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Jeudi
7 mai 2026

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Thursday 7 May 2026

Jeudi 7 mai 2026

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers / Prières.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

HST RELIEF IMPLEMENTATION
ACT (RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY
REBATES), 2026

LOI DE 2026 SUR LA MISE EN OEUVRE
DE L'ALLÈGEMENT DE LA TVH (REMISES
RELATIVES AUX BIENS RÉSIDENTIELS)

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 6, 2026, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 114, An Act to amend the Retail Sales Tax Act to enable credits and payments to be made respecting certain tax paid or payable in respect of residential property and to provide for other related matters / *Projet de loi 114, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la taxe de vente au détail pour permettre l'octroi de crédits et le versement de paiements relativement à la taxe payée ou payable à l'égard de biens résidentiels et pour traiter d'autres questions connexes.*

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

Ms. Jessica Bell: I will be sharing my time with the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane for the one-hour lead for this bill.

The bill is entitled the HST Relief Implementation Act (Residential Property Rebates), 2026. Now, essentially, what this bill does is it enables the government to move ahead with offering an HST rebate on new homes between the period of April 1, 2026, to March 31, 2027. This applies to homes that might have already been built but haven't been sold yet. And it also applies to homes that are in the pre-construction phase. So if a purchase agreement is signed between April 1, 2026, and March 31, 2027, then this bill enables the buyer or the builder to receive that rebate. Part of that rebate is a federal rebate, and part of that rebate is a provincial rebate, and it is a lot of money. It is a lot of money. For homes up to \$1 million, you are eligible for the rebate portion of about the \$130,000 you would typically pay in HST. That's a lot. And then it goes up from there, but the bulk of it is—for homes from under \$1 million up to \$1.5 million, essentially, you'd get a rebate of about \$130,000. That's a lot of money.

Now, you might be interested to know why is it that we're introducing a bill and debating a bill for an HST

rebate program where the application period has already begun? It began on April 1. The reason why we're debating this is because the Conservative government made a mistake. They made a mistake because they rushed through the budget bill very quickly, they rushed through the budget motion very quickly and, as I recall, the budget bill didn't even go to committee.

It didn't go to committee, which is highly unusual. It's standard practice for this government to not take a bill to committee, but previous to this government, for as long as the Legislature has been sitting, it's been standard practice to take a bill to committee.

We all know this: The reason why a bill is taken to committee is because it gives the public the opportunity to provide feedback and for the government to listen. It also provides opportunity for the opposition and the Liberal Party, the independents and the government to introduce amendments to correct the mistakes they made, so that when the bill has gone through the sausage-making process, the bill is pretty good.

Once again, this has happened. I don't even know how many times this has happened on the housing file, but once again a bill has been passed and then the government has said, "Oops, we made a mistake. Better go back to the drawing board." This government—you'd think they'd learn because it just keeps happening, and now it has happened again.

I'm sure that there are a lot of people right now who are wondering, "Why is it that I am eligible for the HST rebate but they're still debating the bill that would allow me to actually get that HST rebate? Interesting." Anyway, that is what we are doing this morning.

My hope is that this government remembers the old adage that you measure twice and cut once instead of measuring and cutting at the same time—

Mr. John Vanthof: We're cutting first.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Yes, cutting first. You'll get your turn; don't you worry. I'm looking forward to hearing what you have to say—can't wait. I'm sure you've got your one-liners all ready, and we will be entertained.

I have a lot of questions about this bill. One of the questions I have is, who is going to benefit? Who is going to benefit from this \$130,000 rebate?

Let me guess. I'm pretty sure that developers are going to benefit from this \$130,000 rebate. I'm pretty sure, because they are currently sitting on a lot of unsold inventory, because they built for what can make them the most profit instead of what people are actually wanting. So they're sitting on a whole lot of homes—500-, 600-, 700-square-foot homes—and they can't sell them.

Then they probably came over to the government and said, “Look, can you please do something to make it easier for us to sell off this unsold inventory?” and the government said, “I don’t know. How about we give you a \$130,000 rebate?” There we go, and here we are. I’m pretty sure that developers are going to benefit from this—I’m pretty sure developers are going to benefit.

Will builders benefit? I’m guessing that builders will benefit. It’s a maybe, but I’m guessing they will benefit because by including pre-construction sales, so you get the rebate before you’ve built the property, it will likely spur construction. Do we know? Have we seen the evidence? Have we got the facts? Have you done the studies? Have you released them? Have you taken it to committee? Will you take this bill to committee? I doubt it, but my guess is that it will probably help spur construction a bit. We don’t know how much, but I guess it will help a little bit. We also know that builders will likely get the rebate because that’s standard practice—don’t know.

Then I have this other question, which is, will home prices go down as a result of this rebate coming into force? It’s an honest question. This \$130,000 rebate, is it actually going to lower housing prices? It turns out that we actually don’t know, and odds are it might not.

0910

I want to read an article that came out in the Star recently that looked at this very issue of if this HST cut on new homes will actually save buyers money. We’re talking about who’s benefiting here. We know developers are going to benefit, builders are probably going to benefit, but are homebuyers actually going to benefit? That’s what we’re talking to now. This is what this study found: “Early Look Finds 78% of Prices Are the Same or Higher” once the expanded HST rebate came in. So that’s very interesting.

There was a study done by an AI-powered real estate brokerage that analyzed pricing for 1,000 floor plans in over 100 active projects in the GTHA and looked at whether the HST rebate announcement affected the prices for these homes that are currently on the market. It took a look and what it found is that the majority of developers kept the listing price unchanged. They’re getting the \$130,000 rebate. They know it’s coming because I know they’re already talking to you, but they’re not necessarily passing on that saving to the homebuyer.

I will send this article to you so you can take a look at it and put your eagle eye on it, and you can critique it all you want. But that’s one initial study that’s coming out—not great.

Now overall, I would say that this HST rebate—\$130,000 rebate—is pretty standard practice for the Conservative government. It’s pretty standard procedure. Because it is part of this government’s very long track record of giving big developers and builders and big landlords everything they want. And what we’ve also found is that giving big developers and big landlords and builders everything they want hasn’t actually worked.

I want to give a little summary here of some of the things the government has done since 2018. They cut

developer fees drastically—you cheered that one. Then you had to create a fund to pay for the infrastructure after your development fee cuts hampered municipalities’ ability to pay for the infrastructure these new developers needed. Remember that? And then you claimed it was new money, which it wasn’t.

It also led to very large property tax increases because municipalities were put in this very difficult situation where they had to pay for existing infrastructure and maintain it, as well as pay more for new infrastructure to link up and connect new housing into sewage-providing services, electricity, roads and so on. But they didn’t really have the money to do it, so they had to look at the property tax rate again and increase it. That’s on you.

This government has gutted and changed official plans, including the city of Toronto’s official plan and the city of Ottawa’s official plan. This government has changed the provincial planning statement I don’t know how many times, it’s hard to keep track. This government has made it easier to move employment lands so that they can be used for housing—even the Toronto Board of Trade didn’t like that one.

This government has made it easier to build housing on farmland, which is incredibly expensive and very unsustainable. First on the greenbelt—you had to back down on that one—and then, and you’re doing this in a really quiet way now, insidious way now, which I find very concerning and deserves more attention, which is now the government has made it much easier for municipalities to change the municipal boundary and permit housing on nearby farmland, and much easier for developers to change a municipality’s boundary by going to the lands tribunal to build more housing. All these things, this is what you’ve done. You know—smile away, I don’t mind.

You brought in strong-mayor powers and changed municipal governance structures so you can pass the kind of laws that you want to benefit your friends. You’ve made it harder and more expensive for residents to appeal development at the lands tribunal, including things like quarries, garbage dumps.

The government has gotten rid of green building standards, even though green building standards make housing generally more energy-efficient and ensures they’re better made, so the first-time homebuyer actually gets a better product, and they’re going to save money in the long term with reduced energy bills. But you say, “No, no. We don’t like that.” And we know who asked you to do that.

This government has made it easier to evict tenants. They have stacked the Landlord and Tenant Board, so landlords get heard first, and tenants have essentially given up. When I speak to tenants about how they’ve got the option of going to the Landlord and Tenant Board, they say, “That place is not a place for me. It’s a place for landlords. We’re not going to seek justice there. We’re not going to get justice there.”

This government got rid of inclusionary zoning—also a developer request. So any big new development near a transit station is no longer required to have some—we’re talking just a few—affordable housing units, so we can

deal with the housing affordability crisis as well as the housing supply issues that we've got. You got rid of that.

The government got rid of parking minimums—something I'm okay with.

And this move, the HST rebate, I believe, is all part of this big plan to give big developers everything they want in order to speed up construction of new housing in order to supposedly lower housing prices and rent.

There are more examples—oh, my God, there are so many, but this is just a few.

You've had eight long years to try this experiment, and what have been the results? Let's have a look.

Well, first off, housing is still incredibly expensive to buy. Before I came here yesterday, I downloaded the Housing Affordability Monitor statistics, just to have a look at how much it costs to buy a home in key markets in Ontario. It's expensive.

In Toronto, the median home price is over \$1 million—\$1.96 million—and you need a qualifying annual income of \$246,000 in order to afford that home and that mortgage. How many people in Toronto do you think earn that kind of money? I'm guessing that the top 7% of households are able to afford the median home in Toronto. That's the state of affairs on housing affordability in Toronto.

Let's look at Ottawa. In Ottawa, the median home price is a little cheaper, \$692,000, and you need a qualifying income of \$157,984. That's still a lot of money, well above average income.

In Hamilton, the median home price is \$894,000, and you need a qualifying annual income of \$200,075. That's a lot of money.

So the reason I bring that up is because that's your track record. This is your track record. You promised to make housing more affordable—you haven't.

I also recently read—when did it come out? It came out yesterday. It was a study by Statistics Canada, and it looked at millennials and the housing market. No surprises here. You're not going to be surprised by these statistics. But I think it is worth reading out, because it really gives us a snapshot of how well you're doing on fixing the housing crisis—which is poorly. This study found that in 2021, the proportion of millennials aged 25 to 39—I think there are a few millennials here. Not me. You?

Interjection.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Yes, a few of you.

What they found is that they are far more likely to be living with their parents than previous—

Interjection.

Ms. Jessica Bell: I know, I know. You've got your own family now.

They are far more likely to be living with their parents than previous generations.

When you are 30 years old, you do not want to be living with your parents—maybe there are a few of you who do. The vast majority of people do not want to be living in the basement of their parents' house. They want their own home. Rent or own—they want their own home.

This study also showed that the number of millennials that are buying homes is at a far lower rate than Gen-Xers and baby boomers, much lower. It is at 49%; so, much lower. We've got this whole generation of people who if they were born 10 years earlier, 15 years earlier, maybe would have had a home.

0920

But because of the housing market and the way that it is, they don't have a home. More of them do not have a home. They're living in their parents' basement. Or they're renting, and they're paying an astronomical amount to rent, so much that they can't afford to save. And if they're saving, they're not saving enough to get that down payment that they need to buy their home.

In some cases—I regularly talk to renters right now who told me their rent is scary, eye-watering: \$3,000 a month. Maybe it's parents with one kid. They need more than one bedroom. They are paying \$3,000 in my riding. That's enough for a mortgage. But they can't save enough for that down payment in order to ensure that their monthly payments are going to something they can keep forever, an asset. Instead, they're paying someone else's mortgage, and they really don't want to. They want to pay their own mortgage. They want that stability.

That's a snapshot of this government's track record at solving the housing crisis. And if I had to grade you, I'd give you a D. I'll give you an F; let's just make it easy for myself. It's not good.

I'm going to talk a little bit about renting. The reason why I want to talk about renting is because there are a lot of people in Ontario who rent. And they're not getting a \$130,000 rebate from this government. No, no, no—they're not getting a \$130,000 rebate. They're getting very little. What they're going to be getting come next month is a notice saying that their rent is going up again. Because this government has made the decision to allow landlords to raise rents on rent-controlled homes every year except for one, and for most of those years, you've gone to the maximum amount that you're allowed under the Residential Tenancies Act, 2.5%.

So while on the one hand you're giving a big rebate to developers—\$130,000—you're doing very little, I would say nothing, to make housing more affordable for renter households. Many of these renter households want to buy these homes. They want to buy their first home. They don't want to rent. I often hear in the news, "Oh, people want to be life-long renters." No, they don't. They want stability. If they had a home where they weren't in fear of eviction every year, that would be a little different but in Ontario's housing market, if you're a renter, you're always worried about eviction. You're always worried are about rent hikes. You do not have the stability that you see in home ownership. You just don't.

So rent is prohibitively expensive for too many people. Later on today, I think there will be a vote on my rent freeze motion, a very practical motion—

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Excellent motion

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you very much.

This rent freeze motion is calling for the government to freeze rents for two years, so renters get some relief.

Instead of allowing that maximum increase of 2.5% or 2.1%, which it is this year, we, later on today, will be asking the government to cap the amount that landlords can raise the rent to 0% for two years, just to give renters some relief.

I heard the member from Don Valley East last night say, “Whoa.” He deliberately misunderstood and said, “Maybe that means rents will be frozen too high.” That’s just silly. Landlords can always lower the rent and renters are always going to agree to it. This is really about capping increases, not stopping decreases.

We surveyed renters in advance of this rent motion and this rent announcement, and I do want to spend a little bit of time summarizing what we heard in the survey. We heard that renters are really having a tough time out there. These are the ones you’re not giving the \$130,000 rebate to. They’re cutting back on groceries and skipping meals in order to afford rent. They’re skipping medical, dental and mental health care because they cannot afford the rent. They’ve stopped saving for emergencies or retirement to pay the rent. Many are staying in housing that is too rundown and too small or not safe because they cannot afford to move. And at the same time, we heard from renters that are worried they’ll be forced to move because they cannot afford to stay. I’m sure some of these renters would love to buy—they would love to buy.

These are some of the statements we heard from renters:

“Making rent is all I ever think about.”

“I carry a huge line of credit that I can’t climb out of.”

“The thought of how I would pay these costs after retirement is terrifying.”

“A constant fear.”

Now, I’ve heard the members opposite say, “Well, rent is going down.” The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing loves to say, “Well, rent is going down. Rent is going down.” Rent on new builds has softened a little bit. It’s slightly off record highs. But overall, average rent has been going up year in and year out. So when you factor in all renter households, rent has been going up year in and year out, and it is getting pretty bad.

It has gotten so bad that no one working full-time on minimum wage can afford rental housing anywhere in Ontario. That’s how bad it’s gotten. Someone is working full-time on minimum wage, and they cannot afford the average rent in their town or city. And the average rent over the last 10 years has gone up by over 50%, much faster than inflation.

You would expect in these tough times that Ontarians—well, Ontarians expect this—would expect this government to use every regulatory and legal tool in the tool box to make life more affordable, starting with housing. That would include a rent freeze. Should it include a \$130,000 rebate to developers? I don’t know. That wouldn’t be my first choice. I’ve got to say that: It wouldn’t be my first choice. And I hope the renters in your riding and your riding and your riding and your riding and your riding know about some of the decisions you’re making where you’re giving \$130,000 to these guys but when it comes to

just saving renters \$50 a month—\$600 a year; \$1,200 over two years—you just look the other way. You have all this grand talk about how you want to make Ontario affordable—grand talk—but when it comes to passing legislation that’s in your power to address these issues, you don’t, and that’s a shame.

I cannot wait—the next election couldn’t come soon enough. The polls have to go down a little bit more. I understand, if the election was called today, you still probably would win, but the trajectory is not great—it’s not great.

Mr. Matthew Rae: It’s not great for the NDP.

Ms. Jessica Bell: It’s not great for the Conservatives, because we are not buying \$28.9-million jets over here. And I know there are a lot of members who are so mad at the Premier for doing that. I can see it in your faces every question period. Question period right now is quite enjoyable for me. Sometimes I sit here and I’m like, “Ah, God, we’re going to be losing another vote.” But this week, it’s been really enjoyable, because I can see all your faces. You really don’t like it. You hate it. Your bad day is our good day; you know how it works.

Where were we? How long have I got? I’ve only got four minutes. Oh, my God. I guess I should start focusing on wrapping up here.

We talked about the HST, the \$130,000 rebate, focusing on giving it to developers and investors and so on. It’s part of your long track record to make housing more affordable by giving developers and investors everything that they want. I gave you a summary and then I gave you some evidence showing that what the government is doing is just not working. Rent is too high, first-time home ownership rates are plummeting, home prices are still astronomically expensive and homelessness has gone through the roof. It has gone from bad to worse. It’s awful. And it’s not just a big city problem anymore.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: No, it’s everywhere.

Ms. Jessica Bell: It’s everywhere: encampments, people sleeping on couches, people staying in relationships they really shouldn’t be in because it’s not safe because they’ve got nowhere else to go, people living in shelters, people losing access to their kids because they’re homeless—it’s really tough. It’s really tough. A lot of those people working are seniors. We have a bunch of seniors in our riding who’ve been evicted. Now they end up in a shelter. We have one senior, who’s 91, who ended up in a shelter. It’s awful; it’s really awful. That’s your legacy, too.

0930

The final thing I want to conclude on is this HST rebate. Will it increase the construction of housing? Probably. The people who are going to be buying it, will they be first-time homebuyers? No, they’re not. The vast majority of them are investors. That’s what we know. That’s what Statistics Canada is telling us. It’s not first-time homebuyers because you tried that. You actually put the rebate first and you said, “Only first-time homebuyers can have it.” Then you realized it wasn’t working because first-time homebuyers aren’t buying these new homes, so you’re like

“Whew, I guess we have to give it to everyone. Let’s see if this works. Let’s just throw something on the wall to see if it sticks.”

What I would prefer this government do is bring in real measures that actually work, and that includes bringing in stronger renter protections, a rent freeze, banning AGIs, having a real plan to build supportive housing, address homelessness and get government back into the business of building affordable housing.

We have presented a plan, and we will continue to hammer this plan. We have a Homes Ontario plan to set up a public agency that works with municipalities, non-profits and developers to build needed housing, not just tiny little condos. You can make a whole lot of money but build needed housing, supportive housing, affordable housing, housing for seniors, housing for students and housing on public land. What we have found is, we can build a lot of homes because we have a lot of public land and the need is very great.

When we’re talking about this \$130,000 rebate—okay, that’s what we’re debating right now—I urge this government to also look at some practical solutions that other provinces are doing. We’re the only province that does not have an agency responsible for building housing—the only one. I urge this government to look at other options because what you’re doing right now is just not working. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): I recognize the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane.

Interjections.

Mr. John Vanthof: I’d like to thank the whip from the government side for his applause. I’d like to thank the member from University–Rosedale for a pretty comprehensive overview of the bill.

I’d just like to start by reading the short title of the bill. The short title of this act is HST Relief Implementation Act, 2026. It’s pretty straightforward. I don’t often do this, but I have 30 minutes to fill, so I am going to read the explanatory note:

“The bill amends the Retail Sales Tax Act to enable the minister to, by regulation, provide for credits and payments to be made to a person in respect of all or part of the federal component of the tax that is paid or payable under part IX of the Excise Tax Act (Canada) in respect of residential property and to provide for other related matters, including measures to recover amounts credited or paid to a person who was not entitled to the credit or payment.”

Do you know what that sounds a lot like? That sounds like something that would be in a budget bill, especially since it’s to provide an HST rebate to people who are buying a new home, especially since the government was talking about that during the press about the budget, but it’s obvious—well, no, it’s not that obvious actually.

When this bill came to light, we asked our research, “Did you see that this was in the bill?” They said, “Yes, but we thought it was going to be in the regulations.” Right? Because often budgets are enabling pieces of legislation, but we don’t have the whole Ministry of

Finance to make sure this is done correctly. This is an enabling piece of legislation that is having to be debated separately because the government for some reason either forgot to put it in the budget or just couldn’t get it done on time. So we’re actually re-debating a part of the budget, a budget that this government rushed through. I think on this side, we all understand or we believe why the government was so focused not on actually—because in one of their platform announcements they pushed this pretty hard, but they didn’t include it in the budget. They forgot.

They were much more focused on stifling people’s ability to get to government information, freedom of information. They were more focused on that. This should be known as the “Let’s stop FOIs budget,” because that was the main focus of this budget. There was lots of stuff wrapped around. There are lots of programs, but this is one of the signature programs, and I’ll get to it a little bit later, why it’s not quite as robust as it would appear, but this was one of the signature programs, and it’s not even in the bill. That is a big problem.

I’ve been here a while. You can tell by my grey hair. This isn’t the first time that a government has forgotten to put something in the budget. Just to make the Conservatives feel better, this isn’t the first time. The first time that I witnessed something like this was under the Liberal government. It was the Fair Hydro Plan that was touted as part of the budget process. I distinctly remember because I was finance critic—amazingly. That might not be the adverb that everybody else is going to use, but anyway, I was the finance critic, and people were looking for the Fair Hydro Plan in the budget, and it wasn’t there. The minister at the time said something like, “Well, you know, it’s expensive to print a budget, and it takes extra paper.” He had all kinds of explanations. We all know who the minister was at the time, and you could look it up.

We all remember the Fair Hydro Plan because the Fair Hydro Plan was a scheme to hide how hydro rates were being subsidized. That’s what it was, and they rushed it. They tried to get it through, and that’s why the Liberal government didn’t pass their audits. That’s one of the reasons.

On the same token, with the Conservative budget under Premier Ford, they are so focused on hiding their records that they seem to have forgotten what budgets are really about. I can assure you that the part about hiding FOIs so that no one can ever access an FOI—I am sure that all the i’s are dotted and the t’s are crossed. I am sure that that is as bulletproof as possible—I am sure. They didn’t forget because that was the goal.

You know what? You put so much effort into that, I think the jet is probably one of the least of your worries. We’re all talking about the jet, but something much more sombre than the jet is being hidden by that FOI blocking—something. And we’re all talking about, for some reason, this crazy jet.

This morning, when I got into the elevator in my building to go to work, you know how they have those TVs on? What is the first thing I saw? Protect Ontario, paid for by my tax dollars, advertising the Ontario government.

And they had the little jingle; I can't even do the jingle, but "doot-doot-doot-doot-doot-doot." What it should have now is, "Leaving on a Jet Plane." You should change the jingle.

0940

And maybe you didn't get a big enough one, right? Steve Miller: "Big ol' jet airliner." You could fit the whole caucus in. Like, why didn't he get a big enough jet if he can't land it anywhere in northern Ontario anyway? Get a big enough jet that everyone can go on the ride.

But the fact that a plank of your budget was forgotten or didn't get done on time? I'm not blaming anybody. Everyone on all sides works hard, and I'm not blaming anybody in the Ministry of Finance. I'd like to commend the government House leader: We had a really good briefing from the ministry. It was a really good briefing. I am sure they all worked very hard and they're diligent.

But for some reason, for some reason, this was left out and we're debating it a week after the budget was rushed through the House. If the government had actually taken the time to maybe let it go to committee, they maybe could have amended it during committee, and we wouldn't be having this debate because it would have just been part of the budget process.

Running a province is a tough job; we get it. Writing a budget—tough job; we get it. Everyone can make a mistake or an oversight. That is what the committee process is for: to make bills better. The government has the right to put forward their agenda. They won a majority. But the committee process is to catch things: "Oh, wait a second. This might not work." Like not including the HST rebate in the budget: "Hey, excuse me, but have you checked that?" Right? That's what the committee process is for. Why they didn't go through the committee process, why they did actual debates during night sittings—because they did not want anybody coming to the committee and talking about FOIs. That's why they didn't want to have a committee process, full stop.

This government—and I don't even think it's this government. Certain people who control this government want to do those things, because I don't think that the majority of the people I talked to—that the biggest thing on their mind is stopping people from accessing government information. Good government should have nothing to hide. Does government make mistakes? Absolutely. Does government have to make decisions that can't be made public at the time? I get that. But if someone really wants to know, should those decisions be able to be accessed after? Absolutely.

Anyone who has ever run a business, a farm, anything: You learn from your mistakes. You're not proud of your mistakes. When I plant a crop and I—look, I can't do a speech without doing a farm thing, okay? I bought a new seed drill. That's how you plant, right? My old seed drill was 10 feet wide and my new seed drill was 12 feet wide, but I kind of screwed it up and I kind of assumed my new seed drill was 12 and a half feet wide.

So my fields looked beautiful when they were seeded, but when they came up, every 12 feet there was a six-inch

strip of nothing. I was very embarrassed. I was super embarrassed. All my friends teased me and I came up with all kinds of excuses. "Oh, those are tram lines so it's easier to"—like, they all knew it was that I just screwed up.

But what you're doing for some of the members of your government is you're hiding your mistakes, or hiding things that weren't mistakes, and you're hiding them forever until a new government shows up—because you all think you're going to be government forever and you're not. And you're going to end up wearing them. It's just like, you're all ending up wearing the plane—and because people like me help you wear it. But you're going to be wearing much worse things. I don't see how you can be proud of the fact that you're covering up the FOIs.

Now, the minister from Oakville stood up many times. He said, "No, no. We're just modernizing because we didn't have email when the FOI rule was put in. We didn't have cellphones." That's not the point. And then he'll say, "Well, we're going to release 95% of what was before." It's the 5% that we're worried about.

It's when you treat the province of Ontario's budget and the province of Ontario's assets like they're your own and you look at how it benefits your friends and, hopefully, benefits the people of Ontario—but it's friends first, and that is what you're trying to hide. You're trying to hide—oh, what? No, not trying—what you've hidden.

And the fact is, now that whoever wrote the budget and whoever compiled the budget forgot to put the HST part in, you're having to listen to it again. And you know what? It looks good on you, and you're going to have to listen to it for a while, because that is what this budget was about. It was about hiding, it was about the FOIs, making sure that was as ironclad as possible, and you just forgot to put in one of the signature planks.

Now, if we want to talk about the HST rebate—I guess I do want to talk about it. It's for new homes, including condos, right? So, the home cannot have been sold already. So all the people who did assignments and who bought condos to get them built, they're not part of this. That pain out there is not part of this bill. There will be people who—they're not building a lot of homes in my region, but they build some, and some people will benefit and rightfully so, right? So if you go to a contractor and say, "I want to build a house," and that contract—the HST will not be part of the cost. That's not a bad thing.

One of the things that the government says took longer is because they don't want that you have to pay the HST and then have to apply to get it back. That's a point. The only caveat I would give to that is, when the buyer pays the HST and gets it back, you know for sure that the buyer is getting the benefit and not the builder. And I'm not saying that all builders do this. I deal with a lot of builders, and they're great. But if the HST is taken off the top, the price of the home could creep up, the selling price could creep up. That's just natural, right? As with many things, if you don't control who gets the benefit, the benefit often goes to the larger player. That's an issue.

0950

So what the government is talking about—and they're giving examples like an individual buys a house, a builder

benefits. But what this bill is really doing is trying to clear out the massive backlog of unsold condos. It's kind of a clearance sale on condos. But who's paying for the clearance sale isn't the developer; it's the taxpayer, the feds and the province.

I'm not opposed, actually, to the GST rebate holiday on new homes. I think it should be administered much differently because there are a lot of people who aren't going to qualify or think they're going to qualify and aren't, and there are a lot of people, like first-time homebuyers, who maybe can't afford to buy a new home but could buy something existing. This is not going to benefit them. And it's not going to benefit them by trickle-down either, really, because you've got this big block of condos that are unsold and they're empty. If they're empty, you're not going to have a big swell of people. It's just not going to happen.

But is the principle wrong? I would have done it differently, maybe. This is actually a finance bill, because it should be part of the budget, but it's actually a housing bill, right? It's one of their many housing bills. At one point, if you keep putting out this many housing bills, you might have more housing bills than houses. But what you're doing each time is you're not looking at the problem, and you're not looking at the solution. You're looking at the issue through a very narrow lens of how it can help your friends first.

When the greenbelt act first came out, I remember the speeches: We needed this to unleash housing because the reason houses weren't getting built is because you couldn't build them on the greenbelt, right? That was going to solve the housing crisis: "Greenbelt, greenbelt, greenbelt—whoa, whoa, whoa." I guess they had to back up on that. The greenbelt was never about the housing shortage. It was about getting big houses where people could make the most money. That's what it was about.

MZOs—same thing. And we're very opposed to the greenbelt, as Ontarians are. I'm not saying all your projects, all your initiatives, are bad, but they're not actually aimed at solving the problem. They're not. They're aimed at solving what your backers identify as a problem. Those are two totally different things.

If you look at what's going on in the housing market—the one part of the housing market under your government that is booming? Tents—tents are booming. When I started here, yes, there were homeless people in Toronto and in cities, but I didn't see it in my riding. I didn't see tent encampments until this government. I'm not saying it's all this government's fault, but there's no real, concerted effort to address what is basically happening here.

When I walk home—I go the same route—there's a lady living in a cardboard box. We walk by her all the time. She could be my—well, now I'm a grandpa, but she's not that much older than me. When I stopped to talk to her—if she would like something to eat—she said, "No. I have enough to eat. I have a pension."

You know when you think of homeless people who have done terrible things with their lives: "Everybody

makes life choices, blah, blah, blah"? This lady's not like that. This lady is emblematic of a lot of people we're dealing with now. This lady has a flower on the outside of her cardboard box. You know what her problem is? She can't afford rent anywhere. That's her problem.

And she is not alone. You're not looking at that at all because you're not looking at housing through the provincial lens. We all have friends, I get that, but you're looking at housing through your friends. Your developers who wanted to open up the greenbelt weren't going to build affordable housing for that lady and for all the people in Ontario like her. They were going to build housing for people who could afford the big houses.

Even this rebate, 130 grand on a million-dollar home: The people who can afford a million-dollar home, are those the ones really struggling in the housing crisis right now? I don't think so; in fact, I know so.

Again, does this policy do something? Yes. Is it going to be as beneficial as you're trying to sell? Time will tell.

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: A member said, "Well, the NDP has a better plan?" You know what? Your plan isn't much either because you forgot to put it in the budget. When we ask questions about how much the jet costs, nobody can answer the question, so I question what you actually know. Did you know that this wasn't in your budget, that we would have to be debating it after? So what about the Conservative plan, my friend? Did you know?

But I bet you knew that the FOI—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Through the Speaker, please.

Mr. John Vanthof: Sorry, Speaker. I bet that member knew that the FOI changes were in the budget. I bet you his caucus was very well versed on that. But I bet you his caucus maybe didn't know that they forgot to put in their signature plank, so I question that.

You can criticize the opposition for holding you to account. You want to talk about an NDP plan? We have proposed time and time again that the government should get involved in supporting housing. I get that developers, contractors, carpenters—in my area they're more independent contractors and carpenters—are not going to build housing that is not going to be profitable. I get that. But the housing that lady just around the corner needs—it needs to be built. Maybe the government needs to say, "Okay, we're going to help with that. We're not going to do the hammering ourselves." The same people who build housing now can build that housing, but maybe they need incentives to build actual affordable housing for people. That is part of our plan.

This government is all about business. They say they're all about business, but if I'm an investor and I'm coming to this province and I see massive tent encampments, I'm not sure. All the billions of dollars that you keep saying is getting invested here—I'm not sure that the province is as inviting as you claim, because that lady on the corner worked her whole life, but her kids are working too. We need a more—and I have never used this word; this is a pretty big word—holistic approach to this.

1000

The one thing that really disappoints me about the current administration—there are several things, but the one thing is, true Conservatives—it's not a surprise; sometimes I'm one of them—used to believe in small government and that government creates the conditions where everyone who wants to can prosper or can decide—I don't know how to word it, but it's not the government's job to pick winners or losers. That's what true Conservatives believe.

That's not what the current administration believes at all, and that's your problem. You're so busy picking winners that the rest of the people of Ontario are becoming losers. You're so busy picking winners, and that's what this bill is kind of doing too. Is it going benefit some people? A hundred per cent, but you're picking a winner.

With the greenbelt, you weren't trying—the Premier; I think this is the Premier—to fix the housing crisis. He was picking a winner. I don't really know much about Billy Bishop airport, but I think somebody's picking a winner. The big Jumbotron on the garage mahal—you know what my prediction is, that's going to be coming attractions at the downtown casino where the spa was supposed to be. It's that kind of stuff. Why do you do that?

In the end, just like the Fair Hydro Plan killed the Liberal government, it's stuff like that that will end your reign. That's when all the FOI stuff that you tried to hide is all going to come percolating to the surface. I get along very well with most of you, and I hope that you don't get caught up in that FOI slime, but it very well could happen that you could because when the Premier got caught with the plane, he threw you all under the bus. Mark my words, they're going to do that every time. Thank you, Speaker, for your time.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Questions?

Mr. Rob Cerjanec: I'd like to ask the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane—we're talking about the spa at the waterfront and connecting it into this HST rebate—what does the member think is going to happen down on Toronto's waterfront, and how might that impact home building?

Mr. John Vanthof: Although I live pretty close to the waterfront when I'm here, I don't know a lot about the waterfront. I do know on the Port Lands, they're spending a lot of money to make it all really nice, and they're going to attract housing. My son works there. He's a diver. He works there a lot.

But I question whether running jets over there is going to make that as prime a housing spot as it could have been. Again, the government is picking winners and losers instead of looking at the whole issue.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Questions?

Mr. Dave Smith: I'm actually going to have a series of questions. I'll start with a simple one, though, for the members opposite on this, and either one of them can answer. It doesn't make any difference on it.

This bill is about the provincial portion of the HST. Could the member opposite tell me, does the CRA collect the HST, or is there something on the provincial side that collects the HST?

Mr. John Vanthof: Actually, that's what this bill deals with, to allow the province to work directly with the CRA so that they can get the money back without having to pay it first. That's what this bill is about.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Questions?

MPP Catherine McKenney: Thank you to my colleagues for that debate this morning—either, actually, could answer.

When we think about what the HST rebate is costing, \$1.3 billion over the next year, and that is actually seven times more than what the province is spending on building and subsidizing affordable housing—so you've got \$1.3 billion on the HST, and you've got something like \$176 million on building affordable housing and supporting affordable housing. Do you think that most people in this province would agree that the way to tackle our housing and homelessness crisis is to underfund affordable housing in this way?

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you for the question from the member for Ottawa Centre. It's really concerning; the government has had eight years to improve and increase the number of affordable homes that are built in Ontario, and it's gotten so bad that the federal government came in a few years ago and said, "We're going to pull the money that we give you because you're so far behind on your affordable housing targets. You've built maybe a thousand over six years." And given that there are 85,000 people who are currently homeless in the province, that's pretty abysmal.

I think a lot of people in Ontario don't want to be homeless, and they don't want to see people struggling. They expect the government come in to provide supportive housing and affordable housing so that people can get stability and rebuild their lives, and it would have been good to have seen a budget that had funding for those kinds of initiatives.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Questions?

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I've been listening to the member from University–Rosedale talk about affordability, but when we reduced the gas tax by 10 cents, you voted against it. When we got rid of the sticker on cars, you voted against it. When we took tolls off the highway, you voted against it. When we had One Fare saving people \$1,600 a year, you voted against it. Carbon tax: You voted against it. The \$200 cheque: You voted against it.

Why are you against giving back \$130,000 to anybody buying a home of a million dollars and keeping the construction industry—hard-working labour people, unionized workers—working in the province of Ontario?

Ms. Jessica Bell: Goodness me. We're very much in support of keeping the construction industry going, and we've been pretty concerned over the last few years when we have seen housing starts plummet under this govern-

ment and their very interesting measures that are just clearly not working. They're clearly not working.

What we would like to see are measures to get government back into the business of partnering with municipalities and non-profits and developers to build needed housing. So that means less 600-square-foot condos and more 1,000-square-foot apartments, where you can raise a family in them; starter homes; seniors' homes; student housing; supportive housing—the kind of stuff that we need.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): I recognize the member from St. Catharines.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I want to thank my colleagues here on this side of the House for the debate this morning.

This government stood in their place and voted for the budget, which actually buried the FOIs, buried a fancy price tag on the Premier's fly-by-common-sense jet, and now, this government thinks Bill 114 is so important. The residents of Ontario should be asking why did they forget to include it in the budget legislation in the first place, and how can they justify threatening mayors across Niagara with funding cuts for missing housing targets while their own housing policies are failing to get affordable homes built in communities like mine of St. Catharines?

1010

Do you think the residents deserve more transparency when debating important bills like the budget or even Bill 100 when they are destroying democracy in the Niagara region?

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you to the member for St. Catharines for that question. You raise a lot of issues about what has been happening in the last few weeks in the Legislature. We have a bill, the budget bill, that brought in very drastic changes to the freedom-of-information process so you can't access government documents back until 1988. What happened in 1988? I don't know, although there's a lot of bad stuff that happened between 2018 and 2026 that is eventually going to come out.

At the same time, given this government's very authoritarian impulse, we are debating a bill right now that replaces elected regional chairs in some regions, including Niagara, with hand-picked Conservative government appointees who have the power to tax. It's taxation without representation. I can't believe that's happening under a Conservative government.

