

Legislative  
Assembly  
of Ontario



Assemblée  
législative  
de l'Ontario

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**Official Report  
of Debates  
(Hansard)**

No. 67B

**Journal  
des débats  
(Hansard)**

N° 67B

1<sup>st</sup> Session  
44<sup>th</sup> Parliament

Thursday  
23 April 2026

1<sup>re</sup> session  
44<sup>e</sup> législature

Jeudi  
23 avril 2026

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Speaker: Honourable Donna Skelly  
Clerk: Trevor Day

Présidente : L'honorable Donna Skelly  
Greffier : Trevor Day

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

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

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 23 April 2026

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE  
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 23 avril 2026

*Report continued from volume A.*

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PROTECTING ONTARIO'S  
FOOD INDEPENDENCE ACT, 2026  
LOI DE 2026 VISANT À PROTÉGER  
L'AUTONOMIE ALIMENTAIRE  
DE L'ONTARIO

Mr. Jones moved second reading of the following bill:  
Bill 109, An Act to enact the Farmland Security Act, 2026 and to amend various Acts / Projet de loi 109, Loi édictant la Loi de 2026 visant à protéger l'autonomie alimentaire de l'Ontario et modifiant diverses lois.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** I recognize the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness.

**Hon. Trevor Jones:** Good afternoon, colleagues. I'm honoured to rise today to speak to second reading of the Protecting Ontario's Food Independence Act, 2026.

Before I begin, there are a number of people I would like to thank for their support throughout the process to get to where we are today. First, thank you to the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound and the member for Algoma–Manitoulin who both serve as exceptional parliamentary assistants to the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness. I want to thank them for their support, for generously sharing their knowledge and experience and for their leadership serving both their home communities and our agricultural communities.

Today, Madam Speaker, I'll be sharing my time with the member for Algoma–Manitoulin.

I would also like to thank the many farmers, farm organizations, business operators, businesses and stakeholders from across the agri-food sector for being our trusted advisers. I've had the privilege of speaking with farmers on their farms, at their kitchen tables, barns and fields and in state-of-the-art production facilities to best understand what they need to navigate the current environment. I appreciate that I can count on them because they have the sector's best interests at heart. We'll always stand up for Ontario farmers, and we'll continue protecting our farmers during these times of uncertainty.

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Like me, farmers want the agri-food sector to continue to be an economic powerhouse in Ontario and be a leader on the world stage too. They recognize the importance of preserving Ontario's food independence to ensure that families across our province can always count on a safe,

high-quality supply of local food. They share the challenges that farmers and their businesses are dealing with, and they offer practical solutions to solve them. They work tirelessly with us at the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness to make sure the needs of the entire sector are heard and better understood.

Consultation and collaboration with those who work every day to feed our province is integral to the development of good legislation. I am proud that the measures of the Protecting Ontario's Food Independence Act were informed by our very farmers and food producers. We've worked closely with them to understand their challenges and develop strategic measures to support their competitiveness and resilience. The additional actions we'll be taking to strengthen the agri-food sector that are outside of the proposed legislation were also directly informed by stakeholders. Having this strong, mutually beneficial partnership is crucial. These are the people always looking to grow our future and to find new opportunities to showcase to the world why Ontario-grown and Ontario-made is the global standard. I appreciate our strong working relationships, and I'll never take these for granted.

This year, we continue to face significant global uncertainty and ongoing trade challenges. This is why in the 2026 provincial budget our government set out strategic investments to strengthen sector competitiveness and to protect jobs during these times of economic uncertainty. These include protecting Ontario's agriculture and agri-food industry, strengthening agri-food supply chains, enhancing competitiveness and attracting and growing Ontario's agri-food talent through the Grow Ontario Strategy.

This year's budget commits to agri-food research and innovation, as demonstrated by our investment of an additional \$61.5 million into Agricultural Research and Innovation Ontario, on top of the \$41-million investment we made in October of last year. This brings our total investment to well over \$100 million over the next 10 years. It will support the province's network of strategic agri-food research infrastructure, including 14 very special research stations, 5,600 acres and more than 200 buildings of research excellence—most importantly, the people that work in them. This research and innovation are crucial to delivering solutions for farmers, to support them in becoming more productive, lowering their costs and protecting their crops from disease and pests, which if not protected, can devastate the viability and profitability of our farms.

The budget also identifies and builds relationships with retailers and foodservice companies throughout Ontario and abroad to help farmers sell more Ontario-grown products

to new markets and strengthen their competitive edge, as well as to enhance agri-food innovation through the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership. These are all part of Ontario's plan to make strategic financial investments to strengthen competitiveness and protect Ontario jobs, workers and our communities.

Now more than ever, it's crucial to plan strategically for the future of agriculture and food in Ontario. As we face trade disruptions and global uncertainties, our government is focused on protecting our food independence. We want to make sure the province's agri-food sector is self-reliant, our supply chains are resilient and that farmers are empowered to sell more Ontario-grown products to the world. Ontario has what the world wants. It's the Ontario-grown brand, that trillium and the maple leaf they'll recognize around the world for safety and quality.

Our government supports long-term goals for a strong supply chain and ensuring the people of Ontario have a consistent supply of fresh, high-quality, local food for generations to come. Protecting our ability to grow, raise and make our own food is food independence. Ontario's farmland is some of the best in the world, and maintaining control of it for our collective benefit to grow, raise and make our food is critical to provincial, local and national significance.

Currently, five provinces have legislation in place to restrict the amount of farmland that foreign entities can acquire: Manitoba, Quebec, Saskatchewan, Alberta and PEI. There are also around 29 US states with similar protections in place.

The importance of protecting the local ownership of farmland is not a new or novel idea; in fact, regulations restricting the foreign ownership of farmland have existed in countries around the world for generations because, like our government, others across the world recognize that food security is truly national security. Protecting our land from foreign ownership is essential to protecting and maintaining our food independence. This is why we're taking action to secure our food supply.

As part of the Protecting Ontario's Food Independence Act, we're proposing the Farmland Security Act, legislation that would enable the province to restrict the foreign ownership of farmland. The proposed act would apply to all farmland in the province to ensure farmland is not treated as just some number on an overseas company's balance sheet but actively producing food for our communities and supporting local families.

Once this land is sold and held by a foreign owner, it can easily be taken out of production, and it's gone. Madam Speaker, it would no longer be there to serve the people of Ontario; it would make our local food supply vulnerable.

The proposed Farmland Security Act would be enabling in nature, meaning it would establish a legal framework while future regulations would set out the detailed rules that would be implemented. The government values and will seek the insights from public input from farmers, organizations, municipalities and people from around the

province to help inform the development of this regulatory framework.

Madam Speaker, this is forward-looking legislation. This legislation would take effect once the regulatory framework is complete and it would apply to farmland acquisitions from that time. This means that once the regulation is in place and the act is in force, anyone buying or acquiring farmland in the province, either directly or indirectly, would need to comply with the act. Anyone acquiring farmland would need to confirm they meet the requirements of this act. Without confirmation, the land transfer registration would not be able to proceed.

Certainly, the restrictions would not apply to Canadian citizens or permanent residents. Regulations will also clarify how this applies to corporations, partnerships and other entities. For clarity, the proposed act would not impact current farmland owners.

The act also recognizes that some flexibility may be needed in certain circumstances. This is why the proposed act will allow the ability for certain exemptions to the restrictions that, again, will be informed by the people of Ontario. If an individual or entity is restricted from acquiring farmland, they can still apply for permission to purchase or acquire the land, with more details to be set as the regulations unfold, including potential fees. Further, general exemptions may be set out through future regulations; for example, based on the quantity of the land or the type of transaction.

More generally, the proposed act also sets out a framework to support administration and enforcement. This includes requirements related to the collection and use of information, as well as inspection, investigation and compliance.

The proposed Farmland Security Act specifies offences under the act and associated penalties, as it must. For example, acquiring farmland in contravention of the act could result in a fine of \$500,000 for individuals and \$1 million for corporations. Furthermore, the proposed act would allow the province to issue orders to prevent unlawful acquisition of farmland or require farmland to be sold if the land obtained was in contravention of the act.

Most importantly, we'll welcome public feedback on the proposed legislation and any implementation considerations to support the development of a future regulatory proposal. As of today, people can provide that feedback via the province's regulatory registry. We have the very best and brightest minds working in the agri-food sector, so consultation will require that all voices are considered in the drafting of the regulations and operationalization of the act.

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Through the proposed Farmland Security Act, we're taking action to protect local ownership of farmland and to protect domestic food production, ensuring the security of Ontario's food supply for generations to come.

Protecting local ownership of farmland is vital to ensuring a sustainable agricultural and agribusiness sector. Local food production is something we cherish, and strong rural communities.

Another way our government has shown that agriculture has been a priority is through the Grow Ontario Strategy, first launched in 2022. The Grow Ontario Strategy is approaching that midway point in 2027, making this a natural time to review its progress and refresh its priorities. Since 2022, Ontario's agriculture sector has faced several new pressures, particularly those involving trade disruptions and global unrest. Reviewing the strategy now will help to ensure it is responsive, agile and current with the realities that it wants to support.

We recently had conversations with more than 200 agri-food stakeholders at the Ontario Food Summit in Guelph on the pressing challenges and opportunities facing the sector, to help inform an updated Grow Ontario Strategy.

It will build on the vision of Protecting Ontario's Food Independence Act and its guiding pillars to support our agri-food sector's proven success, while responding to an ever-changing global environment. The updated Grow Ontario Strategy will stand as a next-phase strategic approach that responds to today's challenges while positioning us all for long-term growth.

Our vision for the strategy is clear and ambitious: We see Ontario positioned as a global leader where local food is supported and promoted. We see the province as an agri-food export powerhouse built on a reputation for quality, reliability and competitiveness. A refreshed and strengthened Grow Ontario Strategy will build on the Protecting Ontario's Food Independence Act's vision and its guiding pillars to further support our agri-food sector's success while responding to a changing global environment.

Much has changed in the environment since that strategy was launched, and I helped launch it at our beautiful crown jewel, our Ontario Food Terminal, while proudly serving as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Agriculture at the time.

Trade and market diversification have become increasingly important. We want to make sure and focus on the matters that have emerged as challenges since that time. In line with that approach with the initial launch, we've strengthened the strategy to include key performance indicators so we can measure, remain agile and make sure we're successful and ensure that the strategy stays on track, even if the future tests us and tests the sector's resilience again and again.

The updated strategy will strengthen resilience and ensure stability across the sector and the agri-food value chain, including inputs and input costs, production, processing and exports. Ontario's agri-food exports totalled around \$28 billion last year. Let's see that number grow.

We'll also focus on removing barriers to farm growth, value-added processing and job creation, ultimately leading to more food production right here in Ontario. A refreshed strategy will support trade diversification, innovation and productivity to drive efficiency across the sector and across the economy. Another focus will be to reinforce Ontario's self-reliance by protecting farmland, expanding domestic production and attracting the right talent to keep Ontario a world leader.

By updating the Grow Ontario Strategy, we'll have a solid plan in place that we can all get behind—a guide for future success, for resilience and a system so precious to everyone here in Ontario—a system that will protect the people of Ontario, support workers, communities and supply the world.

I'm going to talk briefly about a precious resource that many in the north will know already very well and maybe the rest of us need to learn about and understand. Protecting farmland and renewing the Grow Ontario Strategy are key actions to support reliance and growth.

