region and the rest of Ontario will. Why do you think a third of Ontario gets less democracy than the rest of Ontario? How is that fair?

Mr. Deepak Anand: Well, I only have 13 seconds, but I want to use the 13 seconds to thank the PA to the minister of housing, who has come to my riding also.

This bill is not taking away democracy. It is just making sure we are there to—

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

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm very pleased to stand in this place and speak on behalf of the people across Durham region—not only Oshawa today—on Bill 100, the Better Regional Governance Act.

This is called the Better Regional Governance Act, but really, I think it's the “better for the Premier and not so good for Durham” act. This bill is—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I am sorry to interrupt.

Pursuant to standing order 50(c), I am now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there have been six and a half hours of debate on the motion for

second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader directs the debate to continue.

I turn to the member for Essex.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: Continue the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I go back to the member from Oshawa.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I am very glad to be able to continue the debate, because I sure am ready for it.

This bill is yet another attack on local democracy by this government, giving the government and its unelected friends unprecedented power over regional municipal budgets and operations, taking power away from the municipal taxpayers and their elected representatives.

The bill would allow the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to appoint or remove the regional chairs of Durham, Halton, Muskoka, Niagara, Peel, Waterloo and York, as well as the warden of Simcoe county. I'm going to stay in my lane and focus on the region of Durham.

I have used language in this House that the minister is unhappy with. I have said that the bill, in effect, fires the chair of the region. They take exception to that because that's inflammatory language. But the chair in Durham region, John Henry, was elected to a position that they are now saying he can't run for again—in fact, nobody can run for it again. Call it what you will, but the elected regional chair will no longer be able to pursue running in an election for the same job.

It overrides the will of the Durham region voters who, in 2010, voted to stop appointing regional chairs. There was a referendum; it was quite an involved process. There were bylaws that came out in 2012, and there was a triple majority required. This was a really big deal. Then in 2014, we elected our first regional chair, who was Roger Anderson, and then John Henry was elected in 2018 and again in 2022. Now, effectively, he's being turfed. Durham region is being told by this minister that despite the voters across the region having voted to elect their regional chair and the head of regional council, this minister is telling us that we're wrong and, I guess, too stupid to make our choices.

Speaker, in this House we've been talking a lot about Animal Farm. There have been a lot of George Orwell references, and I don't want to miss out on the fun there. I think, today, the role of Napoleon will be played by Captain Canada.

I want to quote from George Orwell in Animal Farm: “No one believes more firmly than Comrade Napoleon that all animals are equal. He would be only too happy to let you make decisions for yourselves. But sometimes you might make the wrong decisions, comrades, and then where should we be?” That's what we're being told in Durham. Even though we had a referendum and decided to stop appointing regional chairs, we are wrong and clearly can't make decisions for ourselves.

When I was first elected to serve Oshawa in 2014, it was alongside then-Mayor John Henry. John was always kind and thoughtful and fair and very interested—he was a bit of a nerd, actually—about the story of Oshawa and

the region of Durham. He was a storyteller and, I think, well-liked across the region. You could disagree with him, and he would be glad to still have coffee with you. He does not deserve what is happening to him. A principled, community-minded politician and neighbour, I want to clearly thank him for his many years of public service.

I have a letter here from Chair John Henry that he put out when this government introduced this legislation. He said, “I am disappointed by this decision. Serving as Durham’s elected regional chair has been a great honour of my career, and together we’ve had great success. Over the past eight years, the region of Durham has effectively planned and delivered major regional services and coordinated growth and infrastructure across municipal boundaries in a way that reflects the needs of our diverse urban, suburban and rural communities.

“I believe the changes being implemented by the province are a disservice to our vibrant communities and our residents who deserve a direct voice in choosing their leadership.

“I am deeply grateful for the trust and support of our residents throughout these many years.

“While my role as the elected chair is coming to an end, my commitment to the community is not. I look forward to continuing to serve the people of Durham in a different capacity and contributing to the growth and success of our region in new ways.”

1610

Again, thank you, Chair Henry, for your years of service. I don’t think we’ve seen the last of him, not only because he lives in the area, but because he’s someone who does believe in our community.

The minister did say to me, for my information—and he also told this House—that he told John Henry he could apply for the job, right? Or that was announced in this space when I asked a question of the minister—that he could apply for the job. Well, if you don’t want someone in the job, why would you let them apply for it?

Also, I’m going to say very clearly, working for this minister is not the same as working for the electorate. That’s not the same job. The minister also told me, “Well, they never used to elect the chair. That’s not how they did it in”—he didn’t say this, but I’m saying that may not be how they did it in the good old days. But in the good old days, Speaker, women weren’t allowed to vote, so I’m wondering how far back we’re going, you know, to go to the good old days. If that’s the rationale, that they never used to elect chairs—do you know what they never used to do? Lots of stuff that we have put an end to. So that is a garbage rationale, if I do say so myself.

If you live in one of the affected regions, Speaker, come October, you will neither get to elect the head of your regional council directly, nor indirectly, through our own local representatives, and now that head of council is going to be more powerful than anyone you can actually vote for.

The government will tell you that this is about housing. This is not about housing. Strong mayors are about power and control from the Premier’s office.

Speaker, there are seven Durham region MPPs—seven of us. Some of us have little sections of it and others have larger sections, but there are seven elected MPPs that represent Durham region. One of those seven is responsible for a half-a-trillion-dollar debt, the largest of national debt. And I would guess, though I haven’t asked him—but I would imagine that he is looking forward to having unfettered, unrestricted access to the budgets of the region and access without permission to pick the property tax pockets of all regional taxpayers, and there is nothing the voters can do.

This is obviously concerning—so concerning that I’m getting very thoughtful emails, and this is one, actually, I was copied on. This is a letter from a Whitby constituent writing to the member for Whitby, but who has said—this is Chris from Whitby: “Regional councillors and mayors of the area municipalities are the decision-makers at the region along with the regional chair who has only one vote. They still work together to serve all of their communities. If their decisions don’t precisely align with the province, it is probably because they see your directions as unsupportive or even damaging to their communities who elected them. That is who they are accountable to—not the Premier.”

Chris goes on to say, “Please provide me direct evidence that elected chairs are standing in the way of developing housing and infrastructure. It seems they are doing the best they can given that your government has ripped apart the authorities and funding mechanisms that supported such activities, without providing a sustainable or viable alternative. Municipalities have been provided no new revenue tools by your government. This situation also will be a barrier to an appointed chair getting things done.” With the proposed 50% reduction in DCs, “existing property taxpayers will be picking up the tab for new development. The related tax increases will be high and constraints on other services will undoubtedly be imposed. Don’t you think that might slow down growth? And what will be the impact on essential services (water, sewer, ambulance, long-term care, social housing, etc.) provided by the region? I envision the new regional chair selling off taxpayer-funded assets to fund infrastructure growth early in his term.”

Chris goes on to say, “I don’t recall that folks in York and Peel have ever been asked if they would prefer an elected chair. Since your government is busy dismantling Peel and preparing to turn their publicly funded infrastructure over to unaccountable service corporations, it’s quite alarming that this could be on tap for Durham as well.

“Appointing regional chairs who are beholden to the Premier and minister is just another step in this direction.... This is just one more action by your government that makes me fear for our future.

“Again, I ask who will benefit from a provincially appointed chair? Certainly not Durham taxpayers who clearly chose an elected regional chair.

“If you think voters are not paying attention you are sadly mistaken.”

That is eloquently put, Chris from Whitby. People are paying attention. They're unhappy with this. I am sure that my colleagues on the other side are well aware of that.

But here's the key. In answer to my question the other day when I raised this issue, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing tossed back at me, "Peel and York." Again, I'm paraphrasing, but he sort of said, "That's working, and you're not talking about them." So I wanted to follow up on that and talk about them—just a bit, though, because being from Durham, that's where I will stay.

As I recall, in Peel, they were in the middle of electing a regional chair, and then Bill 5 stopped that process. As I recall, I think that was to keep Patrick Brown from becoming the regional chair. I don't know if that was a unanimous vote or if Mississauga East–Cooksville might have abstained. I don't really know. But don't tell me that Peel is the shining example.

The thing is, it doesn't matter whether Peel and York today work beautifully, because when this bill passes, it's a totally different ball game. Those chairs that are appointed will now be beholden to the Premier and this government because they will have strong-mayor powers—in this case, strong-chair powers.

The strong-mayor powers will be giving the Ford government's hand-picked appointee the power to set regional budgets, to hire and fire the regional administrator and other top staffers and pass bylaws with the support of just one third of council. So no matter how lovely any existing appointed chair might be—maybe they're all lovely people—they will have strong-mayor powers once this bill passes. And they can be hired and fired by the Premier—by the minister, who can also be hired and fired by the Premier—so it is not apples to apples.

The minister may make regulations establishing also a weighted voting system for any upper-tier municipal council, in which a council member, possibly even the chair, would get more votes than others. There is no requirement that votes be weighted based on population or some principle of fair representation.

We've heard stories in this room about when it will be used, maybe. That ain't in the bill. We don't know how it will be used. We know it will be a power that is granted, so votes can be weighted based on anything the minister chooses.

If Bill 100 passes, an unelected appointee will control the budget representing the biggest part of the municipal tax bill for most of the affected municipalities. This bill gives Doug Ford the power to reach into municipal taxpayer pockets and take whatever he wants, but—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I'll remind the member to use the titles or the ridings of the members of this House.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I appreciate the opportunity to correct that. I am talking about the Premier. This bill gives the Premier the power to reach into municipal taxpayer pockets and take whatever he might want. This, folks at home, is affectionately known as taxation without representation.