Who is benefiting? Voters aren't.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): There is time for one more quick question and response.

Mr. Rob Cerjanec: It was probably about a year ago that I stood up in this chamber and called for the province to remove the HST on new builds. It shouldn't be a surprise to this provincial government because other folks have been doing this and making this call as well for quite some time.

Ontario Liberals called again on the government to do this back in September of last year, and it only took going into this budget for this government to do it in order to ensure that we've got more supply in the marketplace.

Because supply is one element of housing. There's a lot of other elements of housing, as both members have mentioned.

I guess my question to either is, why do you think it took the government so long (a) to do this, but (b) to figure out how to do this?

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you for the question. It's taken them eight years, but I'm not sure they've figured out how to do housing yet. Again, in my remarks I said that this issue has some benefits, but is it going to make a major difference in the housing crisis we're facing in Ontario? No.

What it might make a difference in is, the last quarter of this year is the first time that they've kept statistics that there have been no new condo builds started—the first time in Toronto since they've kept statistics. The condo industry has crashed and that's what this bill is trying to revive. That's what this bill is trying to revive and that's why this government continues to fail. They don't look at the whole issue; they just look at one—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): We are moving to members' statements.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

WEARING OF PINS

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): The member for Peterborough–Kawartha on a point of order.

Mr. Dave Smith: I'm seeking the unanimous consent of the House to wear this specific Red Dress pin for my member's statement.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): The member for Peterborough–Kawartha is seeking unanimous consent for the member to wear a specific pin for Red Dress Day. Agreed? Agreed.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CILEANA TAYLOR

Mr. Dave Smith: I made a promise to Savannah Taylor that I would ensure her sister Cileana is never forgotten. Today I am reminding everyone of Cileana's story. Cileana was born on March 10, 1998, and grew up in Curve Lake First Nation in my riding. She is roughly the same age as my own children, which is probably why her story resonates with me so much. What happened to her could have happened to my own daughter.

On September 3, 2020, she was at a house party with her boyfriend. He got angry at her and he attacked her. The attack put her in the hospital in a coma, and she succumbed to her injuries on February 26, 2021.

In February 2024, her attacker was found guilty of aggravated assault—not murder, not manslaughter—and was sentenced to four years in prison. But with the credit for time served while on bail, the sentence was reduced to 550 days, of which he served 185.

Cileana was a beautiful, young soul who had her entire life ahead of her. Our legal system failed her. We cannot let her simply be a statistic. We need to remember the beauty of Cileana's soul. We need to remember Cileana loved to do the things that young girls love to do. We need to remember that Cileana's family loved her. We need to honour Cileana by remembering Cileana.

TENANT PROTECTION

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Data released in 2022 showed that Homestead is one of five companies responsible for 25% of all above-guideline rent increases in Ontario.

In May 2021, Homestead sent tenants at 2001 Carling notice of an AGI of 5.67%, which they said was required for capital expenditures, including—and you can't make this up—the purchase of a floor-cleaning machine. However, despite being one of the top five requesters of AGIs, they did not fill out the application form to the Landlord and Tenant Board correctly.

Almost four years later, in January 2025, the LTB reached out to Homestead and told them they could just fix their mistakes and send it back in. The LTB then rubber-stamped the application without a public hearing and approved the rent increase dated back to 2021, rather than to the date the correct application was filed. In fact, the LTB approves 88% of AGI applications, Speaker, including, apparently, AGI requests for floor-cleaning machines.

Meanwhile, for the tenants of 2001 Carling, many of whom are seniors on fixed incomes, their housing costs have just increased retroactively to 2021, by far more than the rate of inflation. They're worried about more AGIs coming from Homestead, given that nothing prevents Homestead from doing this all over again. They're worried about being homeless. They deserve better from this government.

We need immediate action to protect renters and to put an end to exploitation by large corporate landlords.

THALASSEMIA KARMA JIU JITSU

Mr. Rob Cerjanec: I rise today ahead of May 8, Thalassemia Awareness Day in Ontario and International Thalassemia Day, to raise awareness about this serious genetic blood disorder. Thalassemia affects the body's ability to produce healthy hemoglobin, and many patients rely on regular blood transfusions and ongoing medical care to survive.

I want to recognize the important work of the Thalassemia Foundation of Canada and Josephine Sirna, who has supported research, patient services, education and awareness for more than 40 years. Awareness is essential to improving care and ensuring patients and families receive the support that they need.

I also want to recognize the athletes from Karma Jiu Jitsu in Ajax, who recently competed at the Ontario open.

Karma Jiu Jitsu had 28 athletes compete, and brought home an impressive three gold medals, eight silver medals and eight bronze medals.

Congratulations to gold medallists Nathan Larrea, Tiana Storie and Raechel Bandurchin, and to all the athletes who represented our community with dedication, discipline and sportsmanship. Our community is proud of your accomplishments. Congratulations to the entire Karma Jiu Jitsu team.

FIRE PROTECTION GRANT

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I have more great news from Essex county: Every firefighter in Essex county is now safer thanks to our government's Fire Protection Grant.

Our government's Fire Protection Grant assists fire departments in purchasing gear such as gloves, helmets and other protective gear. But not only that, Speaker, it also helps fire departments upgrade their facilities so that they can have things like a gear washer-extractor for the decontamination of equipment and a decontamination shower facility so that firefighters can reduce their exposure to harmful substances.

Madam Speaker, I want to thank the Premier and the Solicitor General for providing this important grant, and for doubling the grant so that firefighters in Essex county and across the province of Ontario can be safer.

We are protecting firefighters in Essex county and we are protecting Ontario.

1020

CHARITABLE WALKS

Ms. Peggy Sattler: In London and across Ontario, spring marks the season of charitable walks that unite our community around shared causes. These events not only engage Londoners in supporting the causes and organizations that matter most to them but are a major source of revenue for many non-profits.

Last weekend, Threads of Life held its Steps for Life walk in Byron to honour workers killed or injured on the job. This annual event raises critical funds to support families affected by workplace tragedy and also raises awareness of worker health and safety.

Next weekend, the Walk to Defeat Duchenne will take place in Wortley Village. Now a national event, the walk was founded 31 years ago by Londoner John Davidson to honour his son Jesse, who was diagnosed in childhood with Duchenne muscular dystrophy, a fatal, rare genetic disorder.

The last weekend of May will see L'Arche London's Walk with Each Other walkathon, celebrating the leadership, joy and contributions of people with intellectual disabilities, as well as the London Walk for Lupus, raising vital funds for research, education and advocacy.

On June 6, Londoners will walk to remember the hate-motivated Islamophobic terror attack on our London family and will also walk to end ALS.

Big shout-out to the organizers, staff, participants and donors who put so much effort into organizing these walks and so many more. They show the true heart and strength of our community.

OKD FIELD HOCKEY CLUB

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: Brampton continues to make its mark on the global stage through sport. From hockey to basketball, cricket, soccer, wrestling, kabaddi and field hockey, Brampton and communities across Peel region continue to produce talented athletes proudly representing Canada around the world.

Today, I want to recognize the growing success of field hockey in our community and the incredible work being done by the OKD Field Hockey Club in Brampton and Mississauga. Recently, Team Canada won the Junior Pan American Championship in Santiago, defeating the United States in a final to qualify for the upcoming junior field hockey world cup.

I'm proud to recognize three Ontario athletes from the OKD Field Hockey Club who represented Canada during the championship and previously represented Canada during the Junior World Cup that happened in India: Gurwinder Singh Brar from Brampton, Navdeep Singh Chandi from Mississauga and Leighton De Souza from Etobicoke. Their success reflects the dedication and hard work of athletes, coaches, parents, volunteers, sponsors and organizers who help grow field hockey across Brampton and Ontario.

Speaker, I want to take this moment to congratulate those three players and thank OKD Field Hockey Club for their hard work in promoting and their leadership and commitment to the sport of field hockey in Brampton and across Ontario. I know they're helping foster young, bright, talented individuals and helping them grow to be world athletes.

Thank you again to the OKD Field Hockey Club, and congratulations to those three players.

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

Mr. John Vanthof: Last weekend, I went to the Iroquois Falls Sports and Trade Show, and I had a long discussion with the chief of the Iroquois Falls Fire Department, Dan Boucher. He brought up an issue regarding certification of volunteer firefighters. They want to be fully trained, but most volunteer firefighters have full-time jobs, and the certification process doesn't always work with that. As a result, fire departments across many rural areas are actually losing members.

Something that a lot of people don't realize: The jaws of life auto extrication on the Trans-Canada Highway in many areas are provided by volunteer fire departments.

They're losing members—not because they don't want to be trained; they want to be trained, and they are trained. But they can't live up to the certification process that the professional firefighters have, because they do it for a job. You can't work in a mine for 40 hours, be home one week

out of four and expect that you have to take time off to go for the certification. That does not make sense.

They have solutions. Please, I implore the government and the Solicitor General to actually work with them so we don't lose our volunteer fire departments.

ROY CHURCH MEMORIAL CORNHOLE TOURNAMENT

MPP Billy Denault: This past week, I had the privilege of attending the Roy Church Memorial Cornhole Tournament in Cobden. With more than 50 teams participating this year, the event was nothing short of a tremendous success. I want to thank Lieutenant Nathan, firefighters Steve and Joel and the entire Haley Station fire service for organizing such a meaningful day. Having taken part myself, I can say the event was filled with fun, laughter and perhaps a few poorly thrown beanbags.

Roy Church was a cornerstone of the Haley Station fire department, serving the community for decades. He mentored generations of firefighters and built a legacy of service that continues to be felt throughout the region following his passing in 2024. This tournament, held in his honour, was supported by Roy Church's family—Liz, Ben, Shane and the entire Church family—standing alongside Haley Station firefighters and celebrating his memory.

Proceeds from the event will support graduating students in Renfrew county pursuing post-secondary education in emergency services fields. It was especially fitting to take part in this event on the heels of First Responders Day and just before Emergency Preparedness Week: a reminder of the selfless individuals who remain on call for our communities in both the best and most challenging of times.

I want to sincerely thank the Haley Station fire service for the invitation. I, of course, look forward to this great event again next year.

SOUTHLAKE HEALTH

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: It was an extraordinary, memorable occasion last week for the residents of Newmarket–Aurora. Southlake is a pillar in our community, a pillar that has been needing to expand to meet the demands of our growing population in the catchment area that Southlake Health serves. It was the day after our annual run for Southlake, a day when the community comes together to support our local hospital.

Last Monday, our government came together—with Premier Ford and Deputy Premier and Minister of Health Sylvia Jones at the helm—and announced an investment of \$10 million to advance the plans for Southlake Health's new acute care hospital in East Gwillimbury, as well as the redevelopment of Southlake Health's existing hospital in Newmarket. Together, these projects will connect more than 250,000 people across our communities to more convenient, high-quality care, close to home.

My commitment to the people of Newmarket–Aurora in my first campaign in 2022 was to advocate for the expansion of our local Southlake, to see this project move forward to fruition. And, four years later, oh, boy, that fruition has been realized. Thank you to Premier Ford and Minister Jones for listening to the voices in Newmarket–Aurora.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

MPP Jamie West: I would like to introduce today's page captain from the riding of Sudbury, Onyioza Salawu. She's joined by her mom in the gallery, Temitope Salawu. I look forward to having lunch with you guys.

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: I would like to welcome the College of Opticians of Ontario and the Ontario Opticians Association: Fazal Khan, Amy Stein, Kevin Cloutier, Derick Summers, Omar Farouk, as well as Jennifer Wicks.

Today, at 12 noon, is the opticianry day at Queen's Park lunch reception, in rooms 228 and 230. All are welcome.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: On behalf of the Minister of Health, I would like to join my colleague in welcoming the College of Opticians of Ontario and the Ontario Opticians Association.

Hon. Michael Parsa: I'd like to welcome, from the riding of Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill, Janice and Kevin Ho, the very proud parents of Evalyn Ho, who is today's page captain. Welcome.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: It gives me great pleasure to welcome the Dunbarton High School economic class and their teachers from my riding of Pickering–Uxbridge. I look forward to meeting you this afternoon. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Vijay Thanigasalam: I would like to welcome to the chamber some members of my incredible team: Maria Henein, Maya Silverstein, as well as our new intern, Talitha Ferro. Thank you for your tireless work. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: I'm delighted this morning to introduce Irene Campo and Pamela Hart. Pamela is the executive director of the Native Women's Resource Centre of Toronto.

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Pamela is Anishnawbe Kwe, Muskrat Clan, a member of the Chippewas of Georgina Island and a mother of one. She has worked on the front line for over a decade, offering client care and support services to address issues such as addiction, mental health, violence against women, trauma and homelessness.

Pamela is here today with Irene to take part in a reception that will showcase her organization's 4,000 Cover Stories project, a sobering tribute to the memories of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people. I invite everyone in the House to join us at the legislative library following question period to visit and share some traditional Indigenous treats.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: I'd like to welcome a number of refugee service providers, community leaders and organizations from throughout Toronto. They'll be taking part in a refugee round table today. Thank you for your important work and welcome to your House.

Mr. Deepak Anand: Speaker, it's always a pleasure to have people from Mississauga–Malton. I'd like to welcome Gurpreet Rai, Aman Preet Rai, Gurnam Rai, Gurveer Rai, Tarsem Rai and Navraj Lehal—and Aman is actually a nurse. Welcome to Queen's Park.

HOUSE SITTINGS

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

Hon. Steve Clark: Good morning, everyone. I just want to let the House know that the night sitting scheduled for this evening has been cancelled.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member for Ajax on a point of order.

Mr. Rob Cerjanec: I seek unanimous consent to move a motion without notice that in the opinion of this House and in support of Ontario's critical manufacturing, auto and agriculture sectors, the government of Ontario should request the timely opening of the Gordie Howe International Bridge and support all necessary measures in partnership with other levels of government to facilitate the successful opening and operation of this vital trans-border link.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The member for Ajax is seeking unanimous consent to move a motion without notice that in the opinion of this House and in support of Ontario's critical manufacturing, auto and agriculture sectors, the government of Ontario should request the timely opening of the Gordie Howe International Bridge and support all necessary measures in partnership with other levels of government to facilitate the successful opening and operation of this vital trans-border link. Agreed?

Interjection: No.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): It is now time for question period.

QUESTION PERIOD

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Families are saving up, but they still can't afford their first home; young people are working hard at school, but they still can't find a job; and everybody is playing by the rules, but this Premier is making it impossible to get ahead.

Recently, when the courts told the Premier that he had to start playing by the rules, with the stroke of a pen, he changed the law so that he could hide his phone records. So to the Premier: Does the Premier think the rule of law does not apply to him?

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

Hon. Stephen Crawford: I appreciate the opportunity to speak.

I find it ironic when you talk about the affordability of housing—I just heard, for an hour, the members opposite suggesting that they're not going to support our HST reduction on new homes. That's unbelievable to me.

You talk about affordability. You voted against the budget. You voted against capping the tickets for resales in the province of Ontario. You voted against small business taxes—small business owners are thrilled with a 30% tax reduction, Speaker. That's a lot of money for small businesses here in the province of Ontario. You voted against that, not to mention so many other things that you voted against, whether it's affordability measures like One Fare, which saves transit riders every single day; the LIFT Tax Credit, the largest tax credit in the history of Ontario—you voted against it.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: I'll tell you that, obviously, that member did not listen to the question.

If there is nothing to hide, why change the law to keep things hidden, right? We know that more than 200 records of meetings with developers have been buried and hidden from the public with the changes that the Premier has made to the laws. There is no question that this government rushed through the budget bill just so that they could stop those records from coming out.

Back to the Premier: What meetings is the Premier trying to hide from the public and why?

Hon. Stephen Crawford: Again, as I've said many times in the House, we're modernizing an outdated FOI system which is almost 40 years old. Written in 1988, this legislation didn't contemplate the technologies and the modern world that we're in today, Speaker. It's also, quite frankly, bringing into motion what courts in this country have stood for, which is cabinet confidentiality, the importance of government decisions being candid, but government decisions being open and transparent. That's exactly what this legislation does.

In fact, speaking of cabinet confidentiality, perhaps it's something that the members opposite don't understand because I don't think there has been a member on that side who has actually been in cabinet.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Ouch, Speaker.

Anyway, Speaker, I've got to tell you, it is a shame, really, such a shame that this Premier built his whole career—well, at least the more recent part of his career—pretending that he is just like everybody else, he is for the little guy, he's going to fight back against corruption and government waste, and then he turns around and he takes \$30 million out of the public purse, out of the taxpayers' pockets, to buy a luxury private jet. Shame. Shame on that government. Now what is happening is that the walls are

closing in around him, and right when we get close to the truth, he directs his government to change the law so he can hide his backroom deals. That's what's happening.

Does the Premier believe he is truly above the law?

Hon. Stephen Crawford: The Premier of Ontario has been the most open and transparent Premier, not only in the province's history but across Canada. He has put his phone number out. He receives hundreds if not thousands of texts from everyday Ontarians discussing issues of importance to them, whether it's affordability, jobs, the economy. His number is out there in the public record. I encourage the Leader of the Opposition—I encourage you right now—pass your phone number around. Tell the people of Ontario so they can connect with you and talk about their concerns. This Premier has been very, very open, speaking to the people of Ontario.

What this legislation is doing, for the umpteenth time I'm here in the Legislature speaking about it, is modernizing a privacy framework that is almost 40 years outdated. I encourage the member to also bring up the NDP legislation out in BC if she's got concerns about this legislation.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Ms. Marit Stiles: Wow. All right.

Look, Speaker, let's talk about jobs. This week, we all learned that the thousand jobs that the Premier promised the people of Alliston are not coming—they are not coming. We hear from this government all the time about the so-called record investments that they're attracting to this province, but they've got nothing to show for it. The government is a jobs disaster: 700,000 Ontarians are looking for work, and every day more bad news.

Why is this government letting Ontario's auto industry fall behind?

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

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: I would be happy to remind the Leader of the Opposition that it was under the previous Liberal government, supported by the NDP, that they chased 300,000 manufacturing jobs out of this province and they said, "We want to be out of the automotive manufacturing business."

This government and this Premier stood up, drew a line in the sand and said, "We are going to support our auto workers. We are going to continue to ensure that good-quality vehicles are made right here by the best labour force in the entire world."

We are not going to back off it. We continue to draw in investment: just last year, \$35 billion of investment from 750 companies creating 64,000 jobs. I think we'll stick with our record over the record of the Liberals and the NDP.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: I remember when the Premier was out there making this announcement with Justin Trudeau. Remember that? I remember that. The bottom line is, the

government promised 1,000 new jobs for the people in Alliston. That promise has been broken, and that is the truth.

Look, it is not just Honda. This is the latest in an ongoing EV pullback. The government has totally abandoned their electric vehicle strategy, which I gotta tell you, was the closest thing we've ever had to a climate or job plan from this government. The companies are shipping out. They are taking equipment, they are taking jobs, they are taking tax dollars with them. The Premier can't let automakers back out of these communities without consequences.

1040

To the Premier: Why has the Premier abandoned our auto workers?

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: Every day in this province, we are welcoming new jobs and new investments from local companies, from companies abroad and from small businesses. I know that's not something that the members on the other side of the House would understand, as none of them has ever owned a small business or created a job in their lives.

Madam Speaker, we continue to draw in investments, including \$2 billion in life sciences investments: Sanofi, just this week, announced \$294 million of investment in Mississauga, creating 50 jobs; Chapman's: \$205 million in Markdale, creating 200 new jobs; and Marvell, the global semiconductor leader, just invested \$238 million in Ottawa and North York, creating 350 jobs.

Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition knows full well that no money has flowed to Honda. It is a deferred tax credit. She was told yesterday by the minister. She was told by me a year ago when the announcement was first paused, and yet continues to represent that that is not the case on social media. Will you apologize for your comments and agree that you've misled—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I will ask the member to withdraw.

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Thank you.

Back to the Leader of the Opposition.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Brampton: 3,000 jobs—gone; 30,000 spinoff jobs—gone. Ingersoll, Oshawa, Alliston—every time the Premier has promised good jobs, he has broken that promise.

The way I see it, if you want to sell it here, you need to build it here. Ontario is home to the best autoworkers in the world, and we need a provincial government that is committed to a strategy to sustain the domestic auto sector, those workers and their communities.

Speaker, back to the Premier: When will the Premier come up with a “sell here, build here” policy that's actually going to save jobs in the auto industry?

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: I'm happy to talk about our plan for the automotive industry and the fact that, in Alliston, the 11 millionth Honda just rolled off the line, supporting 4,200 great-paying jobs in that community—hard-working men and women who get up every single day to produce top-quality vehicles right here in Ontario.

That doesn't include GM's announcement, just a few weeks ago—a \$691-million investment in next-generation V8 engines in St. Catharines; Toyota's \$1.1-billion investment in RAV4 production; and Ford investing billions of dollars to retool their Oakville plant to produce vehicles here in Ontario.

We are continuing to support the automotive sector. We are continuing to generate good-paying jobs and great investments in the province of Ontario.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. John Fraser: My question is for the Premier. We learned this morning from The Trillium that the government—Metrolinx—settled a \$500-million lawsuit put forward by the Premier's big donor and billionaire bagman, Carmine Nigro, who's also chair of the LCBO and also a Ford government appointee to Invest Ontario, and also with connections to the greenbelt. There are no details.

Speaker, through you: Did the Premier direct Metrolinx to make this lawsuit go away?

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

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: As that member knows, the Premier nor anyone here gets involved in any of those discussions. Those are independent matters.

But what we are focused on is building transit. For 15 years, those Liberal members sat on their heels and did absolutely nothing. We see record gridlock across this city, across this province, because of their inaction.

We've got shovels in the ground on some of the largest public transit projects across this country—not only this country, but across North America. The Ontario Line: the first time we've got shovels in the ground in downtown Toronto in over 60 years. That line will move 400,000 people every single day.

We're going to continue to ensure that we're building transit for the future. We're going to continue to ensure we get shovels in the ground and deliver on our mandate to build Ontario.

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

Mr. John Fraser: Carmine Nigro has been rewarded with some of the most powerful appointments by this Premier. He's the LCBO chair. He's an Invest Ontario board member, Ontario Place Corp. chair—anybody seeing the connections?—and a past VP of the Ontario—wait for it—PC fund. Interesting combination. And I'm willing to bet he has a luxury private jet as well.

Regular Ontarians don't get secret deals behind closed doors, but somehow the Premier's well-connected friends are getting them. So, Speaker, I'll ask the Premier: Why should the people of Ontario believe that the Premier's secret settlement with somebody who is so well-connected is above board?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Regular Ontarians want us to build in this province. That's what we were elected on our mandate—three consecutive majority

governments to build Ontario. That's transit projects across this province.

Let's talk about the Hazel line, the first time that we're going to get rapid transit for the residents of Peel, Brampton and Mississauga. It's going to move thousands of people every single day.

For 15 years those members across the aisle sat on their heels and neglected the people of Scarborough. For the first time we're going to be building rapid transit for Scarborough residents and ensuring that they get access to the public transit that they deserve.

We've been elected on a mandate to build. We're going to continue to get shovels in the ground and we're going to continue to deliver on the largest mandate to build public transit in the history of Canada and North America.

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

Mr. John Fraser: Carmine Nigro, the Premier's big donor and billionaire bagman, sued the government for air rights that he actually never really owned, and somehow the government has secretly settled behind closed doors.

Ontarians are being asked to trust yet another secret deal. We can't even find out what happened with the Premier's luxury jet and now we have this. And it's involving, once again, one of the Premier's closest insiders, with no transparency, no accountability.

A simple question to the Minister of Transportation: How much was the settlement that Mr. Nigro received for air rights that he never really actually owned?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: We need to build transit in Ontario. That's exactly what we were elected to do and that's exactly what we will do moving forward. We can't afford to have the status quo, and we especially can't afford what the Liberals did in the last 15 years that they were in government. They have nothing that they can account for on infrastructure spending or infrastructure dollars in the ground. We lose almost \$54 billion a year to lost productivity because of gridlock and the lack of investments that they made when they were in government, Madam Speaker.

But we took a different approach. We are getting transit built. We have put legislation in this House to ensure that we can move these projects faster, quicker, so we get shovels in the ground quicker and faster. Because people expect us to build for the future and that is exactly what we are doing. The Scarborough subway extension, the Yonge North subway extension—every one of these projects will change the face of this city, of this province and will move people quicker and faster—

Interruption.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I apologize.

I recognize the leader of the third party.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. John Fraser: Guys, when the Raging Grannies appear, you've gotta be scared. Trust me, I know that.

You know what Ontarians can't afford? They can't afford a government that rewards its rich friends for things that they actually never really owned.

Let's tell the story. In November 2018, Carmine Nigro entered into an agreement to buy these air rights. It's important to remember that this agreement was never settled. Mr. Nigro never paid for those air rights, and they never actually belonged to him. So, in 2021 and 2022, Metrolinx began expropriation. In 2024, Mr. Nigro's company sued for \$500 million and in 2025 it settled. And now we're just finding out about it.

1050

What exactly is the Premier hiding?

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

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: As that member knows and I'll repeat, these are legal processes and these are processes that have been through our independent agency at Metrolinx. What we are committed to doing is building public transit, a mandate that we were elected to do. Ontarians cannot afford to go back to the 15 years of neglect by the previous Liberal government, where no transit was built, where no highways were built, Madam Speaker. The status quo does not stand.

We will continue to build, and that is why the people of this province have trusted us to move forward on this mandate, to build highways like the 413, the Bradford Bypass, to develop the Ring of Fire and to develop the roads that lead to the Ring of Fire, or public transit in this province. For 15 years, they did absolutely nothing to move people. The Ontario Line will move over 400,000 people every single day. The Crosstown, which is now open, is moving thousands of people and saving them over an hour, getting an hour back into their day every single day.

These are real challenges that we are solving and we're going to continue to move forward on getting transit—

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

Mr. John Fraser: The real challenge is getting answers out of this government of any substance. Any reasonable person would listen to what I just said and say, "There's something fishy here." Getting money for rights that you never actually owned—it just doesn't sound fair. I think that's a reasonable thing to say. And then you have to ask yourself: Why did Mr. Nigro buy these air rights in the first place? And then why did he actually never pay for them, over four years? So then it makes me think, maybe he knew something that not everybody else knew.

So my question to the Minister of Transportation is, did the Minister of Transportation or the Premier or anybody in this government let Mr. Nigro know in advance of November 2018 that Metrolinx would be expropriating the rights for which he is now being so richly—

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

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: We were elected, once again, on a mandate to build public transit, because the status quo just does not cut it. We need to get people moving across this province, Madam Speaker. We need to

get shovels in the ground, and that's exactly what we are doing. Whether it's the Bradford Bypass, the 413; whether it's the Ontario Line, the Scarborough subway extension, the Eglinton West extension—none of those projects would have happened if it wasn't for this government taking the initiative to move forward to get these projects built. And that's exactly what we want to do.

The people of this province deserve world-class transit. That is exactly what we want to deliver on, whether it's LRTs in Hamilton, in Mississauga, in Brampton, in Toronto, or our GO expansion at work across this province; setting records last year—over 76 million people using GO Transit last year. We are going to continue to invest in public transit, we are going to continue to build and we are going to continue to ensure that we deliver a world-class transit system.

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

Mr. John Fraser: So the minister is shovelling something, but he's not putting a shovel in the ground.

Speaker, today at committee, we brought forward a motion, and we'll be bringing forward another motion today, to ask the chair and the CEO of Metrolinx to appear before committee, to answer questions with regard to this air rights settlement scandal.

When you think about it, we just gave millions of dollars—millions of dollars—for air; air that somebody didn't own, that was ours. It just doesn't make any sense. We can't give schools the money that they need, our hospitals are hurting, people are out of work, but we've got money for somebody who doesn't own something that we're compensating him for: Mr. Nigro.

Can somebody tell me how that makes any sense to anyone over there? Can the minister try to do that without picking up a shovel?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Madam Speaker, no one in this government was involved in that. That's an independent agency that builds transit, that moves forward on these transit projects. Not the Premier and no one in this government was involved in that process.

What we are doing is continuing to build transit in Ontario. The Ontario Line, for example: 4,700 jobs that are supported by that project; thousands of jobs supported by the Scarborough subway extension. These are jobs that those members opposite have voted against every single time.

We were elected on a mandate to continue building public transit, on a mandate to continue investing in these projects that will create thousands of jobs for people across this province, and that's what we want to do. We want to get people moving—whether it's highways, whether it's public transit and bringing in programs like One Fare that are saving families \$1,600 every single year. That's our commitment, and that's exactly what we want to do—affordability, and ensure people move.

CHILD PROTECTION

MPP Alexa Gilmour: This week, two foster parents were found guilty of murdering L.L. and torturing J.L.,

two Indigenous brothers zip-tied into wetsuits, confined in a dungeon-like basement as they wasted away. Teachers, doctors and social workers sounded the alarm for five years—five years—and this government heard them and did nothing.

This government knows that one child connected to government care is dying every three days, and their response is to stop tracking the numbers. Our children need protection, not secrecy.

To the Premier: Why did the government stop tracking the number of children dying under your care?

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

Hon. Michael Parsa: I thank the honourable member for the very important question.

Madam Speaker, the loss of any young person in care is profoundly tragic and heartbreaking. No caregiver or parent should ever have to deal with such heartbreak.

It's why our government took action from the day we formed government. We said the status quo was not acceptable. We've taken action. We've said from the beginning that the time for talk is over. We have introduced measures that never existed before. We have increased the frequency of visits, from 90 days to every 30 days. We hired more inspectors on the ground. We increased the number of unannounced inspections. We introduced monetary penalties to hold bad actors accountable.

This is a subject that I would appreciate no one play politics with on this side of the House. And certainly, I expect all my colleagues in the opposition to support us on making sure no child or youth in this—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the member for Parkdale—High Park.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: Speaker, this government says that they had a visit every 30 days for five years, and children who wasted away in a basement were never removed from the home. It is shameful.

On Saturday, the Rosedale community gathered to mark two years since another CAS child, four-year-old Neveah, was found dead in a dumpster—two years ago this Saturday, and still no systemic accountability; only a government that hides data.

These were children. These were children with names and people who loved them and a government that was supposed to protect them.

If this government won't protect them, will they reinstate the provincial advocate for youth and children who will?

Hon. Michael Parsa: Madam Speaker, let me make it very clear to every member in this House, including the members in the opposition: No more time for talk. The office that the member is referring to wrote over 700 pages—report, report, report. That time is done.

We're now taking added action. We will hold every single person accountable—including monetary fines.

Madam Speaker, the opposition did nothing when the previous government was in power.

I and the members of this caucus will not have kids left behind. It's why we introduced measures. I would encourage the member to stand up and support us on these initiatives, not to come here and politicize the issue. The measures that we've introduced never existed before.

No, we're not going to have an office that sits down and writes reports.

We will be happy to take action to make sure every child and youth in this province is supported—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The member from Parkdale–High Park will come to order.

Hon. Michael Parsa: —and if they don't, every single person in this space is put on notice: We will hold—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Order.

I recognize the member for Kingston and the Islands.

1100

AVION DU GOUVERNEMENT GOVERNMENT JET

M. Ted Hsu: La ministre des Affaires francophones, dont le ministère a subi des compressions budgétaires cette année, est aussi présidente du Conseil de Trésor qui a approuvé une dépense de 29,8 millions de dollars pour l'achat d'un jet privé de luxe.

A-t-elle déjà approuvé la revente du jet privé de luxe? Peut-elle nous dire quand les documents liés à cette revente seront rendus publics?

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

Hon. Steve Clark: Thanks, Speaker. Through you to the member for Kingston and the Islands, I think it's very important for this House to go back to what we know. What we know is the Premier heard the concerns of Ontarians and decided rightly that it wasn't the time to make this purchase and acted by selling the aircraft. The aircraft was sold—the Premier has asserted it many times—for the same price that it was purchased for.

As the member will know, transferring ownership and completing that hand-off does take some time. But I'm pleased to inform the House that, as of last week, possession of the aircraft was transferred back to Bombardier. The province no longer has it. The maintenance service provider is reviewing final servicing; we will also make that information available once it's finalized.

But just to recap, Speaker, through you to the member, the Premier listened. The aircraft was sold back at the same price. We are no longer in possession of that of that jet.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the member for Kingston and the Islands.

M. Ted Hsu: Ça fait 14 fois qu'elle n'a pas pu répondre. Laissez-la parler, tout simplement.

Le 25 mars 2026, lorsqu'elle a présenté la Loi des crédits de 2026, la présidente du Conseil du Trésor déclarait, et je cite : « Au Conseil du Trésor, notre

responsabilité envers les contribuables de l'Ontario est toujours au premier plan de chacune de nos décisions. Ce sens de responsabilité est indissociable de notre engagement envers la transparence. »

Quand fera-t-elle enfin preuve de transparence au sujet de la revente secrète de ce jet privé de luxe?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the Treasury Board president.

L'hon. Caroline Mulroney: Madame la Présidente, ils sont certainement très persistants.

Madam Speaker, they certainly are quite persistent. I understand why the Liberals are so persistent after three devastating electoral defeats where they were wholly rejected by the voters of Ontario. After three different failed leaders—Kathleen Wynne, Steven Del Duca and Bonnie Crombie—were also rejected, they're here and the member opposite is the interim leader for the third time. And so, they have had to learn persistence over all of these failures.

They won't accept the answers that the government House leader has provided or the Minister of Finance has provided. We have been very clear. They want to lecture about accountability and they want the receipts. Well, let's check the receipts. We have received eight consecutive clean audit opinions year after year. They received two unqualified audit opinions. The Auditor General would not even sign their statements.

NORTHERN TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Billy Pang: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. For 14 years, families and workers across northern Ontario paid the price for the Liberal government's decision to cancel the Northlander passenger rail service. As a result, communities in the north saw their access to jobs, health care and opportunities significantly reduced.

Speaker, our government made a commitment to restore passenger rail to the north, and we have been making meaningful progress to deliver that promise.

Can the minister please tell this House what our government is doing to restore reliable passenger rail service to northern Ontario?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member for Hastings–Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Ric Bresee: I want to thank the member for Markham–Unionville, my friend, for the important question.

Speaker, while the Liberals cancelled the Northlander in 2012 and the NDP offered nothing but silence, our government got to work. We've invested more than \$100 million in rail infrastructure north of North Bay, completed the North Bay rail bypass and acquired 205 kilometres of dedicated railway between North Bay and Washago with a \$138-million investment that means faster, more reliable passenger service. And now, for the first time in 14 years, the Northlander is being tested along the full route from Timmins to Cochrane all the way to Union Station right here in downtown Toronto. This is what delivering for northern Ontario looks like.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the member for Markham–Unionville.

Mr. Billy Pang: Thank you to the minister for the answer. Our government is delivering real results for families and workers across northern Ontario. People in the north deserve reliable, accessible passenger rail that helps them get where they need to be faster and easier, whether that's for work, school or important medical appointments. This is about making travel simpler, more convenient and more reliable for communities across the region, while supporting economic growth and better connection between communities. Through these efforts, we are helping to build a stronger, more connected north.

Speaker, can the PA share what our government is doing to ensure the Northlander truly works for people across northern Ontario?

Mr. Ric Bresee: Thank you again to the member for Markham–Unionville. Our government is focused on delivering a passenger rail service that is affordable, accessible and built to meet the needs of our northern communities. Each train set offers 169 seats, including accessible seating, wide aisles, accessible bathrooms and even charging ports. The Northlander will connect 16 communities over 740 kilometres from Timmins and Cochrane to Union Station here in Toronto.

Speaker, we're going even further. Our government is proposing a northern rideshare framework so that residents in the communities without local transit can still reach the Northlander stations. Northern communities deserve world-class transportation and, under this Premier's leadership and this Minister of Transportation, that is exactly what our government is delivering.

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

MPP Jamie West: I have a question for the Premier. Ron Rousseau is a miner in Sudbury, and two years ago he was diagnosed with stage 4 lung cancer. Ron has a tumour in his lung the size of a mandarin, and the WSIB has confirmed that it's work-related. Ron is going to lose his WSIB coverage in June, not because his cancer is cured but because of his age. So now Ron is not only worried about having cancer; he's worried about how he's going to support his family after his birthday.

My question: In June, will Ron have to return to mining while fighting lung cancer, or will the Premier scrap the WSIB age cap?

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

MPP Mohamed Firin: I'm really sad to hear that, and I do hope for the best recovery for him.

But what I will say, Madam Speaker, is that no government has taken more action on protecting workers than this government, led by this Premier. Recently, the Minister of Red Tape Reduction introduced legislation where we've increased the age cap of WSIB, and it's something, unfortunately, that I wish the NDP and other members of this House supported, but, unfortunately, they didn't.

When it comes to WSIB, we have the best rates, you know what I mean? We've increased our benefits, we've given more back to employers that are doing great work, and we'll continue to support the workers of this province.