The third foundational action will be supporting an agri-food sector and growth in the north, unlocking the crown land and the Great Clay Belt and beyond. This initiative—led in partnership with the Ministry of Northern Economic Development and Growth and the Ministry of Natural Resources—will empower northern farmers and all of Ontario, all of our food producers, to sell more Ontario-grown to communities and around the world.

This is somewhere around 11 million acres of fertile farmland waiting to be developed, drained, maintained and to grow the very best crops for Ontario. Just yesterday, I had a conversation with the president of the Beef Farmers of Ontario. He and his members see all the potential of this land for livestock grazing, an important resource that could easily be overlooked—a resource that previous governments thought was nothing but fallow land and no man's land.

There's excitement in this sector—excitement about genuine potential and interest from livestock producers considering a move to northern Ontario for this purpose, because expanding livestock grazing in the region strengthens local food systems, rural economies, while creating jobs, supporting processing infrastructure and reducing reliance on beef that needs to be shipped a long distance from other jurisdictions. This work is going to be done prudently and respects Aboriginal and treaty rights, mining claims, forestry uses and existing land uses.

Our government recognizes the economic significance and potential of northern agriculture. In 2021, the nearly 1,800 farms in northern Ontario generated \$238 million in farm cash receipts with grains, oilseeds, dairy and cattle representing top commodities. These are significant numbers, significant value for our families. It's an incredible region we have in northern Ontario, and there's so much opportunity for growth.

Our agri-food sector truly is an economic powerhouse. I'm sure, Madam Speaker, you'll hear me say many times, it contributes \$52 billion to our economy. That's the biggest piece of the pie—bigger than auto, steel, manufacturing—and, of course, it employs one in nine of us, including myself, including a dear friend of mine, the member opposite from Timiskaming.

Families and communities across the province rely on a strong agri-food sector as the foundation for our economy.

Farmland in the Clay Belt and across the region, if you look at it, the imaginary border between Quebec and Ontario, you'll see organized, developed farmland—

across Ontario, less so. It's our collective will and our collective potential to see it through to its full potential. Our government is ensuring that farmers in the north have the same success and the same ability to access sustainable land in the Clay Belt and beyond, increasing growth and competitiveness.

My dear friend the Minister of Northern Economic Development and Growth is an exceptional tour guide and champion of the area. He showed it to me first-hand and was excited at its potential. All we must do together is to simplify the rules, establish guidance and create a one-window contact to allow applicants that can come directly from farmers through the ministries to unlock the potential and improve that land.

Through these measures, we're going to unlock the potential, and through partnerships between both the Ministry of Northern Economic Development and Growth and our Ministry of Natural Resources, work closely together to work and identify sustainable growth that's feasible. This work contributes to the shared vision of expanding a northern Ontario—a footprint that improves opportunities for the north and beyond.

Since 2023, the governments of Canada and Ontario have provided almost \$2 million in direct cost-share funding for 90 specific food projects in the north. This is all part of a \$3.5-billion, five-year initiative between the federal, provincial and territorial governments to strengthen the competitiveness, innovation and resiliency of the agriculture and agri-food product sector.

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Further, since 2018, the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp. has invested more than \$83 million in 700 agri-food projects. These are projects that are growing quietly and most of us don't even know about them. The people in the north—our northern farmers, our northern communities—know about them and they cherish them. These projects have created over 600 jobs and attracted more than \$165 million in overall outside investments.

There's still room to grow, Speaker. We want to support further economic diversification and opportunities for agriculture in the north, and the ministries are working together to unlock this potential.

I'd like to personally recognize and thank both the Minister of Northern Economic Development and Growth and the Minister of Natural Resources for partnering to advance true opportunities in the north. I look forward to supporting these efforts and continuing to work together and champion them.

Similarly, the Beef Farmers of Ontario are an organization that represents the province's 19,000 beef farmers. These are producers committed to a sustainable, profitable beef sector, and they're incredibly dedicated in the work they do. Their dedication is evidenced by the economic statistics on the beef sector in Ontario: It supports 56,000 jobs and nearly \$3 billion in GDP. That is a significant contribution to our economy. We'll work closely with beef farmers and all the other organizations to advance the sector.

The BFO have requested a change to how the organization's licence fees are collected. This is important because this is the work they do to advance marketing, reach new markets—and important research in food safety. These licence fees are a nominal fee, but they're important when they're seen as a whole. The licence fees come together to collectively, again, advance promotional marketing, see new markets and benefit the health and wellness of the industry.

Presently, the licence fees are only collected when farmers sell live animals to buyers such as other farmers or processors. However, it's a common practice for beef farmers to process some or all of their own cattle, and some have someone else to do it for them. When this is done, a Beef Farmers of Ontario licence fee isn't collected. It's a loophole that has been identified and that we're closing. This means that farmers not paying that portion don't have a level playing field with those that are.

As such, we're proposing an update—and this is highly technical in nature; I'm still learning all these technical nuances, but it's a proposed update to the Beef Cattle Marketing Act to create that equitable collection of the fees for producers in the transactions that are not currently captured.

In addition to this change, we'll also be creating a "personal use" exemption. So farmers—and I think you'll hear it from some former Ministers of Agriculture in this place—would say, "Freeze your beef." So of course, we're going to make sure that exemption for producers have a two head of cattle per farmer being eligible, so farmers can collect, dress and have their own prepared.

In short, if passed, this proposed update to the act will expand licence fee collection to include all of the sales I've described, for an equitable system, for all farmers to thrive equally.

In another proposed change to the Beef Cattle Marketing Act, we're proposing removing requirements for buyers to register with the ministry if they purchase cattle based on carcass weight. Currently, there's a requirement for beef processing plants to register with our ministry if that's the case. So these proposed changes and subsequent amendments to regulations will ensure licence fees are paid for all cattle, regardless of whether they're sold with room for exemptions, as I previously described. The fee changes would improve equity in licence fee collection and remove red tape across the sector. The latter proposed amendment to remove requirements for buyers to register with the ministry would reduce those burdens for processors, as they would no longer be required to apply for a listing for their plant.

Again, these proposed changes support our overall goal to enhance fairness, enhance clarity and reduce burdens for farmers.

The Beef Farmers of Ontario thanked our government for listening to their members, for taking action to create a more equitable fee structure under what, to outsiders, seem to be a very complicated series of very detail-oriented acts. The more we can save farmers' time and energy by simplifying administrative and regulatory processes, the more

they can focus on what they do best: run successful, sustainable farms.

To streamline services, one of the proposals in the bill will consolidate two separate adjudicative bodies that perform similar tasks into one. We're proposing to consolidate the Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs Appeal Tribunal and the Normal Farm Practices Protection Board into one tribunal called the Agriculture and Agri-Food Protection Tribunal. So, in lay terms, for the benefit perhaps of the Speaker and my colleagues, if there's a resolution in a dispute between parties—it could be a neighbour and a food producer—you now have to navigate two processes, a little red tape, not knowing exactly who is going to hear your concern or complaint. Now, those two boards and two quasi-judicial bodies will be one.

This consolidation will be achieved by amending the Farming and Food Production Protection Act to transfer the Normal Farm Practices Protection Board's jurisdiction, powers and ongoing matters to the new Agriculture and Agri-Food Protection Tribunal. This new tribunal would handle all matters, if passed, reducing red tape for farmers, owners and municipalities, because municipalities are often the ones that hear these concerns first. In rural municipalities, farmers and property owners will certainly benefit from more consistent service, customer service excellence, improved digital tools, easier navigation and a single set of rules—hallelujah, Madam Speaker.

Through this proposed action, we're also supporting Ontario's priority to reduce the number of provincial agencies and modernize the delivery of adjudicative services. Just think of staffing these tribunals and boards: We need talented people, often members called to the bar, legal practitioners who are often in private practice. So to get that talent and that subject-matter expertise, we're competing. To have one board consolidates a lot of talented people into one adjudicative body.

So, Speaker and colleagues, thank you for your indulgence in these detailed, nuanced regulatory changes. Together, we're proud of the efforts we've taken to listen to the needs of farmers and food processors, to advance their needs. I'm confident that if this bill is passed, it will help to build a more independent agri-food sector, enabling Ontario to become the leader, the most competitive economy in the G7, and most certainly remain a global leader in safe, trusted food. I'll work every day to advocate for the people who feed this province and with everyone who plays a role in our food system.

We know the road ahead will have challenges. Growing up in Chatham-Kent-Leamington, I feel fortunate to have been surrounded by productive farmland and renowned food-processing companies like Highbury Canco, Weil's, Nortera and Sun-Brite—destinations for farm-fresh foods to have value added for the world. My home is also home to world-class greenhouse farms, innovative controlled-environment agriculture that produces more than 16 times the yield of traditional field farms while using 90% less water, less nutrients, on far less land, all around the year.

The common denominator across every sector of food production is the diverse, caring, hard-working people.

Farmers have always been my inspiration, and they've always been our voices, sharing their experience, helping to frame legislation in this House and this bill.

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From weather events to changing technology to emerging diseases and pests, Ontario farmers have been the proven problem-solvers, quick to respond to changing circumstances and quick to provide advice. We'll continue to stand behind them to support navigation in uncertain times.

Madam Speaker, at this time, I'll now turn to the member for Algoma-Manitoulin for more detail on the Protecting Ontario's Food Independence Act.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** I recognize the member for Algoma-Manitoulin.

**MPP Bill Rosenberg:** Thank you, Minister, and thank you to all your staff for all their hard work and effort that made this a reality for Bill 109 to be here debated today.

I'm glad to have the chance to stand here today and continue the conversation on the Protecting Ontario's Food Independence Act and to build on what my colleague has already shared. Because when you step back and look at it, this bill really comes down to something pretty straightforward: making sure Ontario can feed itself, support the people who grow our food and stay strong in a world that's becoming more unpredictable every day.

We're seeing global pressures, supply chain disruptions and rising costs. In that kind of environment, you can't take our food system for granted. You have to be intentional about protecting it and making it stronger, and that's exactly what this legislation will do if passed.

Ontario's agri-food sector is already a major strength in this province. It contributes \$52 billion to our economy and supports one in nine jobs. The goal here is simple: Keep that system strong, modernize where we need to and make sure farmers and producers have the tools they need to succeed.

Today, I want to walk through some of the key pieces of this bill, including its actions on dairy modernization, veterinary service modernization, drainage infrastructure, plant health, financial protection programs and the Ontario Food Terminal.

I'll start with dairy. My grandfather started a dairy farm and, like many of the farms in my riding of Algoma-Manitoulin, celebrated being a century farm. Things have changed a lot over that time—genetics, robotics—but one thing remains the same: Our farmers are committed and remain proud of what they do. The dairy sector is a huge part of Ontario, and it's one that the people across the province take a lot of pride in.

One of the proposed changes is to update the definition of a regulated product under the Milk Act so it includes more types of milk products, including ingredients such as milk powder. Now, that might sound like a small, technical change, but it actually matters quite a bit. In Canada, milk is priced based on what it's going to be used for, whether that's cheese, yogourt, butter, or something else. That system helps keep prices fair and predictable for both farmers and processors, but the reality is that the

industry has evolved. Some processors use fresh milk, while others can use components or ingredients, and that's created situations where similar products aren't always treated the same way because these milk ingredients can be purchased at a volatile market price outside of our supply management system, and when that happens, you start to lose that sense of fairness in the system.

What this change does is bring everything back into alignment. It makes sure that no matter how a product is made, the same pricing rules apply. That helps level the playing field and helps protect the integrity of supply management. What does this mean? It means continued stability, delivery of high-quality milk from Ontario farms for processing here in Ontario. And when it comes to removing interprovincial trade barriers, ensuring there is consistency in how milk products are priced across Canada fits right into that.