The minister has said that there's going to be an open process and a vetting process. It all sounds very elaborate, except it's not. Right now, when we have a region-wide election, all of the voters get a say in who gets picked, so you can call it a vetting process or an election. To use a popular turn of phrase, they can elect, also known as choosing someone, or they can reject someone. That's a heck of a process. That's a lot of people weighing in on that person. But instead of allowing the entire regional electorate to vet and elect or reject someone, the Premier and maybe the minister and maybe some party brass will do the vetting.

So this "anybody can apply" thing is absurd. It doesn't matter who applies; it matters who is appointed.

And the history lesson that we got the other day from the member opposite about regional governments and appointed chairs—those were appointed by regional councillors; these are appointed by the Premier. If the Premier decides he's not interested in appointing, there is that fallback mechanism so that the council can do it, but the primary decision-maker is indeed the Premier.

1620

I'm going to go back to part of this letter from Chris from Whitby, who said, "I am very concerned that Bill 100, recently introduced by your government, will severely damage governance in Durham (and other) region(s).... Moving to direct election was a response to a region-wide referendum in 2010 and then required a 'triple majority'. Council passed the enacting bylaw in 2012. It was a high bar reached through a democratic process.

"But now, without any local consultation, Bill 100 will eliminate the election of regional chairs in Ontario and replace them with chairs appointed by the province. In addition, this appointee will have 'strong mayor powers' which will allow them to override majority decisions of regional council. Our property taxes will continue to pay the salary of this appointee but we will have no voter's influence over them and the authority of our elected regional councillors will be diminished as well.... Historically, municipalities may disagree with some provincial directions because municipalities are focused on meeting local needs with limited resources, in addition to services downloaded from the province....

"No evidence to support this change has been presented to us by your government nor has any consultation with affected communities taken place. There is nothing to indicate that the Durham regional chair is slowing down housing development. There are thousands of approved housing units in Durham that developers have simply not built for their own reasons.

"Why should we now accept a situation of taxation without representation in the case of the chair?"

I appreciate the thoughtful comments from the community.

I look forward to the questions because I can hear that the members opposite are taking some exception with what that constituent wrote in that I shared—I am looking forward to hearing when it is not just heckles.

Speaker, I've talked about taxation without representation, and I think a little bit of a history lesson is important. When the American colonies were protesting the Sugar Act and the Stamp Act, protesting that they were forced to pay taxes without elected representation in Britain, they fought it. The Boston Tea Party kicked off the American Revolution. And here, good old Captain Canada is trying, in his folksy way, to pull that nonsense in Durham.

To the people of Durham region and the other regional municipalities losing their elected representation: You don't have to take this. I think that we should dump these folks in the harbour—

Interjection.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm being told that's a little harsh. If that's a bit harsh or unparliamentary, I would also say something else that is unparliamentary is taxation without representation.

The NDP has opposed all of this government's attacks on local democracy, and let me tell you, there have been a whack of them. Even just in the last few weeks, FOI rules are being changed; directors of education are now CEOs and control the correspondence of trustees to public; we're getting rid of elected regional chairs. There are a lot of ways that this government is making sure that they are indeed not accountable, and we are seeing—this is not an erosion of democracy. That would suggest that it's a natural process. This is an attack on democracy. This is purposeful.

We should be voting for people we can hold accountable. And failed PC candidates or friends of the Premier who were not chosen by the people should not be in charge of the regional budget. The lion's share of local property taxes and our property tax bill are now going to be up for grabs.

Remember that the person who is being appointed is not elected. The person who is being appointed gets to appoint or hire and fire the CAO, the senior staff. The CAO, I think, used to work for regional council—supported the chair, but worked for regional council—now they won't. They're hired and fired, going forward, by the regional chair, who is hired and fired by the minister, who is hired or fired by the Premier—

Hon. Zee Hamid: Who's hired and fired by the voters.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: And I'm being heckled that the Premier is hired and fired by the voters—I'm looking forward to the fired part. We're working on it. Thank you for the reminder.

To the folks at home: Make sure to vote. Make sure to write to your MPPs.

I'm very pleased to share the voices of people in the community. I'm not afraid of democracy, and I look forward to democracy.

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

Hon. Sam Oosterhoff: I always appreciate hearing the member from Oshawa speak. One of the things I appreciated hearing her comment upon and something I find very interesting is that they're always so worried about, "There's not enough local representation. There are not enough local councillors. You're going to reduce the number."

Imagine: In Niagara, we're going to go from 126 municipal politicians—more than there are MPPs in the entire province of Ontario—down to 107. How dare we? It's going to be terrible. No one will ever be able to reach out to 107 local politicians in a municipality with a population that is smaller than Halifax, which has 17. How could we?

I hear them saying that more local representation is always the solution, more local representation is always the answer—local, local, local all the way—and I appreciate that, but it rings a little bit hollow when they're not bringing forward proposals to increase. So my question back—if you don't like it, are you going to bring forward a private member's bill to increase the number of local municipal politicians in your riding?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I love the enthusiasm from the member opposite, but nowhere did I talk about the number of councillors—because for us in Durham, this is a change to the elected regional chair. And from anything that I've heard—either thoughtful debate in this House or outside of this space—it's that if there are changes that can be made to improve the makeup of councils, then why wouldn't we ask those who are elected how better to do the job?

I am sure that I could ask some of your colleagues how they could better do their jobs. If they're not sure, we have folks on this side who could help them.

This is about electing someone to be accountable, and now the Premier is going to hand-pick—I don't know; how well did Bob Gale go? That was the provincial vetting process, right? It didn't go so well.

We should be able to choose someone we can hold accountable—especially someone who can dip into our taxpayer pockets.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you so much to the member for sharing this information.

If we look specifically at the Durham region—but it applies to all of Ontario—she made some pretty convincing arguments on why democracy matters; why giving people a chance to be heard through elections, where you select who will represent you, makes all the difference. She gave a specific example as to the people of Durham, who decided that they wanted to vote. They wanted to choose. They don't want anybody else to do that.

My question is, what's going to happen in Durham with that bill?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Yes, people did vote for their regional chair. But even going back before they voted—it was in 2010 that there was a referendum, and then there was quite an involved process to really confirm that the people of Durham region wanted to stop having an appointed chair and start having an elected chair. That was their choice. And this provincial government is saying, "Yes, that's not working for us. We're just going to do away with that. You don't get to vote. You don't get a say. We're going to hand-pick someone. All they would need is a third of council, with the strong-mayor powers to control the budget, to hire and fire." And no voter in

Oshawa, in Durham, in Ajax, in Pickering—none of them get a say.

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

Mr. Stephen Blais: Mr. Speaker, when the Premier introduced strong-mayor powers, he in part justified it based on the fact that the mayor would have a city-wide or region-wide mandate and therefore deserved and required more power. He's now flip-flopping on that by having a government-appointed hack go in there and have these ultimate powers.

Similarly, a few years ago, the Premier boasted about how he was the only Premier never to fly on the private government plane. And now we learn that the Premier is in fact not only flying on a private business jet owned by the government regularly; he now tries to buy a new one for \$29 million or \$30 million.

So I'm wondering if you can explain, from your point of view, why we think the government continues to flip-flop on very critical and important issues around democracy and public finance—including the fact that they increased Ontario's deficit to \$500 billion.

1630

Ms. Jennifer K. French: There were lots of pieces to that, and I've only got a minute.

The jet is its own hour lead. People in Durham have been writing in. They're very unhappy with the decision that the Premier made, that the cabinet has supported—they're enabling him.

I don't know where this actually comes from. I don't know how it's going to make anything better. I think it's just because this government says, "We don't raise taxes. Oh, but if we can get at the regional budgets, then we've got more money to do the things, and then we can still wear the T-shirt that says, 'We didn't raise taxes.' We're just picking your pockets, and there's nothing you can do about it.

So the flip-flopping—I don't know; I think when the Premier gets really uncomfortable or his base gets mad, he makes a change.

This is not a change that anybody wants.

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

Mr. Anthony Leardi: Although I'm very tempted to ask an Animal Farm question, I'm going to leave that to the member from Humber River–Black Creek, and I'm going to ask a different question.

We all know that municipalities are creatures of the province, and much of what municipalities do is to implement provincial legislation.

Here, we have a situation where there are a bunch of municipalities and you have the situation where they're not coordinated in their implementation of housing or zoning etc.

If the member doesn't like this approach, then what approach does that member recommend in order to coordinate the housing, the delivery of water, the delivery of sewer services, and the delivery of infrastructure services?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: If the province is unhappy with the region or a municipality, I would encourage them to build relationships and work with them.

I would also be very interested to hear what you are unhappy about in Durham region. There are seven MPPs—five of them are government. What are you unhappy about? Feel free to share that.

I want to say to you that just because a municipality or regional municipality pushes back, you don't have to squash them. You should work with them. They are meant to represent the electorate. Yes, there are many shared priorities, but you're making them do a whole bunch by constantly downloading.

And I want to say—because Animal Farm: "If liberty means anything at all, it means the right to tell people what they do not want to hear."

You should be willing to hear what you might not want to hear because—guess what? You all might learn something.

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

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Thank you to my colleague from Oshawa for your insightful comments on this bill.

My colleague mentioned taxation without representation and the Premier having unfettered access now to the budgets of regional municipalities.