1110

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

MPP Jamie West: According to Ministry of Labour data, 87% of all fatalities in Ontario are caused by occupational disease in mines. Speaker, Ontario's diesel and silica limits are too high; Ontario's miners are forced to breathe more diesel than miners in comparable nations like Europe and Australia. Our silica limits are four times higher than occupational health expert recommendations. I'm from a mining town. I love mining. I'm excited for the expansion of mining in Ontario, but we have to protect Ontario's miners.

My question: Will the Premier protect Ontario's miners or will he pave the path to critical minerals on their lungs?

MPP Mohamed Firin: I thank the member for the question. Over five million workers receive benefits from the WSIB, and the WSIB has reduced the average premium rate to the lowest rate in almost 50 years in this province, saving businesses over \$60 million. Madam Speaker, 60% of claimants have not lost any time at all, and of the 40% of those who miss work, 87% of them return to work within the first three months. In 2025, WSIB unlocked over \$400 million to invest into the health and safety of the workers of this province.

As I said earlier, no government in the history of this province has done more to protect workers than this government. We've introduced over seven of the Working for Workers legislation and we'll continue to protect the workers of this province.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: Speaker, we have been asking the Premier and his cabinet to share the invoice and the bill of sale for their luxury private jet that they bought, but the Premier, his finance minister, the President of the Treasury Board, they have not shown us the documents. This evasive Conservative Premier and his finance minister used the budget bill to rip apart freedom-of-information laws so the Premier could keep these kinds of records hidden.

If the Premier has nothing to hide about his private jet or his calls with his greenbelt friends or the recent Metro-linx settlement with his friend Carmine Nigro for probably millions of dollars of taxpayer money, then he should have nothing to fear in sharing his records. But this Premier is hiding records, so he must be afraid of what they will show.

Through you to the Premier, Speaker: What is in these documents that makes him so afraid?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Madam Speaker, the NDP and the Liberals that destroyed our province, they want to focus on that; I'll tell you what we're focusing on. We have a plan for jobs, anchored by building our nuclear

energy right here at home. We're leading the world when it comes to nuclear. Ontario is moving forward with Bruce C project, creating over 18,900 jobs and powering over 4.8 million homes. Once it's done, there will be 10,100 good-paying jobs.

They wanted to close the nuclear sector. They wanted to make sure they closed Pickering and Darlington; we're building the largest-scale nuclear at Bruce C on the continent. We're leading when it comes to SMRs, creating thousands and thousands of more jobs. We're shipping those out around the world. We have a list from here to the floor about more opportunities, more jobs for the people of Ontario.

That's what we're focused on. They can focus on their stuff; we'll focus on job creation and making sure—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the member for Don Valley West.

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: Speaker, question after question on this topic and that's the answer we get from a government under RCMP investigation. They have lost their way, and that includes the Premier, the finance minister and the Treasury Board president. They all said yes to the jet. They don't want to say the word, they don't want to talk about it, because it's their Achilles heel. The jet and the FOI changes show this government's true colours: They're more interested in protecting themselves than in protecting Ontario.

Under this government, under this Premier, unemployment went from 5.8% when he took office to 7.7% now. That's not protecting Ontario. The only people believing what the Premier has to say are the Conservative members sitting in the government benches. The people of Ontario aren't buying it and neither are we.

Back to the Premier: What are you trying to hide?

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

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: That imagery of those 300,000 tail lights leaving Canada, all those manufacturing jobs south of the border—the million jobs that have been created since we took power, that is what a government does.

And while the member opposite raises jobs, the Premier talked about Bruce C. What a great opportunity that is for new jobs.

Why don't we talk about my riding of Pickering, the refurbishment? Over 20,000 new jobs being created: There's an opportunity for you—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The member for Ottawa South, come to order.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: —in our communities.

While we're at it, for Toronto, where were you when we had \$83 million for affordable student housing at Toronto Metropolitan University? She voted against it, in Toronto, where she represents her citizens.

Madam Speaker, this member and all the others should support growth and good jobs in Ontario. That's what they should do.

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES

Mr. Joseph Racinsky: Speaker, my question is for the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions. This week is Mental Health Week, an important time to raise awareness about the importance of prioritizing mental health and checking in on our loved ones. I've spoken to many families in my community who have experience with depression and anxiety, whether they are struggling themselves or supporting their loved ones going through a tough time. They deserve access to programs that will help them get the care they need.

Speaker, our government has made historic investments in expanding mental health services through our \$3.8-billion Roadmap to Wellness. We are continuing to work on building a comprehensive system of care and filling gaps in communities across our province.

Speaker, can the associate minister share with this House what progress we have made in expanding care through the Roadmap to Wellness for those who need it most?

Hon. Vijay Thanigasalam: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member from Wellington–Halton Hills for this important question and his passionate advocacy on this issue.

There is no question that too many in our communities have and will face mental health challenges in their lifetime. That is why this government, under the leadership of Premier Ford, has made transformational investments through the Roadmap to Wellness.

We are investing in programs that treat depression and anxiety-related disorders such as the Ontario Structured Psychotherapy Program that offers free therapy services to adults experiencing stress, depression, OCD, PTSD and other anxiety-related concerns. As of last month, there are over 25,000 people enrolled in this program.

We are also investing in intensive services such as rTMS—magnetic stimulation to better treat severe cases of depression.

We take mental health as health and treat everyone, Madam Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the member for Wellington–Halton Hills.

Mr. Joseph Racinsky: Thank you to the associate minister for his continued work on expanding mental health care in communities like mine.

Speaker, the pain of addiction has touched too many lives in our province. People in Ontario want to see services that will help their loved ones on their path to recovery. HART hubs are doing exactly that. They work to provide wraparound supports for those struggling with homelessness and addiction. From withdrawal management and addiction counselling, primary care, all the way to supportive housing, HART hubs are saving lives in communities across our province.

Speaker, can the associate minister update the House on the important work our government is doing to help

individuals struggling with addiction on the path to recovery?

Hon. Vijay Thanigasalam: The member is exactly right. HART hubs are having an enormous impact in communities across the province. Over the past year I've had the opportunity to visit HART hubs across the province from Windsor to Ottawa to Sault Ste. Marie and countless more in between, seeing the incredible work that is being done on the ground to offer meaningful mental health and addiction support for the most vulnerable among us. HART hubs are supporting over 45,000 people annually, helping break the cycle of addiction, Madam Speaker.

We also established 500 addiction recovery beds, serving over 7,000 people across the province.

All these important investments are to help those who are struggling with addiction, to make sure we provide the recovery and treatment towards a path towards recovery.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

Ms. Marit Stiles: What a rare sighting; it's like a blue moon.

My question is for the Premier. Families are saving up, but they can't afford to buy a first home. Young families and young people are working so hard at school—this may sound familiar—but still can't find a job. Everybody out there is playing by the rules, but the Premier makes it impossible for them to get ahead.

1120

Recently, when the courts told the Premier that he had to start playing by the rules, he used his own pen to change the law so that he could hide his phone records. I would love the Premier to stand up in his place and answer this question: Does the Premier think the rule of law does not apply to him?

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

Hon. Stephen Crawford: I find it ironic when the member opposite, the Leader of the Opposition, speaks about affordability. That party voted against the budget that we just passed a few weeks ago, which helps and supports consumers in the province of Ontario, which reduces the cost of a new home. They go on and on about the cost of a new home in this province. They voted against it, Speaker. They have absolutely no problem doing that. They speak one way when the cameras are on; they do something else when the camera is off.

Speaker, we are focused on building an economy, building an environment to create investments. We're getting it done. We're building roads to the Ring of Fire. We're getting investments in various sectors, including the tech sector—the second-largest tech sector here in North America. We're building a financial industry. We're building a manufacturing industry. We're focused on getting the jobs and the people of Ontario to work.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: It really is actually quite sad, because this is a Premier who built his whole career—well, most

of it, anyway—pretending that he was just like everybody else, that he was out there for the little guy, that he was going to be the one who was going to fight back against corruption and the gravy train and government waste. And then he turns around and he reaches deep into the taxpayer pocket and pulls out \$30 million for a private luxury jet. And he makes deals in the backrooms with developer friends.

Now, as the walls are closing in around him, he directs the government to change the very laws so he can hide his backroom deals. That's what has happened now. I really hope that this time the Premier has the backbone to get up and answer the questions that the people want answered.

Why is the Premier so afraid to come clean about why he changed these laws?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The Premier of Ontario.

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Madam Speaker: I talk to the little guy and little gal every day, more than anyone in the entire world.

I'll tell you what we're doing, Madam Speaker. Ontario is leading the world when it comes to nuclear, creating 150,000 jobs. They wanted to close the plants. There would be no one employed in nuclear right now. We're building on the largest scale on the continent.

They talked about housing. They vote against the HST. We made an agreement with the federal government to get rid of the HST, saving people \$130,000.

Madam Speaker, you see the gas prices going through the roof. They voted against that 10.7 cents a litre that we're putting back into people's pockets.

They vote against absolutely everything that will create prosperity and make sure we have the strongest province in the world—which we are. And we're going to continue focusing—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member for Don Valley North.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

Mr. Jonathan Tsao: My question is for the Premier. Speaker, for years Ontarians have used freedom-of-information laws to drag the truth out of governments and hold them accountable, whether they liked it or not.

These laws exposed the greenbelt scandal, and the RCMP got called in. They exposed the Skills Development Fund scandal, and the OPP got called in. They exposed the unacceptable conditions in long-term-care homes during COVID-19, and the army was called in. But when a judge was called in and ordered the Premier to turn over his cellphone records, he decided to change the rules in the middle of the game.

So, to the Premier, what is on your cellphone and why are you so desperate to hide it?

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

Hon. Stephen Crawford: Our government updated legislation that was almost 40 years old, Speaker. It was in bad need of refinement, updating. When this legislation

that it updated first came about, we didn't have cellphones; there was no artificial intelligence, no compound computing. Nothing like that existed. The world has changed.

We're updating a law that aligns itself with the majority of governments right here in Canada, including your federal cousins in Ottawa. I encourage you—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The member for Ottawa South has been warned.

Hon. Stephen Crawford: —to go to the federal government about that.

But what I will say: This government is focused on economic growth. It's focused on affordability. With economic growth, we are building a nuclear industry second to none in the world. We're building the first small modular reactor in the G7, creating tens of thousands of jobs.

I'll have more to say in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the member for Don Valley North.

Mr. Jonathan Tsao: Speaker, the minister can spin all he wants, but he cannot hide. There is simply no defending the indefensible.

This morning, we learned about the secret settlement with the Premier's bagman for untold millions. So maybe, maybe, we're getting closer to the truth now as to why he wants to hide his cellphone records.

Speaker, let's call a spade a spade. The courts were about to expose the Premier's phone records, and now he's moving heaven and earth to stop it.

So here's the question every Ontarian wants to know right now: What is on that phone, and why are you so desperate to hide it?

Hon. Stephen Crawford: I've touched on this subject many, many times. I'll give the same answer. We're aligning legislation with the other Canadian provinces—including your federal cousins in Ottawa.

Speaker, what the people of Ontario do care about is—they want a good-paying job, they want lower taxes. And that's what we're doing.

We're focused on building a nuclear industry that is second to none in the G7. We're focused on building an energy industry. We're focused on getting manufacturing jobs back to the province of Ontario, when 300,000 left, under the Liberal government that you supported—that you were a part of, in fact. Jobs left the province. We're building a financial industry. We're building the manufacturing industry. We're building an industry focused on technology—400,000 tech jobs right here in the province, building and incubating a tech sector that is second to none. We are focused on reducing taxes: small business taxes—a 30% reduction.

That's what the people of Ontario want—lower taxes and economic growth and a good job to come home to every night.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Mr. Brian Saunderson: My question is for the Minister of Emergency Preparedness and Response. When

emergencies like the 2025 ice storm—which impacted the residents of my riding and the minister's—hit, it is important that our residents feel supported and safe.

Residents, municipalities and local organizations are all stepping up, but we know that coordination, training and access to equipment are essential to an effective response.

That is why our government is building an emergency response network across our province to help communities respond to local emergencies and deploy critical resources at a moment's notice.

Through you, Speaker: Can the minister tell us more about Ontario Corps and what investments have been made to strengthen training and equipment?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Under Premier Ford's leadership, our government is building a culture of readiness, empowering volunteers and communities to quickly mobilize and deliver vital support like clearing roads, providing food and shelter, and helping our most vulnerable during emergencies.

That is why our government has created Ontario Corps, a group of skilled partners and volunteers the province can deploy to help communities respond to natural disasters and other emergencies. To ensure these volunteers have the support they need, we are leveraging the expertise and equipment of our Ontario Corps partners, who are ready to mobilize and deploy volunteers within 24 to 72 hours. We have invested \$21.5 million in Ontario Corps partners over three years to purchase equipment and training, and to strengthen their readiness and response capabilities.

Speaker, Ontario Corps is about neighbours helping neighbours, united by pride for our province, fuelled by purpose and proven through action, from north to south, east to west and beyond. This truly is the Ontario spirit.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the member from Simcoe–Grey.

Mr. Brian Saunderson: I want to thank the minister for that important update. It is very important to our residents to hear how Ontario Corps is supporting Ontario communities and delivering critical on-the-ground support.

During emergencies such as severe weather, people in my riding of Simcoe–Grey and across our great province want to know how they can help in their communities and what our government is doing to help support volunteer efforts on the ground. They are asking how Ontario Corps works, who can join and how volunteers are trained, coordinated and deployed alongside partner organizations.

Speaker, can the minister explain how Ontario Corps is engaging volunteers in our communities across the province to make sure that they're mobilized in times of need?

1130

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Everyone in Ontario has a role to play in supporting the safety of communities, friends and families we care about. That is why I encourage every Ontarian to register and become part of Ontario Corps.

Since the beginning of this flood season, over 19,000 volunteers have answered the call and registered to join Ontario Corps, stepping up to support their communities when help is needed most. We now have 13 NGOs and

four private sector partners, including Labatt Canada, which can provide clean water to communities during emergencies; GlobalMedic, which has been deployed to support flood mitigation efforts; and ATTCH Niagara, which provides mental health support during emergencies.

We will continue to expand this network. I have an exciting announcement coming this afternoon. Stay tuned for more.

Through this network, volunteers provide critical on-the-ground assistance, including emergency shelter and accommodation support, debris management and emergency food services.

Sign up to be part of Ontario Corps. Everyone in Ontario needs to do their part to provide a safe, practised and prepared Ontario.

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My constituent Zikun Xu worked almost 150 hours as a licensed security guard in London. After earning more than \$2,000 in wages, he was paid only \$180. When he tried to recover the money he was legally owed, his employer delayed payment for weeks. When he spoke up, he was wrongfully terminated without cause.

Speaker, how many more workers like Zikun will face intimidation, retaliation and lack of enforcement before this government finally holds employers accountable to pay workers what they have earned?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The member for York South–Weston

MPP Mohamed Firin: I'd like to thank the member opposite for the question.

Over the past five years, the ministry has recovered more than \$96 million in wages and other money owed to employees. Wage theft is unacceptable, and that's why we've doubled the maximum fine for individuals from \$50,000 to \$100,000, and increased penalties for repeat offenders by 400%, from \$1,000 to \$5,000.

We have more than 200 employment standards officers conducting inspections and responding to worker complaints. In 2025, we've carried out 530 inspections, and we'll always strive to do more. We also banned unpaid trial shifts and doubled down on ensuring workers aren't charged when faced with gas or dine-and-dashes.

Speaking of dine-and-dashes, I recently learned that the leader of the third party skipped out on paying for a meal. Luckily, we're fortunate enough that the member from Kingston and the Islands paid for that meal. So on one side, they talk about supporting workers, and on the other side, they skip out on paying meals. Madam Speaker, the NDP—

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Speaker, Zikun's story is the reality for far too many Ontario workers. Over the last 10 years, nearly \$200 million in wage theft has been reported to the Ministry of Labour, which is just a fraction of the wages that have been stolen because many workers do not report.

Over that same period, only 22% of those stolen wages have been recovered and returned to workers.

Wage theft means that workers cannot pay rent, they can't buy groceries, they can't afford medication—while employers continue to profit.

I ask again: When will this government implement the proactive, rigorous enforcement and reprisal protection that workers need to prevent the crisis of wage theft?

MPP Mohamed Firin: As I've said, we've recovered more than \$96 million.

But I think the members of the Liberal Party misunderstood me. What I was saying was the member from Kingston and Islands actually paid for the NDP leader's dine-and-dash.

Luckily, because of my colleagues from this side, we've changed the dine-and-dash regulations. That poor worker would have had that deducted from their wages if it wasn't for Working for Workers 4 that my colleagues from that side approved under the previous Minister of Labour.

It shows a pattern that the leader of the NDP talks about one thing in this House, and when she goes out there, she does completely the opposite. She does not care about the workers of this province, and my point proves that.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Pursuant to standing order 36(a), the member for Sudbury has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to the question given by the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development regarding occupational disease in mining. This matter will be debated on Tuesday following private members' public business.

DEFERRED VOTES

BUILDING BILLY BISHOP AIRPORT ACT, 2026

LOI DE 2026 SUR LA CONSTRUCTION DE L'AÉROPORT BILLY BISHOP

Deferred vote on the motion that the question now be put on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 110, An Act to enact the Building Billy Bishop Airport Act, 2026 / Projet de loi 110, Loi édictant la Loi de 2026 sur la construction de l'aéroport Billy Bishop.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Call in the members. This is a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1135 to 1140.

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

On May 4, 2026, Mr. Sarkaria moved second reading of Bill 110, An Act to enact the Building Billy Bishop Airport Act, 2026.

On May 6, 2026, Mr. Clark moved that the question be now put.

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

Ayes

Allsopp, Tyler	Ford, Doug	Racinsky, Joseph
Anand, Deepak	Gallagher Murphy, Dawn	Rae, Matthew
Babikian, Aris	Grewal, Hardeep Singh	Riddell, Brian
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Gualtieri, Silvia	Rosenberg, Bill
Bouma, Will	Hamid, Zee	Sabawy, Sheref
Bresee, Ric	Hardeman, Ernie	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Calandra, Paul	Holland, Kevin	Sarrazin, Stéphane
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Jones, Trevor	Saunderson, Brian
Clark, Steve	Jordan, John	Smith, Dave
Coe, Lorne	Kanapathi, Logan	Smith, David
Cooper, Michelle	Kerzner, Michael S.	Smith, Graydon
Crawford, Stephen	Leardi, Anthony	Smith, Laura
Cuzzetto, Rudy	Lecce, Stephen	Tangri, Nina
Darouze, George	Mulroney, Caroline	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Denault, Billy	Pang, Billy	Thompson, Lisa M.
Dixon, Jess	Parsa, Michael	Tibollo, Michael A.
Dowie, Andrew	Pierre, Natalie	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Dunlop, Jill	Pinsonneault, Steve	Vickers, Paul
Firin, Mohamed	Pirie, George	Williams, Charmaine A.
Flack, Rob	Quinn, Nolan	

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

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gates, Wayne	Schreiner, Mike
Bell, Jessica	Gélinas, France	Shamji, Adil
Blais, Stephen	Gilmour, Alexa	Shaw, Sandy
Bourgouin, Guy	Glover, Chris	Smyth, Stephanie
Bowman, Stephanie	Hazell, Andrea	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Brady, Bobbi Ann	Hsu, Ted	Tabuns, Peter
Burch, Jeff	Mamakwa, Sol	Tsao, Jonathan
Cerjanec, Rob	McCrimmon, Karen	Vanthof, John
Clancy, Aislinn	McKenney, Catherine	Vaugeois, Lise
Collard, Lucille	Pasma, Chandra	Watt, Tyler
Fife, Catherine	Rakocevic, Tom	West, Jamie
Fraser, John	Sattler, Peggy	Wong-Tam, Kristyn

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day): The ayes are 59; the nays are 36.

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

Mr. Sarkaria has moved second reading of Bill 110, An Act to enact the Building Billy Bishop Airport Act, 2026. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

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

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

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1144 to 1145.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): On May 4, 2026, Mr. Sarkaria moved second reading of Bill 110, An Act to enact the Building Billy Bishop Airport Act, 2026.

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

Ayes

Allsopp, Tyler	Ford, Doug	Racinsky, Joseph
Anand, Deepak	Gallagher Murphy, Dawn	Rae, Matthew
Babikian, Aris	Grewal, Hardeep Singh	Riddell, Brian
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Gualtieri, Silvia	Rosenberg, Bill
Bouma, Will	Hamid, Zee	Sabawy, Sheref
Bresee, Ric	Hardeman, Ernie	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Calandra, Paul	Holland, Kevin	Sarrazin, Stéphane
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Jones, Trevor	Saunderson, Brian
Clark, Steve	Jordan, John	Smith, Dave
Coe, Lorne	Kanapathi, Logan	Smith, David
Cooper, Michelle	Kerzner, Michael S.	Smith, Graydon
Crawford, Stephen	Leardi, Anthony	Smith, Laura
Cuzzetto, Rudy	Lecce, Stephen	Tangri, Nina
Darouze, George	Mulroney, Caroline	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Denault, Billy	Pang, Billy	Thompson, Lisa M.
Dixon, Jess	Parsa, Michael	Tibollo, Michael A.
Dowie, Andrew	Pierre, Natalie	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Dunlop, Jill	Pinsonneault, Steve	Vickers, Paul
Firin, Mohamed	Pirie, George	Williams, Charmaine A.
Flack, Rob	Quinn, Nolan	

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

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gélinas, France	Shaw, Sandy
Bell, Jessica	Gilmour, Alexa	Smyth, Stephanie
Blais, Stephen	Glover, Chris	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Bourgouin, Guy	Hazell, Andrea	Stiles, Marit
Bowman, Stephanie	Hsu, Ted	Tabuns, Peter
Brady, Bobbi Ann	Mamakwa, Sol	Tsao, Jonathan
Burch, Jeff	McCrimmon, Karen	Vanthof, John
Cerjanec, Rob	McKenney, Catherine	Vaugeois, Lise
Clancy, Aislinn	Pasma, Chandra	Watt, Tyler
Collard, Lucille	Rakocevic, Tom	West, Jamie
Fife, Catherine	Sattler, Peggy	Wong-Tam, Kristyn
Fraser, John	Schreiner, Mike	
Gates, Wayne	Shamji, Adil	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day): The ayes are 59; the nays are 37.

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

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading? I recognize the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: I refer it to the Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The bill is therefore referred to the Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy.

TENANT PROTECTION

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): We have a deferred vote on private member's notice of motion number 70. Call in the members. This is a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1148 to 1149.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): On May 6, 2026, MPP Bell moved private member's notice of motion number 70.

All those in favour, please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gélinas, France	Shaw, Sandy
Bell, Jessica	Gilmour, Alexa	Smyth, Stephanie
Blais, Stephen	Glover, Chris	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Bourgouin, Guy	Hazell, Andrea	Stiles, Marit
Bowman, Stephanie	Hsu, Ted	Tabuns, Peter
Brady, Bobbi Ann	Mamakwa, Sol	Tsao, Jonathan
Burch, Jeff	McCrimmon, Karen	Vanhof, John
Cerjanec, Rob	McKenney, Catherine	Vaugeois, Lise
Clancy, Aislinn	Pasma, Chandra	Watt, Tyler
Collard, Lucille	Rakocevic, Tom	West, Jamie
Fife, Catherine	Sattler, Peggy	Wong-Tam, Kristyn
Fraser, John	Schreiner, Mike	
Gates, Wayne	Shamji, Adil	

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): All those against opposed, please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Allsopp, Tyler	Ford, Doug	Racinsky, Joseph
Anand, Deepak	Gallagher Murphy, Dawn	Rae, Matthew
Babikian, Aris	Grewal, Hardeep Singh	Riddell, Brian
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Gualtieri, Silvia	Rosenberg, Bill
Bouma, Will	Hamid, Zee	Sabawy, Sheref
Bresee, Ric	Hardeman, Ernie	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Calandra, Paul	Holland, Kevin	Sarrazin, Stéphane
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Jones, Trevor	Saunderson, Brian
Clark, Steve	Jordan, John	Smith, Dave
Coe, Lorne	Kanapathi, Logan	Smith, David
Cooper, Michelle	Kerzner, Michael S.	Smith, Graydon
Crawford, Stephen	Leardi, Anthony	Smith, Laura
Cuzzetto, Rudy	Lecce, Stephen	Tangri, Nina
Darouze, George	Mulroney, Caroline	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Denault, Billy	Pang, Billy	Thompson, Lisa M.
Dixon, Jess	Parsa, Michael	Tibollo, Michael A.
Dowie, Andrew	Pierre, Natalie	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Dunlop, Jill	Pinsonneault, Steve	Vickers, Paul
Firin, Mohamed	Pirie, George	Williams, Charmaine A.
Flack, Rob	Quinn, Nolan	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day): The ayes are 37; the nays are 59.

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

Motion negatived.

BETTER REGIONAL GOVERNANCE
ACT, 2026

LOI DE 2026 POUR UNE MEILLEURE
GOUVERNANCE RÉGIONALE

Deferred vote on the motion that the question now be put on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 100, An Act to amend the Municipal Act, 2001 and the Municipal Elections Act, 1996 / Projet de loi 100, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2001 sur les municipalités et la Loi de 1996 sur les élections municipales.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Call in the members. This is a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1152 to 1153

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): On May 5, 2026, Mr. Flack moved third reading of Bill 100, An Act to amend the Municipal Act, 2001 and the Municipal Elections Act, 1996.

On May 6, 2026, Mr. Clark moved that the question be now put.

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

Ayes

Allsopp, Tyler	Ford, Doug	Rae, Matthew
Anand, Deepak	Gallagher Murphy, Dawn	Riddell, Brian
Babikian, Aris	Grewal, Hardeep Singh	Rosenberg, Bill
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Gualtieri, Silvia	Sabawy, Sheref
Bouma, Will	Hamid, Zee	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Bresee, Ric	Hardeman, Ernie	Sarrazin, Stéphane
Calandra, Paul	Holland, Kevin	Saunderson, Brian
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Jones, Trevor	Smith, Dave
Clark, Steve	Jordan, John	Smith, David
Coe, Lorne	Kanapathi, Logan	Smith, Graydon
Cooper, Michelle	Leardi, Anthony	Smith, Laura
Crawford, Stephen	Lecce, Stephen	Tangri, Nina
Cuzzetto, Rudy	Mulroney, Caroline	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Darouze, George	Pang, Billy	Thompson, Lisa M.
Denault, Billy	Parsa, Michael	Tibollo, Michael A.
Dixon, Jess	Pierre, Natalie	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Dowie, Andrew	Pinsonneault, Steve	Vickers, Paul
Dunlop, Jill	Pirie, George	Williams, Charmaine A.
Firin, Mohamed	Quinn, Nolan	
Flack, Rob	Racinsky, Joseph	

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

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gélinas, France	Shaw, Sandy
Bell, Jessica	Gilmour, Alexa	Smyth, Stephanie
Blais, Stephen	Glover, Chris	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Bourgouin, Guy	Hazell, Andrea	Stiles, Marit
Bowman, Stephanie	Hsu, Ted	Tabuns, Peter
Brady, Bobbi Ann	Mamakwa, Sol	Tsao, Jonathan
Burch, Jeff	McCrimmon, Karen	Vanhof, John
Cerjanec, Rob	McKenney, Catherine	Vaugeois, Lise
Clancy, Aislinn	Pasma, Chandra	Watt, Tyler
Collard, Lucille	Rakocevic, Tom	West, Jamie
Fife, Catherine	Sattler, Peggy	Wong-Tam, Kristyn
Fraser, John	Schreiner, Mike	
Gates, Wayne	Shamji, Adil	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day): The ayes are 58; the nays are 37.

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

Mr. Flack has moved third reading of Bill 100, An Act to Amend the Municipal Act, 2001 and the Municipal Elections Act, 1996. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

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

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

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1156 to 1157.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): On May 5, 2026, Mr. Flack moved third reading of Bill 100, An Act to amend the Municipal Act, 2001 and the Municipal Elections Act, 1996.

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

Ayes

Allsopp, Tyler	Ford, Doug	Rae, Matthew
Anand, Deepak	Gallagher Murphy, Dawn	Riddell, Brian
Babikian, Aris	Grewal, Hardeep Singh	Rosenberg, Bill
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Gualtieri, Silvia	Sabawy, Sheref
Bouma, Will	Hamid, Zee	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Bresee, Ric	Hardeman, Ernie	Sarrazin, Stéphane
Calandra, Paul	Holland, Kevin	Saunderson, Brian
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Jones, Trevor	Smith, Dave
Clark, Steve	Jordan, John	Smith, David
Coe, Lorne	Kanapathi, Logan	Smith, Graydon
Cooper, Michelle	Leardi, Anthony	Smith, Laura
Crawford, Stephen	Lecce, Stephen	Tangri, Nina
Cuzzetto, Rudy	Mulroney, Caroline	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Darouze, George	Pang, Billy	Thompson, Lisa M.
Denault, Billy	Parsa, Michael	Tibollo, Michael A.
Dixon, Jess	Pierre, Natalie	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Dowie, Andrew	Pinsonneault, Steve	Vickers, Paul
Dunlop, Jill	Pirie, George	Williams, Charmaine A.
Firin, Mohamed	Quinn, Nolan	
Flack, Rob	Racinsky, Joseph	

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

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gélinas, France	Shaw, Sandy
Bell, Jessica	Gilmour, Alexa	Smyth, Stephanie
Blais, Stephen	Glover, Chris	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Bourgouin, Guy	Hazell, Andrea	Stiles, Marit
Bowman, Stephanie	Hsu, Ted	Tabuns, Peter
Brady, Bobbi Ann	Mamakwa, Sol	Tsao, Jonathan
Burch, Jeff	McCrimmon, Karen	Vanthof, John
Cerjanec, Rob	McKenney, Catherine	Vaugeois, Lise
Clancy, Aislinn	Pasma, Chandra	Watt, Tyler
Collard, Lucille	Rakocevic, Tom	West, Jamie
Fife, Catherine	Sattler, Peggy	Wong-Tam, Kristyn
Fraser, John	Schreiner, Mike	
Gates, Wayne	Shamji, Adil	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day): The ayes are 58; the nays are 37.

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

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

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

Hon. Steve Clark: Just on standing order number 59: The House knows that this afternoon, we'll be debating second reading of Bill 114.

On Monday morning, May 11, we'll have debate on third reading of Bill 75 in the morning. We'll have an opposition day in the afternoon, followed by third reading debate of Bill 75.

On Tuesday, May 12, in the morning, we'll have debate on a bill that will be reported back to the House. We will be debating Bill 75, third reading, in the afternoon. Private members' business on Tuesday, May 12, will be debate on private member's Bill 106.

On Wednesday, May 13, in the morning, we'll have debate on the bill that's being reported back to the House. We'll also be doing that in the early afternoon, followed by third reading debate of Bill 75. The private member's bill that evening is debate on private member's Bill 107.

On Thursday, May 14, in the morning, will be third reading debate on Bill 75. In the afternoon, second reading debate on Bill 109, followed by private members' debate on private member's motion number 68.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): There being no further business, this House stands in recess until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1201 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: I would like to welcome a good friend, Vinod Karna, here. He's here for opticians day because he's part of the Netralya Lions Club, collecting glasses. Welcome to Queen's Park.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: This morning I wasn't able to introduce my guests: Pamela Hart as well as Irene Campo from the Native Women's Resource Centre of Toronto. They're hosting a wonderful Red Dress reception, sponsored by the minister. We welcome everyone to continue—if they can slip out, they're there until 3 o'clock this afternoon.

MOTHER'S DAY

Hon. Charmaine A. Williams: This isn't an introduction of guests, however, I do want to wish everyone who is a mom, or like a mom, a very happy Mother's Day this Sunday.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Boys, make sure you treat us well, right? It's Sunday, you've got time to go shopping. The florists are still open.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated May 7, 2026, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to Standing Order 110(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

SAFETY AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN ONTARIO CORRECTIONS ACT, 2026 LOI DE 2026 SUR LA SÉCURITÉ ET LA RESPONSABILISATION DES SERVICES CORRECTIONNELS EN ONTARIO

MPP Wong-Tam moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 116, An Act to amend the Ministry of Correctional Services Act and the Correctional Services and Reintegration Act, 2018 / Projet de loi 116, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le ministère des Services correctionnels et la Loi de 2018 sur les services correctionnels et la réinsertion sociale.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Would the member like to explain the bill?

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: It is my honour to explain this bill that is co-sponsored by my colleagues MPP Stevens and MPP Mamakwa.

The bill is entitled Safety and Accountability in Ontario Corrections Act, 2026. The bill takes the opportunity to amend the Ministry of Correctional Services Act and the Correctional Services and Reintegration Act, 2018. These are bills that were passed and adopted by previous governments but never enacted. So although the bills are on the books, it's time to put those words and that law into force and effect.

The Ministry of Correctional Services Act is amended to require the minister to develop a plan to bring into force the schedules to the Correctional Services Transformational Act, 2018. The amendments to the Correctional Services and Reintegration Act, 2018, include adding rules with respect to whistle-blowing and providing the inspector general with the authority to compel managers of correctional services employees to provide certain information. The amendments will also permit the inspector general to make recommendations to the ministry with respect to certain matters and to require the minister to make available on the website of the government of Ontario information about persons who reside at residential correctional institutions.

The reason for this bill, Madam Speaker, is because we have heard and read heartbreaking stories of the conditions inside Ontario jails and detention centres, and it's time for us to fix that problem now.

PETITIONS

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank people from Bruce-Grey, Penetang, Owen Sound and all over the northeast for signing this petition that was put together by

the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation. Basically, the petition calls for an end to the use of the "notwithstanding" clause in labour disputes.

As you know, Speaker, in 2022, the government of Mr. Ford introduced Keeping Students in Class Act, which invoked the "notwithstanding" clause as part of an effort to end a strike by CUPE education workers, rendering the strike illegal and fines for the union or any worker that went on strike.

In 2021, the government, again of Mr. Ford, used the "notwithstanding" clause to strike down an Ontario Superior Court free expression.

We don't want this to continue, so thousands and thousands of people from all over Ontario have signed this petition that asks the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to call on the government to not use the "notwithstanding" clause in order to permit egregious violations of workers' rights and freedoms. Labour disputes should not be decided with the use of the "notwithstanding" clause because it violates employees' rights to a free and fair collective bargaining process, which is enshrined in our Constitution. Moreover, the Ontario government should end the practice of introducing legislation that invokes section 33 of the charter to intervene in collective bargaining.

I support free and fair collective bargaining. I will sign this petition and ask my good page Aneet to bring it to the Clerk.

STUDENT ASSISTANCE

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: Before I get started, I just wanted to say hello to my guest, who just arrived and got in through security, Vinod Karna.

This petition is regarding OSAP. It's to fix OSAP ASAP. It's been signed by a number of young people who are basically asking the government to reconsider the changes to OSAP and to immediately reverse the announced changes because they know that changing the loan minimum to 75% and lowering the grant maximum to 25% is making it harder for students and their families.

I support this petition. I will sign it and give it to page Aarav to bring to the table.

HEALTH CARE WORKERS

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: I'm proud to rise and present this petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It is entitled "Stop Privatization and Support Staffing Ratios."

Whereas recognizing that understaffing is negatively impacting the quality of our public health care system, causing longer wait times, unreliable access to care, unmanageable workloads, the deskilling of health care work and many other issues;

Whereas understaffing causes burnout for nurses as well as health care professionals, literally driving them out of the profession—currently, nurses and health care professionals are seeing the staffing ratios decimated, and

we need to restore our public health care and ensure that public health care and the quality of care is raised across the system. This includes home care, long-term care, public health care and hospitals.

I want to thank the Ontario Nurses' Association for bringing this forward. They are calling on the government to ensure that they do not undermine the public health care system by taking money that should be used on staffing, and instead they're making deals with private and for-profit corporations to deliver health care.

They're calling on the assembly to mandate staffing ratios for nurses and health care professionals across the entire Ontario health care system, developing the proper staffing ratios in consultation with nurses and health care professionals through their unions. Use health care funding to ensure that Ontarians can access the care that they need within the public system, rather than privatizing health care, and then through outsourcing services to private, for-profit corporations.

1310

I'm proud to sign this petition and return this to the centre table with page Kieran.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's my pleasure to introduce the new petition for Lydia's Law, which is now Bill 112.

Speaker, as you know, this legislation has been introduced, in 2024. The government chose not to allow me to debate the legislation. This time, we're very hopeful that I will get the chance to bring survivor voices to the floor of this Legislature.

You'll know that this bill is named after Lydia, who went through a horrendous two-year sexual assault court experience. It builds on the experience of 48 survivors of sexual assault in the Sloka case, where he was acquitted and 48 women were not believed.