This is worth getting right because the dairy sector isn't small. We're talking roughly 115,000 jobs and \$6.6 billion in GDP tied to that value chain. That's farmers, processors, transport, retail—it's a whole ecosystem. Making sure these rules are fair and consistent across the system really matters.

The bill also opens the door for future updates that would give the Dairy Farmers of Ontario more clarity and authority when it comes to how these products are managed and priced. Again, the goal isn't to complicate things; it's to make sure the system works the way it's supposed to.

While we're on dairy, there's also a bigger modernization piece here: the Milk Act. It has been around since 1965—I've been around longer than the Milk Act—and while it's done its job, the industry today looks very different than it did back then. Part of what we're proposing is to separate food safety from the act and move it under the Food Safety and Quality Act. Honestly, that just makes sense. Food safety should sit under the legislation that's built specifically for food safety.

Right now, some of that responsibility sits with a body that's focused on marketing, not inspection or enforcement. This change clears that up by putting the responsibility for this important work under the right authority. It creates a more consistent system, lines dairy up with how other foods are regulated and makes things easier to understand for producers and processors. It also brings all types of milk—cow, goat, sheep and water buffalo—under one framework, and that matters because the industry is more diverse now than it ever used to be.

At the end of the day, these updates are about keeping Ontario's reputation and high standards strong. People trust Ontario food. They trust its quality and its safety, and this helps make sure we keep earning that trust.

Now, shifting gears a bit, I want to talk about veterinary services. Another important part of this work is the proposed amendments to the Veterinary Professionals Act. Veterinary professionals play a critical role in supporting Ontario farmers, and their work in protecting the health and welfare of farmed animals is essential to the success of the agri-food sector. That's especially true in rural and

northern communities, like my riding of Algoma-Manitoulin, where access to veterinary services can be more limited and the need is often greater.

That's why our government has been taking steps to support the profession and to build capacity where it's needed most. Through the Veterinary Incentive Program, for example, we are helping increase the number of veterinarians in underserved areas by providing support to newly licensed vets who choose to practise in those communities, helping address ongoing shortages in food animal services.

We've also launched the collaborative doctor of veterinary medicine program in partnership with the University of Guelph and Lakehead University, which expands training opportunities and helps build a stronger pipeline of veterinary professionals.

Through the Ontario Agri-Food Innovation Alliance, a partnership between the ministry, the University of Guelph and the Agricultural Research Institute of Ontario, we continue to support veterinary education and research through the Veterinary Capacity Program. And we have the Veterinary Assistance Program led by the Ministry of Northern Economic Development and Growth, which helps offset costs for large-animal veterinarian services in eligible communities, including travel, continuing education and temporary coverage.

Our government has been working since late 2024 with the College of Veterinarians of Ontario to explore updates to the regulatory framework for that profession. The need for large-animal vets is felt all over Ontario, but it is magnified in the north with the added challenge of the distances between our services.

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Through that process, we saw the parts of the current law could be updated to work better. The proposed changes to the Veterinary Professionals Act, if passed, would fix those gaps by making the rules clearer and strengthening how the profession is regulated in the public interest. They would also help modernize veterinary care by allowing more flexibility in how services are delivered and making oversight more consistent. This includes the formal recognition of veterinary technicians and the role they play in providing animal care, and helping to make it easier for them to work in rural and remote communities. Most of these changes simply set the groundwork for more detailed rules to come later through regulations.

With continued discussion and continued communication with producers and stakeholders, together we will make it right for today's producers. At the end of the day, this is about making sure the system can keep up with how the profession is evolving and that veterinarians are supported in providing the care that farmers depend on.

Next, I want to touch on something that may not immediately come to mind when thinking about agriculture, but is incredibly important to our farming communities, and that's drainage. Good drainage makes a big difference when it comes to crop yields, protecting the environment and making sure farmland stays productive and financially sustainable over time.

Through the Agricultural Drainage Infrastructure Program, the province supports major investments across all of Ontario, helping to bring together about \$40 million each year from municipalities and landowners. These projects help reduce flooding, improve safety and avoid costly damage to farmland and infrastructure.

Last year, at the Rural Ontario Municipal Association conference, the government announced an additional \$18 million over three years, \$6 million each year, to help extend the program and keep up with demand. Because of this, drainage projects are improving services on more than 74,000 acres of farmland every year.

This continues to be a priority because drainage is a key part of the infrastructure that supports farming and food production across this province. It plays an important role in both environmental and economic sustainability, and it is becoming even more important as farmers deal with more extreme and unpredictable weather. The Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness will keep working closely with our farmers and municipalities to make sure that they have the support they need to protect our farmland and to keep it productive.

Improving drainage infrastructure is also a key part of the Grow Ontario Strategy, which focuses on making long-term investments in this sector. Looking ahead, we will be consulting with stakeholders, including farmers, municipalities and rural landowners, to find ways to improve how that program works. The goal is to make sure it continues to meet people's needs and reflects both stakeholders' feedback and broader government priorities.

Madam Speaker, strengthening drainage infrastructure will help make sure farmers have the tools they need to handle both dry conditions and heavy rainfalls while continuing to improve productivity on our farms. In my own riding of Algoma-Manitoulin, because of tile drainage, we are seeing production of grains grow substantially—corn, beans and canola crops—that were not possible just a few years ago. By making these investments, our government is protecting public infrastructure, building stronger, more resilient landscapes and helping reduce long-term costs for landowners.

Moving on, our government also understands it is important that legislation be reviewed from time to time to ensure it reflects the current environment. That is why we will be consulting on three statutes relating to livestock and poultry that have been on the books in Ontario for many years. These are the Protection of Livestock and Poultry from Dogs Act, the Pounds Act and the Innkeepers Act.

Laws like the Protection of Livestock and Poultry from Dogs Act or the Pounds Act may not come up often in this chamber, but they do matter to people on the ground. These statutes deal with a range of real-world situations, from animals wandering off and causing damage, to cases where animals are being boarded, to incidents where livestock may be injured or killed by domestic dogs. Our goal in consulting on these laws is to hear directly from the people affected so we can update them in a way that reflects how things work today. That feedback will help us

improve clarity and fairness and make sure that the language in these statutes is current, practical and easier to understand.

Turning to another key part of this work, I want to talk about plant health and how it supports the overall resilience of Ontario's agri-food sector. It's a broad area and one that reflects the diversity of what we grow in this province, from field crops and vegetables to ornamental horticulture. The reality is that farmers and producers are facing increasing risk when it comes to plant health. These include emerging diseases, insects and invasive weeds that can affect yields, drive up costs and limit access to both domestic and international markets.

Those challenges are being made more complex by global trade and changing weather patterns, which are increasing the likelihood of new or more severe pest pressures. Ontario is particularly exposed because of the size and the diversity of our plant sector, with roughly 200 different commodities grown across our province.

For all of these reasons, we will be consulting broadly with stakeholders across the horticulture and field crop sectors in the fall of 2026. The goal is to hear directly from the sector about what tools and supports are needed to strengthen prevention, improve early detection and respond effectively to plant health risks.

That input will help us identify practical approaches that support both resilience and long-term competitiveness. Being able to prevent, detect and respond to pests and diseases is essential to protecting crop production and supporting the broader agricultural economy. Ultimately, this work ties back to the purpose of the Protecting Ontario's Food Independence Act, making sure Ontario's agri-food sector stays strong, productive and able to feed people here at home and in markets around the world.

Another proposal under the Protecting Ontario's Food Independence Act is to update the Protecting Farmers from Non-Payment Act to strengthen Ontario's financial protection programs. These programs may not be widely known outside the agri-food sector, but they are very important to farmers. Simply put, they help protect producers when a buyer fails to pay for what they have purchased. They also protect farmers when grain is stored with an operator and isn't returned when requested.

The proposed changes would extend how the act applies, including setting clearer rules for agreements between buyers and sellers to better support these programs. We are also proposing updates to enforcement, including stronger tools to deal with non-compliance and the ability to introduce administrative penalties through our regulations.

If passed, these changes would make the rules clearer and easier to follow, particularly for those working in the grain and beef cattle sectors. Ultimately, this is about making sure farmers are protected and that the rules they operate under are practical, clear and they reflect the realities of doing business today.

**1700**

Another step we are taking to support the long-term stability of the agri-food sector is proposing updates to the Ontario Food Terminal Act. The Ontario Food Terminal is

the largest wholesale fruit and produce distribution centre in Canada, and it plays a central role in Ontario's food system. Since opening in 1954, it has grown into a major hub, with a farmers' market that includes over 500 stalls, warehouse space and large, cold storage facilities.

Today, it facilitates the movement of over two billion pounds of food every year. It connects local farmers to a wide range of buyers, from small, independent shops to major grocery chains, restaurants, caterers and institutions. In many ways, it sits right at the centre of how food moves across our province, operating out of its location in Etobicoke. When people think about Ontario-grown food reaching tables across the province, the Ontario Food Terminal is a big part of that story.

The terminal is run by the Ontario Food Terminal Board, under the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness. We are proposing changes to allow the board to create a dedicated capital fund that can be used for upgrades and improvements, including work on the farmers' market. We are also proposing to formally confirm the board's status as a crown agency and to add liability protections for board members and staff.

These changes are needed because parts of the terminal are aging and require investment, including the need for updated market facilities. Creating a dedicated capital fund would give the board a clearer and more reliable way to plan for long-term improvements and make the investments needed to keep the terminal operating effectively.

Right now, the legislation does not clearly set out the board's status as a crown agency. It does not include standard liability protections that are common for public bodies. Adding those provisions would bring the act in line with other similar legislation and reflect standard governance practices.

Overall, these updates are about making sure the Ontario Food Terminal can continue to do its job: supporting farmers, connecting producers to the markets and keeping our food moving across our province. They will also help ensure the terminal can plan for the future, invest in its infrastructure and remain a strong and reliable part of Ontario's food system. This reflects our government's commitment to supporting growth and competitiveness in the agri-food sector.

Ensuring the long-term success of the Ontario Food Terminal and the board that oversees it means putting the right structure in place today so it can continue serving Ontarians well into the future.

We know there is an enormous potential for economic growth in Ontario's agri-food sector. It is already a major driver in our economy, contributing more than \$52 billion to our GDP and supporting communities across our province. But what is just as important is the opportunity ahead of us. With the right supports in place, we can continue to grow this sector, create new opportunities and strengthen our position both here at home and in global markets.

We are confident that by working closely with farmers, producers, processors and industry partners, we can unlock that potential. This means making sure the conditions are right, reducing barriers where they exist, modernizing

legislation where it is needed and investing in the infrastructure and the supports that allow the sector to thrive.

Everything we have discussed today, whether it's legislative changes under the Protecting Ontario's Food Independence Act or the policy initiatives that will support and complement those changes, is part of that broader effort. These are practical steps designed to strengthen the sector, support innovation and ensure long-term success.

Importantly, these actions have been shaped by the people who know the sector best. We have listened to the industry; we will continue to do so. Ongoing consultation will remain a key part of this approach, helping to make sure that we're making the right decisions and responding to real-world needs. We are fortunate in Ontario to have a strong partnership between government and industry. We share a common goal: to see Ontario's agri-food sector continue to grow and to be recognized as global leaders in quality, safety and innovation.