Just in the past few days, we learned that the Premier chose to spend \$30 million of hard-earned taxpayer dollars on a private luxury jet for himself. There was nothing in the budget about that. So there was no transparency. And today, he told us that he had to do it because he needed access to a bathroom on a plane.

So can the member please explain, why might people in Durham be really worried about what the Premier might do if he has unfettered, unaccountable access to the regional budget?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I can't speak for the government members, but I know that our inboxes are full and overflowing with people's thoughts on this personal private luxury jet that the Premier just had to have. And now he's super sad that he has to give it up. That is really not what people are reaching for. They are tired of begging for scraps. They want health care and affordable housing. They're not wanting a pony or whatever the Premier is going to want next.

I worry that the person who will work for the minister and the Premier is not going to work for the electorate, because the electorate did not choose them; they are not accountable to us.

I have no idea what they're really after—I do think it's probably as simple as our tax dollars, so that they can, again, keep saying they're not raising taxes when the fact of the matter is, they've downloaded so much. Municipalities and regions are responsible for so much. And now they're going to have unrestricted, unaccountable access to our tax dollars.

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

Mr. Stephen Blais: I appreciate the thunderous applause from the opposite—

Interjections.

Mr. Stephen Blais: —from the government benches. It's becoming a custom. They look forward so much to what I'm going to say.

I rise tonight to speak to Bill 100, the Better Regional Governance Act. The government says that this bill is about governance and that it's somehow better for regional government—but better for whom? Better for the people who actually live in these regions? Better for taxpayers who pay the bills? Or is it better for one man at Queen's Park who is increasingly trying to ensure that all levels of government report upward to him? When you strip away the title and the talking points, that's what this bill does. It centralizes power. It weakens local democracy. It reduces accountability. And it creates a system where the person with the most power at the regional level may be the person with the weakest democratic legitimacy. That is not better regional governance. That is more provincial control.

Mr. Speaker, the bill does several things. It allows the minister to appoint the heads of council in Durham, Halton, Muskoka, Niagara, Peel, Simcoe, Waterloo and York—it allows the minister to fire those same chairs. It gives the government regulation-making authority over voting structures at the upper-tier level, and it cuts the size of Niagara regional council and Simcoe regional council. I think we can agree that these are not small housekeeping changes. These are foundational changes to how local democracy works in Ontario.

The most glaring contradiction in the bill is this: When the government defended strong-mayor powers, the justification was always that the mayor had a city-wide mandate from the people. The mayor was elected by the whole city. The mayor could claim a direct democratic endorsement from the people. That was this government's argument. You may not have agreed with it, but at least it was their argument. Bill 100 destroys that argument. Now the government wants to take those same extraordinary powers—or mirror them—and hand them to regional chairs, who will not be elected by the public at all. So what exactly is the democratic theory here? I'm asking legitimately—that an elected mayor with a city-wide mandate can have these powers because voters chose that person directly, but an unelected regional chair can also have those same powers because the Premier likes his or her résumé? That's not principled. That is not a theory of democracy I think many can get behind. That's just a power grab looking for a justification.

Mr. Speaker, if the government truly believed in accountability, it would want the person with the most power to have the clearest and the cleanest mandate. But under this bill, the person with the most power may be the only figure around the table who was never elected by anyone, who no one voted for.

I think it's clear the government wants a floating head: the great and powerful regional chair—the title, the authority, the commands, the vetoes, the orders. But behind

the curtain is still a little man from Queen's Park pulling the levers. That's the Wizard of Oz model of local government, the Wizard of Oz theory of democracy—big face on the screen, big booming voice, big powers. But everyone knows who's really operating the machine, and the people never chose him for that local job.

There's another way to put it: This bill does not create a strong chair so much as it creates a ventriloquist dummy. The mouth moves at the regional level, but the voice and the hand controlling is here at Queen's Park. I think that's why people are reacting so strongly to this piece of legislation, because they understand instinctively that this is anti-democratic. It's anti-democratic to remove elected leadership and replace it with a government-appointed hack. It's anti-democratic to give that appointee powers that can override the will of an elected body.

1640

In our model of government, the only person I can think who theoretically has that power is the King, and in practice, that just can't happen anymore.

It's anti-democratic to tell communities that when they thought they were voting for local representation, they were really just voting for the supporting cast while the lead role was going to be filled later by the minister or the Premier.

We've heard from this government, "Don't worry; we're going to vet really good people. They're going to have been elected to city councils in the past. There is going to be accountability. This is about good government." But accountability to whom? It's not going to be accountable to the voters, certainly not directly. It's not going to be accountable to the ballot box, so to whom are these people accountable?

One of the most troubling aspects of the bill is that it arrives in combination with these strong powers that I have been talking about. We know that that strong-power framework gives the head of council unprecedented decision-making and veto power. Effectively, it allows for the normalization of minority rule in the name of efficiency. Think about that: not a majority, not even a consensus or even half. Basically, the appointed government hack as chair and one third of council can make all the decisions.

Let's be honest about what that means in actual practice. It means that the regional chair appointed by the province can be armed with the powers that allow them to push ahead over the objections of the majority of the elected representatives on budgets; on big infrastructure projects, like where roads go; and obviously, on housing, which the government claims to be their priority.

But once you accept the idea that only one-third support is enough, and once you accept the idea that the person wielding that power doesn't even need a mandate from the voters, then what exactly is left of local self-government? Why not just simply erase these regions and have the government make all the decisions at that point?

Regional council should not be about auditioning for relevance; they are relevant. They make important decisions in these parts of Ontario each and every day. The government might disagree with those decisions. It has

other levers. The minister of housing, the government House leader and the Minister of Education have all been municipal affairs ministers; they know about provincial policy statements and any number of other levers the government has to ensure cities and regions and other municipalities are doing the bidding of the government.

This bill simply won't ensure that the residents of these communities are heard. Local government should be legitimate, it should be accountable and it is supposed to be representative. And do you know what? Sometimes democracy is messy. Sometimes democracy can be slower than we want it to be. I'm sure there are times when Mr. Clark has wished everything could just happen overnight.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Please refer to the—

Mr. Stephen Blais: Excuse me—when the government House leader wished everything could just happen overnight.

I understand we might be doing things overnight pretty soon too, Mr. Speaker.

But even the government House leader knows that democracy takes time, that debate is important.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would propose, if the government is so happy with one-third majority rule in Ontario, that the opposition should be allowed to dictate the standing orders for the rest of the sitting of Parliament. Then let's see how maybe we can get some real legislation pushed through.

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

Mr. Lorne Coe: The member from Ottawa-Vanier served on his local council for a number of years, so he knows that this legislation just introduces targeted reforms to ensure regional governments are better aligned, more efficient and more accountable for results.

In listening carefully to what he had to say, if the member believes no modernization is required, can he please explain how the existing structure is effectively delivering faster approvals—and he will understand that in planning and development—improved infrastructure co-ordination and better outcomes for taxpayers in high-growth regions like his region?

Mr. Stephen Blais: I'm, of course, from Orléans; the member from Ottawa-Vanier is both more accomplished and more attractive. But I'll try to answer the member's question.

The strong-mayor powers in Ottawa haven't done anything. Ottawa is not growing at the pace that the government wants it to grow, so why do we think that the strong-mayor powers in Niagara or Durham or anywhere else would be any different?

I do agree that there was an opportunity and probably a need for some reorganization and I expressed that agreement to the minister in writing, but unilaterally imposing something that reduces local democracy to an appointed government hack and one third of council I don't think is the kind of change people who participated in consultations last year were really hoping for or expecting.

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

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I appreciated the remarks from my Liberal colleague. I'm just wondering, who do we imagine is going to line up for this appointed program? This is something I've actually very legitimately been thinking about because I've never in my life thought, "Oh, I want to grow up and work for the man and do as I'm told and kiss the ring." So I'm interested to know who you imagine will indeed put up their hand to not have to work and just do as they're told and be the yes-man for the Premier in those regions; someone who isn't accountable, isn't elected.

It's a lot easier to just make nice with the Premier and get picked rather than it is to door-knock and talk to the electorate. So I'm just wondering who you imagine will line up to be the yes-men and serve as these unappointed regional chairs.

Mr. Stephen Blais: We've seen with other government appointments that the government is very loyal to their defeated Conservative candidates from previous elections, so they were already signing up to be the yes-men to the Premier.

We learned today—the Premier admitted to it himself—that not a single member of the cabinet objected to the purchase of a luxury business jet. So the Premier knows that he already has 25 or 30 bobbleheads here who are willing to do his bidding—whatever he wants. He knows that he had defeated candidates who are willing to do the same thing, presumably. So I think there will be quite a few Conservatives who might sign up to be the government's yes-man, the picture of the Wizard of Oz up on the wall or the ventriloquist's dummy sitting on the Premier's lap.

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

Mr. Ted Hsu: I'd like to ask my colleague, how will this affect the quality of people who run for local municipal council when they know that the position will mean much less because it will be dominated by the higher-weighted vote of an appointed head of council?

Mr. Stephen Blais: I think that's a legitimate concern. When you run for council, I presume most do that thinking they can make a change and difference for the positive in their communities. The idea that you would be up against a mayor who only needs a couple other votes to shoot you down on every single item, and that mayor or chair is going to be getting direction from his headmaster at Queen's Park—or, I suppose, the headmaster from Etobicoke—I think might actually give pause to some people who are considering running for local office. That might not be entirely against what the government is trying to achieve though, because they might actually just want a whole bunch of bobbleheads on councils across Ontario.