At the time when I asked the Attorney General about Lydia's Law and about bringing accountability and transparency to the court system in Ontario, he accused me of victim-trolling. At the time—I want to let him know—I was here at the behest of survivors of sexual assault who were in the public gallery, including Lydia herself. So I hope that the government understands that this is an important piece of legislation that needs full transparency, and I hope this time—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Speak to the petition, please.

Ms. Catherine Fife: —we can bring it to the floor of this Legislature.

AI DATA CENTRES

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: I'm here today to present a petition signed by residents in my community of Don Valley West regarding AI data centres. As they are becoming increasingly more prevalent, they're worried about the impact on our communities. We know that they will

increase electricity and water bills. They're worried about the gas-generated electricity it may cause.

So they're asking for the government:

—to provide transparency on the application status of all AI data centres trying to connect to public energy grids, including company name, the purpose of the centre etc.;

—to ensure that Ontario ratepayers do not pay for the connection costs of AI data centres;

—to make sure the government denies the subsidization of construction, maintenance and energy usage for AI data centres;

—to provide adequate opportunities for community consultation when building them;

—to enact serious penalties for the owners of data centres whose users may generate harmful, exploitative content against women and young girls using the data centre's computing power; and

—to ensure AI data centre development respects treaty rights of Indigenous people.

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

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I am here to present a petition to end the use of the "notwithstanding" clause in labour disputes. The "notwithstanding" clause is a charter right. Labour unions have worked hard to get to where we are today. Without labour unions, we wouldn't have maternity leaves and weekends and other fairness in our labour sector.

It was recently used against the lowest-paid education workers, and it was going to shut the economy down. So it's not in the best interests of families or students.

I believe collective bargaining is in the best interests of our education system, our economy and, of course, the workers, especially those like those from OSSTF, our secondary schools, our ed workers. Thank you to those who care for our kids, and I do not support the use of the "notwithstanding" clause against their collective bargaining rights.

I support this petition. I thank the OSSTF 24 members, and I'll pass it to page Kieran.

HOMELESSNESS

MPP Catherine McKenney: I'm tabling the following petition that calls for the government to fund homes, not encampments—again, calling on the government to build thousands of supportive housing units to move people from tents into safe and affordable homes connected to mental health care, addiction treatment, ongoing supports.

The petition also calls on the government to reinstate real rent control, double ODSP and OW rates, provide housing benefits to those at greatest risk of losing their housing, and reinstate supervised consumption sites and low-barrier addiction treatment programs.

I am proud to support this petition because people experiencing homelessness deserve real housing solutions

and real support, not displacement and punishment. I am going to gladly send this down with page Azaad with my signature.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Mr. Adil Shamji: I'm proud to present this petition that seeks to protect and preserve the collective bargaining rights of unionized workers in our province, and hopefully across the country as well. Specifically, this petition seeks to end the use of the "notwithstanding" clause in labour disputes.

Unfortunately, this petition is more necessary now than ever before. Certainly, under this government we've seen a few examples in which it has threatened or actually tried to use the "notwithstanding" clause as a means to potentially end strikes and to shortcut good governance and good legislation.

With this petition, it seeks to ensure that the government will not use the "notwithstanding" clause in order to permit egregious violations of workers' rights and freedoms, and to assure that the government ends its practice of introducing legislation that invokes section 33 of the charter to intervene in collective bargaining.

Far too often, this government chooses to take legislative and political shortcuts instead of doing the work of bargaining in good faith and elevating the incredible work of the staff and workers across our province who are the backbone of health care, of education and so many other parts of our public institutions.

I'm proud to support this petition, and I'm thrilled to hand it to page Owen from Don Valley East.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

MPP Lise Vaugeois: This petition is entitled, "End the Use of the Notwithstanding Clause in Labour Disputes." The use of the "notwithstanding" clause to impose settlements or undermine collective bargaining rights is a direct attack on fundamental democratic and labour rights of workers.

Now, in 2022, this government tried to use the "notwithstanding" clause to beat down the lowest-paid of education workers. As I recall, every single member of the House stood up and cheered loudly, stamping their feet, saying, "Fantastic. We're going to stomp on education workers." I hope they learned their lesson, because the province rose up and the government was forced to rescind that.

So I hope that the government has learned from this experience and that they recognize that using the "notwithstanding" clause, certainly in labour disputes, is unacceptable.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Unconstitutional.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Unconstitutional, as well—thank you.

I fully support this petition, and I will give it to Azaad to present.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Mr. Rob Cerjanec: I'm proud to rise today to present a petition from the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation regarding the use of the "notwithstanding" clause, signed by quite a number of individuals.

The increasing use of this clause is very concerning, not just here in Ontario, but around the country as well. Employees should be able to bargain collectively, freely and fairly. That should not be easily violated by passing legislation through section 33 of the Constitution that essentially throws that aside. It's not right; it's not fair.

This petition calls for ending that practice. Our Constitution is something that should be really sacred to us, and invoking section 33 should be only used in very, very rare cases, not to override the rights of workers to collectively bargain.

I am pleased to attach my signature this petition, and I will hand it to page Kieran.

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: I have a petition entitled "Northern Highway Safety" to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario."

Northern highways are lifelines for the communities, workers, families and the economy. Northern Ontario has seen too many serious collisions due to unsafe highway conditions. Highways 11 and 17 are critical for northern life and the province's economy, yet are not maintained to a standard northerners deserve. Highway closures prevent workers from reaching their jobs, causing loss of wages and economic hardship. Safe and reliable highways are essential for northern economic development.

The people signing this petition are calling on the government of Ontario to improve maintenance outcomes on northern highways, including:

- MTO intervention or taking over the failing maintenance contracts;

- advance a 2+1 highway project along Highway 11;

- classifying Highways 11 and 17 as class 1, requiring snow to be removed within eight hours at the end of a snowfall;

- working directly with northern communities to address regional transportation safety needs;

- restoring MTO oversights on driver licensing and testing when private delivery fails to meet provincial safety standards; and

- introducing its own legislation or measures if proposals from the official opposition are not adopted.

I am pleased to support this petition. I will sign it and send it with Aneet.

1320

HIGHWAY 69

MPP Jamie West: This petition's title is "Stop Putting Lives at Risk—Four-Lane Highway 69 Now." This is about the commitment the government has made since I

was elected in 2018 to four-lane Highway 69, but not putting money in the budget. We've had lots of conversation here at Queen's Park about this.

The good news, though, is that the member from Nickel Belt and I have had very positive conversations with the Minister of Transportation, the Minister of Indigenous Affairs and the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka about how we can work together to move this process forward. So I'm happy to report that the pressure that the people from Sudbury and Nickel Belt are creating with the town halls, with the petitions, is paying off.

Basically, what they want, Speaker, is to follow through on the commitment to save lives on Highway 69 by four-laning the remaining 68 kilometres of Highway 69. I'm very happy to report that we're working together and things seem to be moving forward. We'll continue to advocate for our members.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

HST RELIEF IMPLEMENTATION ACT (RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY REBATES), 2026

LOI DE 2026 SUR LA MISE EN OEUVRE DE L'ALLÈGEMENT DE LA TVH (REMISES RELATIVES AUX BIENS RÉSIDENTIELS)

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 7, 2026, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 114, An Act to amend the Retail Sales Tax Act to enable credits and payments to be made respecting certain tax paid or payable in respect of residential property and to provide for other related matters / *Projet de loi 114, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la taxe de vente au détail pour permettre l'octroi de crédits et le versement de paiements relativement à la taxe payée ou payable à l'égard de biens résidentiels et pour traiter d'autres questions connexes.*

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

Mr. Stephen Blais: Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of removing the HST from new home construction—

Interjections.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Thank you. Ontario Liberals first proposed removing the HST from new home construction a year ago.

Removing the HST from new home construction is the right thing to do. It's good policy. It is pro-housing policy. It is affordability policy. Ontario Liberals have been calling for some time—almost a year—and I want to thank the government for joining us in having these sound fiscal principles.

Last year, Mr. Speaker, the Ontario Liberal caucus tabled a motion to end HST on new homes. Our proposal would have removed the HST from the cost of a new home and was explicitly designed to expand relief beyond only first-time homebuyers. It was designed to spur new home construction and support tens of thousands of jobs in

construction, in steel, in lumber and in the broader home-building economy.

Mr. Speaker, imagine how many more new homes could have been built, how many jobs created and how many families housed had the government joined us then. But finally, I am pleased that they've come around. I'm very pleased that the government is adopting Liberal principles.

I'm very pleased that they have finally recognized that taxing new homes at the time of a housing crisis makes no sense. But Speaker, supporting a policy does not mean ignoring its flaws, and this policy has a flaw that needs to be addressed: The government has chosen an arbitrary cut-off date. Under the government's proposal, the enhanced rebate generally applies to agreements of purchase and sale signed between April 1 of this year and March 31 of next year. This is, of course, the government's fiscal year. That means if a family signed on April 1, they may qualify; if they signed on March 31, they won't—same subdivision, same builder, same model home, same closing year, closing date could be the same, same mortgage stress test, same affordability crisis, but one family gets relief and the other family gets left behind. That is not fair. And in communities like Orléans, it's also not theoretical; it's real.

I have heard from families, dozens of families who have signed contracts in good faith before April 1. They have not moved in. They have not taken possession. They have not closed. In many cases, construction has not even begun or is still, certainly, just under way. And yet they are being told that because they signed weeks or months too early, they are not eligible.

Speaker, that is part of this policy that the government needs to fix. And if it needs to fix it with its partners, it should do so, because the tax burden does not become real when someone signs a piece of paper. The tax burden becomes real when they close their contract. When the home is complete is when the tax burden comes into effect—when the money is paid; when the family takes possession. That is why the government should look seriously at using the closing date, occupancy date, or, at a minimum, include a reasonable transition period for 2026 buyers.

It would be an appropriate time now to let you know, Mr. Speaker, I'll be sharing my time with the member for Ottawa South and the member for Don Valley East.

I would like to inform the House—I would like to tell some stories I've heard from Orléans.

Interjections.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Well, the government might think this is funny, but these are real, serious issues.

I want to talk to you about Hayley. Hayley and her husband live in Orléans with their two young daughters: one almost a year old and the other three and a half. They bought a small home in 2017, knowing that some day their family would need more space. And like so many other families, they waited through COVID, through the rising prices and through economic uncertainty, hoping something might change. But by the end of 2025, they reached

a point where, in her words, they were bursting at the seams. They signed for a new build on February 11; then the HST rebate was announced. At first, Hayley was ecstatic because that's exactly the kind of family-first policy she was looking for. They are the family this kind of policy is supposed to help—a growing family, two young children, worried about mortgage payments, worried about selling their current home, worried about job security in an unstable market, worried about their future.

But then she learned that because they signed in February and not in April, they were excluded. For her family, the difference between the current rebate and the new rebate is \$106,000. Speaker, \$106,000 is not a rounding error. It's not a small inconvenience. That is life-changing money. That's a mortgage cushion. That's daycare. That's groceries. That's university or college savings for their two children. That's a family who is able to take a breath.

And Hayley makes a very simple point: Someone could have signed on April 2. Their closing day could actually be before hers, and they will end up receiving far more support, while her family closes in December and gets left behind. How does that make any sense? How is that fair? How does that align with the purpose of this policy?

Then, Mr. Speaker, there's Anton. Anton doesn't live in Orléans yet, but he wants to. He signed an agreement for a new-build home in November of last year, with a closing scheduled in November this year. He is currently preparing to sell his existing home.

Anton makes the point that the government should pay attention to this problem, because if he had access to the rebate, it would give him more flexibility to list his current home at a more competitive price. That could make his existing home more affordable for the next buyer. That's the housing chain; that's how housing markets work. Helping one buyer close on a new home can help another buyer purchase an existing home. It can create movement. It helps create supply, and it can help more than just one family.

So when the government excludes people like Anton, it's not just excluding him; it's potentially excluding the buyer of his current home. It's slowing down the very market movement the policy is supposed to encourage.

1330

And then, there's Omar. Omar signed an agreement on March 1 for a new Minto home one month before the cut-off. He and his family have worked multiple jobs, saved every penny and made significant sacrifices to buy a home. And now, because he signed just a few weeks early, they're being excluded from more than \$130,000 in tax relief.

Speaker, this is the cliff-edge problem. One family signs in March; another signs in April. One gets help; the other does not. One can breathe; one can't. One is told they qualify; the other is told, "Too bad, so sad. You were early." That is not good policy design. That is arbitrary line-drawing.

Omar said it plainly: For his family, this rebate is not a bonus. It's the difference between being house poor and being able to live with a little bit of financial comfort.

That's the reality of home ownership in Ontario today. These are not wealthy speculators. These are not people buying luxury estates. These are a middle-class families trying to buy a home for their family. They're doing exactly what the government says they want people to do: They're saving; they're working hard; they're buying new supply; they're moving into growing communities like Orléans, Whitby, Ajax, Oakville and Brampton—new communities across Ontario. And because they signed a contract before April 1, they're told they do not count.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about Steven and Miriam. They're seniors. They signed an agreement for a new home in Cardinal Creek just weeks before the announcement. Their home closes on October 6. Construction has started, but they missed out on thousands of tax rebates because of the cut-off date.

Steven says if someone buys the same house—literally the same house, right beside him—that person will pay \$30,000 less. Speaker, imagine that: two neighbours, same street, same development, same builder, same year, and one family pays tens of thousands of dollars more because of the date on the contract. And that's the problem. That is what this government needs to fix, and the solution isn't complicated: base the eligibility on the closing date; base it on the occupancy date; create a transition period for people who signed before April 1 but closed sometime during this fiscal year.

There are many, many different ways to do this, Mr. Speaker. But doing nothing means accepting unfairness. Doing nothing means telling Hayley, Anton, Omar, Steven and Miriam that they are on the wrong side of a line that does not reflect the reality of buying a new home in Ontario. That is an easy challenge, an easy problem, for the government to try to fix.

I would be remiss if I didn't address the New Democrats' position on this debate from earlier this morning because, frankly, it is bizarre. We heard members of the NDP argue that this kind of relief only helps the rich; that if someone can afford a million-dollar home, they don't need help; and we also heard they think it's really just a giveaway to builders.

And frankly, Mr. Speaker, that is such a disconnected way to talk about what housing in Ontario looks like in 2026. In many communities, a million-dollar new home is not a mansion; it's a townhouse, a semi, a modest detached home in a growing suburb like Orléans. It's a family home. It's where parents are trying to raise kids. It's where seniors are trying to downsize. It's where newcomers are trying to build a life. It's where young families are trying to get out of a condo and into something with a bedroom for each child.

The NDP talks about million-dollar homes as if—

Ms. Catherine Fife: Why are you talking about the NDP?

Mr. Stephen Blais: Because you talked about it this morning. And don't worry, I'll get to Waterloo later. Pay attention. The NDP talks—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Address the Speaker, please.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Mr. Speaker, the NDP talks about million-dollar homes as though they're automatically a palace. In the real Ontario, it is often just the cost of getting into the market.

Mr. Speaker, let us deal with this idea that helping new home construction is somehow wrong. The NDP position is that helping new construction is somehow wrong because home builders are involved. Who exactly does the NDP think builds homes?

Homes don't appear by magic. Homes are built by workers. They are built by framers, electricians, plumbers, roofers, drywallers, engineers, architects, surveyors, heavy equipment operators, site supervisors and labourers. They're supplied by lumberyards, concrete companies, window manufacturers, steel fabricators and trucking companies.

Home builders create paycheques. They support apprenticeships. They support small businesses. They support communities. And yes, builders and developers are part of that process.

Demonizing everyone involved in building homes is not a housing plan; it's a slogan, and it's not even a very good one.

In Ottawa, many of the families and companies involved in building homes have also given back enormously to our community.

The Taggart Parkes family gave \$1 million to the Shepherds of Good Hope Foundation to support the construction of an eight-storey supportive housing residence on Murray Street, including 48 supportive housing units, a new community kitchen, and a full-day drop-in program. The Taggart name is also attached to the Taggart Family YMCA, which continues to provide recreation, services and housing supports in Centretown.

John and Jennifer Ruddy donated \$1.5 million to the Ottawa Art Gallery.

The Malhotra family, founders of Claridge Homes, have raised millions for local charities—including support for the Ottawa Mission, Make-A-Wish, the Ottawa Food Bank, and other services and organizations serving people in need. Neil Malhotra is currently the chair of the CHEO Capital Campaign.

Kris Singhal, founder of Richcraft Homes, and his wife, Manju, and their daughters Monica and Angela presented the Ottawa Hospital Foundation with a \$20-million donation towards the Campaign to Create Tomorrow.

Caivan's Frank Cairo and Troy van Haastrecht have invested in future city-building—including a \$10-million donation to launch the Future Cities Institute at the University of Waterloo, focused on housing, mobility, sustainability and better city planning.

Roger Greenberg, executive chairman of the Ottawa-based Minto Group, one of the largest developers and home builders in Ontario, is chair of the Ottawa Hospital capital campaign. Roger and his five siblings and their cousins have cemented their legacy as pillars in Ottawa,

with a \$25-million donation to the Ottawa Hospital's Campaign to Create Tomorrow.

So when the NDP stand up and act as though every builder is somehow the enemy, they're not just attacking companies. They're attacking employers. They're attacking workers. They're attacking community partners. They're attacking the philanthropists who ensure our communities are the best in the world to live and raise a family. They're attacking people and organizations that help build housing, hospitals, shelters, community kitchens, recreation centres, galleries and institutions that make our communities stronger.

Does that mean that the government should never hold builders accountable? Of course not. Does that mean that every development is perfect? Of course not. Does it mean that we should ignore infrastructure or schools or roads or parks or rec centres or emergency services as communities continue to grow? Of course not.

I represent Orléans, one of the fastest-growing communities in the entire province. I know what growth looks like. I know what happens when subdivisions arrive faster than roads. I know what happens when families move in before schools, recreation facilities and transit are ready.

I believe in building homes. I believe in building communities. Building communities means building roads; it means building parks; it means building rec centres; it means libraries and fire stations and police stations and paramedics and schools. It means infrastructure that allows a subdivision to become a neighbourhood.

That is the serious conversation we should be having, not lazy slogans about rich people, not blanket attacks on home builders, not pretending that home construction is bad because someone, somewhere, makes a little bit of a profit.

1340

Mr. Speaker, this bill is a step in the right direction. Ontario Liberals called for this kind of relief because we understood that affordability and supply are connected. If we want more homes built, we need to reduce the cost of building and buying new homes. If we want families to get into the market, we need to stop taxing them at the very moment they're taking on the largest financial commitment of their lives. If we want movement in the housing market, we need policies that help people buy, help people sell, help people move and downsize and upsize.

This bill and policy does some of that. It doesn't do all of that. It helps families who signed on April 1. It ignores families who signed before April 1. It helps one neighbour; it excludes another. That's why this government should amend it. It should work with its partners to change that part of it.

We support the bill. I support the bill. Fix the cut-off, protect the intent, respect the families who bought in good faith. Because the purpose of this bill should not be to reward lucky timing of a signature. The purpose should be to make new homes more affordable. The purpose should be to support home building. The purpose should be to help middle-class families. If that is truly what the purpose is, then I hope the government will join us in trying to

change that particular, small flaw in this approach, and we'll get more houses built. Because Hayley, Anton, Omar, Steven, Miriam and hundreds, if not thousands, more families just like them need this support.

Ontario Liberals support removing the HST from new home construction. We first proposed it. We supported it before the government did. We are glad that the government has joined us in our efforts to make new homes more affordable for families.

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

Mr. John Fraser: It's a pleasure to get an opportunity to stand up and speak on Bill 114. It's really hard to follow my colleague from Orléans, who is obviously very passionate and very knowledgeable about this bill and is really connected with his community, especially a fast-growing community like Orléans.

He raises, first off, a very good point about all of those families that are captured because they signed before April 1. Our email boxes are getting flooded, especially in a riding like Orléans or in Kanata, where there is a lot of development.

There's some development in my community. There are people that are caught in it, and it's unfair. It's unfair. I think if any of us were in a situation where we saw that our neighbour got 100 grand off a house and we didn't, we'd be upset. I think we'd be asking the government to say, "I think you need to take a look at this. It's not fair."

But the other thing is, this was something we put forward in the fall, something the government should have taken up then. At the time, the Premier and the finance minister said, "No way, we're not doing that." Now we have a situation where it gets slammed into a budget and it actually doesn't work. Nobody knows how it's going to work. The builders are saying, "Tell us something."

Now, what I understand has happened here is, the federal government sent you the money to cover it, or they were going to send you the money to cover it and then you said, "No, no, no, no, no." Maybe I've got this wrong, so maybe my colleagues can correct me, but you said, "No, we want to do it through CRA, so we have to do this dance where you have to have enabling legislation that maybe we should have thought about before." So what you're doing is, on the back of it now—because you want the CRA to pay.

Okay, maybe that would be the best way to do it, but the reality is, you didn't plan. You said no to a great idea: "We're not going to do it. It's a bad idea. We can't do that. It's not going to help. We can't do that. We can't extend it to everybody. It can't be done. It won't be helpful." It's like, "This is the greatest thing since sliced bread. It's in our budget. Look at it; it's the centrepiece of the budget." But when you open it up, there's nothing in it, nothing there. You don't know how it's going to work.

So we're here debating for six and a half hours something that you could have done and put in the budget bill if you'd done something very simple—a very simple thing, folks, so listen closely: It's called planning and communications, talking to people that you're dealing

with about how you're going to implement the thing you want to do. That would be the federal government, that would be the builders. It obviously didn't happen. This government can't do everything on the back of an envelope, because you know what? Now we have a situation where nobody knows what's going on, you're taking a couple of months to figure out. People are asking, "Do you need to extend the deadline?" You should actually be considering going farther back. Since you're doing this right now, why would you not take the opportunity to go farther back, to be fair to those people? Because this wasn't an idea that popped out in the budget. It popped out last October—September. Is that right? October—

Mr. Stephen Blais: About a year ago.

Mr. John Fraser: About a year—more? A while ago.

Mr. Adil Shamji: A long time ago.

Mr. John Fraser: A long time ago. So it's not like it was new. It was out there.

And now what's happening, because there's uncertainty about how it's going to work, is, are you actually doing the thing that you wanted to do with offering this rebate? Which is—you want more homes built. You want more people working. That's what it's about: building homes so people can afford them and so people have work, people like my colleague mentioned: the people who build houses, the people who design houses, the people who do all that work, right? We have a 7.8% unemployment rate in this province—7.8%. And it's not going to get better, because people don't know how this thing is going to work.

You should have done your homework. You didn't do it. It's just like, "We've got to have something good in our budget, so here's this idea that we saw that we said no to, but now we're going to say it's our idea, and isn't it great?" And then when people see the box—the gift—they open it up, they go, "Oh, there's nothing in it yet." And you're saying, "Oh, just a second here. We've got to put something in it."

So instead, we're debating something you could have done. And you could put it in the budget bill, and you wouldn't have had to debate it because you didn't actually really debate the budget bill—it didn't go to committee. It got rammed through here, the most important document that we have in this place, the most important piece of legislation. You didn't slide in how we're going to fix the HST; you slid in, how are we going to get rid of FOIs? That was the priority, not families. And now, we're debating this.

Now, it is an opportunity, Speaker—and I really want to thank the government for this opportunity, because I'm not sure whether I could say, "Premier's private luxury jet" one more time this week, because I'm having a hard time—

Interjection.

Mr. John Fraser: I've said it a lot, right? I've said it quite a bit. I mean, I could say it again: "Premier's private luxury jet"—or "luxury private jet." We haven't decided which one that is. Anyhow, the good news is I might not

have to say it again in the next 10 minutes or so, but it could happen, because it's something—

Ms. Catherine Fife: Say it one more time.

Mr. John Fraser: No, I have to say this, because—a couple of things. I want to talk about FOIs.

Sharif, who works for us—a really great young man, works really hard—got his hair cut last week. And his barber says, “What’s with this FOI stuff?” His barber—so when your barber is talking about freedom of information, you’ve got to know he’s talking to other people.

I had a taxi driver talk to me about the—wait for it—Premier’s private luxury jet. What’s with that? When taxi drivers start talking about things like the Premier’s private luxury jet, Speaker—and I’ll get back to the matter at hand; I can see I can see you’re being very patient with me. But I want to talk about the taxi drivers, because they talk, and what they do is, right now, they talk about the Premier’s private luxury jet.

Now, back to the bill: I said no one knows how it’s going to work. We put it forward last year.

I want to get back to the retroactive. It is something that’s really, really unfair to people. And like I say, I don’t have a community that’s growing as fast as Orléans or Kanata or some of you who represent areas that are growing very fast, but think about it, folks: You’re saying to folks, “Your neighbour? They did six figures better. You’re going to have five more years of debt. They’re not.”

1350

What do you say to them? How do you respond to them? “Well, this is the deadline. This is what it is. We didn’t get it right. You know what, we knew about it for a year, but we thought—but we thought—we’d put it in now.” And “It wasn’t a good idea then. We didn’t want to help the people who build homes. We didn’t want to apply it to everybody.”

And the Premier and the finance minister—well, I think it was the Premier who said he was kind of thinking about it but didn’t do it, and then it was a hard no from the finance minister. It’s not going to happen—not going to do it. But now you’ve done it and you’re saying, “Wasn’t it a great idea that we had?” And it doesn’t work.

Interjection.

Mr. John Fraser: I’m getting close, okay? It’s Thursday, folks. I’m going to be honest: I’m running out of gas. I’ve had to say “Premier’s private luxury jet” too many times.

Ms. Catherine Fife: No jet for you.

Mr. John Fraser: No jet for me. No, I’m taking a turbo prop home, and that should be good enough for all of us, I would think. But I digress. Help me out here, folks. Help me out. But I digress. Can I get back to the Premier’s private luxury jet? Thank you, Speaker.

Anyway, I won’t talk about the barber anymore, I won’t talk about the taxi driver and I won’t give any more anecdotes about that thing that I just talked about, that everybody knows about, that I can’t talk about right now.

Get ready. I want to thank you very much. We’ll be supporting this and we want to get it done quick, unlike

my colleagues to the right, who are actually to my left, who I believe want to support workers, so they should support this bill to support workers.

Ms. Catherine Fife: We are.

Mr. John Fraser: I know you are. So we’ll see, but that’s not what it sounds like. Just say it.

Anyway, I just hope that you all get a great—I will miss you all this weekend is what I want to say. I hope you have a great weekend. Have a good time back in your constituencies, answering the phone saying, “I’m sorry you don’t get the rebate.” I’ll yield the floor.

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

Mr. Adil Shamji: I want to thank my esteemed colleagues from Orléans and Ottawa South for their remarks on the proposed legislation that is before us.

It is Thursday before a weekend that celebrates an important holiday, and that is Mother’s Day. I want to take a moment just to wish a very happy Mother’s Day to my mom, who is oftentimes watching—one of the few people that watches the parliamentary channel. I love you very much.

I’m very grateful because I grew up in a home. When I reflect on my family—my parents came to Canada as immigrants. They met each other in Vancouver. I was born in Vancouver and at the age of two, my father lost his job—he was a civil engineer, retired now—in Vancouver and ultimately moved over here to Toronto.

My parents, new Canadians, immigrants, followed the entire journey that we hope for everyone today. They came. They started out living in the basement of some relatives that were already here. After that, we moved into a rental, not very far from the riding that I represent right now, actually. My dad had a job, and from that one job—and after first living in the basement bedroom of some relatives and then moving to a rental—was able to find our starter home that I grew up in and got an amazing childhood and education from back in Brampton, in the riding of Brampton South, actually.

That progression, one where someone comes, finds a job after getting their credentials recognized; one in which you start from the very bottom, living thanks to the charity and kindness of people who are here before you, renting, then actually not just having hope of owning your own home but being able to have that promise fulfilled here in Ontario—that is a promise and a dream that doesn’t exist anymore. I mean, right off the bat, I don’t know whether my father would have been able to have gotten his credentials recognized. He’s an engineer; I think it’s a little bit different in the engineering field. But if he was a physician, good luck trying to get his credentials recognized.

If my parents were to move to Canada, or specifically to Ontario, today, could we have gone from a relative’s basement apartment to a rental and to then owning our own home? I seriously question that. Could I have gone on to get a good post-secondary education, become a physician and have the very special privilege of standing in this esteemed chamber? I don’t know. But why wouldn’t we want that for the next generation of young people, of

immigrants, of Ontarians who are going to drive our economy?

That promise of a home that any of us can afford is—
Interruption.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I will ask you to stop the clock for a moment.

I am aware of an emergency alarm system that is a test today. I'll ask the members to quiet their phones.

With that, I will return the floor to the member from Don Valley East.

Mr. Adil Shamji: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We owe it to the next generation to do anything possible to deliver that hope, that promise to them. And if anything, under this government, we have seen that hope and that promise grow more and more distant.

When this government was elected, very shortly after they assumed power, they made a bold promise, one that was very exciting: that they would deliver 1.5 million homes by 2031. They even had a plan. They assembled the Housing Affordability Task Force that delivered a plan, that delivered suggestions. This government subsequently failed to implement approximately half of those recommendations.

Meanwhile, while we wait and see housing starts continue to plummet and crater, years were wasted in commissioning a report that was half-heartedly implemented. And as we have solutions on the table to reverse our housing crisis, they continue to gather dust in the cupboards and shelves of this Premier and this government.

This will be a recurring theme. Consistently, this government waits too long and puts in too little effort to deliver the solutions that Ontarians are looking for and that they need, and of course, housing is a prime example of that.

We are in the situation that we face because this government has made it too unpredictable and too expensive to build homes. We've seen development charges increase by many multiples under the watch of this government after eight long, hard and very tiring years—eight years that have made it more unaffordable for Ontarians than ever.

We see home prices have vastly increased since 2018. We've seen lack of access to primary care vastly get worse compared to 2018. The state of our education system is significantly worse than in comparison to 2018. And Ontarians are looking for solutions.

The government had promised that they would deliver 1.5 million homes by 2031, which works out to approximately 150,000 homes per year. Because they fell behind in the beginning, they revised their annual estimates up to about 175,000 homes a year. And then we've seen them consistently fall further and further and further behind.

To give them credit, it hasn't been for lack of effort, because they sure introduce a lot of housing bills, but each housing bill is usually a half-measure, and worse, often-times reverses something that was in the last housing bill. If this government's measure of success is how many bills it introduces, then I can understand why they would have chosen not to include these measures in the most recent

budget and just introduce it as a stand-alone housing bill. It is truly perplexing why this did not make it into Bill 97.

In any case, in the last year for which I have seen data on housing starts, this government delivered a mere and paltry 62,000 homes. Homes are not being built because development charges have skyrocketed across the province. Homes are not being built because builders and developers simply don't have confidence that the environment in which they start building a home is going to be the economic environment and the policy environment in which they finish building that home.

1400

We saw, for example, in Bill 23 there was a measure to reduce and cut development charges that was almost immediately reversed afterwards, creating a circumstance in which projects that were designed under one circumstance no longer made fiscal sense because of the later fiscal and policy environment introduced by this government because it cannot make up its mind. It cannot make a promise that it actually follows through on.

I believe it was last year we saw a mere 62,000 housing starts, and this government understandably is desperate to show that it is doing something about it—perhaps why it is choosing to introduce this as stand-alone legislation. Because of this government's failed efforts to address the housing crisis, we have rampant homelessness. On any given night, well over 10,000 people are sleeping on Ontario streets. We're seeing encampments for which this government's only solution is to seek to criminalize the people who live there, instead of offering the supportive housing and the wraparound compassion and medical and clinical and addiction supports that those individuals need.

For a very long time now, Ontario's Liberals have been putting forward solutions that can actually address the housing crisis with the seriousness that our province deserves. This legislation is intended to implement a policy that Ontario Liberals have been calling for for a significant period now, and that is specifically to eliminate the HST on new homes, on new primary residences for all homebuyers.

Now, you can always count on this government to do the right thing in the worst possible way, and we've seen many examples of this. One example that comes to mind: My colleague the MPP for Don Valley West has been pushing now for an extended period of time to cut the small business tax rate from 3.2% to 1.6%. She's been calling on this for a long time, and she said the threshold for that tax cut, for that first level, should rise from \$500,000 to \$600,000. This government dragged its feet, stalled and stalled and stalled.

Mr. Stephen Blais: They voted against it.

Mr. Adil Shamji: Ah. This government actually voted against that. And then, only after their polling numbers began to fall, they realized, "Hey, we've talked a lot about introducing a tax cut over the last eight years. Maybe we should finally introduce one." And they made a half-hearted attempt to follow through on my colleague's suggestion and have only been able to manage a very mediocre cut to 2%, with no increase in the threshold. You

can always count on this government to do things the wrong way.

And then sometimes they do the wrong things in the wrong way. No one can deny that we need to improve home care in this province. This government decided to consolidate all of the local health integration networks under a single organization, Ontario Health atHome, promised everything would be okay, and then implemented it so poorly that, first, they had an issue with a massive medical equipment and supply shortage, which resulted in people suffering with pain and lack of dignity at home, and palliative patients being forced to go to the emergency department.

That was just the first fiasco with Ontario Health atHome. The second fiasco with Ontario Health atHome followed when their hastily passed legislation around protecting health information failed to protect health information, and Ontario Health atHome data was actually held ransom and taxpayer dollars were used to pay off criminals somewhere abroad, and we can't get any accountability on that.

I mention all of these things because I am convinced this government, even when it has the right intent, entirely fails with implementation. Here we have a plan to deliver an HST tax cut on all new primary residences for all homebuyers. That's a good thing, but this is a policy that we have been calling for for ages. This government dragged its feet, allowed housing starts and the housing sector to slow down and continue to falter month after month after month, and is finally implementing this after extensive encouragement.

The problem, of course, is that even though they've had months to think about this, to ponder how they will implement this after our extended encouragement on this, they couldn't figure out how to actually deliver it, which is why we're seeing Bill 97 already passed. They were too preoccupied introducing freedom-of-information legislation to protect the Premier from having to release his cellphone records. They were too busy with that. They were too busy trying to purchase a private luxury jet for the Premier's exclusive use. They were too busy looking at that to actually do the work of implementing an HST cut, to actually plan out how to deliver an HST cut and get it right the first time. So unfortunately, what we have is a half-hearted and poorly executed policy, which is the right idea, but which is coming too little, too late.

My esteemed colleague the MPP for Orléans gave story after story after story of a potential homeowner or homeowner who has missed out on saving of tens of thousands of dollars, because this government dragged its feet on the implementation. This is a government that always promises that it will make life more affordable for Ontarians and can say that with a straight face, even as so many of my colleagues' constituents have already been forced to suffer and been forced to pay far too much for the human right of being able to have somewhere safe and dignified to call their own home.

Well, they're finally implementing this policy. They are implementing this legislation, which we are going to

support, because we want to see this HST tax cut come through. But now that housing starts have faltered even more since when we first introduced this idea as a policy, I have a number of questions for the government members: Why is it just for a year? Why not make it for two years? Why not make it retroactive, so that it actually covers some of the people who have been forced to miss out on this very good idea? Who is it going to apply to? I don't see that in this legislation. Specifically which homes is it going to apply to? It better apply to all of them.

Why has this not been put into the budget the way it deserves to? Has this government even done the work to make sure that it's going to be able to follow through on the financial commitment it needs to make? Perhaps it will be partially funded by what we hope is an actual sale of the private jet back to whoever it is. We listened to, I believe it was, the government House leader, who said today that Bombardier has taken possession of the jet. "Possession of the jet" does not mean that Bombardier owns the jet; it just means that it's sitting on the apron of their hangar. Has it even been sold? We're still waiting on the receipts, and if those receipts could be produced and we could see how much money was left over, we might be able to have some confidence that there's actually a source of funds to deliver on this HST rebate.

I want to reflect a little bit on why it took so long for this policy to be implemented. Every time this government is confronted with a problem, its number one strategy is to point the finger at other levels of government, and it always proclaims that it is unable to act unless another level of government acts first. They needed the federal government to act first on HST. They needed the federal government to act first on development charges. They need the federal government to save them with publicly funding nurse practitioners. They are paralyzed with indecision and inaction. They have become impotent, because the federal government needs to hold their hand every single step of the way. That's why this government always delivers too little, too late.

Even now, because this government failed to deliver a fully baked policy for this HST exemption, even as we speak, I know because they're telling me, there are builders who are sitting on the sidelines and not proceeding with projects, not willing to put their homes on the market because they do not know if this HST cut will actually come through and whether the policy will actually deliver in the way that it is intended to.

1410

We cannot afford to be dragging our feet in this ridiculous manner. And we cannot be allowing people to suffer, people to lose their hope of home ownership, people to be forced to choose between living in someone's basement through the charity and good nature of people that they know, of couch surfing, of living in their homes, of living in shelters, of lining up at food banks because they cannot afford to live in safe places and with dignity.

