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Lundi
11 mai 2026

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Clerk: Trevor Day

Présidente : L'honorable Donna Skelly
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Monday 11 May 2026

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 11 mai 2026

The House met at 0900.

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

Prières / Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

KEEPING CRIMINALS BEHIND BARS
ACT, 2026

LOI DE 2026 VISANT À MAINTENIR
LES CRIMINELS DERRIÈRE
LES BARREAUX

Mr. Kerzner moved third reading of the following bill:
Bill 75, An Act to enact the Constable Joe MacDonald Public Safety Officers' Survivors Scholarship Fund Act, 2026 and to amend various other Acts / Projet de loi 75, Loi édictant la Loi de 2026 sur le Fonds Joe MacDonald de bourses d'études à l'intention des survivants d'agents de sécurité publique et modifiant diverses autres lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the minister.

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: I will be sharing my time with the Attorney General, the Associate Solicitor General for Auto Theft and Bail Reform and the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation.

Madam Speaker, especially today, when we acknowledge Police Week—and I would like to specifically acknowledge the president of the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, my friend Chief Mark Campbell, the chief of Strathroy-Caradoc, and I want to say to him and the organization; I want to say to President Mark Baxter, of the Police Association of Ontario, who is with us; I want to say to David Sabatini, my friend, the president of the Ontario Provincial Police Association, how happy I am that they are here especially as we kick off Police Week.

Police Week is another way of acknowledging our first responders, our police officers and everyone who is part of our municipal OPP and First Nations police services in Ontario. All we ask is that everyone who keeps us safe leaves their home early in the morning and comes back at the end of the day, to be with their loved ones, safe. I am so personally grateful to our associations, and I want to also acknowledge the Toronto Police Association, led by Clayton Campbell and his amazing team as well. I want to say for them, they represent the heart and soul of everyone that keeps us safe.

These last couple of weeks in Ontario have been tested. A couple of weeks ago, actually two weeks ago today, we

lost Sergeant Brandon Malcolm of the Ontario Provincial Police, Northumberland detachment. Last week we laid him to rest. A week ago, yesterday, we were at the police memorial right outside here, right outside this beautiful hall of democracy, where members of all sides of this chamber gathered to pay respects to those whose names are inscribed on the monument to remind them, as I said in my remarks, Madam Speaker, that they gave their lives so we could live. But they too live, because we tell their names and we tell their stories.

A few days ago, after that last week, we gathered again to remember the correctional officers, probation and parole officers who gave their lives so we could live. And I said in both speeches that when those we remember lived, they walked, they talked and they breathed—everything inculcated in them to do good, to love their profession, to love their families and to keep us safe by loving our province.

Today as we talk about Bill 75, the Keeping Criminals Behind Bars Act, we are reminded that there must be a point in time in our lives that somebody stands up in defence of the innocent, in defence of the people who want to go about their lives, because they have this fundamental acknowledgement that their lives matter, and that includes us here in this chamber and everyone in the gallery. What does it mean that our lives matter? Who would believe that we have criminality rooting itself in our world. It's not only just here in our jurisdiction of Ontario and our beloved country of Canada, it's actually in our world, that people think it's okay to act in a way that violates our rights to go about our lives and—as people have heard me say—to wake up our kids in the morning, see them off to school, check in on our loved ones and seniors, and go to work, shop and play in the park, and to worship. This is our right.

Somebody has to be able to say that in the time they were in this Legislature, they fought for our rights. And I want to acknowledge those not only on our side of the aisle, but those on the other side, who have an equal love of province and an equal love of their constituencies. And how do I know it? Because I visited there. I visit all over our province. I want to say that when a person comes to this Legislature as an elected official, their duty is to serve their province. Their duty is to stand up for their constituents and communities. Their duty is to make sure that nothing will ever come in the way between our fundamental rights of living in a safe and democratic society—nothing should come in the way.

Bill 75, which I am proud has made it through committee—and I want to thank the members of the jus-

tice committee who debated it, reviewed it and allowed this to come here today for third reading. I want to acknowledge my great friend the Attorney General. Getting to know the Attorney General, Madam Speaker, in the fall of 2022 in Halifax, when we went to our first federal, provincial and territorial meeting together, reminded me that he was the sophomore and I was the freshman. We learned not only a lot about what brought us here in our respective roles—to help Premier Ford keep Ontario safe—but understanding that when we really, really want to do good, we as legislators, as ministers, are unstoppable in bringing forward creativity, imagination, innovation to do good. I want to really offer my thanks to my friend.

I also want to acknowledge our Associate Solicitor General, somebody that, to be quite honest, when he was sworn into his portfolio in March 2025, I couldn't wait to get going with him and work very hard to make sure that the priorities of this Premier were carried out. He represents his constituency of Milton extremely well—thank you.

0910

And to my friend the parliamentary assistant, who we're going to hear from later: All you have to do is listen to his story of going from the water to the highlands in one of the most beautiful parts of Ontario, so well represented by the OPP and the incredible members that keep that beautiful part of Ontario safe. I look forward to hearing your remarks.

Madam Speaker, this day is also very significant. We are here with the Cristillo family. We are here with the Cristillo family not because this point in time was necessarily meant to happen the way that it did, but it happened. Andrew Cristillo was a victim who lost his life because some driver thought it was okay to drive recklessly and shatter the lives of others. When I met Jordan Cristillo and his late brother's wife, Christina, who are with us today, and other members from their family, it changed my life. I realized that here we are debating and fiercely working hard to ensure that our words, which are transcribed in the history of our Legislature, represent a moment in time where we made a difference.

When we sat with the Cristillo family, myself and others that day—the Premier, the Minister of Transportation—we told them that we have to work hard to make sure that Andrew's memory lives on—not only by mentioning his name; not only by reminding the world that he lived; not only by reminding the world that he had a wife, three amazing daughters, a brother and other family members. We have to remind the world that what happened to him should never happen to anybody else.

And with dispatch, we came forward and we said that Bill 75 would crack down, and would crack down hard, on dangerous driving. We call this Andrew's Law, because we want to make sure that if somebody feels that they can get away with it and have a life-altering moment—that maybe they won't appreciate what they did, but the victims of that sure will—that shouldn't happen. So we came forward, as part of Bill 75—and again, I want to

thank our amazing Minister of Transportation and his staff for the dispatch way that they came forward.

And what does it mean? It means a police officer will have the right to immediately suspend somebody's driver's licence, take away the licence for 90 days; that there will be consequences if an accident caused death. And it will raise the spectre across the province: Don't drive recklessly. Don't drive impaired. Don't drive under the influence of drugs, whether legal or illegal, because it doesn't matter. Just don't do it. I don't want to see one other family go through the pain of the Cristillos, what they have had to go through.

I've spoken to Jordan Cristillo over the last number of months as we waited for this day. This day is bittersweet and it's tough. It's not meant to be easy for the family, but the family has to see light, a crack of light when it's impossible to acknowledge that light follows night, that light follows darkness. I promise to this family—not just the time I'm in this role, but always—I will stand with them; I will be there for them. I will be there to make sure that Andrew lived and that we tell his story.

Madam Speaker, Bill 75 also strengthens our bail system. The Attorney General will talk about it, but one thing that we said we would do is make it harder for people who are coming out of jail to just say, "Thank you very much," and go about their way. There has to be a concept of responsibility, and that's why we've moved forward, as part of Bill 75, by ensuring a mandatory security deposit. The Associate Solicitor General will talk more about it. It will be administered by the courts. The judges will decide what is the appropriate security deposit.

But the concept especially, as we kick off Police Week—and police work so hard to do their job. They should know that in the cycle of going through our correctional system—and please God—a person should be released at the end of their time in our correctional system and fulfill the requirements of the courts or the court-ordered conditions, and they should be part of society in a way that they do not reoffend. Having a mandatory security deposit answers that call by saying, "You have a responsibility, too, to follow the rules."

I want to talk for a minute also about the Police Record Checks Reform Act, and this is something very, very important. Especially now, what we want to make sure, Madam Speaker—and we'll be speaking about this as we go forward—that as part of the Police Record Checks Reform Act that people know that they can get a police record check or a vulnerable sector record check, and that the police services work to ensure that there are no unforeseen obstacles in making sure that things happen in a relatively organized and fair time for the person who's applying.

I also want to acknowledge as part of Bill 75, the Constable Joe MacDonald Public Safety Officers' Survivors Scholarship Fund. I think all members of the Legislature—and I really do appreciate the member from St. Catharines; everybody knows whenever we see each other, and I'll tell you, my great friend from Niagara, when he was there, Minister Oosterhoff saw the fact that when we went to St.

Catharines to cut the ribbon on a fire training tower, that you can reach across the aisle in an underlying love of our public safety and our communities.

What we want to do as part of the Constable Joe MacDonald Public Safety Officers' Survivors Scholarship Fund is modernize it. It exists, unfortunately, for a reason: because children of officers are reminded that their dads or moms lost their lives while on duty in pursuit of our public safety. This fund exists so that the children of those families can go to university and college, and what we want to do is modernize it further.

We realize that programs have evolved, and that the children of our fallen want to go into post-secondary degrees. They want to take other courses. And we want to modernize this so they will have greater opportunity with the assurance that the province did not leave them behind and that we will be with them every step of the way.

I want to say one more thing, Madam Speaker, which we spoke about, and yes, we are updating other things in Bill 75: the Coroners Act; we're updating how to explore to strengthen Christopher's Law and the sex offenders and traffickers' registry—I've spoken about this before. I've spoken about the fact that we owe a lot to Premier Mike Harris in his day, that could have left the story untouched in a dark place, but he didn't. The pain of the Stephenson family was important to Premier Harris, and he came forward with Christopher's Law.

What we're doing now, as I've said many times in this House, is we're dusting it off. We're bringing it forward. We're recognizing things changed over 25 years, and we want to make sure that people are held to account. That you can't change your name and seek another alias. That you can't just hide on social media. There's code of conduct, and that's why we're strengthening it. And I really want to again acknowledge two bookend Premiers, Premier Mike Harris and Premier Doug Ford, and in their day will be known as the people that strengthened Christopher's Law yet again.

0920

I want to talk for one minute about barrier-free access. This is a concept, when I kicked off the debate last December, that I brought into perspective. We have work to do on it. We will develop policies around it. We will see a day that people will no longer feel entitled to block places of key infrastructure—our subway stations, our hospitals, our houses of worship, our roadways, our bridges, our on-ramps—just because they feel they can. Those days have to come to an end. We must stand with a person's right in our society to go about our rights with the freedom and democracy that we have enjoyed. And I will work hard with my colleagues and at places where we can tell the story. It's not just that the geo-political conflicts of world find themselves here in our Ontario. It's more than that. People have a right to feel how they feel. That's okay. Democracy is about expressing one's opinion, and that's okay; that's great. But we have to come to believe that you have to do it respectfully and not with intimidation by blocking places of key access. And we will work hard to move this narrative into policy and find its way forward.

So at the end of the day, as we commence Police Week, as we remember Andrew Cristillo, as we acknowledge our associations that are with us today and those that are not here but are equally as important, we look to a future generation to be inspired by what they see here, understanding that it's okay to love our province and to understand the sounds of Ontario. They're bold. They're supportive. They're loving. They're nurturing. They're fair, and they're decent. And Madam Speaker, they're inclusive.

Et c'est pourquoi, madame la Présidente, en tant que solliciteur général, le plus important pour moi c'est d'assurer la sécurité de notre province.

I'm here because I will do everything that I possibly can, with the voice that I have, with the strength that God has given me, in respect for my parents and those who mentored me to reach this day, to love my province that much more, and to not be afraid. When others tell us it's time to sit, I say stand. When others tell us lower your voices, I say no. There's a time to raise your voice so you can be heard. But finally, we must remember where we stand and how we stand: as a simple person that found their way to the floor of the Legislature with a love of province and country.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): I recognize the Attorney General.

Hon. Doug Downey: I'm pleased to rise for third reading of the Keeping Criminals Behind Bars Act. I want to thank the Solicitor General not only for his passion but for working alongside with me and with others because the system has to move forward together for it to be effective. I think that under Premier Doug Ford, we've shown that we're not in silos, that as one piece moves so does the other, so I really value my collegial relationship with the Solicitor General.

Also, a special thank you to the people in my office, the dedicated people behind the scenes at the Ministry of the Attorney General who work alongside the people behind the scenes in his: It has been a tremendous team effort. I'm grateful to everyone who worked so hard to make this legislation come forward.

The proposed new measures and comprehensive reforms I plan to talk about today are just the latest step in our government's work over the years, and they're all part of our plan to help build safer and stronger communities.

We all see the violent crime in this province. We know more needs to be done to keep people and communities safe. Far too often, dangerous repeat offenders are let back out on the streets because of a faulty and broken bail system that just is not working as well as it should. The proposed changes in the Keeping Criminals Behind Bars Act underscore our government's commitment on cracking down on violent crime and keeping our communities safe. I've talked to many people, families, businesses all across the province, and the resounding message is clear: Stronger action is needed to protect communities. The current bail system needs to be better. It is still allowing dangerous, repeat offenders—and sometimes dangerous, repeating offenders—back on the streets and putting

innocent people's lives at risk each and every day. This has to stop. This will stop.

The changes I am about to speak to build on our latest efforts in the Protect Ontario Through Safer Streets and Stronger Communities Act, which passed last year. For example, we made our intensive serious violent crime bail teams permanent across the province. These teams are made up of dedicated crown prosecutors who partner with provincial and local police services to help prepare the strongest possible case at a bail hearing. They have managed over 4,100 cases since 2023 and are permanent as of spring 2025. They are focused on keeping violent, repeat offenders behind bars.

Just this past spring, we also announced that our government is permanently establishing specialized prosecution teams to work directly with police and provide advice during investigations. This includes the provincial guns and gangs support unit, which supports interjurisdictional gun and gang investigations and prosecutions, but we are going further. Through the Keeping Criminals Behind Bars Act, 2025, we are delivering on our promise to fix the broken bail system by making bail more real and consequential for people accused of serious crimes.

Madam Speaker, the first proposed change I'd like to speak to calls for changes that will improve bail collection and modernization of bail liens. We are putting forward tough, new measures that will expand the collection tools available to the province for bail debts of accused persons and their sureties.

But first, let me explain what a surety is: In criminal law, a surety is someone who supervises a person out on bail. A surety is somebody who is supposed to supervise somebody out on bail. For example, they may be required to promise the court money if an accused person does not show up for court or meet their bail conditions, like not possessing weapons, not obeying curfews or staying under house arrest.

Right now, in Ontario, bail money put up by a surety is usually ordered as a financial pledge, or otherwise, a promise. It's not money upfront, so the bail money is only collected if bail conditions aren't met and then the court orders that the money be forfeited. If the accused person follows all the conditions, there is no need to worry about collecting the money. But bail conditions are sometimes violated and the court can order payment. However, sometimes those payments, even though demanded, are still not met.

Speaker, if passed, our proposed amendments would help ensure Ontario has increased power to collect bail debts. We are also proposing the same powers for collecting outstanding bail debts—as in, those already in place—to efficiently recover certain other crown debts. I'm talking about collection tools like the seizure and sale of property and garnishment, which is recovering money through a bail debtor's wages, bank account or other assets. We will also apply to the Canada Revenue Agency to collect bail debts from things like income tax refunds.

Just to go back to sureties for a moment: The Criminal Code requires that sureties provide their full name, date of

birth, address and other important information to the court. But the court sometimes dispenses with this requirement. Using the regulatory authority from the legislation passed last year, we will also require sureties to provide up-to-date information so Ontario can more easily collect any money they owe.

You see, Madam Speaker, rights go along with responsibilities. If the surety says that they will do something, there should be follow-through by the province if the individual they are supposed to be supervising does not. Rights and responsibilities go together. It's another way we are taking steps to deliver a comprehensive bail reform strategy.

Our strategy, that includes enhanced digital tools and the creation of a surety database, will make it even easier for police to track repeat offenders and those not in compliance with bail conditions.

The current system has been around for a long time and it is in desperate need of an overhaul. Key areas we're targeting include the use of digital technology to track repeat offenders and bail breaches, as well as the creation of a thorough database to streamline and enhance security checks.

We also need to take a closer look at the bail system as a whole. We need more specialized prosecution teams and we need to make sure we have the expertise to meet the challenges of today's ever-evolving criminal landscape.

Another item we want to put into action is a move to a user-fee system for GPS monitoring. We are talking about electronic tracking devices, like ankle bracelets. They are a great way to monitor people on bail and allow them to remain in the community while they're waiting for their trial. But these systems are expensive. A user-pay approach would offset the cost of this service, and excess funds, if any, could be used to support victim services and other vital justice programs. Again, rights go along with responsibilities.

0930

I want to turn now to the proposed legislation we're discussing and how it outlines a comprehensive plan to strengthen our bail system by enhancing compliance and keeping violent, repeat offenders off the streets. The associate minister will also speak further to what the Solicitor General said. But we can't do this on our own. We can't strengthen the bail system on our own. We have been relentless in urging the federal government to step up and make real bail reform.

As I previously mentioned, our government has already advanced many legislative and related measures to help make bail more real and consequential for people accused of serious crimes. We will continue to advocate to the federal government to deliver further real Criminal Code and bail reform, including tighter bail requirements, tougher rules and stronger enforcement.

Right now, Madam Speaker, the Senate has Bill C-14 federally and we are waiting for that to come out of the Senate and to be passed by Parliament. I've written to the Senate; we have talked to our federal counterparts—both the Solicitor General and I have talked to our federal

counterparts. We want Bill C-14 passed and implemented because it will help part of what they need to do to help us do what we need to do.

Public safety is and always will be paramount. We will continue building on our plan to protect Ontario by taking action to keep violent repeat offenders off the streets and out of our communities. If passed, the proposed changes in this legislation will help protect Ontario communities and keep our streets safer by getting tough on crime, strengthening the justice system and holding dangerous offenders accountable. I look forward to further engaging with the people of Ontario and all of our partners as we move forward on this very important piece of legislation. Thank you. Merci. Meegwetch.

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

I recognize the Associate Solicitor General for Auto Theft and Bail Reform.

Hon. Zee Hamid: Thank you, Attorney General.

Madam Speaker, as the Solicitor General said, I'll be sharing my time with the member from Brampton East.

I'm honoured to stand before the House today to voice my support for Bill 75, the Keeping Criminals Behind Bars Act. This is the next step in the government of Ontario's plan to enhance public safety and justice systems across the province. As the Solicitor General mentioned, this was very much a collaborative effort, building on the work of numerous ministries, agencies and organizations. I'd like to thank my cabinet colleagues whose ministries put this whole package together: the Attorney General, the Minister of Transportation, the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness and, obviously, the Solicitor General of Ontario.

Bill 75 is ambitious and comprehensive. It builds on a commitment made by Premier Doug Ford to the people of Ontario to protect Ontario streets and neighbourhoods and ensure that criminals are held accountable for their actions. To support this commitment, our government has made historic investments in front-line policing and community safety, as well as supported these investments with sweeping legislative changes.