1650

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

Hon. Rob Flack: As always, it's a pleasure to rise in this chamber to lead off debate, this time for Bill 100, the Better Regional Governance Act, 2026. I appreciate

everybody's comments on all sides of the House. That's why we're here: to debate.

Speaker, we begin this debate at a time in Ontario when we face real and undeniable challenges and changes. The global economy remains uncertain, markets are shifting, and here at home the cost of building has risen where the pace of approvals has struggled to keep up. We are facing headwinds, the likes of which we've not faced for many years, if ever.

At the same time, our province continues to grow: 16.3 million people, more than double from when I was in high school. People are choosing Ontario, and that growth brings both opportunity and responsibility.

We have been clear from the outset: It takes too long and it costs too much to build in this province. Our government is fixing that and changing that.

The two pieces of legislation that I have introduced are not independent of each other; they work and complement each other. Without good and effective governance at the regional level, our goals as a province become harder to achieve. That is the lens through which this legislation must be understood. This bill is not an isolated initiative; it is part of a broader, deliberate plan to remove barriers, accelerate decision-making and ensure that communities across this province are positioned to grow in a way that is faster, more predictable, more affordable and more consistent.

We are not only changing the way Ontario builds, we are changing the way Ontario plans. We are changing the way Ontario creates the conditions to build what we need and where we need housing. Our approach is grounded in a simple but important principle: Strong communities require strong partnerships. Municipalities must work hard, hand in hand with the province, to advance our shared commitments. This, we all know. All of us report to the same people: the taxpayers of Ontario. They expect a government that works in their best interest, and I expect the very same.

Municipal governments are at the front lines of growth. They are responsible for planning, infrastructure and the delivery of essential services that enable housing. That is why our government has taken, and continues to take, decisive action to support and empower our municipal partners so that together we can meet the demands of the moment. This is why we have introduced, and continue to expand, the use of strong-mayor powers, much to some people's chagrin. Since 2022, these powers have provided municipal leaders with the tools they need to advance priority projects, streamline decision-making and deliver results when they feel they are needed to do it. From prioritizing housing applications to advancing major developments and revitalization initiatives, strong-mayor powers have demonstrated their value in helping municipalities move faster and more decisively.

That brings us to the legislation today before this House. The Better Regional Governance Act, 2026, is about ensuring that our governance structures are equipped to meet the demands of a growing province. It's about aligning decision-making with a sense of urgency of the

moment, reducing duplication and ensuring that municipalities have the tools they need to deliver results for their residents.

At a high level, the bill proposes targeted changes to the composition and governance of upper-tier municipalities, with particular focus on the Niagara region and Simcoe county. These changes are designed to ensure that councils remain representative, while also being more effective and more focused on outcomes. It's results that count, Speaker. This is a practical tool that can help ensure that decision-making reflects the realities of population growth and distribution with regions, with supporting fairness and enabling more efficient governance.

But the central feature of this legislation is the proposal to enable the provincial appointment of heads of council for upper-tier regional governments, along with the extension of enhanced abilities for chairs. To understand why this step is necessary, it's important to consider the current landscape. Today, there is no single consistent method for selecting the heads of upper-tier councils in Ontario. Some are directly elected, others are appointed by council and still others are appointed by the province. This patchwork approach has led to inconsistencies in accountability, in alignment and the decision-making across all of these regions. They can lead to misalignment between provincial and municipal priorities, create delays in decision-making and, ultimately, slow down the delivery of the housing and infrastructure needs that these communities require.

Our proposal is straightforward: By enabling the appointment of heads of council in key upper-tier municipalities, we are creating a more consistent and aligned governance structure, one that supports faster, more coordinated decision-making. This is about ensuring that leadership at the regional level is equipped to work with partnership with the province to deliver on shared priorities. Equally, this is the proposal to extend these new abilities to these heads of council.

We have seen the impact of these powers at the municipal level. They provide the ability to set direction, prioritize key initiatives and move forward with the projects that matter most to communities. Extending these tools to the regional level will strengthen coordination, reduce delays and help ensure that critical decisions are made in a timely and effective manner.

At its core, the regional chair is not designed to replace local voices—not at all—nor to override the will of council. Rather, it is to strengthen how decisions are made by ensuring that there is a clear leadership at the centre of the table—leadership that is focused on coordination, facilitation and results.

In many respects, the role is best understood as being akin to a chair of a board of directors. The regional chair's primary responsibility is to facilitate discussion, guide deliberation and bring members together around shared priorities—provincial priorities such as building housing and ensuring the timely completion of critical infrastructure. In complex governance environments, particularly at the regional level, where multiple municipalities, perspec-

tives and interests must be balanced with, this kind of leadership is essential to ensuring that decisions are not only made but made in a timely and, again, effective manner. In fact, Speaker, we have seen this work effectively already in the Peel region, where its appointed regional chair has helped facilitate some of the most pro-housing policies at the municipal level throughout all of Ontario.

The role is fundamentally administrative and strategic in nature. It's about setting agendas and reflecting pressing priorities, ensuring that information flows effectively between the members, and keeping council focused on outcomes that matter to the residents—the people that voted those councillors in—whether that's housing, infrastructure or economic growth. It's about creating the conditions for a productive dialogue and helping to navigate differences in a way that leads to resolution rather than delay. By providing for provincial appointment, we are ensuring that the individual in this role is aligned with the broader objective we all share: getting more homes built faster and supporting the infrastructure that makes that possible.

This alignment is not about centralization for its own sake; it's about clarity of purpose and consistency of direction at a time when both are urgently needed. Importantly, the extension of strong mayor-type powers to this role is not about concentrating authority but equipping the chair with the tools necessary to keep decisions moving faster. These tools support the chair's ability to prioritize key initiatives, to advance matters that support provincial and municipal priorities and to ensure that administrative processes do not become bottlenecks like they can.

Ultimately, the appointed regional chair serves as a facilitator of progress and a steady accountable presence at the centre of regional governance. By strengthening this role, we are improving coordination, reducing inefficiencies and ensuring that councils are better positioned to deliver timely, effective decisions for the communities they serve.

Speaker, I want to also speak directly to how these appointments—there are contrary opinions to this, much to their chagrin—will be made, because transparency, accountability and public confidence are essential in getting this right. All appointees will be selected on merit, on knowledge of their communities and history of public service, with vetting done by the Integrity Commissioner of Ontario, as has been done with our other regionally appointed chairs. Leadership, experience and common sense will be the key factors in our selections, and they will be done at the end of the next municipal election. This is the framework that will guide our selection, as it did in York and Peel regions.

1700

Finally, these changes are not being proposed in a vacuum. They are being informed by the history of regional governance in this province.

To conclude, Speaker, my time is—

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

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I appreciate having the opportunity to ask the minister about Bill 100.

The minister talked about how, without good and effective government at the regional level—and not to misquote, but in effect, the province can't advance its priorities.

So I guess I am curious about what has not been good or effective, specifically, in the Durham region. As Durham region residents, we all have questions for government, but we can hold them accountable because we've elected them.

Further to that, the salary of the elected chair has been paid for by the Durham region taxpayers. Is the salary of the puppet chair going to be paid by the Premier?

I'm just curious about who is going to be answering the questions of the people of Durham region.

Hon. Rob Flack: No one has ever said once that the region of Durham has not done a good job. The chair, in fact, I think has done a good job. Contrary to popular belief across the aisle, the regional chair was not fired. I shook his hand last Friday, and he was still the regional chair. As I said before and I'll say again, if that chair wishes to remain as chair, he is more than welcome to apply; I've said as much to him directly.

With respect to overall governance, I would say when it comes to salary review, that will be set, obviously, by the regional councillors, with our involvement. Again, we need to get some consistency there, and we will get that done.

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

Hon. Sam Oosterhoff: I appreciate the minister speaking to this legislation. I have to say, this is a minister who has come down to Niagara many, many times in a number of different portfolios, who has met with folks from across the province and, really, across Niagara region for sure—farmers, business owners, regular citizens, and also mayors and local municipal politicians.

I spoke earlier about the amount of politicians we have in the Niagara region—I won't say that, but I'll say if the minister listens to the members of the opposition, you would think there's no one in Niagara in support of all these changes.

I want to ask him, has he received any letters or perhaps any notes, or spoken with any mayors or anyone from Niagara who, in fact, supports these changes and believes that they're a good idea? Perhaps he wants to share that with the House—if he has, in fact, received supportive comments from folks in Niagara.

Hon. Rob Flack: Thank you to my great colleague and friend.

Yes, I've enjoyed coming to Niagara. I've always been down to Niagara throughout my life, and it's a great place to live, work and play.

I have spoken to every municipal mayor about the changes we made for regional governments in this bill. By and large, there are always differing opinions, but I think we have very good consent with the direction we're taking.

I think, frankly put, you have too many regional councillors in that region for the size it is—500,000. You've got more than, say, the regions of Peel and York combined. It really doesn't work.

We have done our due diligence. I have spoken to every mayor. I've talked to many councillors. I've talked to many residents and heard back. So upon listening and learning—what we did is what we always do. We act after we've done that listening and learning tour.

Thank you for your continued advocacy in that region.

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

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: The minister knows that effective representation is a constitutional right in this country. I'd like to know how the minister can explain that appointing someone who is not accountable to the electorate will provide the kind of accountable democratic representation that that constitutional right protects.