And while I'm at it, the last thing that I would want, even if this government is successful in delivering the HST tax cut that it is proposing here—even if it can do that, the

last thing that I want is for this government to think that it has discharged its duty and solved the housing crisis. Unfortunately, what I know is that we'll see echo announcement after echo announcement after novelty cheque and repeated proclamations that this government has done everything that it could. We need to make sure that the promised cut to development charges actually follows through. Again, I will point out, you can always count on the government to do too little, too late, in a half-hearted way.

We led in the last election with a flagship promise that development charges should be cut altogether. This government has chosen to drag its feet before announcing its own policy and to only go halfway.

I just recently had a conversation with the Ontario Real Estate Association. They are convinced that a full DC cut is what is needed right now in order to get our housing sector back on track, to give us a hope of delivering the housing supply that our province needs. This is just a half measure. It's a half measure delivered too late because this government couldn't do it without the federal government holding its hand.

I want to warn that even with this half measure, given as little confidence as I have in the government, I want to list four ways in which we can count on this Premier screwing up this policy.

The first thing is, if DCs are cut even by 50%, there needs to be a measure to ensure that municipalities do not introduce other kinds of punitive taxes that raise the cost of housing or cause the cost of housing to plateau and not come down anyway. For example, we need to make sure that property taxes don't go up even as development charges go down. If that doesn't happen, this DC cut will be a failure.

If we want to make sure that property taxes don't go up and that municipalities have the support they need so that other costs don't go up on homeowners, we need to make sure that municipalities have the infrastructure funding that they require so that they can deliver the land and the services that these new homes will require.

For this DC cut to be successful, our understanding is that municipalities and the province will have to apply to the federal government in order to get that DC cut. And we need to make sure that the projects which are selected for this DC rebate are ones that the municipalities choose, not the ones that the province chooses. Because we know every time the province has an option to choose something, it never chooses in favour of Ontario's citizens and residents. It always chooses in favour of its friends and donors.

The DC cut really cannot just be 50%. If we want to be serious, it needs to go much further. As I said, it really should be going down to zero, even if that has to be for a time-limited period.

Finally, I want to make sure that every single provincial dollar that goes to this DC cut is new funding, that it's not reallocated from some other housing fund or somewhere else that will then suffer because of funding has been reallocated away from that.

We're still waiting on details. We're still waiting for the government to move forward on implementing this. And this kind of delay and the kind of sloppy execution that we're seeing with the HST cut we cannot afford to see again with this proposal to cut development charges.

I would also say that we need to go much further. I've long been a proponent that we don't just need to build homes; we need to move people into the right kinds of homes. An important way in which we can do that is by eliminating the land transfer tax for certain groups. Certainly, we should be seeing the land transfer tax be eliminated for first-time homebuyers. I would like to see the land transfer tax eliminated for not-for-profit home builders as well. That would help us get more co-ops built. It would help us get more community and supportive housing. And I'd like to see the land transfer tax waived for seniors. This would enable and encourage them to downsize.

I think of my own parents. I started my remarks this afternoon by sharing how my parents started in the basement of a relative's home. We moved into a rental, and then my parents moved into a home. Just recently, they moved into a condo. My father was simply tired. He's retired; he's much older now. He was tired of having to shovel the snow, of all of the maintenance that comes along with continuing to look after a large home, one from which his children had moved out and in which there were more bedrooms than he possibly required. But to move from Brampton to an apartment in the Toronto area, it was very difficult for him to do that. It was barely possible for him to break even.

The financial incentives need to be aligned in order to encourage people to move into the right-sized, right kind of housing for themselves. Now that my parents have moved out of their home—I don't know who lives there, but there is now, because they moved out, a three-bedroom home in Brampton that a first-time home buyer or a new family can have hope of moving into. While sometimes the answer is increasing our supply, it can't only be that. It has to be also about getting people into the right kinds of homes—in many cases, which are already built.

So these are a few of the other solutions that, I would humbly put forward, need to be considered if we're going to have a government that's actually serious about addressing our housing crisis with the urgency that it desires.

Of course, I would point this government to other solutions that I put forward. Members in this House will know that I've long been an advocate for introducing fourplexes, which would allow a single home to be redeveloped so that four units, and therefore four families, could find a home in the same space. That kind of work to replace density—or, in some cases, increase density in our neighbourhoods—is exactly the kind of serious action that this government could take which would allow more people to get into homes in a more affordable way, and which would increase density that would then allow us to take advantage of economies of scale to achieve density that can allow us to support more public transit, more

subways, more LRT and, in the process, help our province to be more environmentally friendly and more accessible to people of all income levels.

As I come to the close of these remarks, I want to point out that the HST relief is, of course, welcome. It's something that we've been calling for for an extended period of time. It aligns with our advocacy. It's advocacy that we've done because we've needed to do so, because this government has failed at housing.

We obviously support homebuyers. We want to get more people into homes as quickly as possible, especially first-time homebuyers. I want the dream of home ownership to be available to every single person across this province who deserves it. But I have to underscore that good ideas need exceptional execution, and this government even fails at mediocre execution.

On that note, I want to thank all members in this House for coming together to address this legislation. I hope that everybody will support it. The Ontario Liberals will certainly be supporting this. I know that many people across the province will be breathing a sigh of relief—not everyone, because there are going to be many people, because of this government's delay, who will be very disappointed, actually, whose lives will have been made more expensive because of this government. But nonetheless, it's better to have this policy than nothing at all.

I would encourage the government to move quickly. Intent is not good enough. Implementation at this stage, given the scale of our crisis, needs to be exceptional. Get the consultations done as quickly as possible. Get the details right as quickly as possible. Deliver this.

1420

I would end by saying I do not believe that if the policy is left as is, just for a year, it's going to be good enough. Allow us to support some of the people who missed out, who can then contribute to our economy in other ways. I hope you'll give very serious consideration to extending this policy so that it goes beyond just a single year—that, in combination with other measures, such as more deeply cutting development charges—ideally cutting them altogether—supported by additional infrastructure funding, eliminating the land transfer tax and fully implementing all of the recommendations of the Housing Affordability Task Force.

I hope this government will take additional measures to implement fourplexes as of right province-wide and then give due consideration to all those people who seek safe and dignified housing but for whom home ownership may not necessarily be their first-choice option, for various reasons.

Take the time—don't take the time; move quickly and with the seriousness and urgency that it deserves. Move quickly to eliminate backlogs at the Landlord and Tenant Board. Take measures to protect against inappropriate above-guideline increases. Protect renters instead of putting a bullseye on them, as this government recently did by attempting to eliminate security of tenure.

Use this as an opportunity to tell every single one of our 15.5 million across this great province that it matters to

them that they have a safe and dignified place to live; that we wish for them to have safe and dignified housing; that we don't wish for them to be living on the streets; that we don't wish for them to have no choice but to live in encampments; that we don't want to criminalize people who are living with mental health or addiction struggles and that we want them to have housing, whether owned or rental; that we want them to have all of the services and supports that they need, with wraparound social services; and that we want them to have a home that they can call their own. That is the promise of Ontario and a promise that this province must work harder to deliver.

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

Mr. Matthew Rae: Thank you to my Liberal colleagues for their remarks this afternoon on Bill 114, the HST bill, before this place. My question is to the member from Orléans. I know the member from Don Valley East, as well, mentioned the times, the dates, so my question is really simple: For the member from Orléans, what should the dates be?

Mr. Stephen Blais: In fact, if you check Hansard, I talked about this specifically in the remarks. You could have done occupancy. You could have done closing date. You could have had a transition period for people who were moving in this year.

Obviously, there needs to be a date, but a clear, hard and fast, entrenched cut-off of one day to the next is wholly unfair, especially given the nature of how subdivisions are built. You will literally have one neighbour who received the rebate and potentially the person right next door or across the street in the same model home having not received the rebate.

If we want to encourage families to get into home ownership, if we want people to downsize, we need to ensure that there's fairness across the board.

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

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: To the third party: Ontario residents under this government, for now eight years—and let me remind the fine folks that are tuning in this afternoon why we have this government. It's because the residents in Ontario suffered. They really suffered under 15 years of the Liberal government selling off affordability, blocking missing-middle housing, ignoring non-profit and co-operative housing and helping create the homelessness that we have now and the housing crisis we see today.

Why would Ontarians even trust what the third-party Liberals are now pretending to go for, Bill 114 as the only housing solution? Isn't this just another kind of Liberal-style headline grab brought forward by this government, a temporary HST rebate that developers can pocket while families in St. Catharines still can't afford a home—

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

Mr. Stephen Blais: There it is, Mr. Speaker; there it is. The NDP slogan: Developers and home builders are bad. Why? Because they want to make a profit. They don't talk about the people they employ. They don't talk about the hospitals they fund. They don't talk about the soup

kitchens they help get off the ground. They don't talk about the academic institutes in Waterloo they help fund.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Order, please.

Mr. Stephen Blais: What they forget, Mr. Speaker, is that when the NDP was in government—

Interjections.

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

Mr. Stephen Blais: —when the NDP was in government, 12% of the population was on welfare. Under their leadership, they bankrupted the government and they bankrupted people. That's the legacy of the NDP government.

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

MPP George Darouze: My question is to the member and my colleague from Orléans. He illustrated and did a great job talking about how the NDP always attack the developer or the home builder. Also, they don't recognize the work and the labour force behind all these initiatives that our government does to improve this.

For Bill 114, I want to read a quick comment from the Ottawa home builders' association, from Jason Burggraaf: "This is exactly the kind of bold move that the new home construction industry needed as we face low sales activity across the province."

I want to ask the member from Orléans how this is going to impact—elaborate a bit more. I know you spoke a lot about it, but I'd appreciate a little bit of information on the impact in our communities.

Mr. Stephen Blais: I want to thank my friend and colleague from Carleton for the question. Of course, together in Ottawa we approved tens of thousands of new housing units working co-operatively as a group and with home builders because we recognize the value that home builders bring to our community. We recognize the union workers who work for home builders in building roads, in building sewers, in building houses. Lots of union jobs are based on the home-building sector.

Of course, Jason, who is a proud Orléans resident, represents home builders in Ottawa quite well. He represents home builders like Neil Malhotra, who is chairing the CHEO Foundation campaign; home builders like Minto, which donated \$25 million to the Ottawa Hospital; and home builders like Caivan that, over the last three years, have donated \$20 million to charitable organizations, including the establishment of an academic institute at the University of Waterloo.

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

Ms. Natalie Pierre: Thank you to the members opposite for their remarks earlier this afternoon. Last weekend, the member from Oakville–Burlington North and myself were at a local event in Burlington. We were approached by a local resident who asked us to thank the Premier and the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing for the work on waiving the HST on new home purchases. He told us it was only possible for him and his partner to buy this new home only because of the HST rebate.

I'm wondering if any of the members from the third party have heard similar stories from residents in their riding and if they would like to share them with us this afternoon.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Certainly. Last year, when Ontario Liberals were the first to propose taking HST off of new home construction, we heard a lot of praise from families in suburban communities across Ontario. They understood then that taking this burden off families while they are making the largest purchase in their family's history would be an important step to help their families afford the new home, help their families save for university and college, and put them on the middle-class trajectory many families hope for.

So, yes, Mr. Speaker, we have received a lot of praise for our Liberal proposal to take HST off of new home construction.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's an interesting debate today. Personally, I'm happy that the Conservatives forgot this component in the budget bill, because it gives an opportunity to really talk about the measures and mechanisms that we can be applying to ensure that people can buy a home. Of course, we're going to be supporting this because this government needs all the help they can get.

1430

My question is for the member from Don Valley East. There is a weakness, though, in the way that the legislation is crafted and that it's a time limit of one year. For a community like Waterloo region, which is now in a holding pattern—completely not building any new housing or allowing permits because we do not have the water infrastructure to build any more—I'm not sure that this is going to be effective. So can the member from—

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

Mr. Adil Shamji: To my friend the member from Waterloo, thank you for flagging that. That certainly is a concern.

With as much red tape as there is in moving a project from the twinkle in someone's eye to actually a shovel in the ground and having the framing built up and actually delivering the home, in this Premier's Ontario, it takes a lot longer than a year.

The people who are contemplating starting a home and beginning a project can't find any advantage in this policy as written, because the homebuyers that will take that home will not be able to enjoy that benefit the 18 months or two years or five years down the road when it actually becomes available. And so I would certainly advocate for it to be an extended policy.

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

MPP Stephanie Smyth: I just want to remind everybody again that the Ontario Liberals did propose this HST cut in our opposition day motion in October 2025. I just want to ask either member—I guess the member from Orléans is next, but either/or; we can Ping-Pong—why our

motion would have been so much better had they just been able to get the act together to have it properly tabled. Here we are, debating it separate from the budget. What are your thoughts on that? How much would it have been better?

Mr. Stephen Blais: Yes, of course, Ontario Liberals did propose this almost a year ago. And imagine, Mr. Speaker, had the Conservative government joined us then, how many more homes would have been built. How many more people would have had jobs? How many more families would now be sitting on the living room couch, watching us debate some other piece of legislation that will help make their lives better?

I think the lesson here is that the government should take more of our proposals to cut taxes to make living more affordable for middle-class families, and then all Ontarians will be much better off.

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

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I rise today to speak to Bill 114, the HST Relief Implementation Act.

Speaker, let me say this from the beginning: People in communities like St. Catharines are exhausted. They are exhausted from governments announcing headlines while families are still asking themselves one basic question: How do we afford to live? Because the housing in Ontario has become unaffordable for ordinary people—not luxury homes, not mansions, ordinary homes.

The phrase “starter home” barely means anything anymore in this province. In many parts of Ontario, what we now call a starter home is a 500-square-foot condo selling for over \$600,000. Just last week, CBC reported—and I want members opposite to really hear this—that a person making \$115,000 a year can no longer afford the average home in parts of Canada—and that part includes Ontario.

Think about that. For decades, Ontarians were told, “Work hard, get an education, build a career, save responsibly and you’ll be able to buy your home.” Now, even six-figure earners are locked out of that.

In St. Catharines, I hear it every single day: young couples, trade workers, nurses, teachers, paramedics, people doing everything right and still falling behind. The average home price in my riding sits around \$619,000 today. The average home, I’m going to repeat, is sitting around \$619,000 today. Just six years ago, it was around \$400,000. That is a 54% increase in just a few years.

Now, I ask the question: Did the wages go up 54%? No. Did the pensions go up? Did ODSP go up 54%? Did the seniors’ incomes in Niagara or across this province go up 54%? No. But housing costs did.

And now this government says Bill 114 will help by rebating the HST on new homes. On paper, up to \$130,000 in combined relief sounds significant, and, yes, in some cases, it absolutely could help. I’m not denying that, and neither is the opposition.

If someone buys a newly built condo for \$650,000, removing the HST could reduce costs enough to help them qualify for a mortgage. For some buyers already on the edge of entering the market, that may genuinely matter. I will acknowledge that. We will acknowledge that.

However, we also have to ask the harder question: Who is still being left behind? Because if you are renting a two-bedroom apartment for \$3,000 a month while trying to save for a down payment, this bill may not help you out at all. If you cannot qualify for a mortgage because of the interest rates, this bill does not suddenly make housing affordable. If there are no family homes available below \$1 million in your community, removing the HST still leaves you priced out. This is the reality.

Speaker, people are tired of hearing this government talking like affordability is just one announcement away, because this government governs through announcements, and we’ve all seen it—through slogans, through photo ops, through ribbon-cuttings. But people cannot live inside a press release; it’s of no effect. And nowhere is that clearer than the hypocrisy we are seeing right here across Ontario, because while this government says there’s no money for housing support, no money for health care, no money for education, somehow there’s always money for Conservatives’ priorities.

Families in Ontario are counting pennies at the grocery store while this government is out purchasing—as we said—luxury jets. Yes, jets—that’s the only thing they’re going to fly by in that jet: common sense.

At a time when young families cannot afford a mortgage, at a time when seniors cannot afford rent and at a time when municipalities are begging for infrastructure funding, what message does it send to ordinary Ontarians when our Premier bought a jet? Oh, but wait a minute; you haven’t seen it yet, but apparently, they returned it.

What message does that send to ordinary Ontarians? That there is always money for the insiders; there’s always money for optics; always money for the Premier’s priorities. But when municipalities are asking for help building complete communities, suddenly, the cupboards are bare.

Let’s talk about Bill 100, because the same government now claiming to care about housing affordability just rushed through legislation this morning that strips away local democracy. They ran through Bill 100 with limited consultation, undermining the voices of municipalities and local residents.

And here’s the contradiction: They say municipalities must build—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I recognize the House leader on a point of order.

Hon. Steve Clark: Speaker, through you, the member keeps referring to Bill 100. I believe that bill was dealt with after question period. We’re on Bill 114.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I will ask the member to continue her remarks with regard to the bill before us.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I am. I’m talking about housing as well, so I’m getting to that. Thank you to the member, but I will be talking about housing. And I think that’s part of this bill, affordability of housing.

1440

Here’s the contradiction: They say municipalities must build housing faster, but at the same time, this government

is centralizing more power here at Queen's Park than ever before.

And Speaker, let's call this what it is. Strong-mayor powers were never about empowering communities; they were about consolidating control. And now municipalities, including Niagara municipalities, are essentially being told to build what this government wants when this government wants it, or risk—guess what they're going to risk—losing funding for affordable housing, built housing for people, first-time housing. There we are. That is not partnership. That is coercion. That is not collaboration. That is governing by threat. And the mayors in Niagara all know it, because they are under pressure to hit the provincial housing targets or risk losing infrastructure dollars communities desperately need. So now local governments are trapped—yes, they are. Residents are frustrated. Councils are frustrated.

I just spoke to a St. Catharines city councillor, the Merriton ward councillor, Councillor Lindal, who stood up in her council chamber and said, "Do you know what? We want to build affordable housing. We want to build first-time housing. We want to make sure that the HST—it's a good thing for a rebate—but we can't, because it's not proper planning when we're building, building, building."

Mayors are frustrated because they can't do proper planning. And yet, this government continues pretending everything is working perfectly.

Speaker, people in St. Catharines are not asking for miracles. They are asking for fairness. They are asking why a nurse working full-time cannot buy a modest home in the community she serves. Imagine working full-time and not being able to buy your first home. They are asking why adult children are moving back in with their parents because rent is too high, why grandparents are delaying retirement to financially support younger generations. This is not normal. It shouldn't be normal. And why have we—why is this normal? We have become dangerously numb to this normalcy.

Remember the old rule? Housing should cost no more than 30% of your annual income—for someone bringing home \$60,000 after taxes, that means about \$1,500 a month. Speaker, show me where that home exists in Ontario.

In St. Catharines, the average rent for even a small wartime home is around \$2,400, and that does not include utilities, parking, Internet, insurance—food, medication.

People are drowning in Ontario. They're drowning.

And while Ontarians struggle to keep roofs over their heads, this government quietly buried changes to freedom-of-information rules inside the budget bill. They buried them—not debated openly, not transparently—inside the budget. And why does that matter? Because transparency matters when billions of taxpayer dollars are being spent. Transparency matters when insiders are benefiting. Transparency matters when government decisions affect every Ontarian trying to survive this affordability crisis. If the government truly believes in accountability, why hide these changes in the budget bill? Why make it harder for journalists, watchdogs and the public to access information?

People are beginning to feel like decisions are being made further and further away from the public eye—wrong; shouldn't be done. And trust in institutions erodes when transparency disappears.

Speaker, let me turn to Bill 114 itself, as you've asked me to. There is another fairness issue buried inside this policy. Private developers can access these rebates, but many non-profit housing providers cannot access the same level of support. Think about how backwards that is, Speaker. Organizations trying to build affordable housing for working families can end up paying higher effective tax costs than the private companies building luxury condos—how does that make any sense? If public money is going into the system, there should be public conditions attached to it. Where are the affordability guarantees? Where are the family-sized unit requirements? Where are the protections ensuring this relief actually benefits buyers instead of boosting profits? Because even now, there are reports developers are already adjusting prices upward in anticipation of these rebates. By the way, it's 11 months, March 31, 2027—you will not see these rebates.

Speaker, Ontarians have seen this movie before. The public takes the risk, corporations take the reward, and ordinary people, where are they left? Left behind once again. The government keeps treating housing as purely a market problem requiring market incentives, but housing is also a public policy issue.

Ontario cannot rebate its way out of this crisis. We cannot rely entirely on private developers to solve affordability while the economics of the market reward expensive housing over affordable housing. That is why people feel hopeless in Ontario at this time, at this year. Even households earning \$180,000 combined income are struggling to buy a modest home once child care costs, mortgage qualifications, property taxes and interest rates are all factored into that. That is not a healthy market; that is a distorted market. And yes, construction activity is slowing. They're slowing. Projects are actually stalling. Financing costs are higher.

Some interventions may absolutely be necessary to keep workers employed and projects moving, but if taxpayer dollars are being used to support the industry, then taxpayers deserve something in return: affordability, a great idea; rental guarantees, a great idea; community benefits, that's even a better one—not blank cheques, because affordability is not simply about supply in numbers. It matters what kind of housing gets built. It matters who can afford it. It matters whether people can remain in the communities that they grew up in. Right now, too many Ontarians feel like they are being pushed out of their own future.

Bill 114 may help some projects move forward. It may help some buyers close the gap. But let us not pretend this bill alone will restore affordability for all Ontarians. It will not, because this crisis is larger than one rebate. It's about wages, planning, rental affordability, public housing, infrastructure, speculation, transparency and political priorities. That is why people are frustrated, because they see a government willing to move at lightening speed—or

jet speed, I guess—when it comes to strong-mayor powers, luxury jet purchases or burying controversial measures in an omnibus bill, but somehow moving painfully slowly when it comes to building deeply affordable housing, co-operative housing, supporting renters or restoring faith in democracy. That contradiction is impossible to ignore.

Ontario needs a housing strategy that matches the scale of this crisis, a strategy rooted not in slogans, not in headlines and not in announcements, but in evidence, fairness, accountability and the understanding that housing is not simply an investment vehicle. It is a home. It is security. It gives residents in Ontario dignity—not living in a paper box, like my colleague said this morning.

The highest rise in homelessness in Niagara is 55-plus. They've all worked in factories, and they've all had a paycheque come home. They've raised their children. But the reason they're out there on the streets is because they can't afford a place to live and a roof over their heads. It's about dignity, and that is the standard all Ontarians deserve.

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

1450

MPP Catherine McKenney: Thank you to my colleague for that. That was difficult to listen to, the more we're reminded what kind of trouble we're in in this province and the people who have absolutely no housing and we continue to ignore them.

On this, I tend to agree with you, and I think that an HST rebate, especially for first-time homebuyers, is helpful. We know that families need to—and want to—purchase homes, but this also allows that HST break not just for first-time homebuyers, but any one of us who is fortunate enough to own a home that's gone up in price can sell that home, go out and buy another one and get that same rebate. Do you think that that's fair—

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

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Thank you to my colleague. As you stated, the HST new housing rebate and new residential rental property rebate will end next March. So it isn't fair. We need to make sure that in Ontario we have a government that will lead—similar to the official opposition will, after the next election—and make sure that we have affordable homes for people to be able to live in. And when I say “affordable homes,” people often ask me, “What is an affordable house?” Well, it certainly isn't \$600,000 for your first home. Do you know what it is? It's co-operative housing. It's building infrastructure that's fair for all Ontarians, where they can pay rent.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I recognize the member from Toronto—St. Paul's.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: I wanted to ask the member of St. Catharines, you brought up something about fairness in your discussion about private developers being able to access rebates but not non-profits and how you find that a real quagmire, how it doesn't make sense. Can you just explain that a little bit more?

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Thank you to the member from the third party there. It's exactly what I said,

that if someone buys a new-build condo for \$650,000, removing the HST could reduce the cost enough to help them qualify for a mortgage. However, for some buyers—I'm not sure if I'm answering your question properly, but I'm thinking back to what I said. For some buyers already on the edge of entering the market, that might genuinely matter; I acknowledge that. But the question is, when developers are building homes, they're building \$600,000 condos that are going for a million that first-time homeowners can't afford, first of all, and we're looking for—in Ontario, I think it would be fair to say that most people, seniors, especially, on income, would need to—

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

Mr. Dave Smith: Mr. Speaker, \$130,000 is about \$700 a month on your mortgage. The NDP have talked about the rebate going to the developers. By reducing the price by \$130,000, it makes a difference of 700 bucks per month on someone's mortgage. Wouldn't the member opposite agree that having your mortgage \$700 less is beneficial to people?

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I think we've been quite clear that we're going to support this bill. We're going to support it. Of course, any break that you can give to a first-time homeowner is absolutely beneficial to someone in Ontario. We're not saying it isn't. We supported the Liberal's oppo motion a year ago, but unfortunately, we're trying to help you improve this bill and put some regulations in it so it has teeth and so that we can make sure that it is all good and wholesome for everyone in Ontario, not just saving some and developers other—and seeing some of the bad consequences that could come out of this bill.

Now, remember that we all—on this side of the House, for sure—want to give every dollar, because people are penny-pinching. They can't afford their medication, for crying out loud, and not after what the federal Liberals are going to be doing.

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

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Thank you to the member from St. Catharines for really explaining so much about the bill.

We've had many, many housing bills in this House, all in a big hurry to do something. Is there anything here that suggests that we might be able to build co-operative housing or housing that's deeply affordable?

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Thank you to the member for that great question. We have seen this government not prioritize not-for-profit housing. That's one of the regulations that we can put into this bill.

As the member this morning spoke to this bill, she spoke about—this government took away rent control. That's something that we could also see, residents in Ontario be able to afford their homes and then take those monies that they save and be able to put food on the table; to keep those seniors from walking and living in cardboard boxes on the street, or encampments.

I'll tell you, when I was city councillor 23 years ago, encampments were unheard of. They were unheard of, but

then now we're seeing more and more and more. So you know what? Regulations of non-for-profits do have to be put into a bill, and it's got to be—

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

Mr. Mike Schreiner: The member opposite asked a question about the importance of saving \$700 a month on a mortgage, which is pretty darn important, no doubt about it.

But one thing that I find interesting—you said an average house in your riding, \$650,000. This bill offers a \$130,000 rebate to somebody buying a home up to \$1.8 million. Do you think somebody who can afford a \$1.8-million home needs a full HST rebate for that home?

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Thank you my colleague here. Yes, \$619,000 is the average home price in my riding, and exactly what you're saying: We need affordable housing for sure, yes.

Six years ago, an average home price was \$400,000. Now we're talking one-point-whatever-million dollars, right? Our wages didn't go up 54%. Seniors' incomes didn't go up 50%—like, pensions. ODSP didn't go up 54%. But if you're going to put this up on top of the \$600,000 price tag, yes, I think that we do need affordable housing, and we need to see an HST that will cover that too as well.

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

Mr. Dave Smith: The CRA is the organization that collects retail sales tax. It is not the province. So, since this bill is about enabling the provincial government to work with the CRA on this, and the NDP doesn't seem to think that's such a good idea, how would you handle, then, the collection of tax, if you don't think it should be done by the CRA?

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I can't say this enough. You know what? Maybe I'll spell it: W-E A-R-E S-U-P-P-O-R-T-I-N-G this bill.

But I want to ask you a question right back at you: Why do you, on that side of the House, refuse to build affordable co-operative housing for the residents of Ontario?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I recognize the member from Waterloo for a quick question.

Ms. Catherine Fife: This bill is flawed, though. Like many of the housing bills that the government has brought, there's a one-year limit. Waterloo isn't building anything because we don't have the water infrastructure.

Can the member from St. Catharines articulate how efficient or effective this bill will be with such a short amount of time, given how long it takes to build housing in Ontario?

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Thank you for the question from my colleague from Waterloo. Yes, it's not even a year. It's 11 months now.

But the infrastructure that's under the ground—we're hearing from this government, "Build more, build more, build more. Build faster. We're gonna build homes. We're gonna build. We're gonna build. We're gonna build." And they're holding the municipalities accountable to put water

infrastructure in, and if they don't build those houses, guess what? They don't get that cheque, so now—

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

1500

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: It's an honour, as always, to rise on behalf of my residents in Don Valley West. Today we're debating Bill 114, the HST Relief Implementation Act. Certainly, I support the idea of removing HST off of all new homes, because it was actually Ontario Liberals who first introduced a motion calling for this exact thing in October 2025, although we actually called for something broader.

We called for it to be lasting for five years because we know that this crisis that we're in right now has been long-standing and it's not going to be done in a year. Unlike the government's proposal, our plan knew that it would also be wise to make sure that it wasn't just on new homes, but also on all homes; again, we're glad to see the government do that, although it is only for one year.

Speaker, the government announced with great fanfare that it would waive the provincial portion of the HST on qualifying new homes for all buyers, and at first glance that does sound positive. But let's not forget, this government has had eight years to help get homes built for the people of Ontario. Bill after bill on housing, and yet Ontario housing starts were down for—listen to this, Speaker—a fourth consecutive year in 2025, four years of declining home starts. I think that's just over the number of years that the government introduced their target to build 1.5 million homes. And after much fanfare on that, that's also a promise that they have broken. They're not even talking about those 1.5 million homes anymore.

In 2025, the level of home building should have been 100,000 according to the government's own targets. It was only 65,376, well below their target. The dismal Ford Conservative government has done such a bad job with all of their housing policies that the government, including the finance minister—as I say, he won't even talk about those 1.5 million homes anymore, and it was in his budget. It was in his budget a few years ago that that promise was made, Speaker.

The rate of construction in Ontario, we also should remember, is four units per thousand in 2025. That is 35% below the national average, so once again, Ontario is dragging the rest of the country down. Ontario had the second-lowest rate of construction in the country, after Newfoundland and Labrador. And yet, other provinces are facing a similar economic landscape. The government likes to blame US tariffs, and of course US tariffs are having a devastating impact on our economy, but it was happening long before US tariffs—as I say, four years in a row of falling housing starts.

Other provinces are building more—Alberta, 11 units per thousand, so almost three times Ontario; BC, eight units per thousand, double Ontario; Quebec, seven per thousand, almost double Ontario—so, Speaker, it's hard to lay the blame anywhere else but at the feet of the Ford Conservative government.

Many people are asking a very simple question about this HST rebate, the new bill. We know that people are struggling with buying a home, and so they welcome the idea of tax relief. And certainly, again, as I say, we called for it and, although the finance minister initially didn't want to do it—the Premier talked about that; his finance minister was not in agreement. He wanted it and the finance minister didn't. Well, I guess, finally the finance minister was talked into it in a very limited way, with the help of the federal Liberal government.

But since their announcement about this, confusion has spread once again throughout Ontario's housing sector. Builders are confused. Homebuyers are confused. Real estate professionals are confused. My office has already had a number of emails from buyers who said, "Oh, gee. I bought on this date; I'm closing on this date. Do I qualify? How is this going to work? When do I get the money?" They're worried. Obviously, buying a home is exciting, but it's also stressful when it comes to managing the money around all of that.

There really still is a lack of clarity about how buyers will actually receive the rebate. Will the builder apply the rebate directly, deduct it from the purchase price? Will the buyer have to apply later through the Canada Revenue Agency? Will purchasers have to front the entire amount themselves and wait for reimbursement? What kind of documentation will they need to provide? How long will all of this take until they get their money? What happens if approval from the federal government is delayed? These are not just minor administrative details, Speaker. These are very monumental factors in how a home purchase gets financed. A rebate worth tens of thousands of dollars is not just an afterthought.

According to reporting from Colin D'Mello of Global News, the implementation of this promised HST relief has been plagued by uncertainty and confusion. He reports that Ottawa wanted Ontario to administer the rebate directly, and that the federal Liberal government transferred approximately \$875 million to the province to cover the full cost of the program. But Ontario wants the rebate administered through the Canada Revenue Agency, and that federal approval process, we're coming to understand, is still pending. And even if this bill passes, Speaker, there's still a lot of work to do to get it implemented. We know they're going to need to be regulations. It's still going to be a lot of work, partnering with the federal government, partnering with the CRA to try to make all this happen.

Builders are publicly calling on the government to provide clarity. In the Global News piece I just referenced, a representative from the home building industry said, "We need that regulatory certainty urgently, and I can't say that strongly enough." Speaker, potential buyers are likely sitting on the sidelines, continuing to have the housing market stalled because no one knows how this policy will function in practice. What has the government's response to that been? "Trust us. It's there, 100%. Trust us; it's there."

This is coming from a government who is being investigated by the RCMP criminally, Speaker. They want

us to trust them. This comes from a government that just decided it was the right thing to do, during an affordability crisis, to spend \$30 million of taxpayer money—in fact, to borrow—because this government has run up almost a half-trillion dollars in debt, they're borrowing money to buy a private jet for the Premier. They didn't put that in the budget, and yet they want us to trust them on this—strange.

Speaker, Ontarians do not purchase homes based on "just trust me" politics or policies. They need certainty. They need timelines. They need clear rules so that they can understand them and make informed decisions. And most importantly, homebuyers and builders need competent implementation.

Unfortunately, competent implementation is not something this government is known for. First of all, there were the blue licence plates. Anyone remember those? They're still driving around. You can't see them in the dark. That was one thing.

Look at the billions given out through the Skills Development Fund to their friends, donors and companies who have lobbyists who are their friends. Let's talk about what the Auditor General said about that, Speaker. The Auditor General said that process was not fair, not transparent, not accountable. That's what she said about this government. So, Speaker, it's hard to believe that this government would be able to implement this in a competent manner. Maybe that's why they want the CRA to do it.

You know, we also have a message from the Canadian private lenders association, who say that the enhanced HST rebate will be "a key planning item for mortgage pre-approvals, builder deals, and closing instructions," and that "the rebate may reduce the client's required equity/down payment and closing funds, and may improve affordability metrics"—their words, Speaker.

Basically, what they're telling people is treat this as proposed until enacted. And that, again, is where a lot of the confusion is coming from—certainly, as I say, in the emails that I'm getting from my constituents. They're actually telling—again, this is from the Canadian private lenders association, their words: "Avoid underwriting or advising clients on the assumption the full rebate will apply unless/until confirmed in binding legislation and reflected in closing statements." That's a very key phrase, Speaker. It's not just that we need the legislation passed; you actually need to put that in the documents when you sign your name to say, "This is what I'm going to pay for this house."

1510

We've seen rushed policies from this government. We've seen reversals. We've seen confusion caused by their poor communication. I fear that this is one more example of that, where Ontarians are paying the price for that—as they got all excited about the HST coming off and saving potentially over \$100,000 on the purchase of a new home, that it might not come to materialize for them, so they just wait. They wait on the sidelines. That's, again, not good for those families, for those people buying, and

it's not good for the housing industry and the construction jobs that we so desperately need.

Again, as I said earlier, this is a one-year measure for all new homes, and it's kind of in line with the many temporary things this government does. They get a big announcement out of it, but then it goes away a short time later. We saw that with much of the government's tariff relief package, which expired last October, and this is the same approach.

These temporary measures are not going to solve the structural problems that exist in Ontario's housing sector. It is a crisis, Speaker. As I said, this government has tabled bill after bill, but they helped to create the conditions for this by creating all of those confusing bills. They didn't act soon enough. They just had empty promises, empty goals to build 1.5 million homes but no plan to make it happen, hence they've cancelled their plan. That's kind of proof.

We know that we've got an affordability crisis. People across Ontario feel it every day. We've got wages that aren't keeping pace with the rising cost of groceries. We've got shelter costs rising. We've got transportation costs, of course, rising.

And we know that young people, in particular young families, are really worried about whether or not they will ever be able to afford a home, so they're actually leaving the province. House prices in places like Nova Scotia continue to rise—they're obviously lower than in Ontario—because so many people are moving there because the homes are, in general, more affordable. People are saying farewell to their young adult children as they move to other provinces—Alberta, Nova Scotia—because the believe that achieving the dream of home ownership will be more achievable there. It's very sad.

I think it's important to ask, against all of that, why would the government choose to create this very narrow and temporary eligibility window? It's already been more than a month since the initial bill was introduced, and now we're just getting to this bill around the mechanics, as the government's calling it—the technical changes to make this possible, to get it implemented, with the help of the federal government and the CRA. But it's temporary. Time's already flying; it's over a month, as I say. It's only in place for 12 months for the expanded segment of all new homes. So it really does ask, is this really about helping people buy homes, or is it just, again, about another headline for the government?

We've got some real estate experts saying that the limited one-year window is really just a handout to builders with existing inventory. Maybe that's the case, that it could help them unload those completed homes that haven't sold, but will it substantially increase long-term housing construction? We don't know. That is far less clear. The temporary nature of this policy may do very little to spur new supply—actually getting new homes built, not just the inventory that is sitting around today and not turning over.

Builders talk about how they need certainty. They need to make long-term investment decisions about housing projects. They need confidence that demand will be there.

That's why we've seen so many projects stall in my riding, in Toronto and across the province. A one-year incentive will not provide that stability and continuity.

And who knows, other people are worried that the temporary nature of this rebate could actually create upward pressure on prices, if buyers rush in the market before the March 31, 2027, deadline. So there could be blips that actually drive prices up and make things more unaffordable.