Before we introduce Bill 75 in the House last year, we had already passed the Protect Ontario Through Safer Streets and Stronger Communities Act. This landmark legislation addressed critical issues like intimate partner violence, child safety and human trafficking. It also streamlined the judicial appointment process, created dedicated prosecution teams to help stop violent crime and gave police the authority to seize electronic devices used in vehicle thefts. I'm particularly proud of measures in the Protect Ontario Through Safer Streets and Stronger Communities Act to strengthen the bail system by making sure sureties are held more accountable for bail breaches.

Bill 75 builds on the foundation laid by earlier legislation by: cracking down on dangerous driving; strengthening bail compliance to make sure people are held accountable for their bail breaches; taking steps to ensure offenders are accountable; providing public safety personnel and their families with additional tools and supports; and enhancing support for victims of crime.

I'm also pleased to say that Bill 75 continues to advance bail reform and will help keep violent and repeat offenders and their sureties accountable by improving the province's ability to enforce consequences for bail breaches. The bill represents an important next step in strengthening Ontario's justice and public safety framework. It reflects the reality that the challenges facing our communities and our justice system continue to evolve and our legislation must evolve with them.

This bill helps ensure that the system can respond more effectively to complex and emerging public safety issues while improving collaboration across policing, courts, corrections and victim services. It supports a more responsive and modern justice system, one that is better equipped to manage repeat offenders, address serious crimes and support those impacted by it.

Just as importantly, Bill 75 reflects the feedback we have heard from communities, from victims' associates, from victim services and front-line personnel across the province. It is clear that public safety policies must be practical, balanced and focused on real-world outcomes. By building on previous reforms and existing strengths, this legislation will help ensure Ontario's public safety system remains effective, resilient and responsive to the challenges of today and the future. As the bill moves through third reading, it marks another meaningful step forward in our government's efforts to maintain a justice system that works for the people of Ontario.

I'd like to go into deeper detail on Bill 75 and bail reform, Speaker, but first, I'd like to touch on the issue of auto theft. The relationship between the current broken bail system and Ontario's auto theft problem is undeniable. In 2024, for example, Peel Regional Police reported that a third of people arrested for auto theft were already out on bail for similar offences. As you all know, auto theft today is a highly sophisticated crime conducted by highly sophisticated criminal operations and organized gangs, targeting high-end luxury SUVs, cars and trucks.

The impact on the province has been enormous. Between 2018 and 2023, the cost of auto theft insurance claims in Ontario increased by an astounding 524%. In fact, stolen vehicle claims in 2023 surpassed \$1 billion for the very first time. It is something that impacts every single automobile owner in this province through higher insurance premiums.

But because of our efforts, it's not all bad news, Speaker. We've been making serious progress. In 2024, we saw a sudden and dramatic shift. According to Équité Association, a national not-for-profit and a valuable partner in our fight against crime, vehicle theft in Ontario decreased by more than 17% in 2024. In 2025, we saw a further 22% decline on top of that previous 17% decline. The success of our auto theft initiatives confirms our strategic approach to crime fighting is working. Good things happen when law enforcement and government work together. Targeted, collaborative and informed action does have a significant impact on public safety.

We're taking the same focused approach in our effort to strengthen the bail system and compliance. Bail reform

is essential to protecting public safety and restoring confidence in our justice system. Across Ontario and Canada, communities have seen way too many cases where repeat or violent offenders are released on bail only to reoffend while awaiting trial.

I had the privilege of travelling the province and talking to victim services across the province and I heard stories after stories after stories. Just last week, I met a victim whose ex-partner, who was out on bail after domestic violence, had ended up kidnapping her child and she had to travel to a different country to bring her child back. No mother should have to live through that horror.

Bail reform is essential to protecting public safety and restoring confidence in our justice system. Across Canada and Ontario, as I mentioned earlier, communities continue to see cases where people are released on bail not two, not three, not four, not five times only to reoffend. This creates real risk for victims, front-line officers and the public. Our government believes the bail system must strike the right balance between protecting the rights of the accused, while ensuring those who pose a serious risk are not cycling through the system. Bail reform helps close gaps that allow chronic and violent offenders to repeatedly breach conditions or commit new crimes while out on bail. It also supports police and prosecutors by strengthening accountability and improving oversight to individuals who are out on bail. Ultimately, bail reform is about keeping our communities safe, supporting victims and ensuring that the justice system works as it was intended, which is to hold offenders accountable while maintaining public confidence in the rule of law.

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We're advocating for stricter bail practices and a justice system that prioritizes safety for all Canadians. Recent federal government changes to the Criminal Code are a step in the right direction. It is great to see that many of our recommendations have been reflected in the bills recently tabled by the federal government. Right now, we're doing a detailed review of those changes, as we continue to push for a full review of the interim release system. But Speaker, we didn't stop there. We also put money on the table, including a \$112-million investment over the last three years to strengthen bail monitoring and enforcement of high-risk and repeat offenders.

I'm also excited to tell you about the Provincial Bail Compliance Dashboard. This state-of-the-art monitoring tool was developed by Toronto Police Service with help from the Durham police service and is now managed by the OPP. This dashboard helps police monitor individuals on bail for firearm-related charges and others identified as presenting increased risk to the community. For a front-line officer, the Provincial Bail Compliance Dashboard is an operational intelligence tool. It aggregates information from multiple police services across the province so officers can quickly see if someone is on bail and what conditions they must follow and whether they have a history of breaching bail conditions.

I also had the privilege of travelling the province and seeing this bail compliance dashboard in action, through

seeing the officers use the bail compliance dashboard as well as going on ride-alongs with officers to see how they enforce bail conditions and verify that the accused are keeping up with the rules of release.

This system can also provide information on things like warrants and outstanding charges. The goal is to support proactive compliance checks and faster responses to violations. Officer safety is a big part of the equation. The dashboard coordinates data from across jurisdictions, connecting police services from anywhere in the province. We launched the dashboard province-wide just over a year ago after extensive field testing by Toronto Police Service, the Durham police service and the OPP. The results were impressive: In the final three months of the pilot phase, participating police services saw a 21% increase in the number of high-risk individuals being monitored. As a direct result, police laid 429 new charges.

Today, the dashboard is available to all municipal and First Nations police services across Ontario that choose to participate. As of now, 35 police services are using the system with more coming on board soon. There are now almost 8,000 people listed on the dashboard and in the 15 months since the technology went province-wide, it's supported 23,600 bail compliance checks. These results show what is possible when we combine better information, strong enforcement and modern tools. This bill, Speaker, builds on that progress.

As I mentioned at the outset, the bill before the House includes a number of measures aimed at enhancing Ontario's bail system. If passed, the Keeping Criminals Behind Bars Act will help improve bail collection and enhance administration of bail debt. It will review the bail system to make sure it's meeting the challenges of today's ever-evolving criminal landscape and support the use of technology across the bail system. Another change would give Ontario the authority to effectively garnish wages, seize and sell property and take other steps to ensure that bail debts are collected.

We also want to move to mandatory cash security deposits to back up a pledge of money by accused persons or their sureties. What happens today, Speaker, is accused people or their sureties do not provide money up front. Instead, the system relies heavily on promises, guarantees and conditions. In cases of bail non-compliance, it is often extremely difficult for governments to collect—we're fixing that. People on bail who have actual money on the table are much more likely to follow the court's conditions—not to mention, if you already have the cash on hand, there is no longer a debt to collect.

Bill 75 also supports a comprehensive review of the bail reform system. The current system has been around for a very long time, and with the changes in technology and our criminal landscape, is in desperate need of an overhaul. Key areas we need to look at include the use of digital technology to track repeat offenders and bail breaches, and the creation of a comprehensive database to streamline and enhance surety checks. We also need to take a close look at the bail prosecution system. We need more prosecution teams. We need to make sure that we

have the expertise to meet the challenges of today's ever-evolving criminal landscape.

Finally, we need to enable better use of technology in the bail system. I already mentioned databases for sureties and repeat offenders. I'm also talking about things like electronic tracking devices, like ankle bracelets. They're an effective way to monitor people on bail and allow them to remain in the community while they await trial. But these systems are expensive. A user-pay approach would hold adult offenders and accused individuals accountable and provide funds for victim services and victims of crime.

As you can see, Speaker, this is an ambitious plan that strengthens our bail system. It enhances compliance while keeping violent and repeat offenders off the streets.

Strengthening bail is only one part of the equation. When offenders are held in custody, our correctional system must have the modern infrastructure and capacity to support staff, maintain safety and deliver effective programs. That is why our government is working to modernize and expand Ontario's correction system. For too long, Speaker, the system was ignored and neglected.

Over the past six years, our government has delivered on its promise to modernize the system, increase capacity and enhance safety for correctional staff and inmates. We back this promise up with—listen carefully—a \$3-billion commitment to build new facilities and deliver major updates to correctional infrastructure across Ontario.

And we're getting the job done, Speaker. Since 2024, we've added almost 600 new beds to the system. By the end of 2027, we'll have increased the capacity by a total of more than 700 additional beds. This includes new facilities in Thunder Bay and Brockville, modular expansions in Sudbury, Niagara and my riding of Milton, a huge expansion of the Toronto South Detention Centre. These investments ensure that our correctional system has the modern facilities, capacity and resources to do the job safely and effectively, because strengthening public safety requires a comprehensive and coordinated system, one that covers everything from prevention and policing to bail compliance and supporting a modern, secure correctional system.

Speaker, protecting the people of Ontario requires a justice system that is strong, modern and capable of meeting the challenges of today. Bill 75 is an extremely important part of that effort. It strengthens bail compliance. It improves accountability within the justice system. It supports the use of modern technology to track offenders and enforce conditions. It ensures that our public safety partners, from police and prosecutors to correctional officers, have the tools they need to do the job. Speaker, we've heard from the public time and time again that they expect the streets to be safe, they expect their families to be secure and, when a crime is committed, they expect justice to be served. That is what we're doing today.

Combined with our investment in policing, bail enforcement and correctional modernization, these measures represent a comprehensive approach to protecting Ontario communities. This approach will guarantee safety for the public. It will keep our streets safe, and it will make sure justice is served.

But this bill also sends a clear message to violent and repeat offenders: that you will face stronger consequences, and the safety of Ontarians will always come first.

I'm proud to support the Keeping Criminals Behind Bars Act, and I encourage members of the House to do the same.

As I mentioned earlier in my speech, I had the privilege of meeting victim services across the province, and I can tell you that they're looking for changes like this. Victim services across the province, as they work with victims of crime, have told us repeatedly that they expect us to see repeat and violent offenders held accountable, that they expect to close the revolving door of justice so people who pose a threat to public safety are kept behind bars, so our streets are safe and people's families are secure. And this is what this bill does.

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Now I will share my time with the member from Hastings–Lennox and Addington.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): I recognize the member for Hastings–Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Ric Bresee: I'm really glad to be here today. I want to start by thanking the Solicitor General, Michael Kerzner, not only for introducing this important legislation but for working so hard across the Solicitor General's office to make sure that we continue to protect Ontario. I also want to thank the Attorney General and the Associate Solicitor General, Zee Hamid, for their work to help keep Ontario safe.

Speaker, our government has been clear from day one: Anyone—anyone—who breaks the law, endangers others or puts public safety at risk must face serious consequences.

That's why we passed legislation to suspend the drivers' licences of those who are convicted of auto theft, including lifetime bans for repeat offenders. We also increased the limitation period for careless driving charges and enacted a lifetime ban for anyone convicted of impaired driving causing death. And now we're moving that forward; we are taking further action to protect people from dangerous and reckless drivers.

Speaker, they're in the House today. We've all heard the heartbreaking story of Andrew Cristillo and his family. My sympathies and my condolences to you.

Last summer, Mr. Cristillo was killed in a collision involving a driver who was already facing charges for dangerous driving and stunt driving. That driver has since pleaded guilty to charges related to the collision, but the damage that he caused can never be undone. Mr. Cristillo left behind a wife and three children, so now those three children are growing up without their dad.

In the wake of that tragedy, Mr. Cristillo's family launched the Andrew's Law petition, calling for tougher penalties for dangerous driving and increased driver education to keep Ontario's roads safe. Madam Speaker, our government is responding to that call.

Through the Keeping Criminals Behind Bars Act, we are taking action to help get dangerous drivers off the roads, period. When someone chooses to drive dangerous-

ly, they put everyone else around them at risk, and when this leads to a serious injury or death, the consequences change lives forever.

If this legislation passes, police would have the authority to issue a 90-day roadside driver's licence suspension and impound the vehicle for seven days if they have reason to believe that a person was driving dangerously at the time of the traffic stop. The legislation would also introduce a lifetime driver's licence suspension for anyone convicted of dangerous driving causing death.

This sends a clear and very important message that dangerous driving will not be tolerated on Ontario's roads. When a dangerous driver tears a family apart, the consequences for the driver must be severe. This is the kind of action we need to hold dangerous drivers accountable when their actions lead to a loss of life, and we need to keep doing this to keep Ontario's roads among the safest in North America.

Madam Speaker, this legislation would also take stronger action against people who drive with a suspended licence. If your licence has been suspended, you should not be behind the wheel; it's really quite simple. The Keeping Criminals Behind Bars Act would increase fines for anyone convicted of driving with a suspended licence and introduce escalating roadside vehicle impoundment periods.

We're also proposing stronger roadside penalties for careless driving, including a seven-day roadside licence suspension for anyone charged with careless driving and a 30-day roadside licence suspension for anyone charged with careless driving causing bodily harm or death.

This legislation will also increase fines for careless driving conditions. As I've said, Madam Speaker, if you put people at risk on Ontario's roads, there will be consequences.

Distracted driving remains a serious concern. According to Ontario's Road Safety Annual Report, the number of people killed in collisions involving an inattentive driver increased from 75 in 2020 to 83 in 2021. That was an increase of 11% in one year. Over the longer term, fatalities involving inattentive drivers increased by 60% from 2002 to 2021. These numbers show why further action is required.

Today, commercial drivers face the same penalties for distracted driving as any other driver, but we know commercial vehicles are larger and heavier, and collisions involving those vehicles can have much more serious consequences. That's why our government is proposing stronger penalties for distracted drivers in commercial vehicles. If the Keeping Criminals Behind Bars Act passes, it would double the fines and the licence suspensions for commercial drivers convicted of distracted driving.

The legislation would also increase the minimum fine for not having a functional speed limiter in commercial vehicles up to \$1,000. We know that speed limiter compliance is important for road safety, and unfortunately, we know that there are commercial vehicle operators and drivers out there who are not following the rules. Our

government is taking action to strengthen compliance and improve safety on Ontario's roads.

Madam Speaker, road safety starts with training and education. That's why our government intends to launch a comprehensive review of the novice driver training to ensure that drivers are held to rigorous standards. In doing this, we'll consult with road safety stakeholders to better understand the training processes for new drivers and what they need before they're fully licensed.

The Ministry of Transportation will also partner with the Ministry of Education to deliver road safety presentations at the secondary school level to raise awareness of the risks and the consequences of unsafe driving, so young drivers make better decisions behind the wheel. This is a practical step to support safer driving habits very early and keep Ontario roads safe.

Ontario has long ranked among the safest jurisdictions in North America for road safety, with one of the lowest fatality rates per 100,000 licensed drivers, but even one is too many, Speaker. We take road safety very seriously, and that's why our province has continued to set the example for other jurisdictions over the years.

Since taking office, our government has introduced tough new measures to crack down on stunt driving, street racing, impaired driving and careless driving. We've introduced legislation to create a provincial offence for registering a vehicle with fraudulent vehicle identification numbers—VINs. Through this legislation, we're taking the next step to strengthen road safety and hold unsafe drivers to account.

Madam Speaker, every member of this House understands that we have a responsibility to keep Ontario's roads safe. No family should ever face the heartbreak of losing a loved one or the trauma of a life-changing injury, just because someone made a bad decision and chose to drive dangerously or carelessly. Mr. Cristillo's family has lived with that loss since last summer. Our government is responding with measures that would help to prevent similar tragedies and improve road safety all across this province.

Madam Speaker, with this legislation, we're sending a clear message that dangerous driving will not be tolerated in this province. We're taking action to improve commercial vehicle safety all across the province. These are practical measures to hold unsafe drivers accountable.

Speaker, before I get into my conclusion, I do want to speak a little bit about my own riding. I was actually just telling the Solicitor General that my riding is an hour and a half wide and three and a half hours long. You can tell I'm a rural Ontarian because I measure driving distance in hours. In the last year, I've done about 50,000 kilometres in my vehicle. I'm very fortunate. Not to brag, but I live in one of the absolutely most beautiful parts of Ontario, right from the shoreline along Lake Ontario and looking out across at the islands and Hay Bay, all the way north to the highlands. I've got the beautiful Mazinaw Rock at Bon Echo. It's a 300-foot art museum of Indigenous art. I've got some amazing things to be able to see while you're out on the road all across Hastings—Lennox and Addington.

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I'm very, very proud to be able to drive around that representing the people of Hastings–Lennox and Addington, but when I do that, Madam Speaker, there's a contract. There's a social contract with every other person on that road: I will drive following those rules. It only works if I have the confidence that everyone else driving on that road is following the same rules.

Madam Speaker, I know 99.9%—whatever the number is—of the people are driving safely, and that's good. That's why we have a great traffic safety record in this province. As much as it's about rules and about the enforcement through the police services, about all of that, it's also about the good people of Ontario deciding—and it is a decision—to drive safely, to drive conscientiously, following the rules. We need that last very, very small percentage to be added to that group. Through legislation like this, we're making it harder, we're making it more severe when they make the bad decision to not follow the rules, because there are serious, serious consequences when that happens.

Again, we have the Cristillo family here in the House today. Truly unfortunately, most of us know somebody personally, most of us know someone in our own ridings, in our own lives, in our own families, who have been affected by people making bad decisions. Whether that's because they were drunk, whether that's because they were speeding excessively, careless—whatever the definition is—it's a bad decision. Madam Speaker, we want those people off the road. It's that simple.

We will use legislation like this. This is another example of our government's work to protect Ontario. There are lots of ways that we protect Ontario: through our health care system, through our education, through building our economy. This is one of the ways that we protect Ontario by keeping our roads safe, by keeping our communities safe and ensuring that the good people of Ontario can travel anywhere they want across Ontario safely, conscientiously.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. I've appreciated your time today.

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

MPP Jamie West: Thank you to my colleagues across the aisle for all of their shared time. I had a question for the Attorney General or whoever is able to answer.

I really appreciate the passion. You spoke about Andrew Cristillo. It was very important; it resonated with me. Sudbury is the home of the Day of Mourning and we recognize injured workers from all different backgrounds. When you talked about having these conversations, how it's tough but it's important to talk about them every single year—through the Speaker: It really resonated with me because we meet with families of injured workers on a regular basis.