Hon. Rob Flack: Speaker, there's one thing I'm not sure everyone is aware of, and if I had gotten further into my talk, I would have said so—one of the things I'm looking for. Every two election cycles, municipally, in this province, we have what we call a governance review; it's in the Municipal Act. What I'm looking forward to is all municipalities, all regions in the province, to come back to me with their suggestions on governance, on boundary changes, whatever it may be. This is very democratic. We're going to listen to the regions, listen to the municipalities.

I would ask the member opposite, if somebody resigns from certain councils in this province, do you have a by-election in every municipality? I say you don't—they get appointed. They get appointed by the current councils.

So I would say I look forward to that 24-month review. I'm sure we'll get a plethora of information, and we look forward to making governance better in all our municipalities.

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

Mr. Anthony Leardi: There are only two orders of government in Canada: federal and provincial; there's no constitutionally protected municipal level of government. That's why we say that municipalities are merely creatures of the province, and as creatures of the province, municipalities have much of the responsibility of implementing provincial laws—the building code being one of the greatest examples.

I invite the minister to comment on any of that and also to comment on how this legislation will make it important for these municipalities to implement provincial priorities such as housing.

Hon. Rob Flack: Again, to my friend the member from Essex, I would say what we're doing here is creating consistency. Right now, we have elected chairs by county councils, we have appointed chairs by the province—and we have elected-at-large. We want some consistency. Again, at the end of the next election, we will ask for feedback. But I want to point out, it's a very important part

of our governance in this province. I've enjoyed meeting with our mayors, our regional chairs.

I would say to those who are so concerned about the appointment of chairs, look to the region of Peel, look to the region of York; it has worked.

Again, if there are further changes that need to be discussed, involved—whether it's boundaries, whether it's governance—that review is in place in the Municipal Act. I look forward to that feedback after the next election, to see what we can put in place for the following municipal election to make municipal governance even more effective in Ontario.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Speaker, this government has provided no evidence that these changes will lower costs. Instead, by putting unelected Ford government appointees in charge, upsetting municipal budgets, it's more likely that the budgets will serve the interests of the Ontario government and not municipal taxpayers, with less accountability for unchecked spending.

The minister mentioned merits. Can the minister explain if one of those merits that the government will be using is an unelected Conservative candidate in past elections—or will they be using merits that will actually be non-partisan?

Hon. Rob Flack: As I said earlier—and thank you to the member from London–Fanshawe—when appointing these chairs, we are going to look at merit. We're going to look at leadership. We're going to look at common sense. We're going to look at experience. They will be asked to apply. They will be vetted through the public appointment process, including by the Integrity Commissioner. They will then be reviewed by myself to see who is the best fit for that particular region, for that particular area. Having local experience, perhaps having been elected there, understanding the region is imperative to success.

That is the process I promise this House we will follow to a T.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I recognize the member from Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Ted Hsu: I'd like to ask the honourable minister, what do you say to farmers who are worried about developing prime agricultural land, who are worried about urban sprawl and worried about accountability to somebody appointed by a minister, who could be fired at any time—somebody who's in Toronto?

Hon. Rob Flack: I'm happy, honestly, the member from Kingston, to talk about farming and farmers and protecting their rights, day in and day out.

I think he will know, in the last provincial policy statement we put in the ability to protect farmland through agricultural impact assessments. That was done at my behest when I was the associate minister, and that's in place.

1710

Again, we have provisions in place in this province that you just can't take our prime agricultural land and develop it; it has to go through a zoning process, of which we have

a framework that's second to none in this province, and it has to be vetted through the municipality and through our ministry to do so.

So I believe farmers are protected—and there is nobody who has stood up better for farmers, agri-food and agri-business in this province.

Under Premier Ford, this government gets it done for farmers and will continue to do so. We are a growing province. We have to protect our best prime agricultural land. We will continue to do it. But not all land is created equal, and at the end of the day, we will continue to support our farmers.

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

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I'm really proud to rise and speak to Bill 100. I have to say, it has been very enjoyable listening to the rationale of government members explaining away a bill that, yet again, does the opposite of what it states it's to do. This one is called the Better Regional Governance Act, 2026.

Recently, we had the Keeping Criminals Behind Bars Act, and this government went on to lose 150 criminals, right?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's six who are on the run now.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Oh, all right, so they've caught a bunch of them.

Here, with the Better Regional Governance Act, they are—get this—replacing democratically elected people and putting people in who they choose by their vetting process. Is this the same vetting process they use to select candidates for SDF funding? If you look at their vetting process historically in the last eight years and the choices they've made, it has been questionable at best. With the SDF, you had candidates that were essentially deemed not meeting the criteria thrown to the top—we had nightclubs, we had people under investigation by some ministries. Their vetting process is a fail.

I heard that we should tell existing chairs to then apply. Can you imagine that? Again, we heard a speech about municipalities being creatures of the province, of course, and it makes sense. This is why they don't respect them—they're just creatures to them. A little abuse here and there, whatever; they're just creatures, right? They're here by our whim. And this is ultimately what's going to happen, because, as you imagine, in a democracy, you have people—

Interjection.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I know; it's a very new theory, going and selecting their own leadership. So they go and they cast a vote—maybe it's councils choosing whom their chair is going to be. These people, in turn, were elected at these councils. But now they want people to do exactly as their boss instructs. They don't want democracy to get in the way. They don't want these people to choose their own leadership. So with this bill, they're going to do away with it entirely.

Think about it: Who are these people accountable to? You have a bunch of councillors sitting there who may now have the power to choose a slide colour in a new

playground they're building, but at the end of the day, a bureaucrat is being selected by this government to sit atop them and be the top of that entire power structure. What do you think is going to happen? Who are they going to call for advice? It's not going to be the people. They're absolutely not going to be accountable.

And if you look at school boards, these guys are all running balanced budgets by the law—not like this government. And they say, "We want you to cut this. We want you to cut that." "We don't want to do it." "All right. Do you know what? You're fired. We're going to put someone else in charge, and they're going to do what we say." And do you know what we're hearing from parents? These people are not accountable, they're not reachable, and they're just making cut after cut after cut.

So now they say, "Trust us." Have you heard of the Protect Ontario Fund? They're learning from the mistakes of the SDF—because here at the SDF, at least they're accountable. They're accountable to the Auditor General. They're accountable to others who get to look in the books and review everything. But now, we're going to have the Protect Ontario Fund. Get this: It's \$4 billion they're going to take away from taxpayers—again, "trust us," right? And they're going to put it into the hands of private fund managers to spend and do whatever they want. If this was happening in other places, would you trust that? You would say, "Hey, we're going to put some money here, buy some stocks there." Right? Think about all the ways in which this could be dealt with. But they are essentially allowing this—

Interjection.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Oh, sorry. There's an envelope here, and it says—

Interjection.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: This is "Internal government documents." In the interest of transparency and accountability, I think I should probably read this out. It says here, "Proposed names for the government's private luxury jet." It appears that I have a document that is actually revealing a list of names of this jet. In the interest of democracy, transparency and accountability, I think I'm going to share these names with you.

We have the first name here: the Right Winger—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I recognize the Minister of Indigenous Affairs.

Hon. Greg Rickford: I think we're into relevancy territory here, Mr. Speaker. We're debating, obviously, a very important bill that will see new governance models and give Ontarians an opportunity to build housing, an opportunity across the province—not the subject matter that the member has ushered in spontaneously.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I will remind the member that he is speaking about the bill in front of us.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: All right.

I would argue that the title of this bill and what it sets to achieve has the actual opposite effect of everything they've actually said.

It seems a little out of order, but I won't speak to you about the other names—the Gravy Plane, nor Air Farce One. I won't talk to you about the Flat Earther—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I caution the member to keep his remarks to the bill.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Speaker, what I'd like to establish with regard to this—and it's funny because it got really quiet when I got that list out, and then all of a sudden, someone takes offence to it or takes issue to it.

What I'm trying to state here is to show the fact that, ultimately, the decisions of these elected chairs are going to be replaced by the members of this government—not the members of this government, whom I hold in high regard. But the leadership behind this government is ultimately going to be calling the shots from now on in all of these regions. This is the same group of people, the same government that lost 150 criminals under their watch. If you look at the history of the choices they've made—they're the same people who are going to be telling these regional chairs what to do. It's crazy.

And when you actually look at some of the decisions made by appointed supervisors—which is exactly what you're going to be seeing here. This is no different. You are essentially getting appointed supervisors to tell elected councillors what to do.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: And strong-mayor powers.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: This is unbelievable—and strong-mayor powers. What are they actually going to achieve here?

And if you actually look at the strong-mayor powers that they've given, that has been a failure by their own standard. Can you imagine? This was all put in before the elections in the city of Toronto. They brought in rules to give mayors superpowers over other elected officials—essentially a veto. And then all of a sudden—if this was really about democracy—a mayor comes into the city of Toronto, and then what happens when the mayor does something that this government disagrees with? Well, they go to their typical culture war, and they bring legislation at the province of Ontario to essentially do away with decisions made by municipalities.

At the end of the day, this has nothing to do with speed. They were elected eight years ago. They said they were going to build 1.5 million houses; they're lucky if they build 50. They have not been able to achieve anything of the things they said. When they were first elected, they were talking about bringing down the debt and deficit. We're approaching half a trillion dollars. What on earth have they achieved in terms of all the goals they have set for themselves?

So what I say to this government is, if you truly, truly embrace democracy, if you respect voters, if you respect taxpayers, give them the opportunities to choose their own leadership.

1720

I mentioned this in the questions before: If the Prime Minister all of a sudden decided they would do away with the Premier of Ontario and then replace them with a

supervisor—some basically appointed bureaucrat by the Prime Minister—and that person would get a huge vote that could override everything that we do here, do you know what these guys would be doing? Man, I mean, forget points of order. They would be throwing their papers all around, flinging chairs. They would be out of their minds with rage.