Ontario's agri-food sector is incredibly diverse. Across more than 48,000 farms, we produce 200 different commodities. From wine grapes and oilseeds to greenhouse vegetables and dairy products, Ontario offers an impressive range of high-quality foods. That diversity is one of our greatest strengths. It allows us to meet the needs of people here at home, while also reaching markets around the world.

Increasingly, we are hearing from global buyers and industry leaders that the Ontario brand stands for quality, safety and reliability. That reputation does not happen by accident. It's built on the hard work and dedication of Ontario farmers, on the high standards they maintain and on the strength of our food safety system, supported by partners at both the provincial and federal levels. As the well-known Foodland Ontario message reminds us, "Good things grow in Ontario." Our goal is to make sure even more of these good things are grown, processed and sold, not only across our province and country but in markets around the world.

Agriculture plays a critical role in protecting Ontario, and that includes protecting our economy, our communities and our food supply. Food security is quite simply a matter of national security. And in a world that continues to face uncertainty, that reality has become even more apparent. It is why we are taking action now, through this legislation, to strengthen our agri-food sector and to ensure it remains resilient for the future.

Madam Speaker, we have all heard it before, but we need to remind the people right here in Ontario how important agriculture and agribusiness are, adding over \$50 billion to our GDP—one in nine jobs are related to agriculture—and producing over 50% of our foods that we eat right here in Ontario. That is why Bill 109 is so important, now and for our future generations.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** Questions?

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** I want to thank my colleagues for their lead. I'm very curious about the piece around the Ontario Food Terminal. Of course, it's right next to my riding. Many of the workers in my riding work there, but

in addition to that, there are over 100,000 jobs dependent on it, nine provinces depending on that food terminal. It's a hub.

Bill 109 focuses on the governance changes, but I'm very curious about protecting the employment lands around the food terminal because without those additional protections, our food terminal, as it has just recently been at risk, could continue to be at risk.

I'm wondering if the member opposite could speak to how we're going to ensure this vital hub never, ever faces another moment of risk for us.

**Hon. Trevor Jones:** Thank you very much to the member opposite for the question and her sincere concern. Even being a neighbour, I know many of the workers at the food terminal likely live in or near her riding. I'm not sure if she's been to the food terminal recently or not—I didn't get the invite; I've been many times—but it is a precious resource.

1710

This makes sure the food terminal operates as a modern crown agency would so that the money it generates from sales, from vendor fees and from permits, it takes that in. If they have a surplus, they can bake that surplus, act like a business would and plan for the future—plan for paving, plan for maintenance, plan for expansions—but plan to be there for generations to come and to serve thousands of independent grocers across the country, as you know.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** Question?

**Ms. Stephanie Bowman:** Thank you to my honourable colleagues for their debate. My question is for the member from Algoma-Manitoulin. You may know, being a farmer—I know you're a farmer. You care about your land, I'm sure, and I'm sure you're aware that there are over 300 acres of prime farmland disappearing every day in Ontario. So while I appreciate the protections from foreign entities buying our farmland, I wonder if you could talk to the importance of maintaining farmland in general for our food security.

Just today, members of SCOFEA met with Senate members from the Czech Republic, and they talked about how in the Czech Republic, you actually cannot build on farmland for civil purposes without, again, special permission. You can put wind and you can put solar on it and keep farming. I wonder if you could comment on that.

**MPP Bill Rosenberg:** Thank you for that question. As I see up north, we're seeing solar projects coming on and the ability still for the farmers to graze sheep, and it's a shared responsibility.

When I see the production that we're getting right now, like our greenhouse systems—just this week, we were up and we were at Haven Greens. They have five acres of greenhouse producing lettuce, and what they produce on that greenhouse now compared to what you could possibly produce on 160 or 200 acres is amazing. They're producing more food on five acres of land there, and they crop every 25 days.

I think the modernization of the ability for the people to grow and expand on technology is amazing, and I think it's a shared responsibility that we take.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** Question?

**M<sup>me</sup> Dawn Gallagher Murphy:** My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness. Through you to the Minister, Madam Speaker: Municipalities do play an important role in supporting Ontario's agriculture sector, especially when it comes to resolving land use and farming practice disputes. Rural councils do need a system. That is very clear. They need it consistent and able to deliver timely decisions when it comes to issues.

Our government is proposing to bring together the Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs Appeal Tribunal and the Normal Farm Practices Protection Board into one new Agriculture and Agri-Food Protection Tribunal. My question to the minister: Please explain how this new single tribunal will streamline decisions and improve service for municipalities while ensuring farmers continue to receive fair and consistent outcomes.

**Hon. Trevor Jones:** I appreciate the question from my former seatmate the member from Newmarket-Aurora and my friend who cares about farms, who understands that municipalities are often that first line of defence.

As a former municipal councillor, many of the questions and concerns you get from the public will be about land use, land questions. "Hey, I moved from Toronto. I moved to beautiful Leamington. It's quiet country, beautiful land, but there's all this dust, all this noise and these smells at certain times of year." These are what we call normal farm practices. These are the sights, the sounds and the smells of food production as it is naturally.

To take that question to a resolution, you have to go to two different bodies—one to hear the appropriateness of what the question is for resolution. A one-window approach, one body that hears all those concerns, relieves the burden from municipalities and makes customer service excellent.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** Question?

**Mr. Peter Tabuns:** Thanks for this opportunity, and to the Minister of Agriculture: In 2023, a report was produced for the provincial government about the impact of climate change on Ontario, and agriculture was a sector that was targeted for very substantial risk—risk with the major field crops that we grow in this province, risk that could lead to livestock fatalities, risk that could lead to failed harvests and substantial reduction in agricultural income within the next 15 years.

I read the bill. What I don't understand is why this whole question of adapting to a much hotter world is not being addressed by the government. Because, in fact, you have the report; you know what has to be done. Why aren't you addressing it?

**Hon. Trevor Jones:** Thank you for the question. Thank you for your concern; I believe it's sincere.

No one bill or motion can possibly achieve everything we want to do. But taking into account the realities of a changing world, this is why we're unlocking the Great

Clay Belt and beyond: Because the Great Clay Belt is literally 11 million acres that maybe a couple of hundred years ago wouldn't be as usable for agriculture. But now, with slight changes to temperature, a longer growing season and the right technology for drainage, we can unlock the potential of what Mother Nature gave us and actually raise crops.

So drainage, good farm uses and—something I'm passionate about—controlled-environment agriculture that has 16 times the yield on far less land, acre per acre, with 90% less water—that's adaptation. That's innovation in practice, and that's something we're supporting through this bill.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** Question?

**Mr. Anthony Leardi:** Speaker, Essex county has some absolutely great, great farmers and agriculturalists. I'm thinking specifically today of the Iacobelli family, which was an enterprise originally founded by Henry Iacobelli. He started as a—I'll call him a "can engineer." Now, as the Minister of Agriculture knows, that family enterprise is a spectacular business employing approximately 400 to 500 people.

I'm going to ask the Minister of Agriculture what message he has today for the Iacobelli family and people like the Iacobelli family.

**Hon. Trevor Jones:** I have great reverence for that family and all the pioneering families that take time to invest their own money. They don't ask for anything. They just need the conditions to thrive.

They think of a beautiful tomato-processing plant in the municipality of Kingsville in the member for Essex's riding. We've been there, and we've been inspired by their vision, by their forward-thinking, by their investments. And they say, "We revere the people who grow the tomatoes," those inputs that come into their factory to be processed and made into beautiful sauces and salsas for the world. Could you imagine, Madam Speaker, if that land around that processing plant was secured by someone else—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** Thank you, Minister.

Further debate?

**Mr. John Vanthof:** It's always an honour to rise in this House and speak on behalf of the people of Timiskaming—Cochrane and as agriculture critic on behalf of the party. Actually, there's a lot of stuff in here about northern Ontario as well—not actually in the bill but in the overall initiative, and there's nothing better that I like to talk about than northern Ontario.

I'm sure, for a few of us who were at the night sitting last night, hopefully I can help—either help you sleep or help you stay awake, depending on your perspective.

I'd like to start by thanking the minister and the parliamentary assistants and the Ministry of Agriculture specifically for one thing at the start: for having this bill. It's an agricultural bill. It's not all the same; there are many issues in it, but it's an agricultural bill. So we can have a reasoned debate, because I think we all want the same thing for

Ontario's farmers, for Ontario's agribusinesses. Actually, agriculture is one of the things that our parties largely agree on—sometimes not on pace, sometimes not on approach, but we largely agree.

1720

So this is a bill that actually doesn't have a poison pill or two totally different things, right? We just debated a bill that had environmental assessments for landfills and regulations for workers, which aren't the same things, so you might be forced to vote for or against because of one or the other. This bill doesn't do that.

I hope that the other government ministries actually would take a lesson from that. It leads to better debate. And on behalf of the residents of Ontario—particularly the agriculture people, but on behalf of all the residents—it's the way the Legislature should run. So I commend you for doing that. It's a practice at the ministry, and I hope in the future that you continue that because that's the way it should be done. That's the way people in the country do things. So I'd like to thank you for that.

There's a saying that farmers are the only people who buy at retail, sell at wholesale and pay the freight both ways. That's kind of true. There are actually a few examples of that in this bill.

I'm just going to go through the schedules a little bit, just touch on stuff, and there are a few things that I'm going to take a little bit more time on. I think that we don't get to talk about agriculture a lot in the Legislature, and there are a few things in this bill that I think need to be expanded upon so that we have a true understanding of what we're facing.

Schedule 1 is the Beef Cattle Marketing Act. Basically, what this is changing—and you will have the ability to question me if you disagree. If you sell to a processor, there is a marketing fee attached, but if you process your own—you direct pack—there isn't a marketing fee. This attaches a marketing fee. In principle, not opposed at all. Talk to the Beef Farmers of Ontario. They aren't opposed at all.

The question that we need to assure is that the licence to be able to sell these cattle is not too onerous for the people. There are a lot of people now in the country who raise one or two calves a year, take them to the abattoir and maybe sell to their neighbour, or sell to their brother-in-law or sister-in-law. So we need to ensure—we're not opposed to them participating in the system—that it's not too onerous for them to comply.

This government spends a lot of time talking about red tape, and we all have our issues with red tape. But when you make things too onerous, there's a tendency of driving things underground, and we don't want to do that. Nobody wants to do that. I'm not saying that. That is not the intent of this bill. I'll make that clear. That's just something that we need to look at, and I'm pretty sure, pretty confident, that you have.

The second enables the merger of Normal Farm Practices Protection Board with the Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs Appeal Tribunal. To be quite frank, sometimes farming practices clash with people who live in the

country, especially people who come to the country and don't realize what farms do.

I love stand-up comedy. I wish I was better at it; then maybe I'd have a better job. But there's a comic—his name is Derek Edwards. He's from Timmins. He's a great comedian, okay? He's got—what do you call it?

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** A skit?

**Mr. John Vanthof:** A skit? No—anyway, yes, a joke. I don't know what the proper word is for the stand-up—a routine. You can tell I haven't had a lot of time to prepare my notes.

I'm giving credit to Mr. Edwards, because it's his, and I won't do it justice, but it describes the problem: Driving along a country highway, it's a beautiful day, there are a few cows in the pasture, and there's corn growing along the side the road. It's so idyllic, and then all of a sudden, you hit a huge wall of stink because someone is spreading liquid manure. He didn't know what it was. He couldn't figure it out, and in his panic, he rolled the windows down, which made it twice as bad.