I know for years there was a push for the Westray law to hold employers criminally accountable when there is criminal behaviour in a death of a worker. One of the issues we've heard from the police chiefs and from police

associations is that they don't have the time and money for the training of officers to investigate these. I'm wondering in the future if the Solicitor General will consider this funding.

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: To my friend opposite from Sudbury, especially today, Police Week, we acknowledge the incredible work that the chiefs do—that everyone does.

But I believe that there's never been a more opportune time to acknowledge the fact that today, thanks to strong provincial legislation, the Community Safety and Policing Act, in collaboration with the associations, they are prepared, that the training people receive at the Ontario Police College means that those that are being badged are prepared, that the training that they're getting in their police services—municipal, OPP or First Nations—that they are prepared and it goes to the standard that we take it. We take protecting Ontario seriously, and I want to acknowledge everyone that keeps us safe every day.

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

Mr. Deepak Anand: A couple of years back, right at the intersection of Derry and Goreway, I got a call from one of the business owners. He called me. He said, "There has been a robbery." Somebody came. They took stuff from his store. But he was very excited. He said, "Don't worry, I have the all the videos captured." I went there. We called the police. The police came. They saw the video and the first thing they said, "Oh, my goodness. That's Johnny"—by the way, it's a fake name. "What is he doing here? He should not be here. He is on bail. He is not even allowed to enter Malton."

To any of the wonderful speakers, just a very simple question: What is this bill doing to solve such issues? How are we there for the people of Ontario?

Hon. Doug Downey: This bill does a number of things as it relates to bail and people out on bail. We had spoken about the GPS monitoring, which is very important, and about the follow-up on bail verification. We have dedicated resources that the Solicitor General has put out, called the ROPE squad, which helps do follow-up; we have the bail dashboard that was developed by the Solicitor General to allow local officers to be checking that people are where they are supposed to be; and we have sureties becoming more consequential so that, if this bill passes, we will have individuals with something at stake to be supervising those individuals that they promise and undertook to supervise.

There are a number of things happening in the space. All the while, we are working and pushing the federal government and Bill C-14 in particular. I may have more to say in supplementary questions.

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

MPP Jamie West: I want to thank the Solicitor General for talking about Joe MacDonald in Sudbury. Joe MacDonald is a local hero. He died in the line of duty and I'm really grateful that for my son's generation and future generations, most people know him as Joe Mac because of the Joe Mac football league. I'm thankful for the scholarship fund that's happening here.

I was wondering if the Solicitor General would consider in the future expanding that to include death by suicide. I came from the mining background; we have a mentality of rubbing dirt in and holding it in. But as a result, because of tragic incidents that officers see in the line of duty, other things happening like that, mental health is an issue, and I think it would be important to recognize those who died in the line of duty through suicide.

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: Again, to my colleague opposite from Sudbury, we want to modernize the scholarship fund. It's very important. I've had great dialogue with his colleague and my friend the member from St. Catharines, again, because we understood the comments that were made in the justice committee. The House leader says many times that committees play a vital role in the discussion and debate of a bill. That's a perfect example. So we're going to look at modernizing it. We're going to leave all the options on the table right now and consult with our stakeholders, some of whom are here in the gallery.

But most importantly, remember what I said in my remarks: We can't leave the children of those that serve, who gave their lives so we could live, behind. We're never going to do that. I want to acknowledge the ladies from the Survivors of Law Enforcement, the SOLE ladies. They don't just mean just anything to me. They mean everything.

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

M^{me} Lucille Collard: I want to ask the government about addressing the rise of violent crime. We know that this is a fact, that there has been a rise in violence, and I agree that it certainly does need to be addressed. However, I'd like to hear from the government what the evidence is that is showing that having stricter bail is actually more effective at reducing crime than investing the same amount of money into mental health, addictions services and affordable housing?

Hon. Doug Downey: In fact, we're doing a number of things at the same time, but stricter bail is important because what we're seeing are the same individuals over and over. We're seeing crimes happen while people are out on bail and, quite frankly, if they weren't out on bail, those crimes wouldn't have happened. So I think there's a direct correlation between people being held on bail when they're doing serious, violent—and repeat offenders in particular. You know, the best predictor of future behaviour is past behaviour. And although that's not enough to convict somebody on, nor should it be, it certainly is a factor that should be considered when you're deciding whether to let somebody else back out into the community.

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

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I'm wondering if one of the presenters today can talk more about the ROPE grant. The ROPE grant is the repeat offender and parole enforcement grant. In my community, we had the good fortune of receiving a ROPE grant. The LaSalle police force, in

conjunction with the Windsor police force, have used that to great effect, re-arresting individuals who were in breach of their parole conditions or in breach of their release conditions.

I think the ROPE grant is extremely effective. It's been very, very effective in my area. I'm wondering if any of the speakers today could give us more details or talk a little bit more at length about the ROPE grant, because, as I said, it's been very effective in my area. Perhaps it's also been effective in other areas as well, and I would like to hear more about that.

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: Thank you to my friend from Essex. The repeat offender and parole enforcement grant is important. I want to salute his great police service—the LaSalle Police Service, led by Chief Pearce. And I want to tell the member opposite that what LaSalle has done with the Windsor Police Service, led by a great chief as well, Chief Jason Crowley, is to make sure that they have the additional resources to ensure that those people who break their bail conditions are found.

The whole concept of the ROPE, which is the repeat offender and parole enforcement grant, is to stop people from continuously doing what they're doing, coming one, two, three, four times, causing an act of criminality and getting back out the next day.

This grant has been monumental to southwest Ontario. It has helped provide LaSalle Police Service and Windsor Police Service with incredible resources to help keep their community safe.

I also want to acknowledge the surrounding municipal areas, including Strathroy-Caradoc. We're delighted to have Chief Mark Campbell here—their chief—because southwestern Ontario is beautiful. It should be safe, and it is safe because of those municipal police services.

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

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: This past month I had the privilege of announcing an investment of \$5.2 million by our government to connect up to 13,000 people to primary care in Oxford. This investment is monumental, given that access to primary care is important for a strong and reliable health care system. Strengthening primary care not only helps people stay healthier, but it also reduces pressure on emergency departments and hospitals.

Access to primary care has been a concern for Oxford residents. This investment is an acknowledgement that their concerns have been heard by our government and we have taken action on them.

The Thames Valley family health services within Oxford and the Ingersoll Nurse Practitioner-Led Clinic will put this money to good use for the benefit of the

people of Oxford. A portion of this investment will also be used to establish a new nurse practitioner clinic in Tillsonburg, which will connect more people to team-based care.

However, none of this could have happened without the hard work and dedication of the health care partners in Oxford, which has helped us arrive at this new and exciting time. Stephanie Nevins, the executive director of the Ingersoll Nurse Practitioner-Led Clinic, has been striving for nearly a decade, and her hard work has paid off.

Overall, the investment is a significant step forward for primary care in Oxford county, as it will be used to increase our health care workforce and ensure families have access to quality care right there in Oxford.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, as you're well aware, the world is getting hotter. Many scientists are now saying that the rate of change is accelerating. The risk is growing that we will hit two degrees centigrade warming within the next 10 to 15 years. This is decades earlier than previously thought or projected. This risks a substantial drop in our standard of living.

We're already seeing growing insurance losses coupled with rising insurance rates across North America—and certainly, we're seeing it in northern Ontario.

We're already seeing the impact on the price and availability of beef from the western United States, and we will see far more impacts on food prices across the board over the next decade.

This government has cancelled its own climate plan. As weak as it was, there's no excuse for doing this. A variety of environmental groups have called on the government to re-establish a climate plan that will actually be effective. The fact that the government decided to shut down the plan in the first place shows that a safe and prosperous future for Ontario is not a priority for this government.

ATHLÈTES FRANCOPHONES

CITY OF OTTAWA

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Il me fait grand plaisir de souligner l'exploit remarquable de deux jeunes athlètes francophones d'Ottawa, Shakespeare Louis et Ebenezer Dibula, qui ont été repêchés cette semaine dans la Ligue canadienne de football. Shakespeare a été choisi par les Alouettes de Montréal et Ebenezer par les Lions de la Colombie-Britannique, une réalisation exceptionnelle qui marque le début d'un parcours professionnel très prometteur.

Originaires d'Haïti et du Congo, ils incarnent la force, la résilience et la diversité de nos communautés francophones en Ontario. Leur parcours est une source d'inspiration pour de nombreux jeunes.

Je veux aussi souligner le rôle essentiel de leur entraîneur, Jean Guillaume, un mentor francophone dévoué qui accompagne depuis des années de nombreux

jeunes athlètes d'Ottawa, autant sur le terrain qu'à l'extérieur. Son engagement vers la jeunesse de notre communauté est remarquable.

Cet accomplissement résonne particulièrement à Vanier, où la mère de Shakespeare travaille et contribue chaque jour à notre communauté.

Au nom de cette Chambre, je félicite Shakespeare et Ebenezer, leurs familles, leur entraîneur et toutes les personnes qui les ont soutenus dans ce parcours. Ottawa-Vanier est immensément fier de vous et vous appuiera à chaque étape de vos carrières.

Speaking of Ottawa, I'm also happy to highlight that this year we are celebrating the 200th anniversary of our city. In fact, I invite you all to join us this evening at 6 p.m. on the grand staircase for the Speaker's reception celebrating this important milestone, alongside our mayor and city council.

STUDENT START UP PROGRAM

Mr. Joseph Racinsky: Today, I would like to highlight a great opportunity for young entrepreneurs in Wellington county. Wellington-Waterloo Community Futures is organizing a Student Start Up Program for youth in grades 6 to 12. This is a four-week program starting on June 3, where students will learn essential business concepts, problem-solving skills, as well as how to manage a budget, provide customer service and market their business. Students apply to the program with a business idea, and by the end of the program, they will take that idea and turn it into an actual business.

Ontario's entrepreneurial spirit is one of the reasons why this is the best place in the world to live, work and play. It is so important that we continue to foster that spirit.

I want to thank Wellington-Waterloo Community Futures for providing this opportunity to our youth.

I especially want to thank Jane Shaw for helping to organize this program and for the tremendous job she is doing as the board president of the Centre Wellington Chamber of Commerce. If you'd like to learn more about the Student Start Up Program, you can email jane@wwcf.ca.

Let's all continue to make sure that Ontario is the best place for someone to start, run and build a business. We know that businesses and entrepreneurs drive our economy, and a strong economy means a better Ontario for everyone.

RON MICHAUD

MPP Jamie West: Speaker, on Sunday, the member from Nickel Belt and I said goodbye to Ron Michaud, a labour champion in Sudbury. Ron Michaud spent his career fighting for safer mining workplaces with decent pensions and wages, and he continued that activism into retirement.

He was a veteran. He spent his early years in the 2nd Battalion, Black Watch. He enrolled in the army in 1961. He was based in Gagetown, New Brunswick, then Germany for four years and Cyprus for six months.

After fighting for Canada, Ron fought for workers. He was at the Falconbridge smelter for 32 years. He was active in his union and very proud to be part of Mine Mill Unifor Local 598. When he retired, Ron joined the retirees' board and eventually became the chairman, until April 2026, when Ron got sick and was too sick to continue. Although he was in the hospital, Ron was organizing until his last few days.

Ron was ready to stand with any and all of his union brothers and sisters when they were fighting the fight, not only in the Sudbury area, but all of Canada.

I ran into Ron all over Ontario. I ran into Ron standing with auto workers in a snowstorm outside of the GM plant in Oshawa—the member for Oshawa was with us there—and I was in Thunder Bay when a grateful Unifor worker told me how Ron and a van full of retirees with bad backs and bad knees had pulled up to walk the picket line with them.

1020

I want to thank Ron's loving wife of 57 years, Carol; his daughter, Kathleen; her spouse, Paul; his two grandchildren; his amazing seven great-grandchildren. I want to say to them, our province owes a debt of gratitude to all of you for sharing Brother Ron Michaud with all of us. Rest in peace, Ron.

MUNICIPALITIES

Mr. Stéphane Sarrazin: I would like to welcome members of the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus who are here with us at Queen's Park today. I look forward to meeting with them—and, of course, all my colleague MPPs—in room 230 over lunchtime.

I would also like to welcome warden of the united counties of Prescott-Russell, Mr. Mario Zanth, and also warden of united counties of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry, Mr. Francois Landry, both here with the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus today.

I also want to introduce a good friend of mine, Mr. Stephane Parisien, who is the united counties of Prescott-Russell CAO. Mr. Parisien has been leading the united counties for more than 20 years—23 years now. Before becoming a CAO of the counties, he worked for the Ministry of Social Services in Hawkesbury. I had the pleasure as the mayor of the township of Alfred and Plantagenet and as a member of the united counties of Prescott-Russell to work with Mr. Parisien from 2018 to 2022. It's always great working with him. I must say that our relationship goes beyond a professional one. Over the years, we have become good friends.

I would also like to congratulate Mr. Parisien and the entire team at the united counties of Prescott-Russell—I think we counted 500 employees approximately—for the remarkable work they do in providing many services to the residents of Prescott-Russell.

LABORATORY SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: Today, LifeLabs in Sudbury ends local testing. The last few weeks, they've been transporting more and more of their samples to Toronto.

Here's a message I received from my constituent last Wednesday:

"I had a test done in my specialist's office. The results are typically a 48-hour process. A week later"—today—"I go in for the follow-up and my doctor is very frustrated. The results are not back yet. This has cost my doctor a second unnecessary appointment with me, and the time of her staff to try to find out" where the expected results are, since "they are not processed in Sudbury; and a subsequent third appointment next week. My treatment plan is delayed...."

LifeLabs' profits will rise, but they leave behind a trail of late diagnoses, wasted doctors' appointments and job losses for my constituents.

We can do better, Speaker. Instead of padding the profits of this American company that owns LifeLabs, these dollars can be used to retain and develop northern lab professionals, sustain local health infrastructure, support community health, attract and retain professionals, prevent brain drain from northern Ontario and, of course, prepare for emergencies.

If northeastern Ontario is not profitable enough for LifeLabs, then let's give the contract to the people and organizations that keep us healthy and help us when we're sick: our northern community hospitals. Let them bill for community lab services.

YMCA

Mr. Brian Saunderson: I rise today to recognize the incredible impact of the YMCA of Simcoe/Muskoka, a charity that has been strengthening lives for generations. While my own connection is through the Collingwood Y, the organization serves more than 64,000 people through 95 locations across Simcoe county, Barrie, Orillia, Parry Sound and Muskoka. With 1,600 staff and volunteers and 1,800 donors, its impact is truly regional.

Speaker, for my family, the Y has been more than a place for health and fitness. It has been a place to connect with friends, first jobs for two of my sons, an opportunity to serve in a capital campaign, and where Susie and I have taken part in the annual Move to Give fundraiser to make Y programs and services accessible to more families in our community.

One of the Y's strengths is meeting people where they are in life. Guided by the values of kindness, integrity, inclusiveness, respect and optimism, the Y creates a sense of belonging for all who walk through the doors.

And, Speaker, as the region's largest provider of child and school-age care, with more than 5,000 licensed spaces, the Y provides safe, supportive places for children to learn and grow while helping families thrive. For over 100 years, Camp Kitchikewana in Honey Harbour has helped young people build confidence, resilience and lifelong memories.

The future is very bright, Madam Speaker. With the new Barrie Y under construction, supported by a \$30-million provincial funding grant, our government is helping to strengthen that legacy for future generations.

LORIE SMITH

MPP Paul Vickers: I rise today to pay tribute to and thank Lorie Smith for her two decades of service to Grey Ag Services.

Grey Ag Services was founded 25 years ago with a vision to connect local farmers to leading ag sector practices through educational and networking opportunities. This work includes hosting the Grey Bruce Farmers' Week, a week filled with educational sessions dedicated to six different commodity groups. During her tenure, Lorie has been involved with over 20 farmers' weeks and led it virtually during the pandemic years.

Speaker, my friend Lorie recently announced she is stepping down from Grey Ag Services, marking the end of her tenure serving Grey county's farmers. But when it comes to her impact, don't just take my word for it; take it from our local press. While Lorie is not one for the spotlight, our local media honoured her with the Tommy Cooper Award in 2021, which is reserved for those who contribute to the betterment of agricultural and rural living.

Today, Grey Ag Services is going stronger than ever, largely due to Lorie's dedication. On behalf of the farmers and constituents of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, thank you, Lorie. I hope you and Dave can enjoy some well-earned retirement time. But don't be a stranger to the agriculture community.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Joining me in the Speaker's gallery I have a number of guests from Hamilton who are here with an amazing young women's hockey team, who will be introduced in a minute: Pat and Palma de Caria and their grandson, Luca.

Also, from my constituency office, Grant MacLean. Welcome to Queen's Park.

I recognize the Minister of Tourism.

Hon. Neil Lumsden: Sport, but that too.

It's great to rise in the Legislature—

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

Hon. Neil Lumsden: Thank you, Speaker. To be recognized twice, that must be a record.

There are some other great reasons to be here today. I'm real proud to welcome the Stoney Creek Sabres U18 AA hockey team from my riding—wait for it—Hamilton East–Stoney Creek. On April 25, they won the provincial championships and then they went on to New Brunswick to compete for the Esso Cup on the national stage. They won a silver medal on April 25.

They also do a great job on our community skate in the last few years. It's fabulous to have them there. Now it's time: To the players, the coaches and the families, please rise and show us your medal. Welcome to the Legislature. Congratulations.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): We're very proud of you.

Mr. Joseph Racinsky: I'm happy to welcome friends Simmone, Maria, Tommy and Eric. But especially I want to welcome my much better half, my biggest supporter, my wife Mikayla to the Legislature. Welcome.

M^{me} France Gélinas: RPNs are in the House today. I'd like to welcome their CEO, Dianne Martin, and their president, Lindsay Pentland, as well as many of their members. Please join them in room 228 for lunch today.

The nurse practitioners' association is also at Queen's Park. I would like to recognize their CEO, Dr. Michelle Acorn; their president, Marie Greer-King; and their president-elect, Kevin Zizzo. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Nolan Quinn: I'd like to welcome, from the University of Guelph today president, Rene Van Acker, as well as Byron Sheldrick, interim provost, and Mellissa McDonald from GR.

As well, from the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus, Warden Frank Landry and incoming CAO Jamie MacDonald. Welcome.

Hon. Vijay Thanigasalam: It's my honour to recognize Aarav Sujeevan, from Highland Creek Public School in Scarborough, who is serving as page captain today. I would like to welcome his parents, Varuniya Chandrarajah and Sujeevan Nagamuthu, who are here with us today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

1030

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: I'd like us all to welcome the Canadian Mortgage Brokers Association of Ontario and, in particular, Anna DeMarco, who's leading an entire team of mortgage brokers to speak with us and to inform us. She is the executive director.

Hon. Steve Clark: I want to welcome Corinna Smith-Gatcke, warden of the united counties of Leeds and Grenville.