And yet, this is what they are doing, region after region after region. It's about one thing. It's about control—their obsession.

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

Mr. Ted Hsu: You know, this bill seems to me like another action in a long series of actions to concentrate power in this government. Can this government be trusted with an iron fist?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I want to thank the member for the question. But really, what we are debating, again, is just another overreach, another attempt at total and complete control by this government—their boss—and, ultimately, the people behind their boss that actually pull the levers.

I heard it in one of your colleagues' speeches: Just like in the Wizard of Oz, behind the curtain, levers are being pulled. And now, this is what we are going to see in the regions, where they will get supervisors to make decisions that will supersede elected officials. It's just unconscionable.

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

Hon. Rob Flack: Speaker, I would like to ask, through you to the member opposite, how many times he has heard the people of Peel or the people of York complain about the elected democracy in those regions. Each of those councillors are elected. The chair was appointed. Democracy has prevailed. I would like to ask him how many times he has heard complaints from those particular regions.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: We hear from people that are very unhappy with this government and the decisions they make every single day. They flood our inboxes. They're calling in. They're mailing in, on the decisions that are being made.

This is a government that just won't stop until they control absolutely everything. I really don't understand why they want to keep doing this. And the other thing too that I do hear, is that this government is really good at one thing, and that's bullying municipalities. Because ultimately, if the people that they put into these positions don't do as they say, they face reprisals. That is what happens.

And so, what do you have? It's like when you have the emperor. No one is going to say to the emperor, "You're doing a bad job." They say it behind closed doors, but they will never say it to their faces in many of these cases. That's what we're hearing.

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

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: We've seen what happened to this jet plane that they ordered. We can't trust this government. But what I'm really interested in is to hear the rest of your list on this. So, if you can explain your list, I would really appreciate this.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Well, thank you for that excellent question.

We do have a few names here. There was the Buck-a-beer-liner. We had the D-D-D-Dougie and the Jets—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I recognize the Minister of the Environment on a point of order.

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: I submit that this latest tirade is now contemptuous of your prior rulings.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I will allow the member to continue.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Thank you, I want to appreciate the work of our Chair and Clerks.

We have Boondoggle 747; an interesting one, the Debt-liner. We also have Con Air—of course, meaning “Conservative.” We have Plane Embarrassing, Snakes on a Plane and—the top one—Top Dumb.

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

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: The member opposite has spoken about democracy, which this government strongly supports. Truly, I would hope that the member has made note of the following facts regarding our parliamentary democracy in the province of Ontario:

(1) The minister referenced, in the proposed section 218.1, constitutionally must be an elected member of this House.

(2) That that minister may appoint a head of council generally in each of eight regional municipalities.

(3) That if he does not do so, the members of council who are elected by the people shall appoint that head of council.

Has the member made note of those facts about the democratic nature of this bill?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Here is what's going to happen. If they build in these powers—if they do—they are going to look region by region and say, “Who do we like? Who do we dislike?” And if this is a person that already has the blue card in their pocket and they're doing everything we say, then in that case they could say, “Do you know what? We're okay for now.” But in other cases, if it's someone they disagree with, if there's very special interests that they want to directly control with their own hands, guess what? They get the boot. They bring in the supervisor. The supervisor has the special phone call. They're going to basically take directions from this government to do whatever they want, and that will supersede the people, the councils of those areas. It's a power grab. We all know what it is. They even know it.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: I think the member has articulated why democracy is important. Democracy means that the people decide, not the Premier; the people of the regions get to decide.

The title of this bill is Better Regional Governance. Do you see anything in this bill that will bring us better regional governance?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: No. Again, they tabled Keeping Criminals Behind Bars and then lost 157 criminals, okay? They are introducing bills that do the exact opposite of what they state their intention is. You either believe in democracy, you either believe that the people have the right—people have fought and died for the right to choose their own leaders—or you don't. And it looks like this government really doesn't, because the thing they want, above all, is absolute and direct control to implement questionable policies. Because without that direct control, there are some things they could not compel an elected official to support, because they would never get re-elected.

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

Ms. Laura Smith: Let's go back to inefficiencies in the system, and let's talk about Niagara, which has significantly above the provincial average. Does the member opposite believe that larger, more complex and more fragmented decision-making bodies improve the ability to deliver housing and infrastructure and speed up Ontario's housing industry? If the member opposite believes that the current structural situation is optimal, can they please explain how these structures are going to help reduce approval timelines and accelerate construction of new homes and the high-growth regions?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: What I believe in is democracy. I believe that when people come together and they make decisions, they might reveal something that someone else didn't think about.

But I would say this government is consistent, because they have a large number of members that, for the most part, don't get to make the decisions. Ultimately, all the decisions by this government we've seen for the last year don't come from the individual members, whom I like and respect. I've had the pleasure to talk to them many times, and I hold a lot of respect for them. But the decisions come from people who are not elected anyway, behind closed doors, like we see over and over and over again. So at least they're consistent; they just believe that people who are unelected should get to make the decisions.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: There is a bit of a pattern of judgment, I think, when it comes to legislation that this government is creating. Just the recent ones, Keeping Criminals Behind Bars—there are lawyers that came and presented, telling us that this law is unconstitutional. There's a judgment piece, and that's a waste of taxpayers' time and money when you can't create legislation that is even constitutional.

I remember, back in the day, the government changed the merits so that Ron Taverner could be one of the candidates to apply for one of their policing—in the policing sector. So I need to ask the member, what other types of bad judgment calls has this government made and why should we trust this undemocratic bill today?

1730

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: There is an absolute deluge of bad decisions—a sea of them that we’ve been swimming in, trying to keep afloat. I mean, this province has never seen rent out of control, debt so high, repeated deficits year after year, the inability to buy a home—I mean, the list goes on and on and on. And what does this government say? “You know what, all these other elected people are making decisions we don’t like so we’re going to just replace them with someone we will appoint to do more of our bidding.” It is just the absolute wrong direction. It doesn’t help the people of Ontario. It’s time to go back to the drawing board.

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

Mr. Ted Hsu: In my remarks this afternoon, I want to address Bill 100 and, in doing so, say to the people of rural Caledon, you have our attention.

But before I get into their concerns, I also want to say that when I spoke to representatives of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture in my office yesterday, they were concerned. They were concerned about the possibility of losing regional accountability to a regional council head serving at the pleasure of a minister in Toronto.

Bill 100 will, if passed, allow the minister to appoint the head of the regional municipality of Peel. The minister will also have the power to dismiss the head. When somebody can fire you any time, when they say, “Jump,” you tend to ask, “How high?”

Bill 100 will also allow the minister to give extra weight to the vote of the appointed—not elected—head of regional council; the so-called strong-mayor powers. Many commentators have pointed out the breakdown of democratic norms represented by an unelected person who has more voting power than elected councillors.

Let’s look at some of the concerns of rural Caledon—something that is, I think, shared by other rural areas. They revolve around water. Municipal planning decisions are an important way to protect highly vulnerable aquifers and significant groundwater recharge areas, but although responsibility for planning and roads have been or will be devolved to the municipality of Caledon, responsibility for water remains at the regional level—that is, the region of Peel. How would that allow the province to direct development and urban sprawl against the wishes or rural Caledon? Well, first of all, Caledon councillors are outnumbered by Mississauga and Brampton councillors in the Peel region. A provincially appointed regional chair, given extra voting power by the minister, wouldn’t have too much resistance to prioritizing water and sewer servicing extensions towards lands that this Conservative government wants developed—for example, the Highway 413 corridor lands in Caledon—which the residents of Caledon may not want. Once serviced, it becomes legally difficult for Caledon to refuse development plans. Caledon may control local roads, but they will get built on lands already serviced by water and sewer trunk lines. Control of water and sewer is like a veto power over local ability to control how fast and where to expand the urban area.

Why should the residents of rural Caledon be worried about their land? Well, in 2024, residents sued the town council for approving the rezoning of 12 parcels of land for home building, which included a lot of green spaces, farmland and greenbelt land. The basis of the suit was that town council approved rezoning without first receiving studies and technical analysis required by the official plan. Resident groups also said there was no substantial public consultation, environmental studies or financial analysis. The website ThePointer.com reported that draft bylaws for this rezoning were prepared by a developer who stood to benefit and were rushed through using this Premier’s grant of strong-mayor powers. This story is why rural Caledon is worried.

Rural Caledon relies on municipal and private wells. Will a Peel region appointee, given extra votes on council and who has the job at the pleasure of the minister, prioritize groundwater protection over the agenda of this Conservative government and their friends and donors?

There is recent Ontario evidence that provincial planning pressure has already collided with groundwater protection. In March 2024, the region of Waterloo staff warned that Bill 162’s proposed official plan changes would expand urban land into a regional recharge area. Staff warned that if these lands were developed, it would “reduce the amount of water which infiltrates into the ground,” and create uncertainty about adequate drinking water supply.

Waterloo region now has a natural water capacity constraint in the so-called Mannheim service area, which includes Kitchener, Waterloo, Cambridge and Wilmot. New developments cannot proceed. There is no more water left, and nobody in their right mind plans for that.

Could this Conservative government be trusted just to be careful going forward? I would say no. This Conservative government has a documented record of friend- and donor-based land use decisions, not based on any thoughtful or principled balancing of short-term and long-term interests.