Now, maybe that's only funny to a farmer, but I can tell you, when we had the dairy farm and when we were spreading—and I'm not sure everybody follows these practices, but we didn't spread on weekends, because we don't really want to ruin people's weekend. If there's someone down the road barbecuing, if we can not bother them, we try. But sometimes you have to spread manure. The funny thing is, whenever the school bus came down to bring the kids home, all the kids had their noses plugged.

Normal farm practices: Sometimes people complain—complain about dust, complain about smell. And you know what? Sometimes they are in the right. Sometimes something isn't being done correctly, but sometimes it's just living in the country.

So as long as this merger ensures that both the complaints and the concerns from the farmers are dealt with quickly and efficiently—that's not always the case in tribunals in Ontario. We know that from the Landlord and Tenant Board; it's not always the case. I'm hoping that this will be the case. There has been some—I'm not going to go into these cases at all. But I don't think we're opposed to this. We will hear from stakeholders yet.

The one criticism I will give of the ministry, and not of this ministry alone, of how this government operates—and I'm not trying to throw shade on the minister at all. But when you drop a bill one day and start debate the next day, it's impossible for people who haven't really known what the bill is to be talked to, be consulted on the bill. It's impossible to talk to all stakeholders. It just isn't possible. It's better if you had some advance notification.

I thank the minister for actually waiting until I was done my meeting today. We might have comments that are more detailed in the future. It's not simply the one ministry; that's how this government operates. It would be better if all bills were introduced and they had some time to get input from both sides. It would just make better legislation, just saying.

The Farmland Security Act—and this is a really interesting subject, Speaker—about foreign ownership of

farmland: I'm not opposed to looking at this issue, not opposed to legislating this issue, but we need to be very careful that there's no unintended consequences.

**1730**

The minister mentioned in his comments that permanent residents would be an exemption. Because if you go up and down the rural roads of Ontario and look at how many—for example, my heritage is Dutch—Dutch names there are on our mailboxes, many of those families, when they bought those farms, were not Canadian citizens. Many of them now are incredibly proud Canadian citizens but maybe not all, and that is still occurring. We had a Dutch family who immigrated about a year ago—maybe a little bit longer—and bought a very good dairy farm in Timiskaming-Cochrane and made it into a beautiful farm, but they weren't Canadians when they bought that farm.

I understand that the minister is responsible for making these decisions and he can delegate people to make these decisions and I understand the need to look at this, but if it's not done correctly, it is going to be a huge red tape issue. It could be, it has the capacity—I'm not saying it will be. But it's something that, once all the farmers in Ontario realize that's something where they might have to apply to the minister to sell the farm—that process better be robust. There are provisions in the act, but it better be very transparent why and why not. Again, I'm not admonishing the minister, but that has been weakened a little bit today by the budget passing, making ministers exempt from freedom of information.

Speaker, a lot of people think that farms—and there are a lot of mom-and-pop farms. I'm proud to have been a mom-and-pop farmer my whole career. But not all farms are mom-and-pop and some farms are worth \$100 million. There are a few around the London area that are worth that, right? Not everybody can just walk into a farm and buy it for a \$100 million. If the minister is going to approve or disapprove, that is actually a pretty big decision and it has to be very transparent, very transparent. It has to be.

Basically, there is search and seize. I get you have to do this, but basically what you're going to have to be searching and seizing is bank records, because I don't think you have to check under a straw bale to see who's owning the farm. That's also very, very complicated, because if a foreign entity is determined enough, they're going to find ways to try and get around it. You think, "Why is anybody going to try and find ways to get around buying it?" Because not only do the people who control the food production control its destination—and I'm going to get to this when we get to the northern Ontario part. Also, farmland, over time, is a very, very good investment, depending on when you buy it. It could be a very lucrative investment. So when there's big money involved, there are always people looking to get around it. To stop foreign control of farmland to work—and other jurisdictions do it—we have to be very judicious and careful, and the system has to be robust and transparent. The act, I think, shows that, but I'll give you an example where you might run into trouble.

I'm just going to read it from the explanatory notes. It says "designated person may apply to the minister" and "the minister may decide." They're all "may," not "shall." If I recall a couple of days ago, we were talking about the changes to regional government, and the member from Essex made a pretty big deal that the new regional chairs not "may" be appointed, but "shall" be appointed.

The way this reads, there all "mays," but who decides when it's a "may" or when it's a "shall?" I understand in legal terms, you can't—but we're not talking about nickels and dimes here. We're talking about huge investments.

Another question: Almost every time the Minister of Economic Development stands up—and more power to him—and talks about the millions—I think it's up to billions—of dollars of foreign investment he gets in this country. That's his point of pride: into this province, billions and billions and billions and billions of dollars.

But this says, "But not in farmland." I have to question if a major foreign corporation says, "Well, we want to set up factory X but we need so many thousand acres to fill that processing plant," then it has to be transparent. Then if someone comes from Holland, Germany or India and wants to buy a family farm and they can't, but processor X can buy 5,000 acres because basically—and I am for the protection of farmland from foreign corporations, 100%. But you have to square the peg. You talk all the time about foreign investment in this province—and agriculture is either number one or number two in economic activity and job creation in this province—and you're saying, "But for the base of it, there's no more foreign investment." Now, I'm not disagreeing, but please then do what you say. Don't say it's "shall" for him and "may" for her because that's something this government is very bad at.

Traditionally, Conservative governments—I'm going on a way different path than I was planning to go—true Conservatives, believe in small government and believe in making the environment kind of equal, so those who work hard, those who succeed—that's small government. But your government likes to pick winners and losers—really likes to pick winners and losers. I'll give you an example right now. Mining right now is a big winner and anybody in northern Ontario will tell you forestry right now is a big loser. The government is picking that—it's actually picking it with this bill too.

If you're serious about this, then you have to come to terms with how are we going to deal with a foreign entity that shows up with billions of dollars from a country that does not have enough food production and says, "We're going to build a processing facility in your province. It's going to create this many jobs, and we're going to need this many acres?" Then, somehow, it has to be made public how that decision is made, and I don't know how you're going to do that. I'm just putting that on the table.

1740

You're getting into a—I'm not saying a world of trouble, but you need to wrap your head around that, because land isn't cheap. Down here, in Oxford county, it's, what, \$40,000 or \$50,000 an acre?

I'll start talking about northern Ontario if I get to it today. It's much cheaper, and the investment potential is much higher. That's why there are a lot of investment funds and speculators wanting to buy that crown land in northern Ontario. That's got pros and cons too. That's something that we should discuss, and if I get to it, we will discuss it.

Anyway, ensuring that farmland is controlled by Ontarians is a noble goal. It's done in other places, but you've got to think through how you're going to do it. You've got to be able to show us and show Ontarians. The Volkswagen plant in St. Thomas ate up a lot of farmland. I'm not saying it's a bad thing—I have my opinions—but if that, instead of a battery plant, was a huge, huge processing plant for an agricultural product and it was going to be exported, I question whether the government is going to say, "No, no, no." Sorry; if you have that conviction, great, but prove it.

I think I've touched on that enough. I might come back to it another day, because I'm going to run out of time today.

Schedules 4 and 5: These ones are really near and dear to my heart, because I was a dairy farmer for 35 years. Schedules 4 and 5 are about the food quality act and the Milk Act—DFO hasn't gotten back to me, but they're in favour. These aren't bad changes.

The Milk Act is old. I have to say, when I was on the board of the Dairy Farmers of Ontario, I was on for four years. I stepped off the board to run for MPP. When I got on the board, the chairman of the Dairy Farmers of Ontario was Mr. Gord Coukell. Sadly, he's passed away, but he had a long and storied career in the dairy industry. I always remember him saying, "You have to be very, very careful when you open the Milk Act that something you do doesn't change something else that you're going to regret."

I listened to the member from Algoma-Manitoulin talk about this issue, and you could tell that he was looking at the details. I appreciated that. It's something—it's pretty in the weeds, but it's really, really important, especially now, because we're the only country left with supply management. Believe you me, we need supply management in this country.

Now, supply management is federal, but the actual mechanism is provincial. Part of that mechanism is the Milk Act. If you make if you make a wrong move in the Milk Act, you can suffer consequences.

OFA was here a few days ago—I'm trying to get her name correct. She's a new OFA director, she's a dairy producer—

**Mr. Tyler Allsopp:** Marnie Wood.

**Mr. John Vanthof:** Marnie Wood, yes. She and her family came in under the new producer program. It's a great program. My colleague from Nickel Belt was talking to her and she asked her, "How come we're losing?"—they just closed several dairies in the Sudbury area. There's lots of milk being produced there, including in Thunder Bay, hours from there. There's a really strong dairy community; they just closed their dairy. She asked, "Why is this happening?"

What a lot of people don't know—and actually some dairy farmers don't know this: Dairy farmers pay to transport their milk from their farm to the processing plant. There's no rule to how far that processing plant is away. All the milk in Ontario—the cow milk; it's different for goats and different for water buffaloes. But for cows, the Dairy Farmers of Ontario buys all the milk, and it's allocated to all the plants across the province. Right now, there's milk going from Thunder Bay to Laverlochère, Quebec. And that is—yes, sorry for all my hand waving, Peggy—10, 12, 14, 15 hours and sometimes much longer because that's on Highway 11. Highway 11 is closed a bit. It costs a lot of money to ship that milk.

The way our system is set up, the income is pooled for your milk production, depending on what your components are—I'm getting way in the weeds, but if you've got more butterfat in your milk, you get paid more. But your cost of transportation is also pooled. It costs a lot of money to bring milk from Thunder Bay to Laverlochère. It costs a pile. If you have a really big dairy farm—or a little dairy farm—in Ottawa, it's not very far to a plant, but the people in Thunder Bay, the people in Ottawa or the people in Oxford County—actually all the people, all the dairy farms from Manitoba east, all pay the same per 100 litres to move their milk. It's pooled. We pool our income, but we also pool our costs.

That's, indirectly, from supply management because if we didn't have supply management—what we used to have before supply management, what they have in the States is you have a separate contract with each processor. So if the processor closes, you have to find another processor, but your neighbour who goes to another processor, he's not helping you out.

Supply management has a cost-of-production formula. They take—not exact numbers, but there's, let's say, 500 farms. They track how much it costs to produce their milk. They really track it, and they take out the top 15% and the bottom 30%—something like that. They get an average price of what it costs an efficient farm to produce milk. That's kind of how the price is set for what a dairy farmer gets. That's CPI in there too, but that's the basics.

In the States, it doesn't go like that. Milk is like the stock market. When the price of milk goes up, what do farmers do? They milk more cows because you make money. When the price of milk goes down and it plummets—like, right now, it's plummeting in the United States—what do you do when you need to pay your bills? You milk even more cows, and there's even more milk. And then every once in a while, the government has to step in and buy all the cows. It's a crazy system.

1750

And what the States would like to do—and President Trump aside, when milk is cheap in the States and they see the stable prices in Canada, oh, man, they would love to ship milk to Canada, and they would love to break our industry. Not on purpose, but just—right?

Now, the parliamentary assistant said how important dairy farming is in Ontario. It is. So is chicken farming, eggs. They're all supply management. And there are times

when those products are a bit more expensive here—not always. But they're ours. They're ours.

Remember when there was a big shortage of eggs in the States? You know where there wasn't a shortage? Here. Supply management is local food before local food was cool. And I don't see anything in here that is going to jeopardize that.

Dairy Farmers of Ontario and Dairy Farmers of Canada are very picky about this stuff, and I think the government is working with them. I certainly assume so. They haven't called me to say they haven't been. But just make sure, because the Americans—it used to be New Zealand. Skim milk powder is now going to be designated as a product, because other countries have a big surplus of skim milk powder, as we do sometimes, and they would love to dump it here.