I'd also like to welcome, later this morning, what is believed to be Ontario's oldest model Parliament. High school students from Athens District High School will be here. I'm looking forward to meeting with you and members of the Legislature.

Mr. Adil Shamji: This morning, I'd like to welcome the outstanding members from two spectacular organizations.

From WeRPN, I'd like to welcome the CEO, Dianne Martin; the president, Lindsay Pentland; and various other association member representatives, board members and WeRPN staff.

I'd also like to welcome the Nurse Practitioners' Association of Ontario—notably, the CEO, Dr. Michelle Acorn; the president, Marie Greer-King; and the president-elect, Kevin Zizzo.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I want to welcome the Vaughan Chamber of Commerce today, including their president, Jennifer Coletta-Rashty.

Thank you for the work you do to stand up for a strong economy.

MPP Paul Vickers: I'd like to introduce Jay Kirkland, Bill Jones and Brianna Collins from South Bruce Peninsula. They do excellent work up there, and I'm happy to welcome them to their House.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I want to take this opportunity to wish a happy Mother's Day to all the people who mother in this building.

And I want to give a special shout-out to my mother, who's watching live. Thank you, Elaine Clancy, for all you do.

MPP George Darouze: I'm pleased to welcome Mayor Mark Sutcliffe, mayor of the city of Ottawa, alongside a delegation from our great city to the chamber this morning.

This evening, we'll be celebrating and joining you to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the funding of Bytown, a major milestone for our capital and our nation.

Welcome to your House.

Mr. Dave Smith: I'd like to welcome Bonnie Clark, warden of Peterborough county.

Mr. John Jordan: I want to welcome the warden for Lanark county, Richard Kidd, respectfully known as King Richard; and the warden for Frontenac county, Bill Saunders.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: On behalf of the Minister of Health, I'd like to welcome the Registered Practical Nurses Association of Ontario, the Nurse Practitioners' Association of Ontario and especially nurse Blanche Durocher from Amherstburg.

Happy National Nursing Week.

Mrs. Michelle Cooper: I want to welcome to the House Michael Furman and the ShinShinim from Israel. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta: Happy Nursing Week in the province of Ontario.

I want to take this opportunity to thank Dianne Martin, the CEO of WeRPN, for her years of service.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Unfortunately, we are out of time.

To our guests who were not introduced, I apologize. Members will be able to come back at 1 o'clock to introduce guests.

TRAGEDY IN BROCKVILLE

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

Hon. Steve Clark: Speaker, if you seek it, you'll find unanimous consent for the House to observe a moment of silence for the three victims who senselessly lost their lives in Brockville on May 7.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The government House leader is asking for a moment of silence. Agreed? Agreed.

The House observed a moment's silence.

QUESTION PERIOD

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Marit Stiles: Eight long years ago, this government promised to end the chaos of hallway health care that

started under the Liberals. But here we are today, and the situation has only gotten worse. Patients are being treated not just in hallways, but in broom closets, storage rooms. Front-line workers are burning out. Our hospitals are collapsing.

When will this Premier admit that his government and his minister are failing on health care?

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

Hon. Sylvia Jones: First of all, let me begin by saying happy nurses' week to everyone who has joined us here in Queen's Park. There is no doubt that our nursing professionals are world class and absolutely such a critically important part of our health care system. It's been such a pleasure to lead the Ministry of Health as we not only expand the number of opportunities for nurses to be able to train, including expansions to their scope of practice, but also, of course, opportunities for new young people to explore the nursing profession.

It was, of course, under the leadership of the Ministry of Colleges and Universities where nurses were the first Learn and Stay program that we implemented in the province of Ontario, and we have 30,000 nurses training right now in the province of Ontario.

Since Premier Ford took government—I'll go on later.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: All the nice things that the Minister of Health said about nursing professionals are true, but the fact is that you are losing nurses faster than you can hire them. It is a net loss.

It is not only about recruitment, but it is also about retention, right? We have a retention problem. Nurses are burning out left and right, and there are solutions, Speaker. If the minister stopped firing nurses, we could maybe bring in, also, nurse/patient ratios—not just stop firing them, but bring in safer staffing ratios. But instead, hospitals are being told to fire staff. People are still, however, being treated in hallways. Something is not right here. How does that make any sense, Speaker?

Back to the Premier: Will the Premier listen to front-line workers and implement safe staffing ratios?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: As I've said many times in this chamber, you can have your own story, but you can't have your own facts. And the facts are that we've actually seen a 15% increase in the number of nurses that are practising in our publicly funded system. Facts matter, and I want to make sure that people across Ontario, whether they are training to become a nurse, whether they are in our hospitals, our primary care, our public health units, know that we are making more opportunities available to them.

As recently as Friday, I was at the William Osler hospital and talking to those nursing leaders—those preceptors who are training, using funding that has been provided by the province of Ontario sim labs that ensure that our nurses have the best, up-to-date, world-class training—which has been literally something that they are welcoming, they are embracing. They love the opportunity to be able to train in that interprofessional team, and

having that opportunity to see first-hand how our investments are making an impact allows me and emboldens me to continue the important work that our government is doing.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Question?

Ms. Marit Stiles: Hallways, broom closets: This is where patients are being treated in our hospitals right now, and this is where the nurses and front-line workers are being forced to treat them. This is what the government apparently considers to be acceptable health care, Speaker, and they refuse to do anything about it. Emergency rooms are overcrowded; staff are jostled between patients. Other provinces have made this a priority: Manitoba, British Columbia implemented safe staffing nurse/patient ratios.

Why is it that this government refuses to do what everyone else knows needs to be done to fix our health care system? Will you implement that now?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: As I've mentioned, a 15% increase in the number of nurses that are working within our publicly funded system; over 100,000 nurses registered since Premier Ford and our government took power in 2018; and then, I see the investments that we've made in our capital: We have 3,500 net new hospital beds in the province of Ontario since 2018. We're not done. We're continuing to expand. We actually have another 3,000 in the works being built through our capital planning program.

The innovation that happens, whether it is individual hospitals or system-wide, as we share those best practices, really are why Ontario hospitals continue to be world class across the world, and we're proud of that progress.

1040

GOVERNMENT JET

Ms. Marit Stiles: Well, Speaker, my next question is also for the Premier. Earlier this morning, the Premier released a Hail Mary video to applaud himself on all of the great things that he's doing. Here are some of the not-so-great things that he forgot to mention—

Interjections.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Yes, you can applaud all those things, but here are the things he forgot to mention: handing over billions of tax dollars to a private spa company in downtown Toronto that is apparently broke; letting people languish in emergency rooms and storage closets, trying to get health care; and, of course, he forgot to mention his \$30-million private luxury jet that he promises he returned.

Speaker, my question is very simple: Did he actually return his jet, and when?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Every day, our office sends the Premier a different investment from across the province. That's every single day—Christmas Eve, New Year's Eve—for eight years. That's over 2,000 straight days, every single day, with a new investment.

Here are a couple of facts, Speaker. Last month alone, we sent the Premier \$2.7 billion in new investment announcements—6,700 jobs just from those few announcements: Mars Canada, \$180 million across Barrie, Newmarket and Aurora—1,800 jobs; Tubi, the streaming giant, opened their Canadian office here in Toronto, \$20 million, 150 jobs; Mainfreight, a new logistics facility in Brampton—\$119 million, 120 new jobs.

Speaker, these are all companies that are choosing Ontario to invest and add to the million jobs they've already created.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, I'm very concerned. I can't understand; I asked a very simple question. We have heard lots of different things from this government and this Premier over the last few weeks. One moment, it looks like it was returned; the next moment, who knows? Nobody over there can seem to answer what should be a pretty straightforward question. I don't know how you lose track of a \$30-million private luxury jet, but if anybody could, this government could, I guess.

The Premier promised to hand over the receipts for that \$30-million shopping spree. He flip-flopped. We still have no answers. And last week, on Friday, the Premier then admitted that the return was still being finalized.

So what is it? Can the Premier come clean once again and tell us what is going on with his \$30-million jet?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: I know those questions have been asked and answered, but what hasn't been asked is about the Regional Development Program, Speaker.

To date, 180 projects, \$2.5 billion in brand new investment, have come from those regional development projects, many in opposition-held ridings. Those projects alone, just that segment has created 4,800 jobs.

Ya YA Foods, \$35 million: They reshored US production, increased capacity in their Belleville facility to meet rising demand—83 new jobs; CABN, \$14 million: a wood product manufacturer that built an inventory and processing facility in Brockville—20 new jobs; Dajcor Aluminum: \$10 million to upgrade machinery at their Chatham plant—24 new jobs; EnerQuest Technologies: \$15.8 million to reshore 61 new jobs.

Speaker, these new jobs are being created to manufacture Ontario-made products all across the province, and we're just getting started.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Well, Speaker, I hope the Premier will stand up and answer this question, because we're not getting anywhere with this minister. I mean, maybe he has lost the receipts; I don't know.

But just to go back to the Premier again, \$30 million is not loose change. It might be to him, but the people—that's their money. This Premier has wasted it, and now he can't seem to get his story straight. He said one day that he returned it, then on Friday, he said that the return was still being finalized. They don't seem to have the receipts.

They don't know when they're going to deliver the receipts.

If he has returned this private luxury jet—and I know he didn't want to; we got a whole week of the pity, pity, pity Ford frenzy—it should not be so difficult to produce the receipts.

So I would like the Premier to get up and answer this question: When are you going to release the receipts, and have you actually returned this jet?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, I know that's been asked and answered.

But to date, let's talk a little bit about the Ontario Together Trade Fund. Many of your constituents are asking for this fund and they should know that that \$150-million program has seen 73 companies commit over \$500 million in investments and created or protected over 7,500 jobs: ArcelorMittal Tailored Blanks, a \$69-million investment in Woodstock, 174 jobs; Burnco, \$8 million in Vaughan, 290 jobs; Modern Elevator, \$8 million in Burlington, 75 jobs. These are all investments that the NDP and the Liberals have voted against, Speaker. They voted against the \$150-million Ontario Together Trade Fund, with \$500 million in incoming investments. If they actually cared about these jobs, they wouldn't be voting against these investments, Speaker.

GOVERNMENT JET

Mr. John Fraser: Happy Nursing Week, by the way. Happy Nursing Week to my colleague from Nepean and all the nurses here. Thank you for what you do every day.

Interjections.

Mr. John Fraser: Come on, guys. You can do better. Let's go. Okay.

My question is to the Premier. Premier, do the people of Ontario still own your \$29.8-million luxury jet?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the Minister of Energy and Mines.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Madam Speaker, I find it fascinating that the leader of the Liberal Party today would start his question without even recognizing the newly elected candidate from Scarborough Southwest, and I wonder why—because the Liberal Party is too busy fighting themselves instead of fighting for the people of Scarborough.

Madam Speaker, it was days ago that the Liberal leader, not to be outdone by the leader of the NDP invoking Trumpian language, actually calling into question the integrity of that election. I mean, where are we in our politics where a party that suggests the government in waiting is undermining democratic legitimacy in your own nominations?

Madam Speaker, the members from Scarborough—Agincourt, Scarborough Centre and Scarborough—Rouge Park have delivered more for Scarborough—including a new subway, a new hospital, a new medical school—than your party did in 15 long years.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Question?

Mr. John Fraser: So we have a new name for the Premier's luxury private jet. We're going to call it "Chicken Air," okay?

Speaker, can the Premier just tell us, instead of pecking in his notebook there, do the people of Ontario still own the \$29-million luxury jet you bought for yourself?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Madam Speaker, we're actually going to call it "hot air" after the Liberal leader, because the truth is, you have avoided again mentioning the member from Scarborough Southwest—

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

Hon. Stephen Lecce:—and it actually speaks volumes about the lack of confidence you have in your own nomination process and election integrity.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The member for Don Valley East will come to order.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Madam Speaker, who would have thought the Liberal leader and NDP leader would be outdoing each other for invoking the language of MAGA? Deeply dysfunctional—you're not a real, credible party. You're not ready to lead.

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

Hon. Stephen Lecce: If you were, you would be able to bring a program to build subways, to build hospitals, to build medical schools, to build the first Tamil community centre in this province's history.

We are delivering for families in Scarborough every single day. I will ask the member opposite: Join us to deliver the goods for the people of this city.

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

Mr. John Fraser: The Premier bought himself a \$29.8-million luxury jet when there are 29 airports in the north, the member for Kiiwetinoong brought up last week, that need repair. But he got a private jet instead.

And now, the Premier can't tell us who owns the jet. It's a simple question: If you haven't sold it Premier, that's fine, but just tell us. Is there something wrong? Is there something you're trying to hide, Premier? Can you just simply tell us who owns the luxury private jet?

1050

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

Hon. Doug Ford: First of all, I hope everyone had a great Mother's Day—a lot of great mothers in this Legislature.

And I want to thank the nurses for the incredible job they do day in and day out, keeping our province healthy.

Madam Speaker, you heard from the great Minister of Energy. He has led the way, not just in Ontario, not just in Canada or North America, but around the world.

We have a jobs plan anchored by building nuclear energy made right here at home. Ontario is moving forward with the Bruce C project, which you heard is creating over 19,000 jobs, powering 4.8 million homes.

Ontario is also building nuclear on time, on budget, proudly advancing the first large-scale nuclear build in 30 years.

Overall, Ontario's nuclear program is going to create 150,000 good-paying jobs. Let's just remind people—

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

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. John Fraser: Speaker, back to the Premier: This luxury private jet is just a symbol of a government and a Premier that's lost their way—lost their way.

Let's talk about another thing that the Premier's trying to hide. Last week, we learned that a \$500-million lawsuit against the government brought forward by the Premier's billionaire bagman, Carmine Nigro, who's also the Premier's appointment to the chair of the LCBO, Invest Ontario and Ontario Place—there might be something else, but I couldn't find it.

That \$500-million suit for your friend, Premier, was settled, but we don't know what it was settled for.

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

Mr. John Fraser: Speaker, can the Premier tell us—or anybody over there—how much was the settlement in the \$500-million suit?

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

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: The member opposite knows well that we don't get involved in legal matters. The member knows that very well.

But what the people care about at home is about whether the train comes on time or whether the commute gets shorter or whether this government is finally building the infrastructure that previous governments talked about but never delivered.

Under this government, we're building a \$70-billion transit expansion plan that's going to help the people of Ontario get from A to B faster and more reliably.

The question the member was asking is about a legal conversation that took place between Metrolinx and the team. They came into a settlement, and the member knows well that the Premier and this government has no involvement in that matter.

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

Mr. John Fraser: That wasn't much of an answer.

The government is being sued for something called air rights. Air rights are the ability to build over something. Now, Mr. Nigro's company had a deal to buy those air rights, to buy air—a deal that was never fully consummated yet. He didn't actually pay for that air, but he sued us anyway. And he's a government appointee, a friend of the Premier and a bagman.

How is it that we can settle a \$500-million suit for air in this province for a friend of the Premier and we're not going to tell anybody about it?

Once more, Speaker, can the Premier just tell us how much the settlement was for, and maybe, if he can tell us that, why would you pay so much money for air that somebody didn't own?

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: Again, the member knows that we have no oversight in the legal process. It doesn't matter whose friend you are, but in the legal process, it is what it is.

But do you know what, Speaker? We're expanding GO service. We're protecting the Union Station rail corridor. We're building new stations. We're advancing electrification. And we're making investments needed to move hundreds of thousands of people across the region.

Do you know what, Speaker? The opposition had years to build transit and infrastructure in this province. They did absolutely nothing but sat on their hands, and now they want to complain and scream about transit that's being built across this province. We'll take no lessons from the parties that delayed, cancelled and voted against the very infrastructure that they now pretend to support.

The opposition can keep chasing conspiracies. Ontarians can judge this government on its record of getting shovels in the ground, on planning for the future, and not on who knows whom.

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

Mr. John Fraser: Undisclosed settlements for \$500-million suits to the Premier's close personal friend, luxury private jets—the Premier has lost his way.

Will the Premier do the right thing and tell us right now, how much did we pay Mr. Nigro's company for air that he didn't own?

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

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Losing your way is spending a billion dollars of taxpayer money to save a few seats to cancel a gas plant.

Losing your way is increasing hydro prices by 400% on fixed-income pensioners who literally were driven to energy poverty.

Losing your way was increasing taxes to the highest levels in the history of Ontario.

You are so out of touch. The Liberal elitism—their only North Star is holding power.

Our government has been focused on cutting taxes, on reducing fees, on increasing the quality of life of people. I ask the Liberal Party today: Stand up and accept responsibility for the billion dollars you owe the people of Ontario from when you were responsible for 15 years in government.

YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is to the Premier. Ontario's youth unemployment rate has reached over 17% this year; the highest level in over a decade outside of the pandemic. Nearly one in five teens are struggling to find work.

This is not a recipe for a strong economy; it is a red flag. One student noted this morning, “I want to contribute to a province that has given me so much, yet doors keep closing in my face.” Youth unemployment is approaching a boiling point, while this government has cut \$40 million in job-creation funding in the budget.

Why has the Premier prioritized his gravy plane over a youth jobs plan?

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

Hon. David Piccini: Let’s talk about jobs. Let’s talk about the 42,000-plus jobs that were created in the province of Ontario. And I know the NDP don’t like to talk about this, because their jobs plan is anchored in dependency on government, but this was 39,000 private sector jobs created. Do you know how you do that? You do that by lowering taxes for small business, creating the climate for job creation. You do that by building infrastructure.

They’re against public transit because it might cut down a few trees. They’re against manufacturing. They’re against building mines in the north. They voted against our plan—anchored in self-reliance, anchored in energy independence so that we can create nuclear energy. In fact, we know that they’d give them pink slips. They would’ve sent those workers home.

We’re building a stronger Ontario, anchored in independence and self-reliance.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: We need a Skills Development Fund that actually worked and had some transparency on who got some money. That’s what we need here.

After eight years of this government, young Ontarians are continuing to fall behind. If you talk to someone outside of this place, you would learn that.

In communities like Scarborough, young people are doing everything right: They’re finishing school, they’re applying for jobs, they’re upgrading skills, yet they still cannot find work. Scarborough has reported youth unemployment rates as high as 19%; the highest in the province. Organizations like East Scarborough Works and the YMCA Scarborough hub are doing the good work in connecting local youth to jobs, but they cannot do the heavy lifting alone.

Why is this government not addressing the youth unemployment crisis? You have the power to do it. You have the majority to do it. Why are you not doing your job to help youth unemployment in this province?

Hon. David Piccini: Again, the NDP don’t have a jobs plan; they have a grievance plan. They want to tell everyone who to blame. Ours is anchored in self-reliance. Ours is anchored in 39,000 private sector jobs.

In fact, let’s look at our numbers compared to the entire United States: We created 641% more jobs—the conditions for more jobs than the entire US combined. That’s what happens when you build new med schools in Scarborough, when you fund things through SDF capital that is training the next generation of doctors in Scarbor-

ough. We’re building infrastructure—when you have a public transit plan that actually brings public transit to Scarborough.