Let me just come back to the failure of this Conservative government to get done what needs to get done around the housing affordability crisis, and that is to build more new homes. The government set ambitious targets. They fell behind, so they just took away the targets. So when they talk about housing bills—and in fact, as I said, it's housing bill after housing bill after housing bill—Ontarians need to ask themselves, if the government were actually succeeding, why is Ontario behind every other province except Newfoundland and Labrador? Speaker, their plan is not working. Their plan to protect Ontario is just a plan that pretends to protect Ontario.

You know, since 2018, Ontario has added 45,000 new construction jobs, but that's fewer than 10,000 per year, Speaker. If we look at the record, that's 70% fewer construction jobs than were created under the previous Liberal government. And so, again, construction workers are also leaving the province, just like those homebuyers. They're going to other places because they're looking for—they need a job to put food on the table and keep a roof over their head, and so they are they are leaving the province.

And we have shortages. People are worried about the trades and workers, that we'll have enough workers. But we need to create the conditions for those people to be successful here, Speaker. And while tax relief can help, programs like the youth career fund that we proposed a number of months ago would actually have incentivized companies to hire young people, some of those young people who might have chosen a career in the trades, and offered both those businesses relief on their costs but also given those young people their first job.

Speaker, this province has around 17%, I think, unemployed young people. That's not a positive trend under this government, just like unemployment. You know, the government talks about jobs that they have allegedly created. Well, if they were creating jobs at the rate we needed them to, unemployment would be going down. Instead, unemployment has gone up under this government: 5.8% when they took office in 2018. It is now 7.7% because they have not created the conditions; they have failed to create the conditions to get more jobs.

They have failed to create the conditions to get more houses built. And they have failed to create the conditions where we have small businesses that are opening more than closing. Right now, more are closing than are opening. This government needs to take some accountability for that instead of deflecting blame either to Ottawa or south of the border.

Speaker, let's just come back again to the implementation measures as I get ready to wrap up here. Even if this

bill passes shortly—this government, we know, wants to rush it through. We know, though, that it's not going to be the next day that this becomes in effect, essentially. It will be effective in law, but not in practice, because the government has said they need to create a whole bunch of regulations. They have to work with the federal government. The Minister of Finance provincially has to work with the Minister of Finance federally. They have to work with the CRA, which of course is facing some of its own challenges. And they've now got to figure out how to roll this out, Speaker. That actually could take months. I think it's going to take at least three months. I would not suspect if it takes even longer, Speaker. They've got to get people trained; you've got to figure out what they're going to do. They've got to get people trained on it, be able to communicate this. So this could be a much longer timeline than this government would like. And again, I think they've got to take some accountability for that.

Their failure to create a clear, concise approach to get this done is going to let homebuyers down again. And while I don't welcome that, I certainly welcome the HST relief on new homes; that is something to be thankful for, in small measure.

1520

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

Mr. Matthew Rae: Thank you to my colleague from Don Valley West for her remarks this afternoon on a very important piece of legislation in this place. I'm glad to hear that the Liberal members will be supporting this piece of legislation on affordability, putting more money back in peoples' pockets and making the dream of home ownership a reality for many more Ontarians.

My colleague across the way mentioned small businesses. I was wondering—through you, Speaker, to my colleague—why the Liberal members in this place chose to vote against the small business tax cut, which puts more money back in small businesses' pockets to reinvest in their communities, in the most recent provincial budget.

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: I thank the member for Perth–Wellington for the question because, again, it gives me a chance to talk about the small business tax cut bill that I introduced several years ago and this government voted down. Small businesses could have had \$35,000 more in their pockets if this government had passed that bill when they had the chance. They didn't.

And you know, I heard one member at the time, I think, shout out to me, "Oh, because we're going to do even more." I'm not sure if it was in Hansard, but that's what they shouted out, heckling as the vote was happening. And guess what, Speaker? They didn't do more; they did less.

Small businesses now will get \$5,000, and, again, that is some welcome relief. I'll grant that. But I can't vote for a bill that has FOI changes going retroactive to protect the government's phone records, the Premier's phone records and records that should be made available to the public to hold this government account. I could not possibly support that.

But again, I'm grateful for the small measure—about a third of the way that we would have gone on small business tax cuts.

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

MPP Jamie West: Thank you to my colleague from Don Valley West.

I think most of us are talking about how this is a pretty helpful bill in general on HST, but it's missing the rest of the formula when it comes to housing. There's a lot of housing that is required for people who are renters, for example. There's a lot of housing for the first-time home-buyer who cannot afford a really expensive house.

I wondered if my colleague would like to expand on what should be done for housing in general for Ontario with this onslaught of housing needs and this massive expansion of encampments in neighbourhood parks.

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: Well, thank you to the member from Sudbury for that very thoughtful question. Certainly, there is so much more that could be done.

I know the Premier, for some reason, doesn't like fourplexes. I don't know why he doesn't like fourplexes. We've got fourplexes in Don Valley West. Families love them. They are a great kind of starter home for people. So things like fourplexes would be a great thing to do, allowing more density within our cities, which means you don't have to build new sewers and connections.

The government's own housing task force said you could build within urban boundaries today, towns, without going into farmland and the greenbelt. Get those houses built. That would have increased supply and that would have reduced the cost of housing and perhaps also encouraged more rental units as well.

So absolutely this government has been a failure on housing. And while again this is a small measure, it's not enough.

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

Mr. Jonathan Tsao: You know, Speaker, the housing crisis is nothing new. I don't think I have to remind the members of this House that the affordability crisis, the housing crisis, has been ongoing for years under this government. And we've seen an incredible lack of urgency from this government, almost as if they don't care. That's the sentiment I've got.

But now we've reached this crisis point, this breaking point, where they feel they have to act, but they're really just putting their thumb to stop the water coming out of the dam.

So I want to ask my colleague, why does she believe that this government has waited so long to address a crisis that's been going on for years now?

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: Thank you to my great colleague from Don Valley North. It's delightful to have all the Don Valleys represented here in our in our Ontario Liberal caucus, and he helped make that happen.

You know, it's a very good question. It's actually a tough one to answer. I think, to be honest, they are so focused on the wrong priorities that they let this housing crisis just get worse and worse and worse.

They're focused on moving the Ontario Science Centre to the lake to support their friends at Therme. The Auditor

General told them they could repair the existing science centre for less than it would cost, even though that's what this government said: "We're moving it because it will cost less." That wasn't the case, Speaker.

I think they've been distracted by these pet projects of the Premier's, whether it was the science centre, a spa with a foreign company at Ontario Place, and now, of course, the latest being the tunnel under the 401. They're distracted from the things that really matter to the people of—

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

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: Thank you to my Liberal colleague from Don Valley West for the presentation. You talked about the existing housing stock and that there's a lot of inventory out there. That's why we are the one, this government of Ontario, to announce the HST cut. We also announced the DC 50% off from the housing cost, housing price.

Ontario families are struggling. You elaborated that they are going through—we are in the middle of the housing crisis. This is another way how they can bring housing affordability to Ontarian families. I talk almost on a regular basis with people knocking on my door and talking about how somebody bought a house a long time ago. They wanted to close the house and they couldn't even close because banks are tightening up their belt.

Through you, Speaker, to my colleague: Why won't the—

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

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: Thank you to the member from Markham–Thornhill for the question.

Look, doing something on affordability is welcome. It's just that it's too little and it's very late. This government has been in power for eight years. In those eight years, we have seen Ontario go from having the second-lowest unemployment rate in the country to the second-highest. That hurts people when it comes to affordability. We have seen, as I said in my remarks, this government have a complete failure on getting housing built. We are the second-lowest in the country behind Newfoundland and Labrador—second-lowest in the country, Speaker. Ontario, once a growth engine.

This government has failed to create the conditions to get housing built. Yes, now they are desperately trying anything and everything. Certainly, as I said, it was our idea to cut the HST, and I am glad that they have done it. They did wait till the federal government committed, but again, it's a little bit. It's just quite late.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I recognize the member from Spadina–Fort York.

Mr. Chris Glover: I think we all agree that removing HST on new buildings, new housing makes a lot of sense. The Liberals were talking earlier that this bill that the Conservatives have introduced actually copies a bill that they introduced a year ago to remove HST on new buildings. I was looking this up and I found out that HST

was actually introduced on new housing in 2010 by a Liberal government.

So are the Liberals now supporting the erasure of a tax that they actually implemented 15 years ago?

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: Speaker, I thank the member from Spadina–Fort York for the question, but I think he's a little bit confused. The harmonized sales tax was a federal initiative and, yes, Ontario signed on. The idea is that it's a progressive tax, so that if you can afford to buy a very expensive car, you pay HST on that car. And if you buy a less expensive car, you pay less HST on that car.

The idea of harmonized sales tax is actually considered a best practice around the world, and we are now looking at providing some relief because of some of the conditions that have been created by this abysmal Conservative government.

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

Mr. Jonathan Tsao: Seeing bills like this which try to tackle some of the bigger issues on affordability and the housing crisis—it's good to see finally something like this because it seems all we see every day here is Conservative misspending, Conservative waste, scandals constantly about what they're doing with our tax dollars.

I wonder if my colleague here can highlight some of her favourite ways, examples, that the government has put forward so far, in terms of—

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

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: Thank you to the member from Don Valley North for the question.

Look, let's talk about the Ontario Science Centre, moving it out of the beautiful Don Valley into the lake; spending a couple billion dollars to build a parking lot in Lake Ontario, paving over paradise. And let's talk about the jet, a \$30-million jet so that the Premier can fly around like a billionaire. That is certainly something that the province of Ontario—no one asked for that when they were voting for this government.

1530

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

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I rise today to debate Bill 114, the government's bill to bring in an HST rebate on new homes, at a time when Ontario is facing its worst housing crisis in its history.

When so many people are struggling to put food on the table and a roof over their head, Greens will not get in the way of implementing a bill that provides a tool to help make homes more affordable. But we call on the government to utilize all the tools in the tool box at this time of crisis. The government, over the last eight years, has failed to do that, primarily because they've prioritized so much of their housing policy into opening the greenbelt for development or forcing urban boundary expansions onto municipalities to benefit wealthy, well-connected land speculators, at the expense of building homes that everyday people can afford.

That's exactly why housing prices are at all-time highs in Ontario and housing starts are at all-time lows. As a matter of fact, we have the worst housing record of any province in the country right now, and as a result, a whole generation of young people are wondering if they'll ever be able to own a home. Rents have gone up to the point now where there is no place in Ontario where a full-time minimum-wage worker can afford average monthly rent. We're in this tragic, tragic situation where 85,000 people are experiencing homelessness right now in the province of Ontario.

Speaker, let's be clear: Homelessness is a policy choice. It's a choice the government has made not to prioritize building deeply affordable homes for people, so that wealthy and well-connected insiders can cash in. It's a tragedy. And I think the people of Ontario are better than this, because I know people in this province care. They care about their neighbours and they want their neighbours to live in a caring province, and part of living in a caring province is ensuring that everyone in this province has access to the human right to have a safe, stable and affordable place to live. Speaker, we need to use every tool in the tool box to make homes affordable for everyone in this province.

And removing the HST off of new homes: That's a tool. I'll support that tool. But, man, we have to be clear and we have to be honest with the people of Ontario that this is only one tool. It's actually not even the best tool, but it's a tool. I would say—and I'm going to explain in a second—that the way the government is utilizing this tool is flawed and could be improved at committee.

So I hope the government listens to Ontarians who are asking them to utilize all the tools to make sure homes are affordable. I hope the government listens to those who are asking them to fix this bill, because part of the reason we're here is that they rushed the budget bill through, which contained the HST rebate in it. I think they rushed it through because they want to get rid of the freedom-of-information requests, because the Premier is hiding something that he doesn't want us to know about.

And so I hope the government now learns from that mistake and actually takes the time to fix some of the flaws in this bill. One of those flaws is to ensure that we're not using public money to subsidize McMansions, especially at a time when the province has record debt and deficits. Should we really be subsidizing \$1.8-million homes?

In the city of Toronto, where the average new home price is around a million dollars, I totally understand why we'd have a full HST rebate on a million-dollar home. I totally get it. That \$130,000 a year will help families afford a home. But should homes at \$1.8 million get a rebate? And above \$1.8 million, they still get they still get a \$24,000 rebate. Should people who can afford to qualify for mortgages for McMansions get an HST rebate?

Secondly, Greens have been calling for the HST rebate. We've been calling for a development charges rebate for homes built within existing urban boundaries. So why don't we limit the HST rebate to homes built within existing urban boundaries? Why would we do that? Be-

cause it's cheaper for municipalities. Low-density sprawl costs municipalities 2.5 times more money to service because they have to do water lines and hydro lines and sewer lines—all these additional expenses. Transit becomes less efficient. So why don't we incentivize and subsidize homes built within existing urban boundaries? Then we don't have to pave over our farmland, which we're losing at 319 acres each and every day in this province, threatening our \$52-billion agri-food economy, which is the largest employer in the province.

I hope the government comes up with mechanisms. I'll leave this to the public servants in the finance department to ensure that the HST rebate actually leads to lower housing prices.

I also would like the government to clarify—I know it says this on all of the government websites, but it doesn't say it in the bill, and people have raised concerns—to ensure that this rebate only applies to somebody's primary residence. Because we do have a situation in this province, and all across North America, where you have large corporations buying up hundreds and hundreds of homes. We don't want those folks to take advantage of this HST rebate, because it should be for new home buyers struggling to get by. I hope we can clarify that in the bill. I know it says it on the government's website, but people have raised this as a concern that, I think, should be clarified at committee.

Now, I want to put a couple numbers—I'm a small business guy; I'm a numbers guy. I like to look at the numbers. According to the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, we could eliminate chronic homelessness in Ontario with a \$1.1-billion-a-year investment in deeply affordable, non-profit, co-op supportive homes. It could be eliminated in 10 years at \$1.1 billion a year. This particular policy is going to cost \$1.3 billion. I think that's a good use of \$1.3 billion if it's implemented properly—no problem with that, Speaker—but I want to put it in context that for almost the exact same amount of money, the government could choose to end chronic homelessness in this province. But they've chosen not to do that.

Speaker, in my final minute or so, I want to talk about what it means to utilize all the tools in the tool box. The first one is: I call on this government once again—and I've been doing this for years now—to legalize multiplexes and mid-rises as of right in the province of Ontario. That is the fastest and quickest way to increase housing supply that people can afford, and it would make it easier for builders and new home buyers to take advantage of the HST rebates. It's only going to be around for a year, so we need to quickly facilitate building. As-of-right zoning allows that to happen because you don't have to go through this long process to get permission to build homes. Let's take advantage of it. Use this bill to take advantage of it by making fourplexes and mid-rises as of right in the province of Ontario.

Let's bring in stronger protections for renters in this province, because the rent is just too darn high

Finally, Speaker, let's make a commitment to once again have the provincial government be at the table

providing government-funded, non-profit, co-op and supportive housing. Private-sector builders are even saying, “If you guys provide the funding, we’ll put our workers to work to build that housing so we can actually end homelessness in this province.” It’s not going to happen with the private sector because private-sector builders can’t afford to take a loss. The government is going to have to step in if we truly want to eliminate homelessness in this province. The government is going to have to step in and help get the job done.

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

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I was listening to the member over there regarding the removal of the HST. He agrees to remove the HST. I want to thank him for supporting us on that.

But I remember when we passed Bill 23 and removing DC charges, and you were against it; Bill 39 to have the municipalities have more control to build more homes, and you were against that. You said the HST was one tool. So why did you not support the other tools that were put into effect by our government to help build more homes in the province of Ontario? We could have started building more homes back then, instead of waiting for today.

1540

Mr. Mike Schreiner: The reason I have voted against the government’s housing bills is because they just haven’t worked. And I said it at the time in debate—that they would not work. That’s exactly why Ontario has the worst housing crisis in its history, the worst housing crisis in the entire country. So why would I vote for bills that make the housing crisis worse? Most of those bills really were about unlocking land so that wealthy, well-connected land speculators could cash in, instead of actually building homes people can afford in the communities they know and love.

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

MPP Jamie West: Thank you to the member from Guelph for his debate. He mentioned several times, even in the last answer, how bad the housing crisis is in Ontario.

I know in Sudbury we never had these tent cities. We never had tents all over in the local woods. We’re seeing them pop up all over the place. I’m sure they’re showing up in Guelph, as well. He had several thoughtful comments about what we could do, common-sense solutions to this.

I just wonder if the member wants to talk about what we should be doing not just for housing, but for rental property, as well.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I appreciate the member’s question.

Do you know what? I want to give the government a compliment on something really quick. In my riding, the government funded supportive housing that created 32 homes and moved people from tents into housing, with wraparound mental health and addiction supports. There hasn’t been a single eviction. There hasn’t been an overdose that has required a medical intervention. Those people are being housed.

Here’s the problem: We’re not building enough—the budget itself for supportive housing has enough supportive housing to build around 140 a year, when there are 85,000 people experiencing homelessness. We need a more bold and ambitious plan. We have the solutions. We need to implement them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I recognize the member from Wellington–Halton Hills.

Mr. Joseph Racinsky: Thank you to the member from Guelph for your comments.

Like me, the member from Guelph likes to talk about policy, and I appreciate that.

I had the opportunity to join the Wellington–Halton Hills Green Party in Elora for a housing discussion, where I was able to highlight some of the policies we have brought forward, like additional residential units as of right, no parking minimums, major transit hubs. These are things that were very well received at that meeting.

Something that we’re bringing forward now is an \$8.8-billion DC replacement for municipalities that apply.

I want to ask the member if he’s going to join me in advocating with municipalities in the Guelph and Wellington county areas to cut DCs so we can get more housing built that is needed in our communities.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I appreciate the member for Wellington–Halton Hills coming out to that event and contributing to it. I think it says a lot when people can work across party lines.

I brought the housing minister to Guelph and to Fergus, to the member’s riding, to talk about why fourplexes as of right is so critically important. In Guelph, a private sector company has turned eight single-family homes into 156 homes for people in the same land area, through stacked townhouse fourplexes. They’ve done the exact same thing in Fergus. Those are the kinds of solutions I’m talking about. That’s legal in Guelph now, but it’s not across the province. The government’s own Housing Affordability Task Force said that was one of the key recommendations to unlock housing, to quickly build homes that people can afford—and take advantage of this HST rebate, which I support.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I’ll go to further debate.

Mrs. Michelle Cooper: It is a privilege to rise in this House today to speak in strong support of the HST Relief Implementation Act (Residential Property Rebates), 2026.

I want to begin by acknowledging the leadership of the Minister of Finance for his continued work to advance our government’s plan to tackle one of the most pressing challenges facing Ontarians today: housing affordability. Because, Speaker, at its core this legislation is about something very simple and very important: helping people afford a home and giving them the certainty they need to move forward with confidence.

Speaker, we know that Ontario is navigating a period of real and persistent economic uncertainty. Across the global economy, jurisdictions are dealing with the impacts of trade pressures, supply chain disruptions and shifting market conditions. These forces are creating uncertainty

for businesses, workers and families alike, including right here at home.

While we cannot control global conditions, we can control how we respond. Our government has taken a prudent and responsible approach, protecting Ontario's economic stability, maintaining a competitive environment for investment and continuing to support families who are feeling the pressure of rising costs, because while we talk about economic trends in broad terms, the reality is that families are experiencing these pressures directly, especially when it comes to housing.

Across Ontario, people are asking the same question: "Can I still afford a home?" We hear it from young people trying to enter the housing market for the first time, we hear it from families who are trying to find a home that meets their needs, and we hear it from builders who want to deliver those homes but are facing rising costs and uncertainty.

Housing affordability is not a simple issue. It is complex, it is structural and it requires action on multiple fronts. That is why our government is taking a comprehensive approach, one that addresses both affordability and supply, and this legislation is a key part of the plan.

Before I turn to the details of the bill, it is important to put this measure into context. Our government has a strong track record of delivering real affordability relief to Ontarians, and that work has been deliberate, sustained and focused on the everyday costs families face. We've taken actions to cut costs and put money back into people's pockets in very practical ways. For example, we removed tolls on Highway 407 East, saving daily commuters an average of \$7,200 every year—money that can go towards groceries, child care or saving for a home. We also moved ahead to remove tolls on Highways 412 and 418, giving families and businesses more flexibility in how they travel while keeping more of their hard-earned income and helping goods flow freely across Ontario.

At the same time, we've made the decision to permanently cut the gas and fuel taxes. That means every time Ontarians fill up their tank, they are saving money. For many households, that has added up to meaningful savings over time, providing consistent relief in the face of rising costs. We also tackled transit affordability through the One Fare program, eliminating double fares and connecting services across the region. That has made a real difference for daily commuters, who are now saving an average of \$1,600 every year just getting to work and school and back.

Beyond transportation, we know that families need direct support. That is why we delivered \$200 rebate cheques to every eligible Ontarian, putting money directly into people's pockets when they need it most and helping households manage day-to-day expenses during a challenging economic period.

We've also focused on supporting workers. By increasing the minimum wage, we are helping hundreds of thousands of Ontarians earn more for their work, ensuring that income keeps pace with the realities of today's cost of living. And we haven't forgotten about those on fixed

incomes. We strengthened support for seniors by enhancing and expanding income programs like the Guaranteed Annual Income System so that around 100,000 more low-income seniors can benefit.

1550

At the same time, we made sure that GAINS and other programs like the Ontario Disability Support Program are indexed to inflation for the first time in history, so that those who rely on them are better protected from rising costs.

Taken together, these actions represent billions of dollars in relief for people across the province. More specifically, this year alone, we're saving people and families across the province nearly \$12 billion.

They are not abstract policies; they are real measures that people can feel in their daily lives. Speaker, they reflect a clear and consistent principle: Government should be on the side of affordability, cutting costs, supporting families and putting more money back into the pockets of the people of Ontario.

Speaker, the HST Relief Implementation Act builds on that record. Because housing is one of the biggest costs families face and we are serious about affordability, we must address it directly. This legislation would enable the delivery of expanded HST relief, removing the full 13% HST on eligible new homes valued up to \$1 million, providing up to \$130,000 in savings and extending that maximum relief to homes valued up to \$1.5 million, helping to significantly reduce the upfront costs of buying a new home.

That matters because one of the biggest barriers to home ownership is not just the price tag; it's the initial cost of getting into the market. By lowering that barrier, we are giving more Ontarians the opportunity to take the first step. Simply put, we are putting more money back in the pockets of Ontarians and we are helping turn the dream of home ownership into a reality.

But, Speaker, this bill is not only about helping buyers; it's about providing clarity and certainty to builders. That is critically important, because when builders have certainty, they can move forward; when they can move forward, more homes get built; and when more homes get built, affordability improves over time. This is how we address the housing challenge: not with a single measure, but with a coordinated, practical action.

Increasing housing supply is essential. Without enough homes, affordability pressures will remain. That is why this initiative is designed not only to lower costs but also to stimulate housing construction.

By improving the economics of building new homes, we are helping to unlock projects and get shovels in the ground faster. That means more homes, that means more opportunity and that means a stronger, more resilient economy. Because the housing sector does not just build homes; it supports jobs, drives investments and contributes to communities across this province.

Real progress on housing also requires real partnerships, and it requires all levels of government working together. That is exactly what we are doing. We are

working closely with the federal government to ensure the timely implementation of this expanded relief. We have already seen how collaboration can deliver results, and we are continuing that work to make sure Ontarians benefit.

At the same time, municipalities have a critical role to play. We need to work together to address the costs that are built into new housing, including development charges and other upfront expenses that make it harder for families to get into the market, because the reality is, if we want to improve affordability, we must tackle costs from every angle.

Speaker, this bill does not stand alone. It is part of a broader plan, a plan that supports homebuyers through targeted relief investments in the infrastructure needed to enable housing growth, streamline approvals to get projects moving faster and work with partners across all levels of government to reduce costs and increase supply. We are making significant and sustained investments to ensure communities have the capacity to grow.

Through the Housing-Enabling Water Systems Fund and the Housing-Enabling Core Servicing Stream, we're supporting critical infrastructure like water, waste water and stormwater systems, investments that have already supported 120 projects across 127 municipalities and First Nations communities. We have increased funding for these programs by \$700 million, bringing total support to \$875 million, helping ensure that infrastructure is not a barrier to building new homes. At the same time, we are continuing to support affordability directly through existing programs like the new housing rebate and the new residential rental property rebate while also advancing new measures like the expanded HST relief.

We are also making historic investments to get more homes built, including through the \$4-billion Municipal Housing Infrastructure Program, which is helping municipalities deliver the roads and services needed for new communities, and the \$1.2-billion Building Faster Fund, which rewards municipalities that are getting homes built. We continue to take action to support purpose-built rental housing and modernized construction so homes can be delivered more efficiently. Taken together, this is a comprehensive and coordinated approach, one that supports affordability, increases supply and ensures more homes are built for the people of Ontario.

Speaker, Ontario already has programs in place to support housing affordability. We have rebates that provide relief for homebuyers. We support rental housing development, and we continue to take action to address supply challenges. This legislation builds on that foundation. It strengthens our approach, it complements existing programs and it helps us go further in supporting Ontarians.

Do you know who else agrees with us, Speaker? None other than the industry stakeholders and community leaders who have a direct role to play in the present and future of Ontario's housing market. Stakeholders across the province have been clear: This legislation is a positive and necessary step to improving housing affordability and supporting communities. Municipal leaders, industry

experts and housing advocates understand that reducing upfront costs is key to getting more homes built and helping more people buy them. Their support reflects a shared recognition that action is needed now.

The Association of Municipalities of Ontario pointed out that removing the HST on new homes even temporarily can help support housing starts during a challenging time in the market. In eastern Ontario, municipal leaders have welcomed this measure as immediate relief for residents. They see it as a practical step that reflects an understanding of the pressures facing rural and small urban communities, and they agree that this type of action can help stimulate local economic activity. In western Ontario, leaders have also recognized the value of this coordinated approach. They understand that the removal of HST is a concrete step that will help reduce barriers for families.

Across the housing sector, industry leaders are echoing these same sentiments. What we are hearing is consistent and clear: Stakeholders want action, they want collaboration and they want practical solutions that deliver results. This legislation responds directly to those expectations. It aligns with what municipalities are asking for. It reflects what industry leaders have been calling for, and it supports what families across Ontario need.

We recognize that any new measure of this scale requires clear communication and thoughtful implementation. Builders, buyers and stakeholders want to understand how it will work, and rightly so. That is why we are committed to providing detailed guidance and ensuring that the process is clear, transparent and accessible and, importantly, Speaker, we are ensuring that eligible buyers who act within the defined timeline will be able to access the relief once the program is fully in place. That certainty is key.

1600

Speaker, Ontarians have been clear. They want action on housing affordability. They want solutions that lower costs, increase supply and help them get ahead. This legislation does exactly that.

And yet, we must ask, if the opposition says they support affordability, why would they oppose a measure that puts money back into people's pockets? If they say we need more homes, why would they stand in the way of measures that help build them? If they say they support families, why would they delay relief that helps those families achieve home ownership? These are important questions, because this is not about rhetoric; it is about results.

This initiative is also about supporting workers. A strong housing sector means strong communities. It means jobs in construction and related industries. It means opportunities for people across Ontario. When we stimulate the housing market, we are not just building homes; we are building livelihoods.

At the end of the day, Speaker, this is about the people. It is about a young person saving for their first home. It is about a family looking for space to grow. This is about a worker contributing to building our communities—a

builder, ready to deliver the homes that Ontarians need. Our responsibility is to support them, to remove barriers, to reduce costs and to create the conditions for success.

The HST Relief Implementation Act is a practical step forward. It reflects our commitment to affordability, opportunity and economic growth. It is about putting people first. It is about making sure Ontario remains a place where hard work is rewarded and where the dream of home ownership is within reach.

We know there is more work to do. Housing affordability is a challenge that requires sustained effort and ongoing action, but this bill is an important step. It is a very meaningful step. It is a responsible step. And this step delivers real results.

The act—and hopefully all members will support it, and I think I've heard that around the table—if passed, would provide greater clarity for Ontario's homebuyers and builders on the implementation of the expanded HST relief of 13% on new homes valued up to \$1 million.

Buyers of eligible new homes valued at \$1 million or less would receive the full 13% relief on their home, while buyers of eligible homes valued at \$1 million to \$1.5 million would see relief of \$130,000. This is what we are doing to help Ontarians be able to own a home in this province. This is what we are doing to boost the economy and create affordability, protecting Ontario.

I urge all members of this House to support the HST Relief Implementation Act (Residential Property Rebates), 2026. Because supporting this bill means supporting Ontarians, it means supporting families and it means supporting a stronger, more affordable future for our province.

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

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Thank you to the member from Eglinton–Lawrence for your presentation. With respect to the HST rebate, what we know is that there's a large inventory of unsold homes. Most of them are condominiums, to be quite honest, in urban centres. In theory, the HST rebate should be passed along to result in savings for the new home buyer, but we know that there is no requirement embedded in Bill 114. What we've seen since the announcement is that not only are those savings not passed along, some of the developers are raising their prices to eat up those potential savings.

How would the member propose that we prevent the developers from eating the savings as profits and make sure that the savings are passed through, ultimately, to the buyer?

Mrs. Michelle Cooper: Thank you to the member opposite for their question. We are working with our federal partners on this measure. We're actively in discussions and we are hoping to have some solutions. As the legislation states—which was in the budget and in this bill as well—homes purchased as of April 1 will qualify for this. We're actively in consultation and in communication and we will have those measures in place shortly.

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

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: Thank you to the member from Eglinton–Lawrence for her remarks today. As

members in the opposition have laid out, there is still going to be some work to do, even if this bill passes, around the rollout, the work with the federal government, the work with the Canada Revenue Agency around how this all gets administered. I'm wondering if you could talk about a potential timeline for when that could happen and how many months you think it will take. Because, again, during those months, there is still going to be uncertainty for people who are buying or wanting to buy a home and close on their home, so I'm wondering if you have some insight on that.

Mrs. Michelle Cooper: Thank you for that question. This is about us all coming together to support affordability in this province and to tackle the affordability issue. All parties should support this bill. It's really about getting home ownership to the people of Ontario and also getting more shovels in the ground.

What this will do is drive up to 8,000 new home starts this year. I know that I was talking to a home builder last weekend and just the amount of homes they sold in the month of April was more than they had sold in a long time. This is really getting people out there and making their purchases, so it's a good-news story.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I recognize the member for Carleton.

MPP George Darouze: I want to thank the member from Eglinton–Lawrence for her presentation. Speaker, families across Ontario are feeling the pressure of rising costs and are looking for real relief they can count on. Our government has taken steps in the past to cut taxes, reduce fees and put more money back into people's pockets, but Ontarians want to know how we are continuing that work today, especially when it comes to one of their biggest expenses, housing. They want to see a particular measure that will make a difference and help them get ahead.

Through you, Speaker: Can the member explain how our approach to affordability is guiding this proposed HST relief and helping Ontarians keep more of their hard-earned money back in their pocket?

Mrs. Michelle Cooper: Thank you to the member from Carleton for the question and all the hard work he does here for his riding. I wanted to talk about how, thanks to this bill and our government's actions, we're helping thousands more Ontario families realize the dream of home ownership by removing the 13% HST from new home purchases.

My riding is in Toronto. The average price—I think we talked about this in some of the debate—is \$1 million. I think that gets you only maybe a 500-square-foot condo in this city. This is a reality for some. It allows young people to really realize that dream.

This is what we're doing as a government. Cutting this 13% will be helpful for Ontarians.

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

1610

MPP Alexa Gilmour: The Ontario NDP is supportive of measures to get housing built, but I hope the member from Eglinton–Lawrence can clarify something for me. There was a press conference announcing that this HST

credit would be in the budget, Bill 97, and then there was a mad rush to push this bill through. In fact, it was supposed to go to committee where we could have seen the government fix this error, because it wasn't in the budget bill itself, but that mad rush happened and there was a cover-of-night, darkness, night sitting, where the bill came and was finally voted on.

I'm just wondering, in this bill we see the capacity to hide the government's backroom dealings, hide the Premier's cellphone. So my question is this: Was this bill rushed through? Was this error made because protecting the Premier's cellphone was more important than housing Ontarians?

Mrs. Michelle Cooper: I want to talk about this bill and also talk about the budget, because if you review the budget, there were so many good affordability measures that were in there. This is to help people in Ontario and all Ontarians, in every region of this province—all the things we're doing to help.

I'm going to use Toronto because we're both from the Toronto area here, and the member. So let's go to Toronto. It's quite an expensive city to live in. But you know what? We're building the Ontario Line. That's exciting. What other things are we doing? We are spending \$73 million on the Gardiner Expressway for rehabilitation. I know there's a lot of us that use that expressway. Other things we're doing are revitalizing Ontario Place and creating over 5,700 jobs in the construction and tourism sectors, and also \$1 billion to help TTC purchase 55 new—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I'll go to the member from Don Valley West.

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: Thanks again to the member from Eglinton–Lawrence for her remarks today.

We are neighbours in our ridings; we share a border of Yonge Street, and so I'm often in the member's riding in addition to my own because it's close to my riding. I know that in Eglinton–Lawrence there are lots of fourplexes. There are lots of families who are living in those and raising their families. Again, we're talking about housing and housing supply. I'm wondering if you could explain why this government won't support the building of more fourplexes, both in Toronto and across our province.

Mrs. Michelle Cooper: I want to talk about the HST and what's so important about this. This is 13%. This is \$130,000 in savings for new homebuyers and people buying new homes. This is a really important initiative by our government that is—from the builders to the construction workers, we have heard it all. I've heard it from young people that now see a future here in the city of Toronto. And I know this is a great, vast, huge province, but this is what I'm hearing everywhere I go: that they are excited about this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I recognize the member from York South–Weston

MPP Mohamed Firin: I want to thank the honourable member from Eglinton–Lawrence for the wonderful work that she does as a parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance.

Earlier, I heard the member from Orléans talk about how the NDP was not supporting workers. He said, "I don't know; maybe they anticipate robots to build some of these homes." I wanted to ask the wonderful member what this would mean for the workers of this province. What it would mean for the union workers and how this would spur job opportunities for the people of this province.

Mrs. Michelle Cooper: Thank you to the to the member for his great work and for that question.

We've heard from different unions; we've heard from workers, and this is an important initiative. We need to get shovels in the ground. We need to get the construction industry going. This means thousands upon thousands of jobs for the workers. And even run-off businesses: As these new communities get built, there are other businesses that happen. So this is really—

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

ROYAL ASSENT

SANCTION ROYALE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I beg to inform the House that in the name of His Majesty the King, Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to assent to certain bills in her office.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Meghan Stenson): The following are the titles of the bills to which Her Honour did assent:

An Act to amend the Municipal Act, 2001 and the Municipal Elections Act, 1996 / Loi modifiant la Loi de 2001 sur les municipalités et la Loi de 1996 sur les élections municipales.

An Act to amend various Acts in respect of education and child care / Loi modifiant diverses lois relatives à l'éducation et à la garde d'enfants.

HST RELIEF IMPLEMENTATION ACT (RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY REBATES), 2026

LOI DE 2026 SUR LA MISE EN ŒUVRE DE L'ALLÈGEMENT DE LA TVH (REMISES RELATIVES AUX BIENS RÉSIDENTIELS)

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

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: I'm very pleased to rise today to speak on behalf of the great people of Toronto Centre. Today we're debating Bill 114, which is a government bill entitled HST Relief Implementation Act.

The government would like you to know that this bill could make homes more affordable, and in the bluster of the language, they will say that it's going to solve all problems and every single aspect of the housing crisis. I think that may be the case for some people, and I would say that it's very few. But as legislators, I think we're obligated to assess all policies, all legislations, on many things, and among others, the value that they bring for the cost that they bear.

Lowering and removing the HST for buyers of new homes can be a good thing. Certainly, I come from the real estate sector. I can tell you that whenever we reduce the cost of home ownership, that is welcome in the sector.

So I will be supporting this bill. I want it to move to committee for consultation and to receive feedback because there are some concerns about the bill that I think can be addressed. But it can only be addressed if we have the consultation at committee and amendments are considered, without which then this bill is going to pass by a majority-held government, flaws and all.

I would like to see amendments made to this bill to ensure that buyers will actually see those savings as promised by this government. Currently, this bill does not require the developers who are selling these new homes to lower the costs of the homes based on the rebate—none at all. There's no promise that the cost of savings will be passed through to the buyer. That's absolutely critical, because without that amendment and without that requirement, then we're not saving homebuyers anything except for lowering the obligation for the developers. And if they end up pocketing that HST rebate themselves, then we've accomplished nothing other than to enrich them with public dollars.

This bill is going to cost Ontarians roughly \$2.2 billion. Can you imagine what we could do with \$2.2 billion? How much affordable housing could we be building? How many people could we actually be housing? So instead of talking about the bill exclusively, I'm going to touch upon solutions that will actually address the housing crisis that has gripped every single Ontario family today that is struggling to make ends meet.