You know the biggest risk? It's not fluid milk. Fluid milk isn't the biggest danger for supply management. What the biggest danger would be, in my mind: a company like Walmart, Costco—if they could find a way to bring American butter into here by the truckload. Because then our farmers would be producing milk, and all of a sudden they'd lose their butter market. The system would crash.

You hear the President talking about our tariffs. We have tariffs on butter. There is a certain amount that you can ship into this country tariff-free. The Americans never fill it. It's not worth their while. But if they dropped the tariffs on butter and Walmart started dumping butter in here—who's the other guy we always pick on? Oh, Galen Weston. He could do the same thing, right? That would destroy the system, and it wouldn't take long. It really wouldn't.

It's a great system. It's resilient, but it needs to be respected. It's a political system too. I give credit where credit is due: All the parties in this House have all expressed very strong support for supply management. Most of the parties federally do. There's one very opposed to supply management, and there are some people in this House who are very opposed. But there is a reason why we have it and why we need it.

Oh, man, time flies. I hope you're having fun.

**Mr. John Fraser:** That's what you think.

**Mr. John Vanthof:** Thank you for that, John. Even the Liberals support supply management.

**Mr. John Fraser:** That's because you've been propping me up for—

**Mr. John Vanthof:** Yes, yes, yes.

So there was a time there was a minority government. When I first got elected, there was a minority government here. And believe it or not, we cut a deal with the Liberals for a few things to keep them in power for two years. Then they won two successive majorities, and you know who they beat? You guys. So now, technically, the Liberals are propping you guys up.

We were the third party. You keep saying that we propped up the Liberals for 15 years. They had two successive majorities. We were the third party. It's like the Liberals are propping you up; it makes no sense at all, guys.

I'm not discounting—you guys are good at winning elections. That will stop. That will stop. Keep buying planes, and it's going to stop.

Actually, what I can't figure out is, why 12 seats? Why didn't you get one big enough for the whole cabinet so you could actually tour the country?

**Mr. Peter Tabuns:** You'd need an Airbus, John.

**Mr. John Vanthof:** Yes. We don't want to go to Airbus.

I'm going to wrap up, but I have to get my plane dig in, and I'm going to really date myself. If there's one thing you learn from this speech, and if there's one thing you need to do tonight if you don't know this: One of the news reports said that the Premier didn't buy the plane for himself; he bought the plane, like, to help out with emergencies, to bring firefighters to northern fires, despite the fact that that plane can land almost nowhere in northern Ontario.

What came to my mind: I haven't heard anything that ridiculous since the turkey drop in WKRP in Cincinnati. You have to look that up. If your eyes went blank, go on Google and look up WKRP in Cincinnati. It's the five funniest minutes in 1980s sitcom television ever—ever. And it makes as much sense as using a private jet to drop off forest firefighters in northern Ontario. It makes as much sense. So please, everybody: Tonight, look up turkey drop, WKRP in Cincinnati—

**Mr. John Fraser:** The jet was a turkey. It never flew.

**Mr. John Vanthof:** Neither did your Ornge helicopter, my friend.

**Mr. John Fraser:** No, they flew. It was the motorcycle they bought.

**Mr. John Vanthof:** Okay.

Anyway, I am way, way off topic. Where was I?

Okay, schedule 8 is Protecting Farmers from Non-Payment Act. It's important that that legislation is strong. I'll give you an example: For farmers, many of us have our own on-farm storage for grain, but not everybody. So you bring your grain to an elevator by wagon load or by transport load, 40 tonnes at a time. You dump the grain in the elevator, and you get a ticket. That's all you get: a ticket and a promise that you can market that grain—or that you can have grain back. So it's really, really important that that elevator is financially solid and that it's guaranteed, so that if something goes wrong—and we live in a very volatile world—that ticket is worth something. That, in a short, short example, is this part in this act.

Same with cattle: When a load of cattle goes on a truck and goes to either a processor or an auction mart, you are no longer in possession of those cattle. And right now, a load of cattle is huge dollars. Beef, as we all know, has never been as expensive as right now. And it's not done, right? So it's really important that people, the buyers and sellers of those commodities, are financially solid, and that is what this act is about.

I think I'm done.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** I sure do hate to interrupt the member. But seeing the time on the clock, it is now time for private members' public business.

*Second reading debate deemed adjourned.*

## PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

### FAIR AND FREE ELECTIONS ACT, 2026

#### LOI DE 2026 POUR DES ÉLECTIONS LIBRES ET HONNÊTES

Mr. Fraser moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 99, An Act to amend the Election Act and the Election Finances Act with respect to electoral matters /  
Projet de loi 99, Loi modifiant la Loi électorale et la Loi sur le financement des élections à l'égard de questions électorales.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** Pursuant to standing order 100, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

**1800**

**Mr. John Fraser:** It's been a long week, and it's a Thursday night. I want to let everyone who's here who stayed—my colleagues, the Clerk, the table; it's been a long week: Thank you for being here.

Bill 99 is a really simple bill. The idea behind the bill—the changes in it are changes recommended by the Chief Electoral Officer. Really, what it's doing is making sure that people are able to vote, to give the people who run our elections the time to run a fair vote where people have access to vote—not a partisan thing.

Because once we change from fixed election dates to calling an election any time, it creates pressure: pressure on the Chief Electoral Officer, pressure in 124 ridings—each of which is our riding, right? So we know that they have to find dozens of places to vote at. We know that they have to find a returning office. We know that they have to hire sometimes hundreds of people in a short period of time.

And 28 days? It's not enough. It won't work. That's not good for anybody who wants to vote. And in the last two elections, our voter turnout has been less than 50%—45% and 44%, which is a good 10% to 12% to 15% lower than what it has traditionally been. So if we don't make a change and give the people who run our elections the time to do it, it's not going to be good. It's not going to help turnout. It's not going to help them organize things.

So the first recommendation that's in this in this bill is to extend the writ period from 36 to 42 days. Currently in Ontario, it's 29, 28 days. That was when we had fixed election dates.

If you want to take a look at what it is in other jurisdictions in Canada: The Canadian federal election is between 37 and 51 days. They actually do have a fixed election date, but as we can see, that doesn't really matter these days—because of minority governments, but also because governments have chosen to ignore those fixed election dates and they have the ability and the power to call an election.

Now in Ontario, it's been indicated by the government, which is great. I'm glad that we've made a change where

it's like, "It's going to be this way now." So we need to make those changes.

As I said, in Canada it's 37 to 51 days. In Quebec, it's 33 to 39 days. In British Columbia, they have a fixed date, and it's still 28 days. But if they have an election that's outside a fixed date, it's between 32 and 38.

So this is a recommendation from the Chief Electoral Officer, okay? He knows what it takes to run an election.

If you don't have enough time, you don't get places to vote. You don't get the time to get information out to people about where they need to vote. The mail only moves so fast. You don't have as much time for people to register to vote. You don't have as much time to hire people. Before we went to fixed election dates, we were at 36 to 42. Actually, I think we could go over that. We could go higher at that point.

So I think that it's a change that's going to help the people that we all rely on to make sure that people can get out to the polls and vote. Because we all want everybody who has the right to vote in this province to have the ability to vote, have the information that they need, and get access to the polls either on election day or advance polls.

That's the other piece that I want to mention. In a 28-day writ, where you don't have as much lead time as you need to organize things, organizing advance polls—which now is sometimes between 10% and 15% of the overall vote in everybody's riding—is harder to do, to find the locations, to find the places. Those are the challenges that the Chief Electoral Officer and the returning officers have. Their job is to make sure people can vote, and that's what the bill is about.

The second piece is it's just not a really exciting bill, because it's—I want to say it's inside baseball, but it's about returning officers. We know we have to appoint 124 returning officers in the province. We all rely on them; the voters rely on them. We need to have capable people there to hire hundreds of people, find dozens of locations, find a returning office that's central, local and accessible.

Right now, returning officers are an order in council. I know on the other side, there are a few ministers here, maybe a few members, who know the whole process for orders in council and appointments. The pipe for appointing people is constricted, and it's hard for the electoral officer to get those people in place because the OIC process is excessive and bureaucratic.

Now in Quebec, the Chief Electoral Officer shall appoint a returning officer for each electoral district; that's in their legislation. Federally, the Chief Electoral Officer shall appoint a returning officer for each electoral district. I think those are reasonable things to do. We entrust the Chief Electoral Officer to be non-partisan and to be—

*Interruption.*

**Mr. John Fraser:** Leave it to the member for Timiskaming to interrupt my private member's debate—on every session. I wonder who is calling.

It sounds like something that's housekeeping. The problem is it hasn't been treated like housekeeping, and it's been that way, arguably, forever. What the Chief Electoral Officer is saying—not to me, but in his report—is,

"Can you please do this, so I can hire the people I need to get the things done I need to get done, so we can have a fair election? And could you make the election period just a bit longer, because you can't tell me a week before, because I can't do all those things and make sure there's a fair and free election." Just getting stuff in the mail—we all know about the challenges with people finding out where they vote, whether they are registered. We depend on the mail.

The last piece has to do with misinformation and disinformation and expand the authority online to do it. What this misinformation piece is about is people being told the wrong place to vote, or the wrong date to vote. We know this is nothing new. This is something that, before the digital age, happened with frequency, manually. You could just do it by telling people they had to go somewhere else. Then we had robocalls. Everybody remember robocalls? There is a strategy of voter suppression that's a big risk.

We want more people to vote. We want a healthy democracy. What we're asking for here: The Chief Electoral Officer recommends amending the Election Finances Act to establish a duty of care for platforms to monitor and remove harmful or non-compliant content within 12 hours of notice and authorize the Chief Electoral Officer to require individuals or organizations to remove or cease transmitting false or misleading content about the administration of the electoral process—it's pretty straight up, it's not contentious—and introduce administrative penalties for non-compliance.

There's also a requirement that says if there's some election advertising and it's using AI, it should be disclosed. We're just at the beginning of this AI thing, and it's going so fast. Elections are, hopefully, about the truth, right? You're trying to make sure that what you see that's in front of you is true. That's what we're trying to get to.

**1810**

I don't want to belabour this because it is Thursday night and I actually took more time than I thought I would.

Because we stopped fixed election dates, we need to extend the writ. We have to do that.

We need to help the Chief Electoral Officer by allowing him to appoint the returning officers in the 124 ridings across this province so they can be ready.

The last thing is, we need to ensure that the Chief Electoral Officer can deal with misinformation about the voting process and the administration of the vote and that he has more tools and powers to do that, and that we address the issue of AI in our elections by making sure it needs to be declared in advertisements.

I didn't make these up. I didn't think them up. They're not partisan; they're about making sure our elections are free and fair. The Chief Electoral Officer has a lot of other recommendations, but I think these three things, we need to move on with.

I would ask all members of this Legislature to support this. I know what happens with private members' bills sometimes. They don't always see the light of day. If that's how you feel, just do it. It doesn't have to have my name

on it; it's already got the Chief Electoral Officer's name on it.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** Further debate?

**MPP Monica Ciriello:** I am pleased to rise today to debate the private member's bill brought forward by MPP Fraser, the Fair and Free Elections Act, 2026.

The premise of this proposed legislation would make several changes to Ontario's electoral framework. It would establish the Chief Electoral Officer as responsible for appointing returning officers, allow polling day to be selected from a range of dates rather than a fixed timeline and amend the Election Finances Act to require political advertisements generated in whole, or in part, through artificial intelligence to include a specified disclosure.