They don’t want to support any of that. We know the NDP’s socialist plan, and that’s to create dependency on government. Our plan is to unlock our critical minerals, unlock the incredible potential that private sector can create jobs in this province. They oppose each and every measure we take to do that.

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GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

MPP Andrea Hazell: My question is to the Premier. While young people across Ontario, and especially all across Scarborough, are struggling with one of the worst unemployment rates in the country, this government is busy making private deals for the Premier’s personal friends. We have learned that Metrolinx has settled a massive expropriation dispute, over \$500 million, with a company co-owned by his friend Carmine Nigro—again, a close friend of the Premier.

It gets worse. Last Thursday, I tabled a motion in committee to invite the president and CEO of Metrolinx to answer questions about the circumstances of the settlement. But this government voted it down, calling it a “fishing expedition.”

Through you, Madam Speaker, will the Premier tell the taxpayers of Ontario exactly how much of their hard-earned money was paid to his friend’s company for air rights that they never actually owned?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I will remind—talk across the floor is not permitted in the chamber.

I recognize the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

Hon. Vijay Thanigasalam: Madam Speaker, under Liberals, Scarborough used to be the forgotten part of the city of Toronto—no infrastructure, no hospital infrastructure, no medical school.

This government, under the leadership of Premier Ford—after 30 years of inaction, after 15 years of doing nothing from Liberals, we are building the Scarborough subway extension, going with three new stations.

You can go into Scarborough and ask all three hospitals. Liberals did not invest into infrastructure for health. But this minister and this Premier—a brand new Birchmount hospital and redevelopment of Centenary emergency hospital is happening right now.

We are building the first ever medical school in Scarborough. The last time a medical school was built in Toronto was 1843.

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

MPP Andrea Hazell: I work with the Love, Scarborough campaign. Scarborough hospitals are good because the Love, Scarborough campaign has raised millions of dollars. It’s not the government funding that bailed the hospitals in Scarborough out.

The Minister of Transportation calls the deal a private process. Let me give the government a lesson: Taxpayer dollars are not private funds; it's not the government's slush funds. They owe it to the people of Ontario to tell the people of Ontario every time they make a private settlement with their friends for over \$500 million.

Madam Speaker, Metrolinx has the worst track record. They are known for mismanagement of all of the taxpayers' financial budget. All their expansion projects are delayed and over-budgeted. Metrolinx spent \$325 million on a settlement for the grossly mismanaged and delayed Eglinton Crosstown—\$88 million on the crosstown project. So again—

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

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Order.
Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The member for Beaches—East York will come to order.

I recognize the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

Hon. Vijay Thanigasalam: Madam Speaker, if the Liberals and NDP love Scarborough so much, they would have voted for the new subway in Scarborough. They said no. They would have voted for a new medical school in Scarborough. They said no. They would have voted for a new diagnostic unit. They would have voted yes for at least the new—

Interjections.

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

I will remind members, we do not talk across the floor.
Back to the associate minister.

Hon. Vijay Thanigasalam: Under this government, Madam Speaker: new diagnostic units, which never happened under their leadership; new dialysis units—never happened.

Scarborough is thriving and Scarborough is back on the map because this Premier is making sure he's investing in Scarborough. Madam Speaker, Scarborough is thriving.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Ms. Laura Smith: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade.

Since taking office, our government has been laser-focused on making Ontario the best place to invest, create jobs and grow a business. Through competitive business conditions, a low-tax environment and strategic investments across key sectors, we are building an economy that is resilient, competitive and open for growth. We are diversifying our trade, attracting new investments and helping businesses choose Ontario to grow, resulting in more good-paying jobs for our workers.

Speaker, could the minister please provide us with more details on the conditions our government has created to support the growth of good-paying jobs for workers across this province?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: StatsCan has released April's job numbers on Friday, and Ontario led the nation with 42,400 jobs created in the province. Every single one of those jobs was in the private sector, including the manufacturing sector, where we saw 8,700 new jobs in that sector alone.

Ontario businesses are showcasing their resilience—all of this in the middle of a trade war with the United States.

But, Speaker, we continue to fight back. We've cut the cost of doing business by \$12 billion every year and our government has never once raised a tax. You find me one other government around the world that can say, in eight years, no new taxes whatsoever. As a result, businesses have created one million jobs here in the province of Ontario.

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

Ms. Laura Smith: I want to thank the minister for his response and the solid work he does within his portfolio.

We know that a competitive business condition is only one part of the puzzle. As countries around the world look for reliable partners, Ontario has been made a stable and predictable jurisdiction they can count on with world-class talent, diverse economies and a business-friendly environment.

Companies can often make 10- or 15-year investment decisions, and they need confidence. They need to know they're putting their capital in the right place. Ontario is that right place, and we are already seeing the results, with companies choosing Ontario for investments in AI, advanced manufacturing and in the life sciences.

Speaker, can the minister please speak to some of the tangible outcomes that have resulted through the trade missions?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: We looked back, last week, at the job numbers that came out around the world. The United States created 115,000 jobs in a population of 350 million people. Ontario created 42,400 jobs; that's 641% over the United States. That's because of the resilience of our manufacturing sector. That's because of us lowering taxes, lowering the cost of doing business and diversifying our trade.

Think about the 30 missions that we were on last year. Think about Austria, when Element5 and Hasslacher came here and built a \$107-million plant, put 150 people to work. In Sweden, Sandvik came here into Sudbury, built an \$85-million plant: 60 new jobs. France, Massilly—another \$85-million plant: 50 new jobs; 228 jobs protected. That's the resilience of the Ontario economy.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

MPP Catherine McKenney: StatsCan just confirmed what young people in Ontario already know: that the dream of home ownership is slipping away from an entire generation.

Ontarians have always believed that if you worked hard and played by the rules, you could afford a home and a stable future. But for young people today, that is not their reality.

This Premier promised 1.5 million homes. Instead, he handed out greenbelt land to his friends, he gutted planning protections and cut tenant rights. The result is a generation locked out.

So my question, Speaker, to the Premier: When will he admit that his housing plan has failed, and bring forward a real plan to build the affordable homes that young families actually need?

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

Hon. Rob Flack: I really appreciate the question, because I'm going to enjoy answering it.

Housing starts are up in this province. The plan is working, Madam Speaker. We talked about rent: Costs are coming down. Housing starts are up. The HST has been a game-changer. That is part of the plan.

1110

Our DC reduction plan is going to work. We have seen more new sales in the last 30 days than we have in the last number of years. Why? Because these plans are working, Speaker. Housing starts are up year over year. Rental starts are up year over year. In fact, for young people, there were 54,000 new rental starts in the last five years, a 50-year record—24,000 year over year.

The plan is working, and so we are proud of our plan. We're going to be consistent in implementing that plan. It's working. Game on.

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

MPP Catherine McKenney: Speaker, now this minister is telling young families that this time, they are solving the housing crisis. Well, tell that to the 30-year-old sleeping in their childhood bedroom, and tell that to the young couple who put off having kids because they can't afford a second bedroom.

StatsCan, Speaker, didn't release a polling number; they released a generational verdict, and it is damning. The government had every tool at its disposal: gentle-density housing, public land, federal dollars, a mandate. Instead, they subsidized developers, bailed out condo speculators and called it a housing plan. Ontario's millennials are not failing to launch; this Premier is failing them.

Speaker, will this minister and Premier finally admit that after eight long years, they continue to fail in making housing affordable in this province?

Hon. Rob Flack: What I will admit is that the plan is working, Speaker. We have had a housing crisis of the likes we've never seen in the history of this province or this country—that, we acknowledge. But you know what you do when you have a problem, when you have a crisis? You put a plan together that's going to work, and our plan is working.

Again, the Premier and the Minister of Finance and I announced an HST reduction across the board for all new starts. The plan is working. We've announced \$8.8 billion over 10 years to support our municipal partners to reduce the cost of development charges and infrastructure on the ground.

The plan is working. It's about affordability, and that is what's on the menu. Speaker, look at our rental starts: up historically. As I said, I don't think they're listening.

You know what, Speaker? The NDP voted against every one of these measures—every one of them. The plan is working. We will continue. Get on board.

GRADUATION CEREMONIES

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Good morning. We are heading into that crazy time of year: school graduation time. We've all probably attended many where we saw our local MPPs addressing the students, congratulating them, wishing them well in their futures. It's a really special time of year.

But now, Ontarians are learning that school boards have been told to stop inviting local MPPs to school graduations. This is an age-old tradition, where MPPs from all parties have attended grads for years to celebrate students, the families, the educators. This is not political at all.

In fact, the only people making graduations political are this government. This government is so obsessed with controlling every room and every microphone that they're now targeting school graduations. It's ridiculous. Democracies don't function by shutting electoral representatives out.

To the education minister: Will you admit this is wrong and reverse this direction immediately?

Hon. Paul Calandra: The only thing that's wrong is the question from the member opposite, frankly, Madam Speaker. There's no such directive that says MPPs or elected government officials can't go to graduation ceremonies, but there is a directive to say to all of those planning graduation ceremonies that they should focus on student achievement, focus on the kids that are graduating, focus on the great things that they have done, focus on the teachers that have helped those kids succeed.

If the member opposite isn't getting invitations to graduations, I can't comment on that. I know a lot of members on this side and some members over there are indeed getting invitations to them. While I'm up, I'll be attending my daughter's. She's graduating this year, Madam Speaker.

I will say as a parent, I didn't often like hearing politicians at graduations. They were often in hot gymnasiums. I always thought they went on a little bit too long, the politicians, but there is absolutely no such directive.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the member for Toronto—St. Paul's.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Well, I understand a certain MPP told us that they're not there to speak whatsoever, but the focus is now strictly on curriculum and operational school priorities. I don't know if that means it's fixing schools or class sizes; it seems to be a focus on whether we're talking there.

We are seeing attempts now to block elected MPPs from speaking at graduations in their own communities. Graduation ceremonies are not partisan events; they are about celebrating students and their futures. This

government doesn't own public institutions. It does not get to decide which democratically elected representatives are welcome in community spaces.

Speaker, will the minister stop this censorship, respect democratic traditions and allow MPPs to continue speaking at graduations as they have?

Hon. Paul Calandra: I don't know what to tell you. There is no order that says MPPs can't go to graduation ceremonies. I suspect if members aren't getting invited to graduation ceremonies, it's because the schools don't want them there. That's it. It's members on all sides, quite frankly.

I have never been invited to a graduation ceremony in the York Region District School Board or the York region Catholic school board because they didn't want politicians at the ceremonies. They wanted to focus on student achievement—

Interjection.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I'm going this year because my daughter's graduating.

There is no order. What the order is, Madam Speaker, is to make sure that graduation ceremonies focus on what is important: student achievement. If the member opposite is incapable of going to a graduation ceremony and not making it about the student and their achievement and the parents and the teachers, then I suspect that's why the schools don't want that member to be at a graduation ceremony.

Colleagues, if you can focus on students, if you can focus on teachers, focus on student achievement, I allow you to go to graduation ceremonies if it will make you feel better—but don't go unless you're invited.

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Mr. Lorne Coe: My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness. Ontario's agri-food sector is a major economic driver, contributing \$52 billion to our gross domestic product and supporting one in nine jobs across our province. Speaker, at a time of trade disruptions and global uncertainty, continued investment in research and innovation is more important than ever to keep our farmers and food processors competitive.

That's why our government is taking action through the Ontario Agri-Food Innovation Alliance agreement. We're strengthening the partnership between government, food producers and our world-class research institutions to ensure the success and competitiveness of our agri-food sector. Can the minister please share with the House how these investments are helping to protect and grow Ontario's agri-food sector?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): A reminder that if you're speaking in the chamber, you are standing.

I recognize the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness.

Hon. Trevor Jones: Thank you, Madam Speaker; I'm standing. I'm standing to thank the member from Whitby for that important question and for always highlighting the importance of research in Ontario's agri-food sector.

Madam Speaker, the member for Whitby was right. In 2023, our government renewed a \$350-million 5-year investment between our government, the University of Guelph, Agricultural Research and Innovation Ontario and industry. The return of that investment—I think the Minister of Finance would like this number: That \$350-million return yielded \$1.5 billion in real advancements both in food safety, veterinarian sciences, agribusiness excellence and new technologies to help farmers and processors be more efficient and more profitable.

By supporting made-in-Ontario research, we're ensuring the province remains a global leader in safe food production.

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

Mr. Lorne Coe: Back to the minister: It's encouraging to hear about how our government is strengthening Ontario's agri-food sector through strategic investments in research and innovation.

Speaker, farmers and agri-food businesses continue to face real challenges from global trade disruptions and unpredictable weather conditions. These risks impact not only individual farm operations but the strength and stability of Ontario's entire food supply chain. Our government must ensure we're supporting our farmers and helping to remain competitive, while strengthening long-term food security and economic resilience across our province.

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Speaker, can the minister tell us how our government is working to protect the livelihoods of Ontario's hard-working farmers?

Hon. Trevor Jones: That's precisely why our government increased our Business Risk Management Program from \$150 million to \$250 million annually. This substantial investment helps protect directly 383,000 jobs and supports \$24 billion in economic activity across the supply chain.

Madam Speaker, we're also protecting the future of Ontario's food and farming sectors by introducing the Protecting Ontario's Food Independence Act. This legislation, if passed, will help protect our food producers from global trade disruptions, and I encourage all members of this of this House to support this legislation because by working together, we can improve life.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: My question is to the Premier. After years of pressure from Ontario's NDP, this government finally copied our motions and bill to protect consumers by banning the resale of tickets above face value, but a law without enforcement is just a press release.

Click on StubHub today and you can find resale Blue Jays tickets listed for more than five times the original face value. This is exactly what the Premier claimed that he had banned. With the FIFA World Cup starting in one month, will this government put fans first and explain how many

enforcement officers have been hired and how many charges have been laid since the new law was passed?

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

Hon. Stephen Crawford: I find it ironic that the member opposite asks about the Ticket Sales Act when you voted against that very budget that had that in that. You have not been supporting consumers—Speaker, the opposition has not been supporting consumers; it has been against supporting consumers. They voted against the budget. This was a key part of that budget.

Speaker, what I can say is that we have hundreds of people working in the consumer protection division of our ministry, and we are in contact with all companies. Letters have been sent to all companies. We've been in discussions with every organization that is a reseller of tickets, and we will be continuing discussions with them and will be further enhancing enforcement in the very near future, if not in compliance.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member for Humber River–Black Creek.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I have never seen a government move so fast to enact legislation as they did to ban freedom-of-information requests. No sooner had that vote passed than their shredders roared into action, bursting into flame from overuse. But to enact a ban on ticket resale over face value, it's just business as usual for the ticket gougers who are breaking this new law and selling tickets for five to 10 times above the original price.

Speaker, this law is failing because this government simply refuses to enforce it. The clock is ticking. When will this government take real action and finally enforce the ban on this ticket resale rip-off?

Hon. Stephen Crawford: Again, I want to reiterate that the opposition voted against this, but that's neither here nor there. What we are doing, and as I mentioned in my first question, is that letters have been sent to organizations which are overcharging. They will be in compliance imminently, or there will be charges laid. Let me say that.

What I do want to say, as well, to the people of Ontario is what we are doing, whether it's with respect to affordability or economic growth, Speaker, 8,700 new manufacturing jobs were created in Ontario in the month of April. That's a 680% increase above the United States per capita. What we are focused on is protecting consumers and building an economic manufacturing base that supports Ontarians for generations to come.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Stephen Blais: My question is for the Premier. I first raised the issue of abusive and harassing behaviour by municipal politicians at the end of 2020, following heinous behaviour in Ottawa. I've introduced the Stopping Harassment and Abuse by Local Leaders Act over and over again. This government voted for those ideas and then let

them die on the order paper. Then they voted against them. Then they recycled them into Bill 9.

And now, Madam Speaker, more delay, more stalling, more waiting. It has been more than a year since the government introduced Bill 9, and victims, municipal staff and councillors across Ontario are still waiting for the protections they needed years ago.

Why does this government move faster to protect its own secrets than it does to protect people from harassment and abuse at city hall?

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

Hon. Rob Flack: Speaker, let me be clear: Nobody should tolerate workplace harassment, whether you're elected or not. Having a unified code of conduct across the province is better for everyone, especially in the municipal arena.

Our government is committed to passing Bill 9, the Municipal Accountability Act, before the end of the session. I know the member opposite has been persistent in trying to get this bill passed and working through committee etc., etc., and I hope we can achieve all-party support and pass this legislation.

The supplemental, the government House leader will handle.

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

Mr. Stephen Blais: Madam Speaker, the contrast could not be clearer: When it came time to change freedom-of-information laws to shield political records from the public, this government moved at lightning speed. But when it comes to removing toxic councillors, protecting municipal workers and stopping harassment and intimidation, suddenly the government says government is slow. Bill 9 has dragged for more than a year. The secrecy bill was rushed through in weeks.

My question is simple: Why is protecting government secrecy more urgent to the Premier than protecting people from harassment and abuse at city hall?

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

Hon. Steve Clark: Speaker, through you to the member, I just don't know who I'm looking at. You complain things move too fast. You complain things move too slow.

Speaker, through you, we've got three weeks left in the session. The minister stood in his place and said there's a priority. By June 4, we will ensure that the bill moves through the process. It's gone through committee hearings.

The minister confirmed that we were going to take our time with this bill, we were going to study it, there's been committee. It's now reported back to the House through the committee, and I can say, depending on co-operation from the Legislature, that in three weeks we have lots of time to make sure that third reading can be given to Bill 9.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The Minister of Education and the member for Orléans will refrain from talking across the floor.

I recognize the member for Peterborough–Kawartha.

INDIGENOUS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Dave Smith: My question is for the Minister of Indigenous Affairs and First Nations Economic Reconciliation. Across northern Ontario, we're seeing a new kind of momentum take shape, one built through infrastructure, partnerships and First Nations leadership.

Speaker, the Ring of Fire represents one of the most significant economic opportunities of our time. And under the leadership of our Premier, our government is seizing this opportunity. We know that unlocking the Ring of Fire depends on building the right infrastructure, from roads and energy to, above all else, ensuring First Nations are full partners at every stage of the process.

Through you, Speaker, can the minister please update the House on how our government is laying the foundation for real progress on the Ring of Fire and helping move projects forward?

Hon. Greg Rickford: I want to thank the member from Peterborough–Kawartha for the question.

Roads, power and First Nations partnerships characterize all of the activities that are going on in northern Ontario. Take, for example, the Greenstone electricity transmission line: 7,000 jobs anticipated, seven First Nations communities with 50% equity position in that; the Red Lake transmission line, supporting 5,800 jobs for Evolution Mining, Kinross Gold, Frontier Lithium and for Ear Falls and Red Lake to have stronger, better sources of electricity. The Webeque supply road, the Marten Falls access road, the Anaconda and Painter Lake Road upgrades are anticipated several years in advance.