I want to be able to recognize the real solutions that Ontarians are looking for, especially renters in every single riding in our communities. What they really, deeply need is action on real rent control: closing the rent control loophole that has been exempted for homes that were built after 2018.

This morning, members of this House had a chance to actually give renters some financial relief. It was not going to solve every single aspect of the housing crisis, but you had a chance to endorse a rent freeze for only two short years while we knew that there was economic hardship and uncertainty. Members of the government voted it down.

We could be banning above-guideline increases for corporate landlords, a system that has now become so wildly abused that we've seen the rise of rent increase faster than the rate of inflation. On this government's watch, rent has now increased 54.5% over the past 10 years. I challenge anybody to show me your housing bill, your mortgage bill, where it's actually gone up 54.5% and you're not screaming bloody murder.

Many landlords now wait until the repairs are so bad in their rental units that they then become eligible for AGI increases, forcing the tenants to live in substandard, disrepair conditions and then passing off all the costs to the tenants. All that cost should have just been part of their business contract, their rental contract with the tenants.

Initiatives like the city of Toronto's RentSafeTO program could be invested in, cracking down on absentee landlords by making sure that all the necessary repairs are made quickly, and then passing those bills to the landlord to recover the costs.

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The province could be funding a great initiative such as the Toronto Rent Bank, which is administered locally in my community by the Neighbourhood Information Post. This is a city-of-Toronto-run program that actually prevents people from losing their home. All they needed was a small loan, to be repaid, that would allow them to catch up.

This government could be investing in co-op housing, which is a fantastic community-based model that has delivered affordability and consistency across the province. It's a proven model that works. Toronto Centre is home to the largest number of housing co-ops anywhere in the country, and I can tell you that that is a proud accomplishment.

Investing the right size of community housing models and making repairs to community-based housing will actually go a long way. Currently, in Toronto Community Housing, the wait-list is over 100,000 households deep, and last year, TCHC only housed 2,838 families. At this pace, if you are a resident who is on that TCHC wait-list, you will not get an apartment for the next 37 years.

Last year alone, the housing wait-list for TCHC housing grew by 10,000 applicants. That's 10,000 new families on the wait-list for housing. Obviously, we need urgent, sustained funding to make that system work. We need to build new affordable, supportive housing to support the most vulnerable in our communities. They live in every single community across the riding.

It's frustrating to me when this government tells low-income Ontarians that there's no money for permanent, deeply affordable housing that they desperately need, but somehow there's \$2.2 billion of public money available for this HST rebate. Obviously, this is to help developer donors and friends who are carrying very expensive, overpriced housing stock that they have failed to sell. I get it; I worked in the sector. They're always looking for some type of relief. If they can't get it from the buyer, they're going to ask the government for it.

So here we are subsidizing this initiative, this rebate. The HST rebate, at the cost of \$2.2 billion, is going to be borne by someone. Either it's the municipality, through reduced service cuts, or perhaps service cuts at the provincial level. But one way or the other, higher taxes will show up elsewhere. That's just the way it works. You cannot move an item from the balance sheet without having an offset.

So I'm very pleased that the Ontario NDP has a real housing plan, one that will work for everyday Ontarians. The Homes Ontario plan will be a dedicated public agency with a mandate to tariff-proof Ontario's housing market, and we will deliver the homes that are publicly built, permanently affordable and made in Ontario, built by Ontario labour.

Housing is essential infrastructure. I would say that it's nation-building infrastructure. Ontario cannot grow, thrive or compete if people cannot afford to live here. Homes Ontario is about getting the government back into the business of building housing at scale, for the public good and for the long haul. Homes Ontario would finance and deliver 30,000 new homes—permanently affordable.

This government has been in power since 2008. If it was an NDP government, we would have built 240,000 new homes of deeply affordable housing with the Homes Ontario plan. But instead, when I came to Queen's Park in 2022, almost every day in question period, I heard the government talking about their plan to build 1.5 million homes—not affordable, but just homes—and that you were going to achieve that goal by 2031. I don't hear that number anymore, because now, I hear that the government is trying to build as many homes as possible—no actual target, no quantum, no details. You've abandoned house building in Ontario. And I think it's a real shame, because on your watch, you've only had a start of 74,600 new housing starts in 2024. The numbers since then have tanked.

We need to leverage public land and fast-track the development to ensure that it serves the public interest.

We need to partner with non-profits, co-ops, supportive housing providers and municipalities, who are bearing the brunt of the homelessness and housing crisis.

We need to work with our trade unions and work with workers to strengthen Ontario's skilled trades and building capacity, because for all the money that's doled out to build new training centres, I don't see the government rushing out to hire tradespeople. That's been a big criticism coming back from the sector.

It's critical that Ontario reinvest in supportive housing, rent-geared-to-income housing and co-operative housing to combat the housing crisis and to lift communities.

Homes Ontario will use grants, low-cost public financing and public land to fast-track approvals and to provide supports to enable the construction, the acquisition and the repair of at least 300,000 permanently affordable homes. We will enable the purchase of existing, privately owned rental units to be converted to permanently affordable, public non-profit or co-op housing, similar to Toronto's Multi-Unit Residential Acquisition Program, MURA, something that has worked in a stellar way at the city of Toronto. It's comparable to the United Kingdom's Council Homes Acquisition Programme. We will protect the existing supply of affordable rentals. We will complete the renovations and repairs as needed.

Homes Ontario will help create thousands of new jobs in residential construction and keep that highly skilled labour employed in periods of market downturn and slow-down, like we have right now.

To truly make a difference in housing affordability in Ontario, we need to do something more than a simple tax credit on brand new homes, something that most Ontarians cannot currently afford. We need to rethink Ontario's housing strategy because the numbers that I've shared with you—that are on your record—are simply not

meeting the test. This government has failed to do so, and I fear that they have run out of ideas.

Sunsetting the rebate is built into Bill 115. The rebate program is going to sunset by March 2027, comparable to the new housing rebate and the new residential rental property rebate. The government tried to bury this information on page 226 in the budget, but we found it.

These two long-standing HST rebate programs will be survived by two newer HST rebate programs for first-time homebuyers and purpose-built rental housing, which are set to expire beginning in 2031. In other words, two permanent HST rebate programs are being briefly supplemented and then replaced by two temporary programs with much more restricted eligibility that will begin expiring within the next five years. What a sleight of hand, since the government is touting this as a massive win for affordability despite the fact that the program is short-lived with a sunset clause and largely designed as a giveaway to developers, with no guarantee of pass-through savings to the buyer.

The Ontario Financial Accountability Office released a report this past March speaking about the province's subsidized housing program. The report projects that the number of households receiving rent-geared-to-income and financial assistance will continue to drop, which means that more and more Ontarians are becoming less and less qualified because the bank account is empty. Over 331,000 Ontario households are eligible for financial assistance to help them pay their rent, but the overwhelming majority will never receive any financial assistance whatsoever.

I see this problem in action every single day. Constituents routinely come to my office, as they do yours, and they tell you that they're so confused by how it is that they meet every single financial requirement for financial assistance and none is ever provided. They're breaking themselves in half, hustling to get two or three jobs to make ends meet in some of the most expensive places in our country.

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All those funds in those accounts are over-prescribed so quickly, which means that the programs are grossly underfunded. You have let this happen on your watch. The Premier can find \$30 million to buy himself a private luxury jet, but he can't find \$30 million to add to the financial assistance program for renters who are facing eviction.

This government is continuously failing Ontarians in need, and they've almost abdicated all their responsibility for keeping Ontarians housed. The Premier builds housing at record low levels and the federal Liberals haven't come close to filling the gaps. Where is the safety net in Ontario and Canada? No level of government is investing enough in affordable housing, but certainly, this Conservative government is the stingiest by far. The need for affordable housing couldn't be more dire, and yet the funding from this government has flatlined.

I'm passionate, Speaker, because these are real problems manifesting in tragic stories in our community. I

know the government is ideologically opposed to building housing using government resources. Let the private market fix the problem: That has been the neo-liberal policy now for eight years of Conservative government and 15 years of Liberal government. The housing crisis that we are in today is largely because of failed policies where you don't centre people first.

The solutions are all there; I've just laid them out for you. The benefits of deeply affordable housing are not to be realized by big condo bailouts or tax holidays for developers. What we do need are connected communities that can stay close to their families and network, neighbourhoods with history where people have fun to live where they want to live.

I know that in my community recently, I celebrated the Forsythia Festival in Cabbagetown, one of the largest concentrations of beautifully restored Victorian homes anywhere on the planet. It's a thriving neighbourhood and embedded in that neighbourhood is a very strong co-op community. Everybody wants to live there. You can have all the beautiful mixed-income community coming together where people want to be.

We would have kids who remain in local schools. We would have people who are less stressed and who are happier. We'd be able to enable them to pursue their passions and to live their fullest lives. We would have a health care system that they feel strongly supported by if we could lower the chronic stress and offer them greater stability.

I know community members are living cheque to cheque. I know that government solutions and programs can go a long way to making them happier and healthier. But despite all of these solutions that are before us, what we have is a bill that is narrowly focused on one thing: this tiny, little sliver of a population that may get some material benefit from an HST rebate that is going to cost the public taxpayer \$2.2 billion. Then it will sunset in about 11 months—actually, no, 10 months. We're running out of time.

I don't know why it is that the government can't see that they have the power and the resources to address the housing crisis in a real, tangible, human-hearted way. Instead, choices are made every single day, and it's reflected in a budget that is flawed.

When you ask us why we don't support the budget—when you embed to gut the 40-year-old FOI rules that we have in Ontario, you tell us to swallow that poison pill and then you make fun of it like, “Look at you. You didn't support our budget.” You know why we didn't support your budget. My question to you is, why would you support your budget?

Speaker, housing is a human right. Housing profit is not a human right. We have so many people in our province struggling. We can do better, and the better starts now.

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

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I was listening to the member from Toronto Centre very attentively. You said that if you were in government, you would build 224,000 affordable homes at approximately \$500,000 each. That would work out to \$112 billion.

Now, what would you have cut? Would you have cut record spending of health care, where we're spending \$101 billion? Would you have cut infrastructure? Would you have cut education? What would you have cut to get that \$112 billion when Ontario's budget is approximately \$223 billion?

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Thank you very much to the member for that question.

I know you said you were listening to me intently, but I don't think you were. What I said was that, under the Homes Ontario plan, we would have built 30,000 new units of deeply affordable housing, and if we had been in power since 2018, we would have built 240,000 units.

What the member forgets to factor in is that these units would not be at no cost; it would be at low cost, and it would still be a mixed community with market and affordable rents that you collect as a revenue to pay for it in the long term.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My thanks to the member from Toronto Centre for her presentation.

The government is boosting this initiative pretty heavily. Do you have a sense of what they expect in terms of number of houses that will be made available, how this will actually improve the situation? I know their goal was 1.5 million houses. How close are they going to be moved with this particular initiative?

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Thank you very much to the member from Toronto–Danforth. That's an excellent question.

I do not believe the government has provided any information as to how many homes would qualify or who would take them up on this offer, but I can tell you that I know that there is probably a group of speculators—I know who they are—who are going to look at this quite favourably because this will allow them to bulk-buy condominiums at discount.

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

Mr. Matthew Rae: It's been a long day or week, everyone. We're almost there.

Thank you to my colleague from Toronto Centre for her remarks this afternoon on a very important piece of legislation. I know she talked about affordable housing, something she's passionate about. I know she mentioned she and her party chose not to vote for the provincial budget recently before this place that had affordability measures in there. That's okay, Speaker. I'll forgive her this time on that—or forgive them this time for that.

I was just wondering, could this member please explain through you, Speaker, why they chose to vote against every single provincial budget, including the provincial budget that saw a 400% increase in the Homelessness Prevention Program a couple years ago, which goes directly to deeply affordable housing.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Thank you very much to the member from Perth–Wellington for that question.

I think we recognize that budgets are known as “confidence bills” in every government House. You usually would vote for your government’s bill. The PC government, this Conservative government, is not my government. If we were to vote for a government budget bill, it would say that we have confidence in this government, which we clearly do not.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I recognize the member from Spadina–Fort York.

Mr. Chris Glover: I want to thank the member from Toronto Centre for her remarks today.

This government set a goal of building 1.5 million homes by 2031. And they are miserably failing at it, so they decided that a home could be a long-term-care bed. So now, they’re counting long-term-care beds as homes. There is some talk, rumours I’ve been hearing, that they’re actually considering including tent encampments as homes because they have been incredibly successful at building tent encampments in every part of this province. Everywhere I go now, there are tent encampments, and that is the legacy of this government’s incredible success in their building homes faster act.

What do you think of the government’s success in building tent encampments across the province?

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MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Thank you to the member from Spadina–Fort York. Obviously, if the government’s intention was to build homeless encampments, then they have succeeded. We have them right across every community and every riding.

But I also know that the government, I think, was dead serious when they first claimed that they were going to build 1.5 million homes in Ontario. It’s just that when they started to fall dramatically short of that goal, instead of trying to fix the problem, they abandoned the problem altogether. So now we have a province—the most prosperous province in the country—with no housing strategy and no housing goals. That is the problem, and that is why the housing crisis is getting worse.

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

MPP Mohamed Firin: I’d like to send my question to the member from Toronto Centre, and thank you for the debate.

Speaker, the member’s math is not mathing. I just looked at the numbers. She said that—30,000 homes is the number she mentioned, even though she mentioned 224,000 homes. Those 30,000 homes would cost roughly \$15 billion, based on the \$500,000 a month that she put.

Then, previously, in the last session, I think it was the member for Sudbury who brought a housing bill forward where he said they would spend about \$180 billion on building housing. I’m trying to figure out who would be paying for this.

The member also said that the house would pay for itself. I’m in the market for a home; I would love to see the house that pays for itself, myself as well.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Thank you very much to the member for the question.

I don’t know why the government members can’t seem to write this down. The Homes Ontario plan proposes to build 30,000 new units of affordable housing, and I said that if we were in government since 2018—you’ve now been in power for eight years. But if the NDP had been in government, we would have built 240,000 units of new housing that is affordable in this province.

We know that there are several ways to approach real estate valuation. One is comparable sales approach, one is new build cost replacement and one is income approach. You can finance new rental housing through several different ways, and I would factor in the rental cost to make sure that you can carry the long-term cost to build that housing and to carry the debt forward.

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

MPP Jamie West: This is very similar to the questions I’ve been asking throughout the debate. This is a very targeted section that may help some people who can afford really expensive homes to save some money, and everybody is feeling the pinch because Conservatives have done such a bad job with the affordability crisis. But I think what’s most important to the majority of the people in Ontario is, “How can I afford rent? How can I afford to get into a starter home?” And I’d like the member maybe to expand on some of the ideas that the New Democrats have for making life more affordable for the people of Ontario.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Thank you very much to the member from Sudbury for the question.

I’ll just give you an example in the GTA. The CMHC numbers have cited that renters are paying about 42% of their income on housing costs for a one-bedroom apartment. If we were to provide some support to those renters—that was proposed in the University–Rosedale member’s motion to freeze the rent for two years. We would have provided relief to 1.7 million renters right away in Ontario as of this June, but the government members chose not to help. And so, those renters will be getting—and you can quote me on this—at least a 2%, 2.5% or 2.9% increase by June, because you’re going to set that rate.

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

MPP Mohamed Firin: Speaker, what we see here is that this is going to put back \$130,000 in people’s pockets. What I want to ask the member is, does she feel that this is going to make an impact? I think \$130,000 is a lot of money, especially for residents who live in the city of Toronto, for example, where she’s from.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Yes, there will be some benefit. The problem is that there’s no guarantee in this bill—no stipulation or conditions in this bill—that the savings will be passed through to the homebuyer. There’s nothing that stops a developer from taking that and putting it in their pocket.

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

Mr. Jonathan Tsao: It’s a pleasure for me to rise today to speak and debate on Bill 114, HST Relief Implementa-

tion Act (Residential Property Rebates), which we're talking about today. It has been a truly thrilling debate so far. So I'm glad to be able to stand here and participate with such an exciting crowd this Thursday evening here at the Ontario Legislature.

Speaker, let me start by being very clear. I believe that HST relief is needed in order to help my residents of Don Valley North achieve the goal of home ownership, but I also want to add the fact that HST relief alone will not be enough, because people in Ontario—families, specifically in Don Valley North, young professionals, newcomers, renters trying to become homeowners—are facing a housing crisis that demands action. I said previously, in some of my questions to my honourable colleagues, that this is not a new crisis. This is a crisis that has been going on for years and years, if not decades. But with the compounding of inaction—the compounding of a government that has not deemed it worthy for the past eight years to do anything to actually make a difference, rather than just tinker around the edges—finally, we're at a breaking point. We're at a breaking point, where it's no longer just the people who cannot afford the houses; the builders can no longer afford to build the homes. Everyone is suffering. The entire system is starting to retract, and the government realized, "Oh, boy, we probably should do something."

So HST relief is an important thing, and it's an issue that, actually, in my previous life, I've advocated for very heavily.

Removing or reducing HST on new housing is one of many tools available to the government to lower upfront costs and finally get projects moving again—but I do want to stress that it's one of the many tools available to the government.

Speaker, I want to ground my remarks today in my own lived experience. Every time, in this House, when I speak on the topic of housing, I always go back to my role before entering this House, and that's with Habitat for Humanity Canada. As I said, in that role, a substantial amount of my own time was spent advocating for HST relief, for affordable home ownership. Why that's important to me is because I understand the importance of affordable home ownership—and it's important that we stress the fact of that phrase, "affordable"; it's not just "home ownership." I'm not talking about the need or the desire for a billionaire to have another mansion or someone with wealthy parents to finally get that cottage in Muskoka.

What I'm talking about is affordable home ownership that sits along the housing continuum. We're talking about people who want to be able to move from renting to owning; people who want to be able to look at their home and see themselves in it, see something long-term, something real that they are actually paying towards, that they will own one day, that their children will benefit from for generations to come, because affordable home ownership is exactly that—it's generational. It changes lives. It changes the trajectory of people's lives forever.

And what we've seen, especially in the work on affordable home ownership, is that HST had become a real barrier for that work to be able to be done. For every home

that Habitat for Humanity Canada was able to raise the funds to create, the HST that was put on top of it felt like a penalty. That they're doing the work to ensure that people who are fighting so hard every single day to become a homeowner—we were being penalized by the government for helping them.

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The government ensured that they would take their piece of that money, but where would it go? It wouldn't necessarily go back to building more houses or creating a bigger stock. Where did it go? We only have to look at the scandals that have plagued this government to see where that money has gone: \$30 million to buy a private jet for the Premier, millions of dollars disappeared in the SDF—they were giving money to strip club owners.

So when we talk about the housing crisis, when we talk about people being unable to afford a future in Ontario, it's not their fault; it's the government's fault. The government needs to take accountability for their actions. They need to take accountability for the misspending. But like I always say, when the government finally does something that is right, I'm not afraid to say so, and I agree with HST relief. When we are trying to help a working family buy their first home, every single dollar matters. Every added cost can be the difference between qualifying or not.

Speaker, I want to be very clear: I do not approach this bill as a theoretical exercise. To me this is not just an idea. I approach it knowing that removing HST can make a real difference for families trying to get into the market, trying to break through, trying to be part of a system and finally owning something. But support doesn't mean silence. Support does not mean we ignore the details. Support does not mean that we ignore the past reckless spending and incompetence of this government. And support certainly does not mean we stop asking the hard questions.

Today, I want to dive into three things: I want to acknowledge what this bill gets right, I want to identify where it falls short, and I want to press the government on delivery, because there's a real problem in Ontario's housing market. Projects are stalled, financing is dried up, developers are walking away and families are priced out. Reducing the tax burden on new housing supply makes sense. HST is a major embedded cost, for sure. Remove it and you'll lower prices, improve availability, restart projects. That matters and that's what I see the bill getting right.

But, Speaker, there's another point we can't ignore. This housing crisis did not just start yesterday. It did not just start when a policy adviser had an idea that we should remove the HST. In fact, as I said earlier, I have been advocating for the removal of HST on homes in this province in my past career. And meeting after meeting—yes, we had great conversations, but they were always just that, conversations. And a conversation, when you needed it to become action, usually became passing the buck. "Well, we've got to wait for the feds. We've got to see what the feds are going to do"—just ragging the puck, until now.

We're at a breaking point where action must be had now or the entire system begins to fall apart. Families have

been warning us. Builders have been warning us. Municipalities have been warning us. So why are we only seeing these measures of this scale now? If the government had taken this seriously from the beginning, if there had been a real coordinated plan, we might not need such a large intervention today. We might have had steady supply, predictable pipelines, a more stable market.

And yes, I understand the government will say to me, “Well, there are factors out of our control: the war on tariffs”—who knows what other excuses they’ll use—“the war in Iran.” But when you have a plan, when you look far down the road and you prepare, you can actually make things happen and not be reactive, like we’re having to be today. Instead, we see delay, then urgency; inaction, then expensive catch-up—and Ontarians are the ones who are always left holding the bill and being left behind.

Speaker, when we talk about housing, we also have to talk about transit. I’m sure that everyone in this House who stays late on a Thursday has heard me talk about transit before, specifically the Sheppard subway extension. If we’re talking about HST relief in order to push forward and spur more development of homes, how are you going to get from your home to your job if there’s no transit?

The Sheppard subway extension itself is so critical to my riding, so critical to the people that live in Don Valley North, but clearly this is not being taken seriously by this government and it’s not being taken seriously even by the MPPs the Sheppard subway extension would benefit. It seems that I’m the only lone voice in this chamber who has ever been fighting, since the last election, for a Sheppard subway extension.

And that extension is not a new idea; it’s not a radical proposal. It’s not even a partisan issue. This is unfinished business because, for decades, residents in northeast Toronto have been told, “Wait your turn. Study it again. We’ll get to it later,” and year after year that promise has been delayed.

Speaker, let me tell you what delay looks like in real life. It looks like commuters packed on to buses along Sheppard Avenue and long travel times just to get to work or to school; families spending less time together because of transit delays and growing frustration from residents who feel left behind.

Sheppard Avenue East is not just a quiet corridor anymore; it’s one of the fastest-growing parts of our city. We’re seeing new housing developments, increased density, more families moving in and more pressure on an already strained system, and yet the backbone infrastructure, something that people rely on every single day, something that runs right through the heart of our community—that subway stops short. Speaker, extending the subway extension is not just about convenience; it’s about equity.

I remember a time in Toronto when we had a mayor at city hall who told my residents, “A subway is a matter of respect. Don’t let them give you an LRT. You deserve better: subways, subways, subways.” That’s what Mayor Ford told us. Now we have a Premier Ford. Where is our subway, subway, subway? The Sheppard extension has

continued to be left off the map. He has moved on to bigger, shinier projects, like private jets and the Ontario Line, while the people in my part of the city continue to sit on a bus.

Right now, residents in Don Valley North are being asked to accept less, more transfers, more commutes, less reliability, while other parts of the city benefit from direct subway access. That’s not equitable; that’s not acceptable.

Speaker, this is also an economic issue. Transit and infrastructure—and infrastructure drives growth. A Sheppard subway extension isn’t just about convenience. It’s about unlocking new housing supply, which this bill is clearly meant to do. It supports transit-oriented development. It attracts investment and creates jobs.

Now, if this government is serious about housing—and they say they are—then we need to build where people can actually live and move efficiently. You can’t talk about density without talking about transit. You can’t approve housing without supporting infrastructure that makes it viable. Right now, the Sheppard corridor is a perfect example of this mismatch.

Speaker, we’re asking communities to grow. We’re asking municipalities to approve more housing. We’re asking families to accept more density. But they’ve been very clear; my residents have been very clear: They want the Sheppard subway extension, and they want it now.

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So the question now, Speaker, is no longer whether this project makes sense; it’s a question of political will. Does the government have the will to actually deliver transit that helps people, or are they only looking to enrich themselves and create projects where they can have a nice shovel and a great photo, or perhaps only use that money for that \$30-million private jet? I don’t know—maybe they even want a second one.

Speaker, at that, I will call it a night.

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

MPP Jamie West: My colleagues and I were listening intently. A very thoughtful conversation about the need for housing and expansion of housing, and I know the member speaks often about his riding and affordability issues in his riding and ways that life can be affordable if rent were affordable, and if people could purchase a first home or condo. I wonder if the member would like to expand on that.

Mr. Jonathan Tsao: I thank my honourable colleague for this opportunity. He makes a very good point: Young people in my riding are fighting every single day to get into a market which is almost unattainable. They look for government’s help, but they’ve found nothing.

Now, this HST bill is a good step. I don’t deny that whatsoever. But the real question is, in this bill, will the savings from removing the HST actually reach those young people who are trying to get a first home, who are trying to get a condo? Is it relevant to them? Will they benefit, or will it be more the millionaires and billionaires who are looking for another cottage in Muskoka? I think that’s something we really need to question here.

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

Mr. John Jordan: You were mentioning about the young people looking for their first home, and there are two challenges with that. They're just starting their career; they need to come up with that down payment, which is very difficult these days. The other difficult part is qualifying for a mortgage. So by taking that HST off the front end, lowering the cost of that home that they present to their financier—the bank, usually—do you agree that that would assist them qualifying for their mortgage?

Mr. Jonathan Tsao: Thank you to my honourable colleague for that question. I think a lot of the times, what we have a problem with in government is that we look at the problem with housing in isolation. We look at these as individual problems to be solved, but it's a bigger issue we have to consider.

So if you're talking about issues of down payments, this isn't just a housing issue, right? This is a job issue. This is an economic issue. Right now, young people aren't just struggling to get into the housing market; they're also struggling to find a job. So, yes, the HST piece we're talking about, impacting the ability to finance a down payment—but you can't come up with a down payment at all if you don't have a job.

When we talk about housing, again, we need to talk about transit. We need to talk about the economy. We need to talk about jobs. Right now, youth unemployment is out of control in this province and this government continues to do nothing.

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

Ms. Jessica Bell: My question to the member opposite is really about first-time homebuyers and whether first-time homebuyers are going to be benefiting from this \$130,000 rebate, particularly when we're already seeing studies coming out showing that, when the HST is introduced, the majority of developers are not passing on that cost savings to the buyer. They are keeping that money for themselves and keeping the price at the same rate.

So my question to you is, how could we tweak this bill so that it helps first-time homebuyers?

Mr. Jonathan Tsao: Well, thank you very much to my honourable colleague for that question. And that focus on first-time homebuyers is truly appreciated because that is the group I'm hearing from constantly. They're the ones struggling. They're the ones who are looking for a home. Not just that, but their parents, their grandparents, are calling me, saying, "My son, my grandson, my granddaughter can't afford a home." It's totally out of control. We need to be able to do something where young people are able to succeed in this province.

A very good first step, I would say, is making sure that the bills in this House actually get to committee; right? We want to make things better. We want bills that actually help people. Let's hear from people; let's get it out there. If you're proud of the work you're doing, you should shine the light of day on it and shout it from the top of this building, not try to hide it and ram it through this place and then run home in June.

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

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: I want to thank my great colleague from Don Valley North; we're neighbours. It's great to hear him talk about this important topic because he has a lot of experience in housing based on his previous work, as he mentioned.

He also mentioned the Sheppard line. I wanted to ask him if he could talk a little bit about the need for that in conjunction with affordable housing. We talk about fourplexes. In my riding in Don Valley West, there are people who live in fourplexes who are steps away, literally, from the Yonge Street subway line. Wouldn't it be wonderful if the people in fourplexes in Don Valley North could have that same kind of benefit. So, if he could talk a little bit about how those two things could go together?

Mr. Jonathan Tsao: The issue of housing and the issue of transit, again, are two very inseparable topics. I think that's what this government fails to recognize. The Sheppard subway is something that's long overdue. If you come to my riding—I invite anyone in this House to please come to my riding—I'll give you a tour along Sheppard. You will see condominiums that have sprung up all along that corridor, and then you suddenly get to Fairview Mall. The condos continue, but the subway comes to an abrupt end.

Now, how do you expect HST relief to build more homes, to do anything, when people can't get from their homes to their job? Sure, they can buy a car, but not everyone can afford a car. Not everyone wants to be in a car. Not everyone wants to ride a bike. We need transit options. It's about the spectrum that we need to have in both housing and in transit.

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

Mr. Dave Smith: I'm going to follow along the lines of what you were talking about with subways. Apsley is a community in my riding; 3.6 people per square kilometre in that. It's part of the Canadian Shield. If I follow your logic, we should not be doing HST relief until we can get a subway into Apsley. That's not happening in my lifetime, nor is it in my grandchildren's lifetime, and probably not their grandchildren's lifetime.

Would the member agree that the government of Ontario needs to look at all of Ontario and not just Toronto?

Mr. Jonathan Tsao: I would say that's quite a rich statement coming from this government, that you don't want to focus just on Toronto. I agree: Stop focusing so much on Billy Bishop, stop focusing so much on the science centre, stop focusing so much on taking away the rights of our city, and focus on what we need to do, that the province is supposed to be doing. I'm sorry; you woke me up this Thursday. I was tired. This whole House was tired. But I can't let that one go.

I will say this as well: As the member for Don Valley North, I was sent here with a clear objective for my residents, and that's to fight for that subway. I will do so every single day.

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

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: It's a pleasure to rise today. I was just listening to the debate from our honourable colleague from Don Valley East. He said something about this government—

Mr. Jonathan Tsao: North. We've got all of them.

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: North, south? It's one of you.

Interjection.

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: North—Don Valley North.

As I said, I was paying very close attention. The member mentioned that he felt that this government was obsessed with Toronto. I found that really strange. I thought, "Well, had you talked to any of your rural members about that?" Then I went, "Oh, but you don't have any rural members." I thought, "Well, maybe you should talk to some of your northern members about that." Then I looked and I went, "Oh, you guys don't have any northern members." So do you think that there might be a lesson there for you, as the Liberal Party, in the fact that you only have members that either reside in Toronto or other large urban centres?

Mr. Jonathan Tsao: I thank my honourable colleague for that lovely question and for paying such close attention to the debate today. It's truly appreciated. I would be remiss if I did not recognize my colleague from Kingston and the Islands, who does represent a rural part of his riding. That member represents it extremely well and very proudly. That member is extremely good at bringing those voices into our caucus, and I'm very proud of the work he does every single day.

1710

But I'll tell you this: Go across any part of Ontario—any part of Ontario that you have seats in—and ask them how they feel about that \$30-million jet the Premier bought for himself. I'm sure you know this isn't a northern issue. This isn't a rural issue. It's not a Toronto issue. That jet is a true symbol of what the problem with this government is: arrogance.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I will go to further debate. Further debate? I recognize the member from Peterborough-Kawartha.

Mr. Dave Smith: Thank you, Speaker; I appreciate that.

It is getting late on a Thursday afternoon. I'm reminded as I'm listening to the debate of something that was actually written way back in 1856—I believe that's when it was written; I'll stand corrected if someone can correct me on it. It's from Mark Twain's *A Tale of Two Cities*: "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times."

As I'm listening to the debate, I'm hearing that come up from the opposition, because we've got the NDP who have said, "We're going to support this," and then they dump on everything in it. It's as if the world is coming to an end, according to the NDP.

Then we have the members from the third party stand up there, and there's absolutely nothing to do with HST on housing in what they're talking about. It's almost as if we're in a different world.

Here's the reality of it, and it's an interesting thing: We have in front of us an opportunity to work with the federal

government on HST. We had made the commitment that the province of Ontario was going to take the 8% provincial portion of it off, but we wanted to work with the federal government as well because we recognized that 13% would make a big difference. We had to work with them whether they put their 5% in or not, because at the end of the day, the Canada Revenue Agency is the agency that deals with sales tax.

So we had to work with the feds to get this implemented. It's become a pretty good working relationship, I'll say that, because everybody recognizes, even the two parties opposite here and the independents, that housing affordability has been a challenge and this is something that can help a lot of people.

Then we talked about how we do it in a way where we set a threshold that makes a lot of sense. In my question to the member from Don Valley West—

Mr. Jonathan Tsao: North.

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: South, east, west.

Mr. Dave Smith: Don Valley somewhere. It's small enough to fit, likely, on one of the farms in my riding. Sometimes it's a challenge when we're talking to him about it.

To put it in perspective, I'm not one of the largest ridings in the province. The member from Timiskaming-Cochrane, as I look over to him, has got a riding that's bigger than mine. But my riding is roughly the size of Prince Edward Island. So, it's interesting when we hear from the Toronto-centric groups because they really have no idea about some of those challenges on travel. We've got other members who have ridings that are roughly the size of Italy, the size of Germany, as a single riding. These things do come into play.

I know the NDP have talked about McMansions. The leader of the Green Party talked about McMansions at a million dollars. I will freely admit, in parts of my riding, a home for a million dollars would be a very palatial home. The average price right now in the city of Peterborough, as of about a month ago, was about \$590,000 for the average home, so a million-dollar home is a very, very nice home.

I know that for other members in other parts of the province, a million-dollar home would be massive. It truly would be a mansion.

Speaker, if I look at your riding, which is right next to mine, I'm sure if I was to find a million-dollar home in Madoc, it's going to be quite a palatial place. But, if I look at a million-dollar home in Toronto or I look at a million-dollar home in Ottawa or probably even Hamilton, it's likely a starter home for a million dollars. When we craft legislation, we have to do something that's going to be effective across the entire province, and we have to weigh all of those things. Absolutely, the million-dollar home in Madoc is a very, very, very nice home. But the million-dollar home in Toronto is not. And we want to make sure that when we write this legislation, we're capturing the entire province on it.

The reality is, we've talked about that \$130,000 rebate that's going to be on it; it's not going to be \$130,000 across

the province. It's going to be—in my riding in particular—probably around \$60,000 or \$65,000. But when I take a step back and I look at that, what does that mean? Well, here's what it means, Speaker: Instead of a \$590,000 home, it's about a \$520,000 or \$525,000 home, if we remove the HST in my riding. It still sounds fairly reasonable. Here's the real effect: That young couple starting out at \$520,000 needs to have a joint income of about \$127,000. So each partner would be making slightly more than \$60,000. That's not unreasonable. But at \$600,000, they'd need to have a joint income of closer to \$170,000. That's much more difficult for that young family. That's much more difficult for any family trying to start out. So this is making a difference for them. This makes a big difference for them, because at a much younger age, earlier on in their career, they can qualify for the mortgage to do this. And that's why the HST needs to be taken off at the beginning, not a rebate that goes back to that couple after the fact, because they have to qualify for the mortgage, and at \$590,000 or \$600,000, they have to have a much higher income to get into that home. By crafting it this way, it then becomes affordable for that young couple.

Now, I think of my riding again, and I look at the census data from our last census in 2021: 28.4% of my riding is over the age of 65. I have a lot of retirees. I have a lot of people who are over-housed, and they're looking to downsize. Most people, when you're buying a home—let me flip that. Most people when they're selling a home are more interested in a home or an offer that doesn't include conditions. I know, myself, I've had a couple of homes, and if I had an offer that was conditional on the sale of their home, I wasn't as interested, because I know they might have some trouble selling it. So that family who wants to downsize, it makes it easier for them to downsize and put their property on the market. They might be in a position where they could carry the two for a short period of time. But this gives them some certainty to do it, and it allows then for that secondary market to be opened up—because that more senior couple who has decided that they don't need the four-bedroom, three-bathroom home any longer because their kids are 30 or 40 years old and they're not having to raise kids in it anymore, they're in a position where they can sell their home and buy that new downsized version specifically for them. And this makes it easier.

1720

So when the opposition has talked about, “Why is the rebate going to the developer? Why isn't it coming to that homebuyer?” It's because it's about affordability, Speaker. If you take the price off the sale price, you make the home more affordable. You make the mortgage more attainable. You change all of those things.

Now, when we look at mortgages—and I'm going to go to the million-dollar home for this. When I look at a mortgage for a million-dollar home, if I'm putting down just 5%, which is the minimum, I'm going to have a carrying cost of more than \$3,000 to do that. I have to qualify for my mortgage based on that. But if I knock \$130,000 off the top, my carrying cost is now lower. If I

keep it at that \$3,000 mark—slightly more than \$3,000, actually—I qualify at that; I get my \$130,000 rebate. Because of how mortgages are structured, I can only put so much down on my mortgage in a single year, and I can't put 13% down on it. My mortgage payment is still going to stay at \$3,000-plus a month.

Yes, I could take a portion of that HST rebate and apply it to the mortgage to bring down my overall capital cost on it, and I'm going to shorten the length of time for my mortgage, but I still have my mortgage payment—more than \$3,000 for it. And I can't realize that full savings. I am going to be tied into that now, in all likelihood, for five years. And that reduces my ability, then, as a family member, for having that quality of life for my family. It reduces my ability, if I have a young family, to say, “I want them enrolled in hockey; I want them enrolled in soccer; I want them enrolled in dance; I want them enrolled in music lessons,” because my monthly operating cost is higher.