Madam Speaker, at the onset I want to be clear: Our government has taken a careful, comprehensive and principled approach to modernizing Ontario's election laws. The amendments we have already introduced reflect the recommendations of the Chief Electoral Officer following the 2022 provincial election. They are thoughtful, they are measured and they are designed with one goal in mind: to protect the integrity of Ontario's elections while ensuring our system remains responsive to changing circumstances and emerging threats.

Through the Plan to Protect Ontario Act, 2025, our government took decisive action to modernize Ontario's electoral framework. Notably, we removed American-style fixed election dates and restored the traditional parliamentary approach that served this province well for nearly 150 years. Under our approach, elections continue to be called by the Lieutenant Governor on the advice of the Premier, consistent with Ontario's long-standing constitutional conventions and the principles of responsible government.

This is not a step backward; it is a reaffirmation of the system that underpins our democracy. It strengthens democratic accountability by ensuring that a government must always maintain the confidence of this House. It reinforces public trust by preserving the constitutional rules that have guided Ontario for generations. It ensures flexibility in times when leadership and responsiveness are most required.

Elections Ontario has demonstrated time and time again that it is fully capable of administering elections effectively under this framework. Whether elections are held on fixed dates or not, Ontario's long-standing 29-day minimum writ period continues to provide consistency and predictability for voters, candidates and administrators alike.

The recent provincial election in February 2025 underscored this point. Elections Ontario delivered a secure, accessible and well-administered election and voter turnout increased compared to 2022. This is not the sign of a system in need of overhaul; it is a sign of a system that is working.

Madam Speaker, if members opposite are suggesting that Ontario's elections are not fair and are not free, they must also contend with the role of Elections Ontario itself.

Elections Ontario exists to administer provincial elections and by-elections in a manner that is accessible, secure and transparent. It operates independently of government and is accountable to this Legislature, not to any political party.

At the same time, the Lieutenant Governor plays a critical constitutional role: She ensures there is a Premier who commands the confidence of this House, appoints members of cabinet, summons and dissolves the Legislature, delivers the speech from the throne and grants royal assent to legislation. These are not symbolic functions; they are foundational to our system of responsible government, and they are carried out in a strictly non-partisan manner, safeguarding the democratic will of all of Ontario. There is no ambiguity in these roles. There is no gap in authority, and there is no compelling evidence that the proposed changes, such as shifting the appointment of returning officers, are necessary to strengthen our system.

The bill also proposes measures related to false or misleading information in elections. Let me be clear: Ontario already has strong safeguards in place. The Election Act includes offences for knowingly making false statements or providing false information in election-related filings. These provisions exist to protect the integrity of the electoral process and to hold bad actors accountable.

Our government has gone one step further: We have introduced stronger enforcement tools, including administrative monetary penalties, to ensure compliance with the Election Finances Act. These penalties apply to those who fail to follow the rules, whether by withholding required information or violating political advertising requirements. This is real accountability, this is meaningful enforcement, and this is how we protect the integrity of our elections.

Madam Speaker, I also want to address the proposal related to artificial intelligence in political advertising. This is an important and evolving issue, and it deserves serious consideration. But it is also an opportunity to highlight the broader work that our government is doing to position Ontario as a leader in responsible and trustworthy AI. While others approach this space with uncertainty, our government is taking a proactive and balanced approach, embracing innovation while putting clear guardrails in place.

Through Ontario's trustworthy AI framework, we are ensuring that transparency, accountability and public trust are at the centre of how AI is used across this province. This means no AI in secret, no unchecked systems and clear expectations for how technology is deployed in the public sector. We have reinforced this through the Enhancing Digital Security and Trust Act, which establishes strong standards for the responsible use of digital technologies, including artificial intelligence.

Since 2024, every ministry and provincial agency has been required to assess and manage AI-related risks and to be transparent about how these tools are being used. In simple terms, we are building an approach to AI that serves people, not the other way around. We will continue

to monitor developments in this space closely to ensure that Ontario remains both innovative and secure.

At its core, this debate is about more than any one bill; it is about the strength of our democracy. A strong democracy is not defined by constant change; it is defined by stability, accountability and public confidence. It is built on institutions that people trust—independent officers of the Legislature, impartial election administrators and constitutional conventions that have stood the test of time. It depends on clear rules that are consistently applied. It depends on transparency that allows people to see how, in fact, decisions are made. It depends on accountability, so that those in positions of power are always answerable to the people that they serve.

#### 1820

In Ontario, we are fortunate to have a system that reflects all of these principles. We have an independent Elections Ontario that administers elections with integrity. We have a Legislature that holds government to account. We have a judiciary that is independent, impartial and upholds the rule of law. And we have engaged citizens who participate in the democratic process, whether by voting, volunteering or putting their names forward to serve in public office.

Madam Speaker, protecting democracy also means remaining vigilant. It means recognizing that threats to democracy can evolve, whether through misinformation, foreign interference or emerging technologies. And it means responding in a way that is thoughtful, measured, and grounded in evidence—not reactionary and not performative. That is the approach our government is taking.

We are strengthening enforcement where it is needed most. We are modernizing systems where it makes sense. And we are preserving the core elements of our democratic framework that have served Ontario so well for generations.

Madam Speaker, people across this province expect their government to protect democratic rights, ensure fair and free elections and defend the integrity of our institutions. They expect a system that is accessible, transparent and accountable. And they expect leadership that is focused on strengthening—not undermining—the foundations of our democracy.

Our government will continue to work constructively with the Chief Electoral Officer and Elections Ontario to uphold all of these principles. We'll continue to reduce unnecessary red tape while maintaining strong safeguards. And we will continue to listen to Ontarians and take meaningful action to ensure our democratic institutions remain strong, today and for generations to come.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** Further debate?

**Mr. Peter Tabuns:** First of all, I should thank the leader of the third party for introducing this bill, because I think debate about democracy is a very timely thing in this Legislature.

We are currently led by a Premier who, before the election of Donald Trump, a convicted felon, made it clear that he supported the election of a convicted felon to the head

of the most powerful government on earth. This is a Premier who recently, at a scrum, said that he supported America's attack on Iran—and you are all familiar with the fallout of that attack. Those are not the musings of someone who's committed to a free, open and democratic society.

This is a Premier who brought forward a bill essentially saying that regional governments should have as their controller an appointed person who in the end will be answerable to the Premier.

This is a Premier who thinks that having elected trustees with power is a bad idea and in fact has supported taking over a number of school boards in this province.

This is a Premier who has followed the example of Donald Trump by attacking judges—notwithstanding the comments of the member from Hamilton Mountain, who I'm sure was trying to accurately relay things. This is a Premier who attacked judges who were carrying out their duty to administer the law as it was written.

This is a Premier who increasingly seems to be driven by donations, in terms of making decisions—and the Skills Development Fund and the greenbelt are examples of those things.

What we have in Ontario is a culture increasingly Trumpian in its approach to democracy. So when we have an opportunity to debate democracy, an opportunity to debate the things that need to be in place, I think people should welcome that.

Notwithstanding the comments from the member from the government, I would say the Chief Electoral Officer probably made a very good recommendation when they said that there needed to be more control and openness about the use of artificial intelligence in producing elections material.

If I have to choose between the Premier of this province, who supports an anti-democratic demagogue in the United States, and our Chief Electoral Officer, who is a person that I think all of us have found to be straightforward and honest in his commitment to democracy, I don't think there's any real choice.

The question of supporting the recommendation of the Chief Electoral Officer about prohibiting the sharing of certain false or misleading content about an election—I think that the Chief Electoral Officer's recommendation as incorporated in this bill should be recognized, as opposed to the ideas of the Premier, who engaged in personal attacks against a member who has had a long and well-respected history in media.

In fact, the Premier has attacked journalists in this building in the past when, in fact, even when we disagree with them, if you want to have a free and open society, you have to make sure that journalists have the freedom and ability to comment to the best of their ability on what's going on. If you undermine that, let me tell you, the road you go down is not a happy one—not a happy one at all.

Speaker, there's a lot that's good in this bill, and I've mentioned the key points. I wish the member had gone further and put a cap on donations or recommended a cap on donations because, again, looking at the American

experience, the more that power is ceded to those who are extraordinarily wealthy, the less power there is for the population as a whole. That is a substantial problem.

Not that the member could have mentioned freedom of information when he wrote this bill because it doesn't relate directly to the electoral laws, but as an example of the anti-democratic animus of this Premier, the fact that he has taken the steps to not only drop a bomb on freedom of information but to make the fallout retroactive over decades so that whatever he is hiding in his cellphone records is way outside the scope of the people of Ontario is a huge red flag, one that everyone in this province should be worried about because it indicates an authoritarian impulse, an anti-democratic impulse that is unprecedented—well, maybe Mitch Hepburn in the 1940s, maybe that's a comparable person.

With that, Speaker, I've had an opportunity to comment. I thank all those for the opportunity to speak.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** Further debate?

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** I am pleased to rise today in support of the Fair and Free Elections Act.

I want to begin by thanking my colleague the MPP for Ottawa South for bringing forward this legislation that speaks to something fundamental: the integrity of our democratic process.

Democracy, which seems to be put to the test more than ever right now, only works when people trust it. That trust is not automatic. It has to be built, protected, continuously renewed, nurtured—whatever you want to say, but just kept strong.

The Fair and Free Elections Act does exactly that. It modernizes the framework that governs how elections are run in this province, and it does so in ways that are practical, evidence-based and long overdue.

Let's talk a little bit about some of the key changes in the bill. First, extending the writ period: Currently, Elections Ontario operates under a minimum writ period of 28 days. As the 2025 post-event election report makes clear, that window is simply not sufficient. Anyone who took part in that snap frostbite election of February 2025 knows this, right?

**Ms. Stephanie Bowman:** Brutal.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** Yes, brutal.

It's not sufficient. Hiring and training staff, finalizing voting locations, standing up local election offices across 124 electoral districts—these aren't small tasks. It's not just like that. When timelines are compressed, operations are strained, and at the end of the day, the voter bears the consequence.

This bill proposes extending that writ period to a range of 36 to 42 days—not radical. British Columbia already operates with a similar framework. Quebec has a writ period of 33 to 39 days. Canada's federal elections require a minimum of 37 days. Ontario is behind and this bill brings us in line with the rest of the country.

**1830**

More time—it's not hard to figure out—means better-run elections. Better-run elections mean more Ontarians can meaningfully participate.

Also, allowing the Chief Electoral Officer to appoint returning officers—another element here. Speaker, Ontario has the only electoral management body in Canada where returning officers are not appointed by the Chief Electoral Officer. Every other jurisdiction—federal, Quebec, British Columbia—grants that authority directly to the Chief Electoral Officer.

The current order-in-council process requires cabinet approval and imposes a 10-year term. It's slow, it's rigid and it limits Elections Ontario's ability to respond to operational needs. This change would reduce bureaucratic red tape. Isn't this what this government is all about, getting rid of that red tape? Did I wake you up? And to give Elections Ontario the flexibility it needs to recruit and retain qualified people based on merit and operational fit—that is simply good governance.

Third and perhaps most urgently are the provisions addressing misinformation and digital transparency. During the 2025 general election, Elections Ontario confirmed more than 20 cases of election-related misinformation. Not one takedown request was honoured—not one—I heard the member from Hamilton Mountain talking about transparency and accountability. It's so interesting to hear that coming out of their mouths.