Madam Speaker, the bottom line is we're building roads, strengthening the grid, connecting communities, protecting Ontario's economy, and First Nations are front row centre in the ownership of all of these projects.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member for Peterborough–Kawartha.

Mr. Dave Smith: Thank you to the minister for that. And 7,000 jobs and 50% Indigenous ownership on one project alone—it is so encouraging to hear these major infrastructure projects are moving forward, and they're moving forward in partnership with Indigenous communities.

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But we know the opportunities in the Ring of Fire go beyond roads and transmission lines. Across the north, First Nation communities and Indigenous-owned businesses are building the partnerships, commercial projects and workforce capacity that will allow communities to benefit directly from the development. This is exactly the kind of economic reconciliation our government has been talking about—not simply participation, but ownership, leadership and long-term prosperity.

Speaker, can the minister explain how we're developing the workforce to build the Ring of Fire and how recent Indigenous-led business partnerships are leading the next phase of economic growth?

Hon. Greg Rickford: The member is right. There are so many First Nations-owned and -operated companies that are going to be involved, either wholly or as partners in many projects across northern Ontario, including the Ring of Fire.

Take, for example, in the Greenstone area, a First Nations-owned and -operated forestry and training company will be building a 7,000-square-foot training and business capacity facility, supporting employment, training and business skills; Garden River First Nation and Neoen partnership—50% equity partnership to build Ontario's largest solar firm; Atikameksheng Anishnawbek is doing drilling services across projects throughout northern Ontario; and there are many others.

The bottom line is that this is real training, real ownership and real business. That's what they have in common. What they also have in common, sadly, is the NDP have voted against that. That's right, Madam Speaker, they're not doing prosperity—wait, eight years into this, I get what “NDP” stands for.

We'll stand for prosperity in First Nations—

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

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Chris Glover: To the Premier: It was a bad week for Therme Canada last week. It was revealed that not only did they lie about having a partnership with the Canadian construction company Aecon when no such partnership existed, but they also lost a lawsuit over their trademark because their name, Therme, is too close to the Canadian company Thermea.

Why does the Premier continue to give our tax dollars to this company that has been lying to the people of Ontario?

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

Hon. Stan Cho: Speaker, why does the NDP look for every and any reason not to develop the most iconic waterfront in the entire country? This thing was sinking into Lake Ontario for the better part of two years, and they sat there supporting the Liberals. What they said: “Forget Ontario Place. We don't need it.”

Well, guess what, Speaker? I have fond childhood memories of going to Ontario Place, and that party opposite has robbed an entire generation—from the young people sitting up top—of those exact memories.

Speaker, this government thinks very differently. We're going to build this thing. We're going to attract six million visitors a year to that waterfront. We're going to redevelop the science centre. We're going to introduce the largest green space in the downtown core to this entire area. We're going to make it a hub for tourism and we're going to create jobs along the way. They're not going to stand in our way.

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

Mr. Chris Glover: The minister asked: Why does the NDP look for any reason not to continue the contract with Therme? Lying, fraud, lying about their financials, claiming that they own six spas in Europe when they only owned one: Are those not reasons to cancel the deal?

How can you have any confidence in this contract with Therme when they have been lying to the people of Ontario? What is in this for the government of Ontario? Why are you continuing to hand our tax dollars and our public parkland over to a company that lied to the people?

Hon. Stan Cho: No matter where we go to in this great province, or travelling abroad, people are supportive of this redevelopment because they understand what an iconic waterfront this is.

Now, talk about losing sight of the forest for the trees, Speaker. This is a party that has been focused, on the last couple of weeks, on political dysfunction in Scarborough. It's no wonder they're losing members. In fact, when you lose them, Doly Begum—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Order.

Hon. Stan Cho: —to stay.

The reality is, we are building something iconic for generations to enjoy. We are investing into millions of jobs—a GDP of \$185 million, bringing this thing back to where it should have been: its true glory. Generations will enjoy Ontario Place, and guess what, Speaker? They're going to be first in line to come and visit the attractions.

HOUSE SITTINGS

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

Hon. Steve Clark: I just want to advise the House that the night sitting scheduled for this evening has been cancelled.

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

The House recessed from 1135 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

MPP Tyler Watt: It is my pleasure to welcome Michelle Acorn, Marie Greer-King and Kevin Zizzo representing the Nurse Practitioners' Association of Ontario. Happy nurses' appreciation week, and welcome to your House.

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: Earlier this morning, I was delighted to welcome here to the Legislature Mark Baxter, the president of the Police Association of Ontario; as well as David Sabatini, the president of the Ontario Provincial Police Association; and also chief Mark Campbell, the chief of Strathroy-Caradoc and the president of the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police. I was delighted that they were able to join us today.

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: It's a pleasure to welcome CAO Adam Goheen from Prince Edward county and the mayor

of Prince Edward county, Steve Ferguson. Thank you so much for coming, and welcome to your House.

Hon. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to welcome my friends today Doug DeRabbie and his son Jack DeRabbie, who I haven't seen in a long while, and he's grown up extremely tall. Welcome to the Legislature.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON HERITAGE, INFRASTRUCTURE AND CULTURAL POLICY

MPP Tyler Watt: Speaker, I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Julia Douglas): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 98, An Act to enact the Fare Alignment and Seamless Transit Act, 2026 and to amend various Acts / Loi édictant la Loi de 2026 sur l'harmonisation des tarifs et l'intégration des transports en commun et modifiant diverses lois. »

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Pursuant to the order of the House dated April 21, 2026, the bill is ordered for third reading.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ACCESS (ASSISTANCE FOR CARE, COMMUTING AND ESSENTIAL SPECIALIZED SERVICES) ACT, 2026

LOI «ACCESS» DE 2026 (AIDE AU TITRE DES SOINS, DES DÉPLACEMENTS ET DES SERVICES SPÉCIALISÉS ESSENTIELS)

MPP Gretzky moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 117, An Act to enact the Access (Assistance for Care, Commuting and Essential Specialized Services) Act, 2026 / Projet de loi 117, Loi édictant la Loi «Access» de 2026 (aide au titre des soins, des déplacements et des services spécialisés essentiels).

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

First reading agreed to.

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

MPP Lisa Gretzky: I want to thank my co-sponsors from my caucus, the member for Nickel Belt, the member for Hamilton Centre and the member for Ottawa Centre, for co-sponsoring this bill.

The bill enacts the Access or Assistance for Care Commuting and Essential Specialized Services Act, 2026. The bill requires the Minister of Health to examine establishing a grant program for the purpose of defraying the travel-related expenses of eligible Ontarians seeking access to necessary medical specialist services or procedures that are not available in their local communities. The minister is required to table a report in the assembly about that examination. The report is to describe the steps the minister will undertake to ensure the grant program is fully funded within the timeline that is set out in this bill.

PETITIONS

HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I have a petition entitled “Stop Privatization and Support Staffing Ratios.” I would say that this is particularly poignant given that it is Nursing Week here in Ontario.

I’m tabling the following petitions—and they come from ONA—because the petition recognizes the extreme pressure that our nurses are under in Ontario. It calls on the government to mandate safe staffing ratios for nurses and health care professionals across the health care system.

Currently, we know that understaffing—working short, as we hear in the sector—leads to burnout and unsafe working conditions. We’re seeing nurses and health care workers leave the sector, and this understaffing is a particularly important solution. If we were able to come up with safe staffing ratios—we know it’s a proven solution—this would be one way, in fact, that we could help to improve the conditions for our nurses and patients in Ontario.

I am proud to add my name to this petition. It was signed by many Hamiltonians, including the folks at Extencare and Idlewyld Manor right in Hamilton. I’m going to pass this petition to page Juliana to take it to the table.

CHILD PROTECTION

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I’m here to submit and speak to a petition organized by the Stop Medical Kidnapping Advocacy Association.

In the fall, I met with several families who had had their children mistakenly apprehended because they were accused of abuse. In reality, their children faced diseases that looked like abuse, but they were really health conditions that were misdiagnosed. They don’t want this to happen to any other family. Some of these families were without their infant children for years and spent thousands and thousands of dollars trying to get their custody back of their children for false accusations.

What they’re asking for is that we put up guardrails in place, ensure that they can access a second opinion that’s not meddled with and that there be proper verification and certification for people who are making these diagnoses.

My heart goes out to all the families whose children were mistakenly apprehended, and I support this petition to ensure that we have more checks and balances in place so that no family has to go through this ever again.

I support this petition. I will affix my signature and give it to page Hitarth.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

MPP Alexa Gilmour: Speaker, it’s always an honour to rise on behalf of the people of Parkdale–High Park, who collected this petition called “Act Now to End Gender-Based Violence.” In light of the ongoing epidemic in our province, the three lives lost in Brockville, it is urgent that the government act.

What this petition does is it asks that the government enact the Ontario opposition plan to combat gender-based violence by investing in social infrastructure that bolsters women’s economic security and improves the very services that they depend on.

It is my honour to sign this petition to also ask that we invest in social services, child care, the care economy and the women of this province.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I want to give a shout-out to Ms. Palmer, who continues her work to increase social assistance rates.

This petition calls for an increase because \$733 for individuals on Ontario Works and \$1,408 for folks on ODSP is inadequate. People do not have enough for roof and food, so we end up sending people to jail, quite frankly, or they end up quite sick. We know, through the basic income pilot, that when people have adequate amounts of money to pay for roof and food, they have better employment outcomes and better health outcomes.

Thank you to Ms. Palmer for your ongoing advocacy to eradicate legislated poverty in the province of Ontario.

I support this petition, and I will pass it to page Sienna.

AIDE SOCIALE

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Cette pétition dit à Ford de doubler les taux d’aide sociale.

« Alors que l’inflation est au plus haut depuis 40 ans et les personnes à revenu fixe sont obligées de faire des sacrifices chaque jour juste pour survivre...;

« Par conséquent, » les soussignés demandent « à l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario de doubler immédiatement les taux d’aide sociale, afin que les gens puissent vivre dignement et en bonne santé. »

I fully agree with this and will give this to Juliana.

1310

HEALTH CARE WORKERS

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: I’m very proud to rise in this House to present this petition. These signatures were collected by the Ontario Nurses’ Association. The petition is entitled “Stop Privatization and Support Staffing Ratios.”

They call on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to recognize the negative impacts that the quality of our public health care system is experiencing, largely due to understaffing and underfunding. This has led to a large call-out around burnout for health care professionals and nurses.

The undersigned petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to do the following: Mandate staffing ratios for nurses and health care professionals across the Ontario health care system, develop staffing ratios in consultation with nurses and health care professionals through their unions, and use health care funding that Ontarians need so that they can access the care that they deserve within the public system, rather than privatizing health care through outsourcing services to private, for-profit corporations.

I'm very proud to sign this petition and to return this to the table with page Hitarth.

LABORATORY SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Véronique Roy from Chelmsford in my riding for this petition. We are at thousands and thousands of names that are asking to keep medical lab testing in the north.

LifeLabs, an American for-profit company, owns LifeLabs. They are the biggest provider of community lab services, including for all of the northeast. What happened is that they have decided that they want to put profit ahead of care. To make more money, they will close their lab facility in Sudbury and move that work to Toronto.

The problem is that we are already starting to see delays. Delay means that your appointment with your specialist has to be rebooked. Delay means that your oncology treatment that you were supposed to get is not taking place because the result has not arrived. This is not acceptable.

We have many small hospitals in northern Ontario who would love nothing more than to provide community-based lab services, where they would do the collection of the samples, they would bring them to the hospital, and the hospital would do the analysis. But if they do this, they don't get paid. If an American, for-profit company does the exact same thing—they do the collection in the community, they transport it, and they do the analysis—they get paid.

This does not work for northern Ontario. This is not the Captain Canada that we've heard. We want things to change. We want the samples to be analyzed in northern Ontario, and we want the small northern hospitals to be allowed to bill. Even if they bill less than what this American company gets, they would do the work. This has to change.

Thousands of people have signed this petition, which I fully support. I will add my name to it and ask page Tej to bring it to the Clerk.

HEALTH CARE WORKERS

MPP Robin Lennox: I'm rising today on behalf of the residents of Hamilton Centre, particularly the workers at

Hamilton Health Sciences who presented this petition to stop privatization and support staffing ratios.

We know that the number of nurses to patients is not only something that improves staff retention and recruitment but it also saves our patients' lives. We know that there's a devastating impact on patient care when we don't have enough trained staff at the bedside.

And so it's my pleasure to add my name to this petition and to send it down with our page Sienna.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I want to thank members and supporters of OSSTF District 11 in London who collected signatures for a petition calling on this Legislature to end the use of the "notwithstanding" clause in labour disputes.

We know that when governments employ the "notwithstanding" clause to impose collective agreements, this is a direct attack on the fundamental labour rights and democratic rights of workers in Canada. And we've seen this happen both in Ontario and in another Canadian province, in Alberta.

We saw the government invoke the use of the "notwithstanding" clause to impose a contract on education workers and also to restrict political advocacy by unions.

And then, most recently, we have seen Alberta invoke section 33 of the charter, the "notwithstanding" clause, to forcibly end a teachers' strike.

The petitioners are calling on the Legislative Assembly to prohibit the use of the "notwithstanding" clause because of the attack that it represents on workers' rights to fair and free collective bargaining.

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

HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Mr. Chris Glover: It's my honour to read this petition from the Ontario Nurses' Association, and it's entitled "Stop Privatization and Support Staffing Ratios." It's a call-out to the people of Ontario and for this Legislature to stand up and fix our public health care system before it gets completely destroyed by this government.

They're talking about the importance of understaffing and how that's negatively impacting the quality of public health care. It's causing burnout among the staff and the hospitals.

The government, instead of investing money into our hospitals directly, is diverting the money, our tax dollars, into private, for-profit corporations that provide nurses at an inflated rate. They're wasting a billion dollars a year on these private, for-profit corporations, many of which are owned by Conservative donors and friends, and even former Conservative MPPs.

So they're asking the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to mandate staffing ratios and to stop the privatization of health care.

I fully support this petition. I'll affix my signature and pass it to page Evalyn to take to the table.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

MPP Catherine McKenney: I'm tabling the following petition called "Bring Back Rent Control." This petition calls on the Ontario government to immediately introduce real rent control so that it applies to the rental unit and not just the tenancy. Vacancy control would remove the incentive of bad-faith evictions and renovations that squeeze out existing tenants so that the next tenant can be charged a much higher rate.

At a time when rents have never been higher, I'm very proud to support this petition, because every Ontarian deserves a stable and affordable place to call home. I will be affixing my signature to it and handing it to page Sienna.

HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Meegwetch.

Remarks in Anishiniimowin. This report will be republished to add the transcribed remarks once available.

I have a petition here to stop privatization and support staffing ratios, from the Ontario Nurses' Association. The petition asks the Ontario government to mandate safe staffing ratios for nurses and health care professionals.

Remarks in Anishiniimowin. This report will be republished to add the transcribed remarks once available.

Which would address the dangerous levels of understaffing in the Ontario health care system.

With the support of over 179 people from ONA Local 2 in Algoma-Manitoulin, it calls for staffing ratios to be developed in consultation with nurses and health care professionals.

I support this petition. I will sign the petition and pass it on to Devin.

Meegwetch.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Jim Loiselle from Gogama in my riding for these petitions. They're called "ServiceOntario in Gogama."

The residents of Gogama and the surrounding communities—we're talking about Biscotasing, Westree, Shining Tree and Mattagami First Nation—do not have access to essential government services.

1320

There is a ServiceOntario kiosk that is willing and able to welcome ServiceOntario to come to their community, but they come very sporadically. They came about three months ago. But the residents would like ServiceOntario to come on a regular basis, even if it's only once or twice a month. But you can plan, you can get your driver's licence renewed, you can get your health card renewed. You can get the services of ServiceOntario on a regular basis so that they don't have to travel.

Right now, to go from Bisco or Shining Tree to Sudbury, it's a good two-and-a-half-hour drive if Highway 144 is open. It's really difficult. It's a service that should be available to every Ontarian, especially northern Ontarians. We have no choice but to drive in my riding. But to renew your driver's licence, there's no ServiceOntario.

So every resident of Mattagami and Gogama has signed the petition. They want regular service from ServiceOntario to come to their community. I fully agree, affix my signature to it and ask Kieran to bring it to the Clerk.

OPPOSITION DAY

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

EMPLOI DES JEUNES

Ms. Marit Stiles: I move that, whereas youth unemployment in Ontario has reached over 17% this year, indicating that too many young people in Ontario face barriers to securing employment; and

Whereas early work experience is critical for youth to build skills, gain confidence and establish pathways to long-term employment and economic stability; and

Whereas young people experiencing prolonged joblessness often face mental health challenges, delayed financial independence and difficulty establishing career trajectories; and

Whereas municipalities, non-profits and small businesses have the capacity to create meaningful summer jobs that support local priorities including social services, cultural activities and environmental conservation initiatives when provided with sufficient funding and support;

Therefore, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should establish a comprehensive youth summer jobs program to ensure every young person under 30 who wants to work can access meaningful, paid employment or training opportunities in their community.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): MPP Stiles has moved opposition day motion number 5.

I return to the member to start debate.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Good afternoon. Today, I'd like every member of this House to reflect on why they're here. I'd like everyone to think about what their answer is when people ask them, "What do you do for a living?" Because the real question that we all face in that moment is, are we here for politics, or are we here for public service? For me, and for the members of our caucus, I know it's the latter.

We are here because we believe in Ontario today and for tomorrow. It may seem a little cliché, but we believe in planting trees that we'll never sit in the shade of because we owe it to the next generation of Ontarians. We want to leave Ontario better than we found it, because the day will come when—whether we want it or not—it's time to pass the torch off to today's youth. I am always optimistic of that future, no matter how bleak things get.

But I have to admit that I'm here today with some grave concern for the future of our province. And by future, I don't mean period of time; I mean the people. More specifically, I mean our province's young people. More specifically, I mean that, through no fault of their own, we are seeing generations of young Ontarians who will have a worse future, worse future prospects, than their parents and their grandparents. I feel that hopelessness that they're experiencing every day when I listen to young people across our province.

But here's the good news: We have the power to still change that. I'd like to believe that we're all here because we believe that a better world is possible, and we want to build it for our children and our grandchildren.

Which is why it brings me no pleasure to say that this Premier and this Conservative government are failing those future generations. Because after eight years of cuts, eight years of wasted tax dollars on private jets and vanity projects, eight years of silence as our youth beg for help, those young people are at a breaking point.

Life in Ontario today is more unaffordable than it has ever been. The Premier has gutted protections for renters. He has left young people who are just trying to get on their feet at the mercy of wealthy corporate landlords who are ready to squeeze every last dollar out of them. Grocery costs are through the roof, and while those greedy corporations use predatory pricing tactics to gouge our young people even further, this government turned their backs on young people again by voting down our ban on surveillance pricing. And to put a bow on it all, nearly one in five Ontario young people can't find a job.