Ontario’s Auditor General found that greenbelt boundary changes were driven through a flawed process, influenced by a small group of developers—a process which is still under criminal investigation by the RCMP. In 2024, the ministerial zoning order audit found that the MZO process concentrated discretion in the minister, outside normal municipal planning processes. Transparency and consistency concerns were so serious that the replacement housing minister had to retreat and pull some MZOs.

Centralized power in the hands of this government is dangerous, and it is getting more dangerous because accountability mechanisms—like freedom of information, like letting committees do their work of hearing witnesses and examining government bills in detail—these are being shut down as this Conservative government tries to protect itself from scrutiny. This Conservative government doesn’t even care about rule of law. They have created special economic zones where any provincial law or regulation can be ignored, and they have peppered legislation with clauses that prevent people from suing the government.

And now, realizing this, a group has got together to start a constitutional challenge against what this government has done. It's pretty clear that people are looking at the ability of this government to exempt any company or project from any law or regulation in Ontario; that that is a serious matter that serious people are concerned about—concerned enough to do all of the preparations and put resources into taking this government to court.

This Conservative government is saying, with all of this, “We can do whatever we want. It can be arranged in secret, and it cannot be checked in detail by elected representatives. And if we hurt people, there's nothing they can do.” Bill 100 is part of a larger perversion of democracy in Ontario by the Conservative government, and I will be voting no.

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

Ms. Jennifer K. French: The member was talking about different communities—the folks in Caledon—but the actual impacts of this bill have yet to be felt. Anticipating what some of those might be, I would ask the member—who just reminded us that, in effect, this bill will allow this PC provincial government to do whatever they want—do you have any idea what some of those things might be in some of the regions, especially once they will have access to the regional budgets, without accountability? What might they do with that power?

Mr. Ted Hsu: The worry, especially for people in rural Caledon, who rely on municipal or private wells, for example, is that the management of groundwater will be done by the regional government of Peel, and it will be done with only one thing in mind, which is more urban sprawl, trying to build houses—too many houses, too fast—in the wrong places. That is the worry. For example, yesterday, when I spoke to the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, they said we need to build up, not out. This is the problem. How do we control sprawl? There's an incentive to use the wrong land for building because it's easier. But if you think about the long term, it's really important to protect land.

1740

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

Mr. Lorne Coe: I listened very intently to what the member from Kingston and the Islands had to say. It seems that the member opposite believes it's acceptable for Ontario to continue operating under outdated regional governance structures that create the unnecessary fragmentation between municipalities and that result in delays for housing, infrastructure expansion and service delivery. This legislation is focused on addressing those very inefficiencies by improving coordination and ensuring regional leadership.

If the member doesn't support the approach, how do they propose we eliminate the delays that residents are currently experiencing when projects require co-operation across multiple municipal jurisdictions within a single region?

You've lived it. I've lived it. We haven't heard a response from the Liberal Party at all.

Mr. Ted Hsu: First of all, I thank my honourable colleague for listening intently.

Let me say this: I don't think it's right to say, “We need to build housing, so we need to be less democratic.” Democracy requires work, and figuring out how to do things yet still preventing tyrants from taking over, preventing authoritarian governments from controlling our society—that's a worthwhile thing to do.

The Liberal Party has put forward proposals—for example, changing development charges; reducing them for certain kinds of housing to encourage the building of the housing that we need.

We don't have to throw away democracy.

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

Mr. Anthony Leardi: As we've been talking about this matter tonight, I have observed, and probably others in this chamber have observed as well, that there really are only two orders of government in Canada—the federal order and the provincial order—and that municipalities are creatures of the province existing primarily to implement, I would say, to a large extent, provincial goals and priorities.

Why doesn't the member from the Liberal Party believe that priorities at the provincial level should be implemented at the municipal level?

Mr. Ted Hsu: The answer is that the one-size-fits-all answer is not always the right answer. You need municipal articulation of whatever things society needs. What Kingston needs is different from what Thunder Bay needs, and that's different from what Windsor needs, and that's different from what North Bay needs. We need to be able to articulate locally and have accountability locally for any provincial policies.

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

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: I'm pleased to rise this evening to join the debate and to offer my support for Bill 100, the Better Regional Governance Act, 2026, and to build on the comments, in particular, of the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. The purpose of this legislation and the broader strategy our government is pursuing is to make it faster, more predictable and more affordable to build the Ontario of tomorrow.

When we talk about governance reform, we're not talking about an exercise in academic or political theory; we're talking about whether systems work in practice.

Let's talk about systems. I asked one of the members opposite about this. We have in Canada and Ontario a constitutional system of responsible government. Provincial governments are tasked constitutionally with responsibility over municipal government, local government, matters of a local nature. That's in section 92 of the original BNA Act, now the Constitution Act, 1867.

For about the last 180 years, even before Confederation, a portrait of one Robert Baldwin hangs outside this very chamber. He is one of the fathers of responsible government, the concept that to be a member of the Lieutenant Governor's executive council, the crown's representative

here in Ontario does not govern by decree but governs on the advice of ministers who must, by constitutional convention, be elected members of this House.

The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, who is the minister tasked with appointing heads of council of eight regional municipalities—that particular person who happens to occupy that office is tasked with that appointment power under proposed section 218.1(1). That minister may appoint heads of council for eight regional municipalities, and if he does not do so or if she does not do so, then the councils themselves shall appoint those heads of council. That's the default. Each one of the members of those councils is elected at the municipal level, whether they be mayors or regional councillors, depending on the regional municipality in question.

So as I implied in my question to one of the members opposite, this bill is actually all about democracy. The process that governs it is about democracy, but it's also about governance reform, making the system better, making it work better. As I said, it's not an exercise in academic or political theory; it's about what works in practice. That's important because we're talking about whether water and waste water infrastructure can be delivered when it's needed, whether planning and approvals are clear and predictable, and whether governments at every level are able to move with the urgency that Ontario's growth demands. We're not talking about governments that should be working at cross-purposes with one another.

One of the things I've heard, having been an elected member of this place now for four years—including with my re-election last year—is, the citizens and residents we have sworn to serve with due diligence and to the best of our ability do not expect us to work in any way other than in common cause. So municipal governments should not be governing at cross-purposes with provincial priorities, which, I may add, are set by legislation passed by this House and regulations passed and filed under that legislation.

This House consists of 124 members elected from across ridings or districts in the province of Ontario. So it's all about democracy. This is a choice about maintaining both elected regional councils, which we have, and eight across the board having appointed heads of council—either by the minister who's responsible to this House and is elected, or by elected councils.

To personalize this is a mistake. When we're debating bills, it should never be about the person. No office belongs to one person. That is dictatorship. That is a fiefdom. That is not what this is about.

I challenge the member for Oshawa. We represent the city of Oshawa together, because north Oshawa is part of my riding. It's not about who's going to be the member for Durham or Oshawa forever. It's not about who's going to be the chair of a particular region forever. Anyone who makes it about the person who holds the office at a particular time is actually speaking against democracy—because it's about having a term. We don't have term limits, but there is a time for everyone to end their term.

No one was fired here. Each and every one of the existing chairs of these eight councils can, if they wish, apply, and their terms were coming to an end in any event. If you read the legislation carefully, no appointments will be made until after the 2026 elections, either by the minister, if this act passes, or, if this act passes, by the elected regional councils—but the elected members of those councils elected in this 2026 election.

To say that this is anti-democratic is to fail to understand what our parliamentary democracy is about, what the history of our parliamentary democracy and responsible government is, and how this bill actually is proposed to be operated.

1750

We have massive growth ahead of us, and we have to be ahead of the curve. In the next 25 years—by mid-century—we will add six million residents to the province of Ontario. That's good news for the people of Ontario now and in the future, and it's good news for the prosperity of our province and our nation. But we have to be ready for it. We have to invest in the infrastructure and make it happen. We can't have it happen if levels of government are not working in concert with common priorities, in common cause for the people who have put their trust in us to govern.

Growth is a sign of confidence in our province, but it's also something that brings great responsibility to us, as members of this House, and to the ministers who are responsible to this House and form the government of this province. Growth must be supported by infrastructure that is planned properly and built on time. Growth must be managed through political systems that reflect today's realities. Growth must be delivered in a way that protects our environment while ensuring communities remain livable, affordable, and economically strong.

So it is about balance. A balance between growth and responsibility sits at the core of the responsibilities of ministers and legislators, but achieving that balance becomes significantly harder when governance systems are slow, fragmented or misaligned with the scale of the challenges before us; when decision-making is duplicated across too many tables; when accountability is unclear; or when council structures are too large and unwieldy to function efficiently. The result is not then better outcomes; the result is delay.

Delays matter because delays drive up construction costs. Delays defer infrastructure needed to unlock housing. Delays strain systems that were never designed to carry today's population pressures. It's certainly not fair to families and individuals who are waiting for new homes to be built, when they already have the planning support but remain stalled in their goals because the systems governing decisions cannot keep pace.

Upper-tier municipalities: That includes the eight listed in this bill that will, if it is passed, have appointed chairs but elected members. Those upper-tier municipalities are responsible for some of the most critical infrastructure systems that enable growth and keep our communities functioning, while protecting public health and our shared

environment. This includes drinking water and waste water systems, trunk infrastructure, regional roads, waste diversion, and long-term land use coordination. These systems do not always stop at local municipal boundaries. Water and sewer systems often serve multiple communities. Transportation corridors connect entire regions. And the impacts, positive or negative, are shared across municipalities.