By structuring it the way we're structuring it, we're reducing the cost at the source. We're removing that. We're taking those barriers down. I've said this in some of my other questions: \$130,000 off the mortgage is about \$700 a month. That's what it works out to on your mortgage payment. So think about the affordability; think about your own cash flow. If you had \$700 more per month, what could be the quality of life for your family?

This makes a big difference. I know the opposition has talked about this. And I know the opposition is opposed to us removing it right at the source, to having the rebate potentially go back to the builder instead of the rebate going to the individual purchaser. But this is why: We're talking about affordability. If you had \$700 more—every person in Ontario running their own home suddenly had \$700 more, what would their quality of life be? It would be higher. They wouldn't be as concerned about, “Am I buying Kraft Dinner or am I buying No Name mac and cheese? Am I buying day-old buns, or can I buy fresh buns?” These are the things that make a difference for people.

It also means, when we look at the GTA—with the GTA, we talk about the housing prices. The theory is that you move as far away from your work as you can afford to purchase a home. If we're reducing your monthly expenses by \$700 by doing it this way, it means if you're working in downtown Toronto, you don't have to buy a house in Lindsay. You don't have to commute from north of Barrie, from Orillia, from southwestern Ontario. It makes it more affordable for you to be closer to where you work, which reduces your commute time, which gives you quality of life back, because you get to spend more time with your family. You don't have to be travelling two, three hours away to get back home at the end of the day because we've reduced the price closer to you.

It works then for people who live in communities like mine. We've reduced the cost. It works for people who live in communities like yours, Speaker. Those people in Madoc can choose to stay there. This works for them. For someone who's in Toronto, for someone who's in

Hamilton, Windsor—all of those larger centres—it works for them. It makes it easier for them. We're changing that whole narrative and we're changing it in a way that surprises me that the opposition objects to it.

The opposition is concerned that somewhere down the line someone is going to do something that is untoward. We're taking the approach of, how do we make it easier for families? How do we make it easier for that young couple to qualify for that new home? How do we make it easier for that senior couple to downsize? How do we make it easier for that couple who has just had their third child and is in a two-bedroom home to move and upgrade so that each of those kids can have their own bedroom? How do we make it easier for those families to be in a position where they've got money left over so they can do the things that they need to do or want to do with those families, with their kids? They can spend more time with it.

All of us who have had kids, all of us recognize that the more time we spend with our children, the happier we are and the happier they are. If we can cut the commute by an hour a day for someone and they're able to spend more time with their kids, they're happier, their kids are happier. We're finding ways to improve life for everyone that way. And I'm so surprised that the opposition has come up with these manufactured reasons why this is bad. This is something that makes a big difference.

I'll come back to it again because I don't think we can emphasize this enough. My riding is indicative of a lot of other ridings. There are a number of ridings across Ontario where the average home price is less than \$600,000. What we're doing is we're lowering that point of entry so that that young couple at a \$125,000 combined income can buy a home. That's what we're doing. We're making it easier for that couple to get into home ownership.

We've focused a lot on all of our conversations about those couples, but what we've lost on this is that trade worker who has full-time employment, that carpenter who is able to build that home near his home, that drywall-lath-and-plaster applicator who has work because we're building new homes—that plumber, the electrician, the roofer, the landscaper. All of us have people in those industries in our communities. When you spur on the development of new homes, you're giving work to them—all of those skilled trades, all of those general labourers. What does that do? It means that they have the money, then, to go out and purchase that new home.

That 13% can make that much of a difference. We're talking tens of thousands of people who will be employed as a result of this, and we're already seeing it. We're seeing some of the home builders have talked about the number of sales that they've had since April 1, since this was implemented. Now we're finalizing that formula, the agreement with the federal government. That's what this legislation is about.

The opposition has said, "Why didn't you do it in the budget? You missed it. We should have had it in the budget." We're working with the federal government. We needed to find out from them what the CRA needs,

because we have to work with them on it. This allows us to do what we need to do so that we set the table provincially so the federal government can do their portion of it as well, because we are dependent on the CRA—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Pursuant to standing order 50(c), I am now required to interrupt proceedings and announce that there have been six and a half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will, therefore, be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader directs the debate to continue.

1730

Hon. Steve Clark: Speaker, please adjourn the debate. *Second reading debate deemed adjourned.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Orders of the day.

Hon. Steve Clark: Speaker, if you seek it, you will find that there is unanimous consent to see the clock at 6.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Mr. Clark is seeking unanimous consent to see the clock at 6. Agreed? Agreed.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. John Jordan: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should create a streamlined, standard provincial regulatory framework for ride-share programs and continue to improve first-mile/last-mile access across the province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Mr. Jordan has moved private members' notice of motion number 66. Pursuant to standing order 100, the member has 12 minutes for their presentation.

Mr. John Jordan: I am pleased to rise today to speak to this motion, and I do so as a proud member of a government that has consistently shown it understands Ontario only succeeds when every part of this province moves forward together, including rural and northern Ontario.

This motion asks the House to affirm that the government of Ontario should continue its work to modernize transportation by creating a streamlined, standard provincial regulatory framework for rideshare programs while strengthening first-mile/last-mile access across the province.

Speaker, this motion fits squarely within the priorities of this government: supporting economic growth, improving safety, reducing red tape and ensuring rural and northern communities are not left behind. From day one our government has rejected the idea that Ontario begins and ends at city limits. We work with small towns, rural communities, northern regions and fast-growing areas that do not fit neatly into traditional policy boxes. Nowhere is that more evident than in transportation policy.

Public transit solutions that work well in dense urban centres often do not work or are simply not viable in rural and northern Ontario. That is why this government has focused on flexible, practical and locally responsive transportation solutions rather than imposing one-size-fits-all systems.

Ontario currently operates under a patchwork of municipal rideshare bylaws. Some municipalities regulate rideshare services, some are considering it and many, particularly in rural Ontario, have no framework at all. This patchwork creates uncertainty for municipalities, drivers, riders and companies seeking to operate safely and legally across regions.

As the government, it is our responsibility to provide clarity, consistency and modern standards. A provincial framework would ensure baseline standards for safety, insurance, driver screening and vehicle requirements while respecting local decision-making. The ultimate goal here is to balance provincial leadership with municipal flexibility.

As the Northlander passenger train celebrates a new era in connectivity, the Bracebridge Chamber of Commerce supports the rideshare framework as “a practical step towards improving mobility, last-mile connectivity, and access to the Northlander corridor for residents, visitors, workers and businesses. Bracebridge has long viewed consistent rideshare rules as a priority, particularly for smaller and more seasonal communities where transportation gaps can directly affect labour access, visitor movement, and business activity.”

The Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus, representing more than 100 rural and small urban municipalities, has formally called on the province to adopt an Ontario-wide rideshare licensing framework, citing, “Municipalities across Eastern Ontario have been advocating for a provincial licensing framework for rideshare companies that would align Ontario with Quebec and British Columbia. Ridesharing provides a vital transportation option in communities across Ontario, but much of the province is still underserved by rideshare services.”

Municipal leaders across my riding of Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston have been clear in their support. Economic growth depends on workforce mobility. As our government attracts investment in manufacturing, construction, agriculture and the skilled trades, people must be able to access those jobs. Rideshare services help fill critical transportation gaps, offering flexible mobility for workers and income opportunities for local drivers.

As we heard from Richard Kidd, warden for Lanark county, “The current municipal-by-municipal regulatory model creates uncertainty for service providers and limits their ability to operate across jurisdictions. This fragmented system is particularly challenging in rural areas. A province-wide rideshare framework would help ensure consistent access across municipal boundaries, support workforce participation and improve access to health care and social services. It would also reduce administrative complexity by establishing clear, consistent standards for safety, insurance and consumer protection.”

Speaker, safety is also central to this discussion. In many rural communities, transportation options late at night are extremely limited, increasing the risk of impaired driving. Stakeholders like MADD Canada have identified ridesharing as “a crucial tool in helping to prevent impaired driving, particularly where no alternatives exist. Evidence suggests that rural and remote areas experience higher impaired driving rates than urban areas. This is in part due to less visible enforcement, a dependence on personal vehicles to get around and fewer options for a safe ride home.”

In a recent report entitled *Municipal Measures to Minimize Impaired Driving and Support Victims and Survivors*, MADD Canada stressed “the importance of ensuring people have as many options as possible to get home safely, including reliable public transportation, taxis and ridesharing services. Currently, residents of northern and rural Ontario do not have equal access to rideshare services in their communities, as differing municipal regulations create red tape for rideshare drivers and operators, despite a demand for services.”

This motion also supports seniors and aging in place. Transportation access often determines whether seniors can remain independent in their communities. Rideshare services can help seniors attend medical appointments, access necessities and remain socially connected, supporting dignity, independence and better health outcomes.

The Highlands North Network operates a rural, community-based model across multiple independent halls in northern, more isolated areas of Lanark Highlands township. Highlands North Network President Barb Young is a strong supporter in expanding vehicle options for transportation: “The cost of inaction in rural transportation will not show up in transportation” costs, “it will show up in health care budgets. A provincial rideshare framework tailored for rural municipalities could become the missing infrastructure ... that allows community-based systems to remain viable and preventative.”

This motion is not about forcing municipalities to adopt rideshare services. It is not about replacing taxis or dismantling existing transit. It is about enabling choice, removing red tape and providing a clear and consistent provincial framework so communities that want these tools can use them effectively and safely.

Innovation is already working in Ontario. Innisfil Transit, developed in partnership with Uber, demonstrates how on-demand rideshare-based services can deliver cost-effective, reliable transportation in communities where traditional transit is not viable. For Innisfil, this model has proven to be an effective solution to filling the gap between traditional transportation models and existing disparities in connectivity for an important segment of the population.

1740

Returning to my riding in Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston, Mississippi Mills Mayor Christa Lowry underlined a critical reality for residents in a rural environment: “For seniors, youth, individuals with disabilities, and families

without access to a private vehicle, limited transportation options can result in social isolation and reduced economic opportunity. A clear and consistent provincial regulatory framework would provide the certainty and flexibility needed to welcome rideshare organizations in a way that reflects local realities and is uniform amongst neighbouring communities. A standardized approach would reduce administrative burden, enhance safety and consumer protection, and encourage equitable access to ridesharing services across the province.”

Cathy McNally, director of community services for the town of Perth, noted, “This approach also aligns with the town of Perth’s strategic plan, which identifies the need to enhance transportation opportunities within our community. Specifically, the town is committed to investigating and supporting co-operation with Lanark Transportation and other service providers to improve transportation services for seniors and other residents. A provincially coordinated rideshare framework would complement these efforts by expanding available options and improving overall connectivity. A harmonized approach would support public safety, consumer protection, and fair competition, while enabling municipalities to focus limited staff resources on priority services rather than developing and enforcing individual regulatory regimes.”

Speaker, this motion reflects this government’s commitment to pragmatic, fiscally responsible solutions, supportive of municipalities and focused on safety and economic growth. I encourage all members of this House to support this motion and continue the work of ensuring every Ontarian, no matter where they live, has access to modern, safe and flexible transportation.

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

MPP Jamie West: Thank you to the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston—sincerely, probably one of the nicest people here. We’re all very nice, but he’s a really, really nice person. He was great and came to Sudbury and was lovely to everyone there.

To bury the lede, we’re going to support this bill. This is something that’s going to help people. The reality is, in northern Ontario, it’s hard to get from a destination from somewhere else, and so it’s about building a framework for it.

I’ve had conversations in the past with Northlander bus lines, talking about when people want to come for a doctor’s appointment in Toronto—it’s overwhelming for them—or to see a play, and to be able to plan that all out in advance and not having to figure it out, especially in the north. If you’re going to the north and you’re arriving in the middle of the night, for a lot of places, they don’t have reliable taxi service or anything else. And how do you ensure you get home from there? So I think it’s a good bill.

Our role, though, as opposition, is to talk about ways we can improve. I want to point out some flaws with the rideshare program. There was a report that Toronto had commissioned. It’s called *On the Road: Analysis of Driver Earnings in Toronto’s Vehicle-for-Hire Industry*. They talk about, all throughout this report, the private transport

companies—we know them as Lyft and Uber, though. They collected 84 million data points of these Uber and Lyft rides in Toronto between January 1, 2023, and May 1, 2024.

What you need to understand is that, if you’re in a Lyft or an Uber, that person is only being paid for engaged time. They get paid from the minute they show up and start waiting for you to the minute you get out of the car and leave. The other time—they don’t get paid for that. You have to understand that.

When I was in high school, I had a job at Baskin-Robbins—super busy in the summer, less busy in the winter—and I was paid a base rate no matter how many ice creams I was scooping. But for these drivers, they’re only paid the minute—not when they get the call to pick someone up, but when they arrive at your doorstep. You need to understand that everything else is unpaid. In 2023, that meant that while they were waiting, they were working about 65% of the time and paid only 65% of the time. That amount of time went to 58% in 2024. While working, these drivers make a really good wage. It’s a little over 33 bucks while they’re engaged. The problem is that they’re contractors, and as contractors, it is their vehicle, so they’ve got to pay for their expenses—fuel, insurance, depreciation, maintenance, repairs, all that sort of thing. So their actual earnings while engaged is closer to 15 bucks—\$15.30, maybe \$15.50—which is less than minimum wage, and that’s only while they’re engaged. If you break it down to the time that they’re available, even the time that they’re driving to pick somebody up—it goes down to about \$7.94 an hour in 2023, then it dropped to \$5.97 in 2024. This is what they found consistent with about 95% of the drivers. Sadly, they saw that in the early days of Uber and Lyft, about 1% of drivers actually lost money doing the job, and by 2024, that number rose to about 17% of drivers who are out there working regularly and going home with less money in their pocket than they started off with.

In contrast to this, Uber and Lyft are doing okay. It’s hard to see, specifically, how they do in Ontario. But in Canada, in 2023, Uber made \$1.93 billion, and the estimate in Ontario is somewhere between \$500 million to \$700 million; in 2024, they did a little bit better, \$2.43 billion, and the Ontario estimate went up, \$600 million to \$800 million. So they could afford to actually pay their drivers better and still make a healthy profit. For Lyft, it’s harder to find the data, but the rough estimates are about \$140 million to \$195 million in 2023, and then that went up to \$150 million to \$210 million in 2024. It has probably gone up since then. More and more people are using it.

I bring this up because the Conservative government has a role to play in this. We brought this up in the past, as New Democrats—how people should not be making less than minimum wage if they’re working; the base should be minimum wage. The Conservative government agreed. They said you can’t make less than minimum wage for engaged time. So they brought forward the Digital Platform Workers’ Rights Act. It sounded like a great bill. They put it in a bill called *Working for Workers*. But it’s

weird, because it means that now these companies can pay less than minimum wage—a lot less, about a third of minimum wage. Also, it removes these workers—because it misclassifies them as contractors, so that means they don't really have access to the Employment Standards Act, the Labour Relations Act, the Occupational Health and Safety Act, WSIB, things like that. They may have limited rights to some of those, but they don't really have a ton of rights—so they're making less money; they also have less protections.

The member who sits directly in front of me, from London West, has talked about and tabled in the past the Preventing Worker Misclassification Act. Basically, it's about protecting gig workers. Many of our kids have these jobs—Skip the Dishes, that sort of thing—and many of our friends and neighbours do, as well. This is a way to make a living. For newcomers, it's one of the most accessible jobs that they have. But if newcomers are trying to get hours towards getting their PR, they can't use these gig jobs for that, so they've got to pick up another job. Literally, they'll work 14 hours to try to make what they'd make in eight hours just a few years ago, and then they need a secondary job, because they're trying to get towards their PR. We're punishing workers in Ontario with this, and we're ensuring that incredibly profitable companies are being even more profitable. I'm all in favour of companies being profitable, but workers should at least make minimum wage. So I'm sure that the member is going to table her bill again.

Then that brings forward the ABC test for contractors. We all know what a contractor is. A contractor is the guy who comes and builds your deck. If you're building a house, the contractor is maybe the electrician; the contractor might be the plumber. A contractor is not somebody who's directly responsible to you, for driving, where you set their hours and everything else. Basically, gig workers need to be presented as workers.

There's much more time on the clock, but I'm not going to go too far on this because, like I said, the bill itself is great; the framework is such a good idea. I know the member—on a personal level, I think he's a smart guy; I think he's a thoughtful guy. I want to let him know that we're supporting his bill. I just want to point out how we can make it better by helping these workers.

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

MPP Andrea Hazell: Speaker, I rise today to speak to motion 66 on creating a provincial rideshare framework and improving first-mile/last-mile access across Ontario.

1750

I really like the member across the aisle from Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston. He's one of the really good members over there. And I am going to support the motion, but I just want to present some concerns that I have.

Let me start by saying this clearly: Improving first-mile/last-mile access is important. It matters and it is one of the biggest gaps in our transportation system today. If the connections are unreliable, expensive, unsafe or

inconvenient, people will not use the system. They will drive and they will sit in traffic, causing more gridlock.

If this government is actually committed to bridging the first-mile/last-mile gap, like they say they are doing in this motion, they would have not voted down my bill. I'm really proud to have this opportunity to bring forward my bills again.

In 2024, I introduced Bill 184, Supporting Mobility, Affordability and Reliable Transportation in Ontario Act, to address exactly this issue. Again, in 2025, I brought it forward through Bill 70, the SMART Ontario Act. Both my bills amend the Metrolinx Act, 2006, requiring it to promote and facilitate the integration of routes, fares and schedules of municipal Bike Share systems to bridge the gaps in first-mile/last-mile. We need options.

Once again, this government does what it does best: It votes our bills down on this side of the aisle. And now this government has brought back sections of part of my SMART Ontario bills, and I would say put it into their rideshare strategy. When the government stands up and says it wants to improve first-mile/last-mile access, people have every right to ask whether this is a real commitment or just another motion with nice words attached to it.

Speaker, I have seen these gaps every day in Scarborough for years. Scarborough has been treated like a transit desert. People in my riding of Scarborough–Guildwood know what it means to live with long walks to transit—we're still doing that today—unreliable connections, overcrowded buses and commutes that take way too long. For seniors, students, shift workers and people trying to get to medical appointments, rideshare could help close part of that gap, especially late at night or when local transit does not reach where they need to go.

Scarborough does not need a government that tells people to pay extra out of pocket because this government failed to build a connectivity system that properly serves Ontarians. That's why I tabled my petition in this Legislature demanding accountability and rail transit connectivity investment for Scarborough, signed by over 1,500 Scarborough residents. This petition puts on record what people already know: unreliable service, excessive commute times and poor connectivity have only gotten worse with the derailment of Line 3. The people in Scarborough are still suffering through connectivity in Scarborough from that derailment.

Speaker, rideshare can be part of the solution in communities like Scarborough and even rural and northern communities. It can help connect people where traditional fixed-route transit is limited.

First-mile/last-mile is bigger than Uber; it is bigger than one company, one app or one approach. It is about giving people real transportation options. That is exactly what my SMART bills tried to do.

Bike Share is one of the clearest, most practical first-mile/last-mile tools we already have. It is not some distant technology that needs to be built from scratch. It is being used right now by millions of people across Ontario. In 2025, Bike Share Toronto tracked 7.8 million trips, increasing from 6.9 million trips in 2024. In 2025, about

231,000 users were first-time riders, and total trips are projected to rise to about 8.6 million in 2026. This is a massive demand. People have already chosen Bike Share because it is convenient, efficient, affordable and often faster for short trips.

When millions of trips are being taken and demand is growing—the population is growing year over year—the government should be asking how to integrate that into the transit system. We have seen remarkable growth in the Bike Share system, and there is a current disconnect between the bike share systems and the TTC and GO system, like they almost exist in two different worlds.

Speaker, bikes are a great first-mile and last-mile transit option, giving riders a healthier and more flexible method to get towards subways and GO stations than just buses. This government is not serious about the rideshare program. This is just a start, however, and I'm happy that it came forward in a motion because I heard the member across the floor present in more detail than what the motion said—gave us like two lines or three lines, so we all had to go back and figure this out and come up with our debate information. Why doesn't this government give us the information that we really need to come into this House and debate our bills or debate motions properly? There is no information in this motion, and I said it already, to really tell me how they're going to be easing the first-mile/last-mile. I didn't see that. I didn't hear about that.

A rideshare vehicle is still a car on the road. It still contributes to traffic. It circles. It waits for requests and drives around without a passenger. If anyone has ever tried to take an Uber from Union Station—because I've tried that; I've given up on that route—they know exactly what I mean. Speaker, you wait for a driver stuck in the same traffic, try to find the right pickup point—and they're going to keep circling—watch cars crawl through gridlock, and struggle to leave one of the most congested areas in the city. How is that a seamless transit connection? That is gridlock on top of gridlock.

Speaker, if rideshare is combined with Bike Share, safer bike lanes, safer walking routes, and rail fare integration, then we can actually reduce gridlock and give people options that fit their commute. We should not be penalizing people for choosing active transportation or forcing them into Ubers. We should not be making the greener option more expensive.

This is what I mean when I say the government is not thinking far enough. I really want them to think far enough. Motion 66 talks about rideshare regulation, but where is the broader transportation vision in this? Where is the environmental lens? Where is the gridlock and congestion lens? Where is the affordability lens?

Speaker, if we are going to talk about rideshare, we also have to talk about rideshare drivers. As the critic for transportation, we must consider both the riders and the drivers. Riders need safe, reliable, affordable options, but rideshare drivers also need fair treatment, fair wages and basic dignity.

Recent reporting based on city of Toronto data shows that rideshare drivers in Toronto were on the road without passengers about 50% of the time in 2025. That is called deadheading; I just gave it that name. It is for real. It means time spent driving, waiting and burning gas without being paid for a trip. Rideshare drivers are paid minimum wage only during engaged time; this means the time from accepting a trip to dropping off a passenger. So, rideshare drivers are spending half their time on the road waiting for bookings without getting paid, and now we are saying we want to add these drivers to the rideshare strategy or program without details of compensation. So, yes, let's have a provincial framework that protects all commuters and rideshare drivers and respects municipalities' rights over their local transportation systems.

I support the goal of improving first-mile/last-mile access. We all need this. We know how it's important to us—all of us in Ontario. I support the idea that we need a clearer framework for rideshare, but this motion is very limited to what it includes.

Speaker, as I close, if this government is really serious about building better first-mile/last-mile solutions, then here is what they should include:

- support full multi-modal first-mile/last-mile integration;
- bring Bike Share into route and fare planning;
- work with municipalities instead of overriding them;
- protect rideshare drivers with fair standards;
- fix transit projects that are delayed and over budget;
- deliver on real GO expansion projects; and
- improve the safety on all transit services.

1800

Speaker, the people of Ontario need a system that works. They need a system that connects. Ontarians do not need another motion that says the right thing; they need a government that finally does the right thing.

But I'm still supporting the motion.

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

Hon. Graydon Smith: It's a pleasure to be here this evening and talk about this important motion that the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston has brought forward. As usual, I'll overlay some municipal perspective on this and also the perspective of someone that represents a rural riding with a vast amount of geography and many, many, many communities in it. But I specifically want to focus in on one component of what the member has brought forward in his motion as a tangible benefit of supporting this, and it's around impaired driving.

Speaker, whether you've had a fantastic night out in Parry Sound or enjoyed the downtown of Huntsville or maybe been out having an excellent dinner in Bracebridge or enjoying some live music in Gravenhurst, oftentimes that is done with an alcoholic drink and maybe more than one. Maybe you had an opportunity to go out with friends and have a great night unexpectedly and find yourself in a situation where at the end of the evening you need to make a decision—a right decision—and that is to not get behind the wheel.

We've heard of the support from MADD Canada for this motion. And I cannot stress enough that in rural communities where we have existing excellent transportation providers—and I'm going to underline that this is not about the existing transportation providers in any of the communities in my riding and, I know, elsewhere in our province—sometimes there just is not a sufficient amount of choice or access in the place you find yourself at that particular moment when you need to make the right decision. And this helps with that.

As a former mayor, I can tell you that we struggled with transportation options in our community when you got to the end of the evening, when people would congregate out on the sidewalk, and the night breaks up, and they say, "Well, what do we do now?" Those that were fortunate to have a designated driver, those that were fortunate to have responsible friends would make sure everyone got home safe. But sometimes there's that person left on the sidewalk who doesn't have that, who made a call to a company that maybe their vehicles are out of position and it's going to take a while to get to them, and then they make the wrong decision. And we know that that wrong decision can have lethal consequences not only for them but for others.

Too often, Speaker, I look at the local online newspapers we have, and there are stories of impaired driving charges. It is more prominent, I think, in rural areas, where we see that on a daily basis people are driving impaired. In part, it is because not only have they made a bad decision, but they may not have had what they feel was a choice, and then they make that wrong choice. So by supporting this motion, we can provide the opportunity for people to maybe make that right choice, to absolutely make that right choice and get home safe and make sure that they can lead the life they dreamt about and not have to pay the consequences of a horrific decision after a wonderful night, make sure that no family ever has to receive a call that they don't want to receive, make sure that Ontarians stay safe and our communities stay safe.

Stay safe, everybody, out there.

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

MPP Billy Denault: Thank you to the member for Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston for tabling this important motion. I rise today in strong support of this motion because, as the member mentioned, it asks the House to affirm that the government of Ontario should continue its work to modernize transportation by creating a streamlined, standard provincial regulatory framework for rideshare programs while strengthening first-mile/last-mile access across the province.

Speaker, for the people of my riding—a riding that is one of the largest in the province by geography—the Ottawa Valley stretches through communities like Pembroke, Petawawa, Renfrew, Cobden, Barry's Bay and beyond. I can tell you with certainty that the transportation gaps in my riding are not abstract policy problems; they are daily realities faced by real people. A senior in Renfrew county who no longer can drive safely is not just

losing a vehicle; he or she is losing their independence and, in too many cases, their ability to stay in their community they call home—a young person in Pembroke or Arnprior who cannot get to a job interview or a college program simply because they're lacking a ride.

Speaker, public transit solutions that work well in dense urban centres simply are not viable across the vast distances of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. That is why this government has been focused on flexible, practical and locally responsive transportation solutions. The rules around rideshare in this province are all over the map and, in many cases, there are no rules at all. Some municipalities have figured it out, some are still trying to, but many communities, especially in rural and northern Ontario, have nothing in place. That leaves drivers, riders and companies in limbo, and they are unsure of what is allowed and where. The result is simple: rideshare services stay out and our residents go without.

I think of it this way: a rideshare driver picking someone up from Renfrew and dropping them off in Arnprior may have crossed through several municipal jurisdictions, each with different rules or no rules at all. It is like driving across the province with a different rule book for every county. No company can operate efficiently in that environment, so they don't, and the people who need those services are left without options.

The voices from my riding and across the province are clear on this, Speaker. The Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus, representing more than 100 rural and small urban municipalities, have formally called on the province to adopt an Ontario-wide rideshare licensing framework, citing that municipalities across eastern Ontario have been advocating for a provincial framework that would align Ontario with Quebec and British Columbia, because ride-sharing provides vital transportation options in communities that are under-served.

Stakeholders like MADD Canada have identified ride-sharing as a critical tool in preventing impaired driving, particularly where no alternatives exist. Evidence shows that rural and remote areas experience higher impaired driving rates than urban areas, in part due to fewer safe riding options.

Currently, residents of northern and rural Ontario do not have equal access to rideshare services because differing regulations create red tape for drivers and operators, despite clear demand. A provincial framework changes that. Transportation access often determines whether seniors can remain independent in their communities, like attending medical appointments, accessing necessities and especially staying socially connected. In a riding the size of mine, that independence is not a given and it must be supported by policy.

Speaker, as I close, this motion is about common sense. It's about making things work better for people, spending wisely, keeping communities safe and making sure our economy keeps growing. It reflects the understanding that rural Ontario is not a footnote in this province's story; it is a central, fundamental chapter. That is what this government stands for and that is why I'm proud to support it.

I encourage all members in this House to support this motion. I'm going to share the remainder of my time with the member from Perth–Wellington and I really appreciate the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston's bringing this forward.

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

Mr. Matthew Rae: It's great to be able to rise this evening to speak on my colleague the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston's very important private member's motion this evening. I want to thank him for bringing it forward. As a member from a rural riding as well, I see the importance of, hopefully, this House passing this motion and supporting some of that last-mile infrastructure and the rideshare access across Ontario.

I had the opportunity to host the Minister of Transportation in my beautiful riding in Stratford, Ontario, recently to announce that our government is making significant investments along the Kitchener line, which is allowing us to bring back the GO train to Stratford with daily commuter trips to Union Station and ensuring that we have weekend trips from Toronto along the Kitchener line for those who are interested in some of the tourism locally with the Stratford Festival and many other attractions in beautiful Stratford and Perth county. Obviously, it just comes to Stratford, one portion of my riding, and so there's a need for rideshare to help feed some of that transit infrastructure to bring people to the train station in Stratford so they can get on the train to go to work or potentially go see a Blue Jays game—not a Leafs game right now, obviously. It's important that we establish that framework.

1810

It's great that the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston has brought this forward. I know our government caucus is focused on supporting rural Ontario and northern Ontario. It's disappointing that the former Liberal government called northern Ontario a no-man's land.

We in this government caucus obviously have a very different opinion of northern Ontario. We continue to invest significantly in transportation. The Northlander is returning after the former Liberal government cancelled that, bringing that back to northern communities.

I know the government announced in the fall economic statement an expansion of rideshare that this member is asking the government to do across Ontario to ensure that we're supporting transit infrastructure. We're investing billions of dollars in the Northlander in particular, ensuring those in Bracebridge, from the Associate Minister of Housing's riding, are able to get to the stop in Bracebridge and get to any of the stops along the line, but to Toronto and the GTA is important as well.

I appreciate the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston for bringing this forward. I encourage all my colleagues in this place to support this piece of legislation that will benefit rural Ontario; northern Ontario; western Ontario, where I come from; and southwestern Ontario. I know we've received a lot of support from a lot of municipalities across our great province.

I hope all my colleagues will join us in supporting this important piece of legislation. Thank you again to my colleague for his visionary leadership in this.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: I would like to thank the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston for bringing this motion forward—fully supportive. Those of us in northeastern Ontario are looking forward to the return of the Northlander. We have all agreed—at least the two of our parties have agreed—to bring this back.

I'd like to thank the government for taking the initiative and also for thinking about a rideshare program for the stops, because in Timiskaming–Cochrane, rideshare isn't a thing. Just as an example, when the train is scheduled to stop in New Liskeard at 3:15 in the morning, there will be people hopefully using the train for a wide circumference. There is no way to get there. There is a taxi service in New Liskeard that services Temiskaming Shores. There's also a bus—that's the one place I have a bus. But in all the places—in Kirkland Lake, where the train stops, there is very little service to get people to the train. So we're looking forward to working with the government, working with people and working with small taxi companies as well to try and make that work.

We all want to fill that train. We all want to be able to access not only the route but to get to Toronto. We all want the Northlander to work and making sure that people from miles away can access the Northlander is key to its success, so we're looking forward to having that happen.

Thank you to the member for bringing that motion to once again put a light on not only the Northlander but that this should be happening across rural Ontario.

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

The member has two minutes to reply.

Mr. John Jordan: I want to thank all the members for their insights tonight, especially the one from Sudbury. He's very generous with his compliments tonight, I find, so thanks for that and the insight into the specific challenges that we will face and the opportunities surrounding the transportation gap in rural communities throughout this province.

Minister Khanjin has also shared her experience with the successful implementation of a rideshare framework in her riding: The Innisfil rideshare model was launched in 2017 in partnership with Uber as an alternative to traditional fixed-route bus systems. Residents now enjoy access to an on-demand transit solution to key destinations like the south GO station, local libraries and recreational complexes.

As we bring the Northlander online, as the member from Timiskaming was speaking to, this motion will encourage the government of Ontario and the Ministry of Transportation to develop a framework for rideshare, creating an efficient, reliable transportation network connecting rail with surrounding communities. But also, this motion encourages a network model that can be adapted across all of Ontario as a best-practice model.

As we engage stakeholders from across the province, this government anticipates many more successful outcomes as we establish a clear path forward to reliable, affordable, safe transportation in our rural communities.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

Mr. Jordan has moved private member's notice of motion number 66.

Is it the pleasure of the House that this motion carry? I did not hear a no. I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Before I finish, I'd like to take a moment to remind everyone that this is Mother's Day weekend. I want to wish a happy Mother's Day to all the mothers of Ontario, but most especially my own mother, my stepmother and my beautiful wife, the best mothers I know.

With that, all matters relating to private members' public business having been completed, this House stands adjourned until Monday, May 11, at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1816.

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Ciriello, Monica (PC)	Hamilton Mountain / Hamilton-Mountain	
Clancy, Aislinn (GRN)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
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French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Première Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
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Holland, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin (PC)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	Associate Minister of Forestry and Forest Products / Ministre associé des Forêts et des Produits forestiers
Hsu, Ted (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin—Caledon	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health / Ministre de la Santé
Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Trevor (PC)	Chatham-Kent—Leamington	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et de l'Agroentreprise
Jordan, John (PC)	Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston	
Kanapathi, Logan (PC)	Markham—Thornhill	
Kernaghan, Terence (NDP)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	
Kerzner, Hon. / L'hon. Michael S. (PC)	York Centre / York-Centre	Solicitor General / Solliciteur général
Khanjin, Hon. / L'hon. Andrea (PC)	Barrie—Innisfil	Minister of Red Tape Reduction / Ministre de la Réduction des formalités administratives
Kusendova-Bashta, Hon. / L'hon. Natalia (PC)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga- Centre	Minister of Long-Term Care / Ministre des Soins de longue durée
Leardi, Anthony (PC)	Essex	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Lecce, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)	King—Vaughan	Minister of Energy and Mines / Ministre de l'Énergie et des Mines
Lennox, Robin (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	
Lumsden, Hon. / L'hon. Neil (PC)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	Minister of Sport / Ministre du Sport
Mamakwa, Sol (NDP)	Kiiwetinoong	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
McCarthy, Hon. / L'hon. Todd J. (PC)	Durham	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs
McCrimmon, Karen (LIB)	Kanata—Carleton	
McGregor, Hon. / L'hon. Graham (PC)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism / Ministre des Affaires civiques et du Multiculturalisme
McKenney, Catherine (NDP)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
McMahon, Mary-Margaret (LIB)	Beaches—East York	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)	York—Simcoe	President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones
Oosterhoff, Hon. / L'hon. Sam (PC)	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	Associate Minister of Energy-Intensive Industries / Ministre associé des Industries à forte consommation d'énergie
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	
Parsa, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (PC)	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires
Pasma, Chandra (NDP)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	Deputy House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Piccini, Hon. / L'hon. David (PC)	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de l'Immigration, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences
Pierre, Natalie (PC)	Burlington	
Pinsonneault, Steve (PC)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	
Pirie, Hon. / L'hon. George (PC)	Timmins	Minister of Northern Economic Development and Growth / Ministre du Développement et de la croissance économique du Nord
Quinn, Hon. / L'hon. Nolan (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	Minister of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security / Ministre des Collèges et Universités, de l'Excellence en recherche et de la Sécurité
Racinsky, Joseph (PC)	Wellington—Halton Hills	
Rae, Matthew (PC)	Perth—Wellington	
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Indigenous Affairs and First Nations Economic Reconciliation / Ministre des Affaires autochtones et de la Réconciliation économique avec les Premières Nations Minister Responsible for Ring of Fire Economic and Community Partnerships / Ministre responsable des Partenariats économiques et communautaires pour le développement du Cercle de feu
Riddell, Brian (PC)	Cambridge	
Rosenberg, Bill (PC)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Sarrazin, Stéphane (PC)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Saunderson, Brian (PC)	Simcoe—Grey	
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Chris (IND)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Scott, Hon. / L'hon. Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	
Shamji, Adil (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Skelly, Hon. / L'hon. Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	Speaker / Présidente de l'Assemblée législative
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, David (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Graydon (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre associé des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Smith, Laura (PC)	Thornhill	
Smyth, Stephanie (LIB)	Toronto—St. Paul's	
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Tangri, Hon. / L'hon. Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	Associate Minister of Small Business / Ministre associée des Petites Entreprises
Thanigasalam, Hon. / L'hon. Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associé délégué à la Santé mentale et à la Lutte contre les dépendances
Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Rural Affairs / Ministre des Affaires rurales

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Associate Attorney General / Procureur général associé
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	Deputy Speaker / Vice-Présidente Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Tsao, Jonathan (LIB)	Don Valley North / Don Valley-Nord	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Vaugeois, Lise (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
Vickers, Paul (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	
Watt, Tyler (LIB)	Nepean	
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
Williams, Hon. / L'hon. Charmaine A. (PC)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity / Ministre associée des Perspectives sociales et économiques pour les femmes
Wong-Tam, Kristyn (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Vacant	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough- Sud-Ouest	