So let's recap, shall we? Young people are facing a soaring cost of living, and not only does the government refuse to address that; they won't even help them find a job so they can pay those absolutely exorbitant costs.

I want to ask the members opposite, honestly: How are young people supposed to survive in this climate? Not everyone was born with a silver spoon in their mouth. We don't all have parents who can give us a cushy job in the family business. So what are young people in Ontario supposed to do today when they can't afford food, when they're facing eviction because their landlord raised their rent above guidelines, when they have to work so hard every day just to help their families make ends meet, when there are no jobs for them to even try to make ends meet?

And this didn't start overnight, right? It's not a new issue. For eight years, young people in Ontario have been begging this government to help them get ahead. And the worst part is, they're not even asking for a lot, Speaker. They just want a job. They want to be able to afford a decent place to live, to help out their families, to not be plagued by the constant stress of how they're going to pay their bills. All they want is a shot to build the life that they were promised and the best that this government can offer is the same old "pull yourselves up by the bootstraps" kind of rhetoric. Meanwhile, we have a Premier who insists that he is not out of touch with the people of Ontario, and yet he thinks he can get away with buying himself a private luxury jet, because apparently he really deserves that.

Ontario's young people are tired. They are tired of scratching and clawing just to survive, and they are tired of this Conservative government's empty promises. They want action. They can't pay for groceries. They can't put gas in the car. And let me tell you this: Those expensive commercials that the government is paying for don't put gas in their cars either and they don't help pay for those groceries.

Young people today are done waiting. That's what I'm hearing every time I'm out listening to young people. They are done waiting. And let me tell you: So are Ontario's New Democrats. We are not happy with the Liberal-Conservative status quo. It has to end. That's why our motion today is introducing a youth summer jobs plan: to get younger—

Interjections.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Yes—because it's time that we got young Ontarians the work that they need. If they want it, our plan will give every Ontarian under 30 who wants a summer job one of the following: six to 12 weeks at a paid job, a paid training and placement pathway, or a subsidized employer placement with supports for certification and licensing.

I want to make it very clear: This is not a band-aid solution. We're not looking just to get these young Ontarians a job for the summer and then leave them in the wind, because we're not just talking about a job; we're talking about connecting young people with meaningful jobs in their community. This doesn't just help young people find work; it gives them an opportunity to find solid ground in a really tough economy. It gives them the skills and the confidence and the pathways that will help them thrive as they grow into their careers and their future.

Small businesses, municipalities and non-profits have the tools to help with this. In fact, First Work was here just a few weeks ago and they have a whole plan. They said, "We're ready to go. Let us do this for the young people of Ontario. Let us do what we know how to do so well." Let's get those young people those first jobs that are so critical. And those same small businesses and non-profits and municipalities can help us create good, meaningful summer jobs, right where they are needed the most in those communities. All they need is support from the government.

1330

To the members opposite, I would like you to think about the question that I asked at the beginning: Where are we today? Who are we here for? Ontario's young people are doing everything that they are supposed to do. They are trying to put themselves through school, but their Premier is attaching a lifetime of debt to their education. They are trying to afford rent, but this Premier allows rent to become more and more unaffordable every year. They are trying to find jobs, but their Premier isn't creating any for them.

To the members of the government: There is one simple common denominator here. The Premier can do this one simple thing to just give our young people a chance to help them get up on their feet and start moving toward their future. I have to wonder, if there are members in this

House today who plan to vote no on this motion, what are you going to say when you go back to your communities, when one in five young people in our province can't find a job? When young people in your riding come up to you and they say, "I can't afford rent. My family can't afford rent. I need to help my family. I can't afford groceries. All I wanted was a summer job just to get me started. Why couldn't you give me that? Just give me that"? What are you going to say to them?

I want to be very clear to this Premier and this government: You should pass this motion. You should pass this motion, but listen, if you don't, then take it. Make it your own, pass it then—I don't care, because this isn't about us. It's not about you. It is about the future of our province, and those young people are begging you for help. A youth summer job plan is the least that we can do about that, just to start helping them to get ahead.

I'm not going to stand here and tell you that there won't be more to do, Speaker, because there absolutely will be. Affordability is at a crisis point. There is far more that we need to do not to help just young Ontarians but every Ontarian—700,000 Ontarians out of work right now and the numbers just keep going up.

But all of us in this House have a chance to do something good today to make life just a little bit easier for the people who are going to shape the future of our province, the people who are going to take care of all of us. They grew up with dreams, and they still have them, even if it's something as simple as a decent summer job. They deserve to see and feel the best that this province has to offer them, and this province deserves to see the best that they have to offer too.

Please do the right thing. Set Ontario's next generation up for success. Set Ontario up for success. Vote yes on our motion.

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

MPP Andrea Hazell: Speaker, I rise today in support of opposition day motion number 5, calling for a comprehensive youth summer jobs program to ensure that every young person under 30 can access meaningful paid work or training in their community and, of course, my community of Scarborough.

Young people are being told to work hard, gain experience and contribute to the economy. But too many are locked out of the very first opportunity that would allow them to do that. They are studying, applying, upgrading their skills, volunteering, building résumés and trying to contribute. But when they look for that first real opportunity, too many are met with closed doors, rejections or a job market that does not have enough doors open for them, just like in Ontario.

That is not a failure of young people. Young people are doing exactly what we are asking them to do: to go to school, to study hard, to get their post-secondary education, to find a job and hopefully, one day, in this God-forsaken Ontario, they can afford to buy a house.

Yet this Premier said, "It drives me nuts when I see young, healthy people and they'll call me saying, 'I can't

find a job.' I can assure you, if you look hard enough ... you'll find a job." I said, "Shame for that." This is a government that is completely out of touch with what the young people in Ontario are facing.

Young people that I know and I speak to in Scarborough have already started to apply for over hundreds of jobs. Some of them—lots of them, actually, are carrying student debt. They are faced with rising costs, and trying to build a life here in Ontario—I don't know which word I could give that, to make this a very serious concern for what the young people are experiencing in Ontario. The young people do not need a Premier to blame them. They need a Premier who will listen to their concerns, who will listen to their needs and take action.

Speaker, Ontario's youth unemployment rate is far too high. As of April 2026, Toronto's youth unemployment rate was 20%, compared to 15% provincially. This means almost one in five young people in Toronto's labour force were looking for work and could not find it. In the summer of 2025, the youth unemployment rate was at 17.9%, and so I am not sure what these members across the aisle are listening to, or maybe they're sitting in another place called Ontario. These numbers should concern every member in this House, because I'm pretty sure every member in this House has young kids that are ready to work; they have young kids that are going to post-secondary education; they have nephews, cousins, right? So we are all connected to this.

Youth summer job programs teach young people how to interview, work with a supervisor, communicate professionally, solve problems and see a future career path. We are not asking this government to invest monies where it doesn't matter. The youths are the future of Ontario, so why are we treating our young people so horribly wrong that they're leaving Ontario in droves? They are leaving Ontario in droves, Speaker.

For many young people, all the opportunities come through family friends, referrals, connections, or unpaid internships they can afford to take. But Speaker, for young people in underserved communities like Scarborough, that is not their reality. It's not their reality in Scarborough. They don't have parents with heavy pockets—they do not. They do not have neighbours that own businesses. They cannot pick up the phone and call their friends that have businesses or the neighbours that own businesses, and say, "Can you hire my son for summer?"

Speaker, young people need paid work, mentorship, support and access. A 2025 report on high-quality summer youth employment programs found that these programs can serve as critical bridges to promising careers, especially for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds or underserved areas—again, I'm going to mention Scarborough, because I asked a question this morning, and the member from Scarborough—Rouge Park got up and talked about a different Scarborough that he lives in, and all of them stood up and applauded.

Well, let me tell you what I took part in on Saturday. I went to a youth job fair. We had maybe 10 tables. Think about the population of Scarborough, because no Premier

is going to win an election without Scarborough. There were over 500 young people lining up waiting for summer jobs. I left crying, because it hurts.

1340

So what Scarborough is he talking about? I live there day in, day out; I know the hardship of Scarborough. So they better get up and start supporting Scarborough the right way.

Speaker, when we talk about a comprehensive youth summer jobs program, we're talking about more than income. We're talking about workforce development, poverty reduction, community safety, mental health support and giving young people a reason to believe there is a place for them in Ontario's future.

The worst part is that this government already knows these programs matter but refuse to build a stronger and coordinated program that actually meets the scale of the unemployment crisis young people are facing. A youth summer jobs program only works if it is built to reach the young people who need it most. It needs structure, funding, accountability and a clear path into paid work.

But I also want to add that unpaid experience is not accessible to low-income youth. Speaker, a young person who needs help to pay for their tuition, rent, groceries, transit or bills, especially after the cuts to OSAP—we're killing them. Now we're cutting OSAP from under their legs. This is a serious question: How do you want our young people in Ontario to survive? Not every young person in Ontario comes from a rich family. I think this is what the government needs to understand. Making it difficult to have a post-secondary education in Ontario—that's the lowest this government can go.

Youth in underserved communities often face layers of barriers, and, as I said, many do not have family connections to employers. Getting to interviews, training or a workplace across the city costs us money. They don't have that. Some of them don't even have the money to pay for transit to get to that job. Those are the barriers that we face in Scarborough.

Speaker, discrimination and bias also remain real barriers in hiring. Racialized youth, newcomer youth, low-income youth and youth with disabilities often face additional obstacles when trying to access the labour market. This matters to every Scarborough riding because we see it all over Scarborough. Scarborough has a youth unemployment rate reaching 20%. Do you need me to explain that or detail that? The youth unemployment rate is 20%, far beyond the provincial rate of unemployment.

Scarborough is full of young people with talent, ambition. Let me say that again: Scarborough is full of young people. They are resilient. They work with what little they have. They're talented. They have ambition. They're creative, and they're driven. But far too often they're facing long commutes, rising costs, limited local opportunities and intense competition for every level, with no support in sight for them to get ahead.

Speaker, for many families in Scarborough a summer job is not extra spending money. It helps pay for tuition. It helps cover groceries, rent, transit, and it helps support the

household, because some of those students, with their jobs, end up helping their families to buy groceries and to save for when they return to school.

Speaker, they could be building skills in libraries, community centres, child care programs, arts organizations, environmental projects, skilled trades placements, health administration, public service, local journalism and technology. They just need a hand up. Can we give our young people in Ontario a hand up, not the private backroom deals that are using taxpayer dollars by the millions and the billions?

This government loves to talk about building Ontario's economy, but that future cannot be built while young people are being forced to look elsewhere for their first job and leaving Ontario in droves.

The youth unemployment crisis and affordability crisis is not going to fix itself. Ontario needs a real plan that ensures every young person has access to meaningful paid employment or training—one that brings together government, employers, schools, municipalities, non-profits and community organizations to help with the youth unemployment crisis that we are facing, one that invests directly in underserved communities like Scarborough and treats youth employment as essential economic infrastructure for Ontario. From Scarborough and across Ontario, young people are ready to work. May I say it again? The young people in Scarborough are ready to work. The question is whether this government is ready to invest in them.

That is why I am supporting this motion. I am crying and I am bleeding for our young people in Ontario that cannot get ahead. They cannot get ahead. They want to work, they are studying, their OSAP is gone, they can't find jobs, some of them don't even know if they're going to be going back to school. We are closing all the doors on our young people while this government does all its backdoor deals and pays millions of taxpayer dollars in lawsuits.

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

Hon. David Piccini: Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to rise today to talk about youth in the province of Ontario. Every young person in Ontario wants the same thing: A chance to build a future, earn a paycheque and know there is opportunity for them to find a home and build a family.

The question before the House is not whether youth unemployment matters. It does. It's about how we get there and how we create that opportunity. Our government believes that the best social program is the opportunity to have better training for a better job with a better paycheque and actually get a job. That's what our plan to protect Ontario is delivering.

It's not about a government program to create more government jobs—a band-aid solution. It's about meaningful training. It's about creating the conditions for the building blocks that are success in Ontario. That creates meaningful jobs and meaningful employment for generations to come. Since 2018, of course, this government has created the conditions for over a million net new jobs in

Ontario, and we've secured more than \$222 billion in foreign investment into this province.

But behind this investment are stories. It's the story of Sanofi, for example, a recent multi-million-dollar investment that's creating jobs. It's the story of the AI Centre of Excellence there that is helping meaningful STEM jobs, creating those conditions. It's a story of building and giving youth the opportunity for success.

We look to some of those things that build success in Ontario. Let's look to our energy sector. It's creating meaningful opportunities, meaningful apprenticeships, meaningful job opportunity for youth in Ontario. Speaker, the opposition had an opportunity to support that youth jobs plan. They would have pink-slipped everyone in Pickering—everyone in Pickering, everyone working on the SMR plant, where I met young millwrights through the introduction to millwrighting program at Darlington. We met a next generation of young men and women and Indigenous youth getting an opportunity to find meaningful employment through an apprenticeship in the skilled trades creating SMRs—think of that: the first country to roll out a small modular reactor—to create the conditions for new nuclear in Wesleyville at Bruce C.

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We see global economic uncertainty, and we're not immune from that. We see these challenges for youth unemployed all across Ontario. It's this Premier, this government standing up to create those conditions for employment, to stand up and make sure we're more self-reliant. I can't think of a better jobs plan than making sure we're self-reliant and we're not dependent on foreign dictators for energy, Speaker. We can create that energy right here.

Our energy minister is setting the framework for new nuclear, Speaker. That's exciting communities like mine in Northumberland–Peterborough South, building small modular reactors, where I had the chance to go out and see 2,000, 3,000 construction workers and a number of young men and women working in apprenticeships.

Speaker, we put forward this plan. The opposition had a chance to support it. They didn't; they voted against it. But even worse, for those youth in Scarborough that that member spoke so passionately about, she turned her back on them by voting against Pickering refurbishment and the opportunity for us to be energy independent. I don't want us to be dependent on foreign countries for our energy needs. This minister—these ministers are working to secure that energy future.

Speaker, let's look to mining. We talk, and people often wax poetically about mining and the support for mining. Yet when the rubber hits the road and we have a chance to actually support mining, members opposite vote against it. They vote against the young men and women in our mining sector like Jaden, whom I met at Agnico up in the James Bay area. He's a member of Moose Cree First Nation, and he introduced me not only to his story, which I was privileged to hear, but that of his family. He's a beneficiary of our Skills Development Fund, and he's helping get trained as a heavy-equipment mechanic.

That's the type of opportunity that we're providing for the next generation: meaningful opportunities not just for a summer job but for a career—a career with dignity, a career with purpose.

Again, Speaker, every time we bring forward these measures, members vote against it, because the truth is they don't want us to be a mining superpower. They don't want us to be an energy superpower.

But what's even more troubling, Speaker, is when we get to the core building blocks for success in our communities, like the new medical school in Scarborough—the first since the 1800s—or the new schools in my riding, modern schools for our youth to learn in Newcastle. We don't have to think back too long to remember that the opposition Liberals, supported by the NDP—when they had a chance, they shut those schools down in rural communities like mine. They shut down over 600 schools, Speaker.

Hon. Sam Oosterhoff: Shame on them. Shame on them.

Hon. David Piccini: Exactly: Shame on them.

Interjections.

Hon. David Piccini: I've hit a soft spot, Speaker, because they know that it's an embarrassing history to turn your back on youth in rural Ontario who deserve an opportunity to get an education.

I think to Bernadette Vanderhorst and other champions in our farming community who stood up against and said, “No, you're not going to shut down Norwood high school.” They stood up and they said no. You fast-forward to today, and—schools like Port Hope High School, which is on the forefront now of training for a new nuclear plant, Speaker.

But what's more troubling is that they pander to those interests that would have even shut down the Ontario Line, Speaker. I think to that line that's going to move over 400,000 workers. They would have shut it down because you had to cut down a few trees.

Speaker, that's what this government is doing after decades of neglect in our public transit system. I used to go into schools and draw a U with a line through it. That was their plan, and it stopped because they didn't want to build. It's why organized labour abandoned them in droves to support this Premier's plan to create meaningful opportunity.

MPP Wayne Gates: Bought them off.

Hon. David Piccini: Speaker, we hear things like, “Buy them off.” How disrespectful is that member to the electrical workers in his own riding? I visited IBEW in Niagara. He showed up for the photo op, Speaker. He calls it things like “buying them off.” I call it investing in the next generation of youth. That's what those leaders are doing—because I visited their youth, and I visited some youth that went through the college system just to end up in a union, who asked for equal treatment, as we treat other TDAs. They got that under this Premier, under this government, who recognized that every single graduate of that program is walking into a job. What was so exciting is, I visited them a year later and guess what, Speaker? I

saw them working on the Niagara hospital expansion. That's something this member advocated for.

So when I said that third pillar—the most troubling: They vote against those hospitals but show up for the photo op when it comes time to cut the ribbon. They vote against the public transit, but then decry—we need to do more for public transit. Perhaps they would look at the budget, where they could see \$2 invested in public transit for every \$1 in highways, roads and other infrastructure. The Ontario Line would have ground to a halt had it been up to those members opposite.

That's the sort of opportunity we're creating, the sort of opportunity my grandfather saw when he looked to immigrate here, to be a part of nation building. That's what we're doing in partnership with NDP Premiers next door, with the Liberal federal government. We're working collaboratively to create those building blocks for success that are going to create meaningful careers for youth not just today but for generations to come.

I met them at the local pumpkin drive in Newcastle. Again, these are the workers who said to me, "We recognize the members opposite would have given us a pink slip." Let's be honest. Let's have an honest conversation. They would have shut Pickering down. They wouldn't have the courage to invest in new nuclear. They wouldn't have done that. Liberals had over a decade to do that, and they didn't.

It's this government that said yes to energy independence; this government that said yes to hospitals, schools and bridges; this government that said yes to new schools, new medical schools, expanding the seats for meaningful career opportunities for youth, for young doctors—not one, not two but three new med schools. That's a meaningful career opportunity. When the previous government shut down and closed and reduced residency positions for those doctors, those young Ontarians, it's this government that expanded those residency seats, that expanded nursing training seats, that treated colleges with respect in nursing training, that supported training for PSWs, as well, creating those meaningful employment pathways.

It's about giving them a leg up, not a handout. That's one thing I agree with that the member opposite said. We've done that through expanding our In-Class Enhancement Fund: \$60 million to create 12,000 spots in the skilled trades. The members opposite voted against that. They actually voted against creating more skilled trades opportunities for youth. They want a summer job for them, but they vote against an actual apprenticeship that gives them a career for life—for life—12,000 new spots.

Or pre-apprenticeship training: We've expanded pre-apprenticeship programming. The Leader of the Opposition spoke about First Work. She'd perhaps care to know they're an SDF-funded recipient benefiting from investments this government is making in meaningful jobs and careers training. Sadly, Speaker, I don't know why she would oppose something like that, but that's meaningful training opportunities that this government is creating and supporting in every corner of Ontario.