That is why regional governance exists, and we propose to make regional governance better than ever to get it done for the province of Ontario.

Bill 100, proposed by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, is about ensuring that the governance framework around these essential systems is fit for purpose and for a rapidly growing province facing increasingly complex infrastructure demands. The urgency of the moment cannot be overstated. We believe in democracy. This bill is about democracy, but this bill is also about getting it done with the rapid growth and the urgent challenges before us.

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

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm glad to be pulled into this question-and-answer by the MPP for Durham, who reminds this House that he and I share Oshawa.

In Durham, there are a lot of people who are quite concerned about this bill and the fact that the government is giving this minister the ability to appoint our regional chair who has, to this point—since 2010, it has been decided that they be elected. To this point, it doesn't matter who's in the chair—it could be a terrible regional chair, but as the electorate, it is our chair that we voted for.

So when we're talking about democracy—and I'm so glad there's a man to explain democracy to me—I would like to know whether this member feels that the referendum was democratic in 2010 or whether the electorate should have more voice than the puppet appointee.

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: The member for Oshawa should not demean the office or the person who may occupy the office, who is not yet known. That's unfair. That is disrespectful.

I will say this: Regional governance has been around for more than 50 years. From 1974 till 2010, we had appointed chairs in Durham, and, yes, there was a referendum.

There was also a referendum in relation to provincial politics in 2007: Should we have an end to the first past the post system—a system that, incredibly, elected an NDP government with 70 seats in this House, with only 37% of the popular vote back in 1990. That was the question, but the people decided—at least a majority decided—to go with maintaining the first past the post system.

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

Mr. Lorne Coe: To the member from Durham: What the proposed legislation does is extend the strong-chair powers to appointed regional chairs, mirroring strong-mayor authorities already in place across Ontario.

Can the minister outline for the Legislative Assembly how these enhanced powers will help local leaders cut

through delays and accelerate the delivery of housing and infrastructure projects that communities that make up the region of Durham urgently need?

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: It's an excellent question from the member for Whitby. Of course, he has great knowledge because he was elected many, many times as a regional councillor for Whitby on Durham regional council, at a time when there was an appointed chair for Durham region—as we propose to bring forward if this bill is passed.

The concept of the strong-chair powers is consistent with what has proven successful—the strong-mayor powers. That has been an important aspect of this because the chair, whether appointed or elected—and we've already got appointed chairs elsewhere—has the wider perspective, as a mayor does, when a mayor presides over council and exercises strong-mayor powers. So that system has proven effective, and we propose to bring it to this level of municipal government.

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

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I like that this is sort of the unofficial Durham region caucus hashing it out here.

When it comes to these strong-mayor/strong-chair powers, it means that an unelected, unaccountable-to-the-electorate chair will get to rule things by minority control, like with one third of council, and appointed by the minister who—you're right, chairs can change, ministers can change; it could be the member next time. Who knows?

I have a question about the statement the member made that the municipal level of governance should not be working at cross-purposes with provincial priorities. Could there ever be an occasion when there's a local priority that perhaps the local folks know better? And I'm curious about who this member would appoint as the new chair.

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: I thank the member for Oshawa for the question.

Let's be clear: The member speaks of unelected positions. The minister, whomever that minister is, responsible to this elected House is himself or herself elected. If the appointment is not made by that elected minister, the elected members of council make the appointment. So there are many facets of democracy here.

What this is about is balance—and read the bill carefully, because that is what it's about. We live in urgent times. We have to be ahead of the growth. We can't have provincial priorities ignored when they're established by elected members of this House through legislation and they represent the entire province.

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

Mr. Lorne Coe: Speaker, through you to the minister: At a time of global uncertainty, in rising demand for housing and infrastructure, we know that delays at any level of government—and they happen—create real consequences for hard-working families and businesses in the region of Durham.

Can the minister explain in greater detail how strengthening regional governance will help remove those barriers, improve coordination and directly support faster delivery of housing and infrastructure projects across Ontario that the residents of the region of Durham deserve?

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: I thank the member for Whitby. This truly is a Durham caucus debate, it seems.

The people of Durham, like all Ontarians, expect that decisions affecting tens of millions of dollars in infrastructure investment can and must be made in a timely and accountable way. Residents in Durham expect results, as do all Ontarians. They expect growth to be planned re-

sponsibly. They expect infrastructure to be delivered when it is needed, not years after communities are already built. And they expect governments at every level to work together.

We have a democratically elected government that is proposing this bill. It is very much about process and focus and democracy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): The time being 6 o'clock, it is now time for private members' public business.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

Report continues in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Edith Dumont, OOnt
Speaker / Présidente de l'Assemblée législative: Hon. / L'hon. Donna Skelly
Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day
Deputy Clerk / Sous-Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim
Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Julia Douglas, Meghan Stenson,
Christopher Tyrell, Wai Lam (William) Wong
Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Tim McGough

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Allsopp, Tyler (PC)	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	
Anand, Deepak (PC)	Mississauga—Malton	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London—Fanshawe	
Babikian, Aris (PC)	Scarborough—Agincourt	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia—Lambton	
Bell, Jessica (NDP)	University—Rosedale	
Bethlenfalvy, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (PC)	Pickering—Uxbridge	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Blais, Stephen (LIB)	Orléans	
Bouma, Will (PC)	Brantford—Brant	
Bourgouin, Guy (NDP)	Mushkegowuk—James Bay / Mushkegowuk—Baie James	
Bowman, Stephanie (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu
Brady, Bobbi Ann (IND)	Haldimand—Norfolk	
Bresee, Ric (PC)	Hastings—Lennox and Addington	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Burch, Jeff (NDP)	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	
Calandra, Hon. / L'hon. Paul (PC)	Markham—Stouffville	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Cerjanec, Rob (LIB)	Ajax	
Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Raymond Sung Joon (PC)	Scarborough North / Scarborough-Nord	Minister for Seniors and Accessibility / Ministre des Services aux aînés et de l'Accessibilité
Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Stan (PC)	Willowdale	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Gaming / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et des Jeux
Ciriello, Monica (PC)	Hamilton Mountain / Hamilton-Mountain	
Clancy, Aislinn (GRN)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Clark, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (PC)	Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes / Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands et Rideau Lakes	Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Coe, Lorne (PC)	Whitby	
Collard, Lucille (LIB)	Ottawa—Vanier	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Cooper, Michelle (PC)	Eglinton—Lawrence	
Crawford, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)	Oakville	Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery and Procurement / Ministre des Services au public et aux entreprises et de l'Approvisionnement
Cuzzetto, Rudy (PC)	Mississauga—Lakeshore	
Darouze, George (PC)	Carleton	
Denault, Billy (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	
Dixon, Jess (PC)	Kitchener South—Hespeler / Kitchener-Sud—Hespeler	
Dowie, Andrew (PC)	Windsor—Tecumseh	
Downey, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte	Attorney General / Procureur général
Dunlop, Hon. / L'hon. Jill (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Minister of Emergency Preparedness and Response / Ministre de la Protection civile et de l'Intervention en cas d'urgence
Fairclough, Lee (LIB)	Etobicoke—Lakeshore	
Fedeli, Hon. / L'hon. Victor (PC)	Nipissing	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique, de la Création d'emplois et du Commerce

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Waterloo	
Firin, Mohamed (PC)	York South—Weston / York-Sud— Weston	
Flack, Hon. / L'hon. Rob (PC)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Premier / Premier ministre Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Leader, Third Party / Chef du troisième parti
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Première Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn (PC)	Newmarket—Aurora	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gilmour, Alexa (NDP)	Parkdale—High Park	
Glover, Chris (NDP)	Spadina—Fort York	
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Grewal, Hardeep Singh (PC)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	
Gualtieri, Silvia (PC)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	
Hamid, Hon. / L'hon. Zee (PC)	Milton	Associate Solicitor General for Auto Theft and Bail Reform / Solliciteur général associé responsable de la Lutte contre le vol d'automobiles et de la Réforme relative aux mises en liberté sous caution
Hardeman, Hon. / L'hon. Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Hon. / L'hon. Mike (PC)	Kitchener—Conestoga	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Hazell, Andrea (LIB)	Scarborough—Guildwood	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Holland, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin (PC)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	Associate Minister of Forestry and Forest Products / Ministre associé des Forêts et des Produits forestiers
Hsu, Ted (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin—Caledon	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health / Ministre de la Santé
Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Trevor (PC)	Chatham-Kent—Leamington	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et de l'Agroentreprise
Jordan, John (PC)	Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston	
Kanapathi, Logan (PC)	Markham—Thornhill	
Kernaghan, Terence (NDP)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	
Kerzner, Hon. / L'hon. Michael S. (PC)	York Centre / York-Centre	Solicitor General / Solliciteur général
Khanjin, Hon. / L'hon. Andrea (PC)	Barrie—Innisfil	Minister of Red Tape Reduction / Ministre de la Réduction des formalités administratives
Kusendova-Bashta, Hon. / L'hon. Natalia (PC)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga- Centre	Minister of Long-Term Care / Ministre des Soins de longue durée
Leardi, Anthony (PC)	Essex	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Lecce, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)	King—Vaughan	Minister of Energy and Mines / Ministre de l'Énergie et des Mines
Lennox, Robin (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	
Lumsden, Hon. / L'hon. Neil (PC)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	Minister of Sport / Ministre du Sport
Mamakwa, Sol (NDP)	Kiiwetinoong	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
McCarthy, Hon. / L'hon. Todd J. (PC)	Durham	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs
McCrimmon, Karen (LIB)	Kanata—Carleton	
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	