This bill would change that. It would require clear labelling of AI-generated political content, prohibit the circulation of false or misleading information about elections and give the Chief Electoral Officer real enforcement tools, including fines of up to \$10,000 for individuals and \$100,000 for companies who fail to act within 12 hours of notice.

These aren't abstract concerns. They are real and they are getting worse. Voters who receive false information about polling locations, about eligibility, about results, are being disenfranchised. So this bill says that that is unacceptable and it backs that up with consequences.

Speaker, free and fair elections are the foundation of everything we do here in this House, and this bill strengthens that foundation. I am proud to support it, and I urge all members to do the same.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** Further debate?

**Mr. Ted Hsu:** I want to concentrate on Bill 99's addition to the Election Finances Act, subsection 37.8.1(c). I'll just read it out: "No person or organization shall knowingly transmit or publish any false or misleading content about ... the location of any polling place;..."

The closest thing we have right now is something in the Elections Act which says if you prevent somebody from voting—you impede them or you interfere with how they vote—then you are guilty of an offence. But to convict, you have to prove that some voter's vote was impeded or interfered with.

The new law makes it illegal simply to knowingly put out wrong information about where to vote, full stop. It's

a stronger law. These days, with the hyper-online world, things posted online can be amplified. It's super important to do that.

I just want to quickly explain with a historical example why this is so important. And that is the nationwide robocall incident in the federal election of 2011, which I was part of.

On election day in 2011, thousands of voters in Guelph received automated phone calls from a voice claiming to be from Elections Canada. The message said there was a projected increase in turnout and then it told them that their polling location had been moved; 7,676 calls directed voters to incorrect or non-existent polling stations, often on the other side of town. This actually happened and it prevented some of them from voting.

It got investigated and they found that somebody with the alias of Pierre Poutine—you might remember Pierre Poutine; they used a burner phone. They paid RackNine, this Edmonton contractor, via PayPal using prepaid credit cards.

Elections Canada eventually traced the IP address used to access the RackNine account to the campaign office of the Conservative candidate in Guelph. Misleading calls were reported in at least 14 to 18 ridings. Elections Canada eventually investigated complaints in 56 ridings, including my riding of Kingston and the Islands, which was flagged by Elections Canada. In 2013, a federal court ruled that fraud had occurred and that the most likely source of the phone numbers used was the Conservative Party's CIMS database. That example shows why we must have election integrity. With technology today, all of what happened before could be amplified.

In 2011, there was something passed here in response to that: the Ensuring Integrity in Ontario Elections Act. It was passed unanimously in this chamber. I ask all members to do that again and to all vote yes on Bill 99.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** Further debate?

**Mr. Rob Cerjanec:** I'm pleased to rise today to speak to Bill 99. This bill is about modernizing our elections because we always need to modernize our elections to ensure that we're being responsive to present-day realities that are taking place. It cracks down on misinformation, brings transparency to AI in political advertising and strengthens how elections are run so that our election officials can run it effectively.

These are good, common-sense changes. They're recommended by Elections Ontario, the non-partisan body that runs our elections. They help make sure that the public—the people—can trust what they see and trust the system when they cast the ballot. That's why I support this bill.

We look all around the world and there are attacks on elections. There are attacks on democracy. The people of Hungary voted overwhelmingly for change because they were tired of a government that was openly corrupt and tried to skew its system away from democracy. In the United States, we're seeing it with state legislators drawing lines on a map like a child with a crayon to benefit one

party or another. And other countries are trying to influence or interfere with elections in the Western world. There's a threat to our democracy, and it's up to us in this chamber to protect it.

There's something to be said about our system here and how it works when we give our consent on how we're governed—the idea of peace, order and good government in our country. But let's think back to what happened last year. The Premier called a snap election to take advantage of the trade situation with the United States and, rightfully so, the people's fears with Donald Trump. But calling a snap election like that was not the right thing to do. And we wonder why the public doesn't trust politicians. This is a provincial government that thinks snap elections and maximum chaos is good for democracy—it's not.

I just heard the government side talk about our non-partisan Chief Electoral Officer. Well, it's the same person who's recommended these changes that are in this bill. It doesn't seem like the government is interested in strengthening our democracy or making it work better.

One of the more important parts of this legislation is how it begins to address artificial intelligence. AI is already shaping our elections, our economy and our daily lives. This bill, I think, takes an important step forward in requiring transparency when AI is used in political campaigns. But it also exposes a bigger problem: The provincial government needs to lead on AI and not react to it. They had an opportunity last year to pass a bill that would create a real strategy that brings in everybody, across the province, in order to create one that is responsive to our needs as a society and to government itself. The government voted it down—it chose not to.

Now, we can't talk about strengthening elections without talking about strengthening democracy because while we hear the government talk a good game on it, when we look in Durham region, voters are no longer going to be able to directly elect a regional chair. That decision is out of their hands and now placed with the province, going back against what the voters in Durham region voted for in 2010 to directly elect their chair.

But it doesn't stop there. Whether it's school boards, conservation authorities, municipalities, the provincial government is showing it doesn't care about local decision-making or democracy. Communities in Durham, Niagara and Waterloo region are telling us the same thing: They want a voice in the decisions within their own local democracy. So that's the problem that, I think, we see here right now in this province.

Bill 99 reflects the advice of non-partisan experts. It takes real steps to strengthen our elections and respond to modern challenges. The bill is about making our province better and democracy stronger. That's how you protect Ontario. And time and time again, we're seeing with this government that they're not interested in doing just that.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** Further debate? Further debate? Further debate?

I return to the member, who has two minutes for his reply.

**Mr. John Fraser:** I'd like to thank the members from Hamilton Mountain, Toronto–Danforth, Toronto–St. Paul's, Ajax and Kingston and the Islands for their remarks.

I'd also like to thank Gabby in my office. She helped to write this bill—and for her patience. I'm not always very—well, you all know me. And Geneva and Veronika, because I rely on all three of them to have infinite patience.

I think we know which way this is going to go. I'm disappointed to hear what I heard from the government. These changes are really simple, very clear. I don't think we're undermining democracy. I don't think—going back to the writ—the way the writ was when you could call a snap election is undermining democracy. It's not. It is really disappointing.

But if anything happens, what I hope is that when members go away, they'll think about this. Because if you are one of those 20 people where misinformation went out and Google wouldn't pull it down, and the Chief Electoral Officer had no power, you're not going to be happy. It's not going to be fair to you or your constituents, all of us. So I'd like you to think about those things. These things do not—they help elections run smoother.

I appreciate the remarks from the member of Toronto–Danforth. I didn't put donations in it just because I thought this had a reasonable prospect of happening. I didn't want to go where it hurts. I thought this is a good thing to do.

But I do take what you said about FOIs—and I really couldn't talk about it. Since I've heard what I've heard, it's like—I thought about this, this afternoon, and no government that's under a criminal investigation should be allowed to destroy documents, but that's what happened here today. The government voted to do that. I can smell the shredders right now.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

Mr. Fraser has moved second reading of Bill 99, An Act to amend the Election Act and the Election Finances Act with respect to electoral matters.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

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

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

In my opinion, the nays have it.

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

*Second reading vote deferred.*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):** All matters relating to private members' public business having been completed, this House stands adjourned until Monday, May 4, 2026, at 9 a.m.

*The House adjourned at 1843.*

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO**  
**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO**

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenante-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Edith Dumont, OOnt  
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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	
<b>Bethlenfalvy, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (PC)</b>	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	
<b>Bresee, Ric (PC)</b>	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	
<b>Calandra, Hon. / L'hon. Paul (PC)</b>	Markham—Stouffville	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Cerjanec, Rob (LIB)	Ajax	
<b>Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Raymond Sung Joon (PC)</b>	Scarborough North / Scarborough-Nord	Minister for Seniors and Accessibility / Ministre des Services aux aînés et de l'Accessibilité
<b>Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Stan (PC)</b>	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	
<b>Crawford, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)</b>	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	
<b>Downey, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)</b>	Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte	Attorney General / Procureur général
<b>Dunlop, Hon. / L'hon. Jill (PC)</b>	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	
<b>Fedeli, Hon. / L'hon. Victor (PC)</b>	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

<b>Member and Party / Député(e) et parti</b>	<b>Constituency / Circonscription</b>	<b>Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités</b>
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Waterloo	
Firin, Mohamed (PC)	York South—Weston / York-Sud— Weston	
<b>Flack, Hon. / L'hon. Rob (PC)</b>	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
<b>Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)</b>	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
<b>French, Jennifer K. (NDP)</b>	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	
<b>Hamid, Hon. / L'hon. Zee (PC)</b>	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	
<b>Harris, Hon. / L'hon. Mike (PC)</b>	Kitchener—Conestoga	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
<b>Hazell, Andrea (LIB)</b>	Scarborough—Guildwood	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
<b>Holland, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin (PC)</b>	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	
<b>Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC)</b>	Dufferin—Caledon	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health / Ministre de la Santé
<b>Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Trevor (PC)</b>	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	
<b>Kerzner, Hon. / L'hon. Michael S. (PC)</b>	York Centre / York-Centre	Solicitor General / Solliciteur général
<b>Khanjin, Hon. / L'hon. Andrea (PC)</b>	Barrie—Innisfil	Minister of Red Tape Reduction / Ministre de la Réduction des formalités administratives
<b>Kusendova-Bashta, Hon. / L'hon. Natalia (PC)</b>	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
<b>Lecce, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)</b>	King—Vaughan	Minister of Energy and Mines / Ministre de l'Énergie et des Mines
Lennox, Robin (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	
<b>Lumsden, Hon. / L'hon. Neil (PC)</b>	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
<b>McCarthy, Hon. / L'hon. Todd J. (PC)</b>	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	
<b>McGregor, Hon. / L'hon. Graham (PC)</b>	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	

<b>Member and Party / Député(e) et parti</b>	<b>Constituency / Circonscription</b>	<b>Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités</b>
<b>Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)</b>	York—Simcoe	President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones
<b>Oosterhoff, Hon. / L'hon. Sam (PC)</b>	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	Associate Minister of Energy-Intensive Industries / Ministre associé des Industries à forte consommation d'énergie
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	
<b>Parsa, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (PC)</b>	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
<b>Piccini, Hon. / L'hon. David (PC)</b>	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	
<b>Pirie, Hon. / L'hon. George (PC)</b>	Timmins	Minister of Northern Economic Development and Growth / Ministre du Développement et de la croissance économique du Nord
<b>Quinn, Hon. / L'hon. Nolan (PC)</b>	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	
<b>Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)</b>	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	
<b>Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)</b>	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	
<b>Skelly, Hon. / L'hon. Donna (PC)</b>	Flamborough—Glanbrook	Speaker / Présidente de l'Assemblée législative
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, David (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	
<b>Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Graydon (PC)</b>	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
<b>Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)</b>	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
<b>Tangri, Hon. / L'hon. Nina (PC)</b>	Mississauga—Streetsville	Associate Minister of Small Business / Ministre associée des Petites Entreprises
<b>Thanigasalam, Hon. / L'hon. Vijay (PC)</b>	Scarborough—Rouge Park	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associé délégué à la Santé mentale et à la Lutte contre les dépendances
<b>Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)</b>	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Rural Affairs / Ministre des Affaires rurales

<b>Member and Party / Député(e) et parti</b>	<b>Constituency / Circonscription</b>	<b>Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités</b>
<b>Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)</b>	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Associate Attorney General / Procureur général associé
<b>Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)</b>	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	
<b>Williams, Hon. / L'hon. Charmaine A. (PC)</b>	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	