I think to my own community. I think to heritage restoration, where I met a young woman, Pam, who got trained through OPCMIA. She was working precarious part-time jobs, and she got training through a training program that was treating the historical facade of that heritage building as a training ground, an opportunity to start her apprenticeship in brick and stone masonry work through training with OPCMIA.

I would add they were given training delivery agent status by this government, the ability to train a next generation of brick and stone masons. I'm from heritage communities like Port Hope; I recognize and value the opportunity of that craft.

I met Pam, who was working evenings, Speaker, just to get up early, then to come and get trained at that opportunity. Do you know where Pam is today? Working for Clifford Restoration at Casa Loma. That's not a summer job; that's a career that Pam can be proud of, an opportunity to put food on her family's table, an opportunity to create family and create wealth in the province of Ontario.

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That's the difference between our party and the members opposite: those core building blocks of success, finding meaningful opportunities in the skilled trades. Let's look at statistics on how that plan is working. We have almost 100,000 people registered for apprenticeships today in Ontario. The fastest-growing number is youth who are signing up for apprenticeship programming. We have more women today registered in the apprenticeship program than at any point in Ontario's history since we've been tracking the data, Speaker.

I've had the opportunity to meet some of these remarkable youth. I think, hopefully, that's something we can all agree with, that these opportunities to meet youth and to see the training that they're doing hands-on—and I'm excited because we're expanding training capacity. Whether that's through supporting college-funded programming, union-delivered training, non-profit training, we're supporting that training.

I think, again, the energy minister has come and met those youth first-hand because he doesn't want to give them a summer job. This minister wants to give them the opportunity to live in a province where we're actually not energy dependent, but an energy superpower. We saw when it meant going into Indigenous communities to train a next generation—we supported mobile training trailers like the trades and tech truck that Skills Ontario delivers. He met young people in our community who are holding the hands of their parents in the energy sector, who worked for an entire career at OPG, who were afraid of the pink slips that they would have gotten under the members opposite. But no, under this minister and under this Premier, they've got an opportunity to be part of building an energy superpower future—an energy future where we're not dependent on others; rather, we're supplying energy to communities south of the border and to the world, Speaker. And I can think of no better place to do it than right here in Canada, right here in Ontario, creating those opportunities for those youth.

Opportunities for mining—and that is the real, ugly truth about the members opposite's opposition to mining. They would rather end up being dependent on dirty dictators and mining in the other side of the world that does nothing for workers here, that does nothing to benefit social responsibility here, that does nothing to build health and social infrastructure in rural and remote communities. They would rather us be dependent on nickel from Indonesia than nickel from Sudbury. Speaker, I choose Ontario. And those unions recognize that. That's why they supported this Premier and this government, because a professional opposition party who oppose everything—they're professional protesters, Speaker. This government rolls up its sleeves to find meaningful solutions, to create that sort of opportunity.

Interjection.

Hon. David Piccini: Exactly. Speaker, as the member said, they would be happy if nobody is happy.

This government strives to create those opportunities. As I see the Solicitor General here, I think of the opportunity for young men and women in policing. We know that had they had the power, they'd be defunding police, Speaker. It's in their own manifesto; they want to defund police. This Solicitor General has made the college free to attract a next generation of young first responders. And it's working, Speaker. This Solicitor General has had the opportunity to meet some of the youth in my own community on ride-alongs—the young men and women in uniform serving and protecting their community

Speaker, I and many in our school systems look up to those men and women. We don't demean them and decry them; we look up to those who serve us in uniform. And that's why we're proud to support those career pathways.

I think to some of the tools that we can do, the core building blocks to get youth into meaningful careers. I mentioned the In-Class Enhancement Fund: 12,000 additional spots in the skilled trades. But little things that I heard members opposite speak about, which I think we can find agreement on, are those wraparound supports to help career pathways.

Speaker, let's talk about things like the tools grant, a simple program. Under the Liberal government, that was a loan program that cost more to administer than actual loan dollars out to get a young skilled tradesperson their first set of tools. Maybe it's a young hairstylist—their first set of tools. Maybe it's a young automotive technician—and we know automotive technicians especially are in demand and it's a high cost to get that first set of tools. The opposition—it cost more to administer the bureaucratic program; we turned it into a grant. We've helped tens of thousands of young people get access to their first set of tools.

We've helped break down barriers, like child care costs, through Better Jobs Ontario. We've helped address transit barriers—last mile—like the trade tech trailer I spoke to you about, going into rural communities, or IBEW Local 353, for example, who have, through their trailer, gone in and found meaningful partnerships with Indigenous communities. These are the type of things we're doing when

we talk about investing in the building blocks of success. I think we can all agree that those are meaningful training pathways to find meaningful careers.

But the problem, and where we ultimately disagree, is that those careers are supported when you back hospital construction, something they oppose. Those careers are supported when you expand medical residency training, nursing training, something they oppose. Those careers are enshrined when you have the courage to build new nuclear, to be the first country to leverage Candu technology and others that we're so proud of here, to be the first off the starting block for small modular reactors, something they oppose. It is really unfortunate, but really, it's reflective of just a differing view.

We want to create the conditions for job investment, for attraction, to create new industries in Ontario. I think to communities like mine and the agri-food and processing sector, who've benefited from investments through the Eastern Ontario Development Fund; benefited through investments from this government to create the conditions for jobs, for young people joining meaningful careers.

I think to a plumber in my own community, Stadtke Plumbing. They had an opportunity to address ratios, to address meaningful career pathways in the skilled trades, and they didn't. They shut down shop classes. They didn't have the courage to make those changes that have now helped the next generation of young people in my community. I met them at Stadtke Plumbing. Jennifer often reminds me of those changes this government made to attract a next generation of skilled trades workers.

And while I'm up and at it, let's talk about Level Up! career fairs. These are incredible skilled trades career fairs: 60,000 youth last year alone in every community. I was pleased to see members opposite attending those career fairs, where we saw training partners, colleges, unions, non-profits, employers alike there on the floor, inspiring a next generation of people to find meaningful careers. It's working—we know it's working, with 60,000-plus people attending it—and these initiatives have helped support over 156,000 construction workers who we know we're going to need in the construction sector.

Just last week we visited, with Premier Ford, LIUNA Local 837, who expanded their training capacity in Cambridge, thanks to the advocacy of our member from Cambridge, who's been a tireless advocate to support those training centres.

I look around and I see the member for Durham, who has championed a new opportunity for young firefighters to get training. I see the member for Bay of Quinte. I see the member from Windsor, who's brought in Windsor—

Mr. Anthony Leardi: Essex.

Hon. David Piccini: Windsor-Essex; let's not forget Essex—who has brought in unparalleled—he knows that when we flourish down there, members from Essex benefit: young people with expanded trades opportunities.

The \$14 million in payroll that we saw on a weekly basis, thanks to creating the conditions for investment that this Premier has made: We're going to keep making those investments in our next generation, helping young people

earn certifications, enter apprenticeships and move directly into good-paying jobs.

For young Ontarians who need support right now, help is here today. Employment Ontario, a network of more than 400 service providers, offers free job-searching support, career planning and training referrals in every corner of this province. Better Jobs Ontario, which I spoke to earlier: up to 35,000 for longer programs, including support for tuition, books, transportation and living expenses like child care. Thousands of Ontarians are already using these programs.

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The motion before us calls for a new youth summer jobs program, but we already have apprenticeship programming today that they oppose, we already have employment programming today that they oppose. In fact, those better job suite of supports, the tools programming—I've never seen one member of the opposition actually promote those non-partisan programs that help get dollars into meaningful training pathways for Ontarians.

We already have Level Up!, paid internships and targeted training investments, and we're building on an economy and creating the conditions for meaningful careers, whether it's in first response, whether it's in mining, whether it's in health care in the new hospitals like Campbellford Memorial in my own community, expanded nurse training, expanded PSW training or expanded medical residency training.

You heard this member from Scarborough earlier in question period talk to us about the first med school since the 1800s in Toronto. It's this Premier, this government that got that job done. It's this Premier and this government that's creating those pathways for careers.

Speaker, we need more than a summer jobs program—an economy that creates meaningful careers and career pathways, and that's what this Premier, this government strive to do each and every day. It's one of the reasons why we created the conditions for over 40,000-plus jobs created, 39,000 of which were in the private sector the last month alone. I know things go up and down, so I don't want to just cherry-pick on that provincial number, but it's reflective.

That monthly number is reflective of a culture over here that promotes a competitive taxation structure; that promotes meaningful employment-driven training; that promotes the infrastructure needed to create those jobs to support those rural communities; that builds the hospitals and the schools that we need for these workers; that builds the new medical schools; that invests in the apprenticeships after decades of neglect in the skilled trades; that says, "Yes, if I'm going to mine a critical mineral, let that critical mineral be done in Ontario and not from dirty dictators on the other side of the world. Let's make sure that energy produced is done by Ontario workers, by Ontario boilermakers, by Ontario millwrights, Ontario labourers, Ontario carpenters, Ontario electricians and so many more right here in Ontario."

They would have us beholden to dictators. We want to create a strong Ontario that will create the conditions for

meaningful career employment. That's our plan: a strong economy for strong jobs, not just today but for tomorrow. I'm proud to work with members every day on both sides of the House to achieve those objectives.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: I just want to welcome David, Madeline and Amanmeet who were here earlier. I don't think they could stomach what they were hearing from the Minister of Labour because it's—"delusional" comes to mind, as a word. He says "the ugly truth" about what's happening here—this is a minister that clearly cannot handle the truth and the reality and the lived experience of what students and youth are facing in the province of Ontario.

I just want to say, our youth unemployment numbers right now, today, in Toronto, in and around Scarborough, in and around the rest of the province, are at 17.8%. This is pandemic-level unemployment. In the pandemic, we recognized "Oh, there's a crisis. There's a crisis here, and we can do something to help."

That is why we've come here to the floor of the Legislature. The official opposition has listened to the voices of youth across this province. We've conducted round tables. We've looked at the research and evidence of what is working in other provinces, because clearly it is not working in this place. You are failing the youth of Ontario. Even when you have an apprenticeship program, that apprenticeship program does not involve retaining apprenticeships, so then they're looking at other provinces to go to.

So the motivation is coming from a very good place. It is grounded in research and knowledge of what is working. The not-for-profit sector has said, "Listen, we have strategies; we have plans. We just need some resources to get students and get youth employed."

The labour force participation rate is extremely concerning for Ontario. There's obviously a crisis. There's a trend here that is exceptionally troubling where overall participation rates have been quite stagnant for youth employment. The youth participation rate has dramatically declined and seems to be on a continued downward trend. This, of course, hides a true unemployment rate, as unemployment figures do not include people who have stopped looking for work. Youth have stopped looking for work in Ontario.

In order to solve a problem, you have to acknowledge that it exists. What we just heard from the Minister of Labour, that song and dance—which was all over the place and filled with ideology which is not grounded in the reality that Madeline and David and Amanmeet have faced every single day. That's a breach of trust. That's how we see it over here. So with the continued decline in youth participation and the increasing youth unemployment rate in Ontario, it is clear that the real unemployment rate is much higher, and none of us want that.

We, as the official opposition, have listened to youth across the province, and they've said, "Listen, we just need to get our foot in the door." This morning, it was

heartbreaking to hear one of our validators talk about how he wants to be part of this province—the economy, the life of this province—and all that he's getting is doors slammed in his face. We want to open those doors with strategic and targeted funding with municipalities, for instance, Madam Speaker. Municipalities at AMO have said to us for years, "We can be part of the solution. We just need a dedicated fund." The 444 municipalities across this great province, if they were supported by the provincial government to employ youth in those areas—this would put an equity lens on those youth opportunities, because those 444 municipalities would hire tomorrow and they want to be part of the solution as well.

Also, there is a cost to not taking on this issue, right? The King's Trust Canada did a report and research around the real cost of having these high-crisis levels of youth unemployment. They said the costs of youth unemployment are decreased productivity, higher rates of crime, \$18.5 billion in lost GDP across the country, growing social unrest and \$5.3 billion in government revenue. These are real, tangible costs to not having a plan or a strategy. And the budget reduced spending on ec dev and job creation by \$40 million. You removed it. You removed the funding. So of course we're not going to support that.

But we've come to the floor of this Legislature with a strong plan to get students back to work, to bring hope back to the job market. Stop the talk around buying Ontario. Right now, you're just selling Ontario out. So let's get to work and let's do the work together.

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

Mr. Chris Glover: I'm very happy to speak to the NDP's motion to create a youth summer job program. The most important job we ever have in our lives is the first job because that's where we learn to show up on time and to put in a day's work. But right now in Ontario, we've got 17% youth unemployment.

The NDP is proposing a youth employment program for summer jobs. We'd be partnering with small businesses, with not-for-profits and with municipalities, and it would be a win-win-win. The youth would get the experience, the job training, the references and the networking that they need to set them up for a life of successful work, and the businesses would get customers and clients and residents. They would all get better customer service, and there would be a benefit of enhanced services.

How would we pay for it? This is the question that always comes up. Well, we're going to cancel the \$2.2-billion handout at Ontario Place, the \$1.5-billion Skills Development Fund scandal, and we're not going to be investing in a \$30-million private jet for the Premier. Instead, we're going to be investing in youth in this program and giving them jobs.

The Conservative response to the 17% youth unemployment rate in this province is to "go look harder for jobs" that don't actually exist. They've already said they're going to be voting against our motion.

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But instead, what they decided to do is these unemployed youth, the youth that their policies have made

unemployed—they're going to be downloading another \$15,000 of debt onto them by cutting OSAP grants.

We need an NDP solution, here. We need a youth employment summer program. I hope the Conservatives will reconsider and actually invest in the youth in this province.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I am very pleased to rise in support of this motion, and I want to begin with a shout-out to the members of my London West Youth Cabinet. We had 61 applications to join the cabinet this year from eight high schools: St. Thomas Aquinas, Oakridge, Banting, South, Saunders, Saint André Bessette, Westminster, Catholic Central and Monseigneur-Bruyère.

This high level of interest from these young people not only shows how much youth want to be involved in their communities, but it also reflects their awareness that serving on the youth cabinet could be helpful to their résumés. We have talked a lot about résumés over the last year, especially since the Conservative cuts to OSAP.

Students have told me how hard they have been working to find a part-time job or a summer job. They've been putting out hundreds of résumés, not even getting an acknowledgement. Sometimes they need to help their families, or they are trying to save for post-secondary education. But they are competing for entry-level jobs against people who are twice their age.

In London, we have the highest unemployment in the country. Many workers are laid off, and these are the kinds of jobs that they are going after. This is at a time when youth joblessness is at a record high, and OSAP cuts are going to make it harder to afford college or university.

It's not just high school students who are being shut out; it's hurting current post-secondary students who are already carrying significant student debt. They can't find work to help them pay for the next school year. Students with co-ops or internships are finding out that their placements are going to be cancelled, or their placements are unpaid.

Speaker, young people in Ontario want hope so they can begin to build a future for themselves. I urge this government to support our motion and move forward with the establishment of an Ontario summer jobs program. Youth are counting on us; let's not let them down.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma leader, Marit Stiles, et tous les membres de notre caucus NPD demandent au gouvernement de mettre en oeuvre un programme d'emplois d'été pour les jeunes afin d'adresser la hausse sans précédent du chômage chez les jeunes.

Les jeunes à la recherche d'un emploi devraient pouvoir accéder à des emplois utiles sur le plan social, économique et environnemental qui leur permettent d'acquérir les compétences transférables à l'emploi.

Le programme que nous mettons de l'avant vise à connecter les jeunes à des emplois valorisants dans leurs communautés. Nous avons privilégié les partenariats avec

les municipalités et les organismes à but non lucratif afin de les transformer en créateurs d'emplois locaux.

Les Ontariens-Ontariennes de moins de 30 ans qui souhaitent un emploi d'été peuvent choisir parmi les trois options suivantes :

—un emploi rémunéré, entre six et 12 semaines;

—une formation rémunérée et un parcours de placement; et

—un placement subventionné chez un employeur avec un accompagnement pour un certificat ou un permis, etc.

Ici, au NPD, on croit qu'un programme d'emplois administré localement contribuera à répondre aux besoins locaux. Les municipalités peuvent recevoir du financement pour offrir des emplois dans des domaines. Puis là, je vais vous en nommer quelques-uns : parcs et loisirs, programmes de bibliothèque, camps d'été, services de garde d'enfants, soutien aux aînés, soutien administratif municipal, numérisation des documents, conservation du patrimoine, postes de soutien dans des logements sans but lucratif, services de transition, programmes artistiques et culturels locaux—théâtre, etc.—et bien d'autres.

Le programme est là pour aider les jeunes. Quand on regarde les statistiques, plus de 7,6% des jeunes ne sont pas capables de se trouver un emploi. On doit faire mieux. Le programme nous permet d'aider des jeunes à avoir des emplois pendant l'été, et ça, ça change tout. J'espère que tout le monde va comprendre ça et voter en faveur. Merci.

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

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: As always, it's an honour to rise in this House on behalf of the residents of Don Valley West.

Today, we're speaking about opposition day motion number 5, which is, of course, about youth unemployment and helping to fix that. It's certainly a very important topic in Ontario and for my constituents. I've got many young people who reach out to me talking about their challenges in finding work. They talk about how many résumés they've sent off and how they don't hear back, Speaker.

That is why I tabled an opposition day motion back in November, about six months ago, which would have seen the creation of a youth career fund, which was a costed plan. It would have employed as many as 75,000 young people. It would have also provided support to businesses through funding half of the salary of a young person for the duration of the placement. Certainly, Madam Speaker, I am in support of this because we do want to do, on this side of the House, what we can to support young people who are facing unemployment—in record numbers, Speaker, and let me talk about that.

Here we are, heading into the summer season. In fact, university and college students—many of them are done now and they are looking for work. But Speaker, we know that youth employment actually is getting worse. For the fourth month in a row, job losses of 6,000 in April happened on top of the 56,000 that occurred since January. We know that more young adults are looking for work. So the youth unemployment rate jumped from 17% in March to 17.7% in April, Speaker. That is the highest since 2009

and close to the 1992 record of 19.8%. The number of unemployed youth in April is 217,000, and I'll come back to that number. That is also up from the previous month.

We know that there are fewer jobs available. While the Minister of Labour talks about what they're doing for young people, it's not working, Speaker. The numbers tell that very clearly. Youth unemployment is up, under this government, and it's up recently, even.

The other thing the Conservatives talk about is their dismal record of creating jobs. The employment rate, the number of employed people between the age of 15 and 24, has sunk to record lows. Less than half of Ontario's 15- to 24-year-olds had a job in April; only 49.8% had a job in April—young people, Speaker. That's the lowest rate in the last half century, excluding the pandemic.

Speaker, let's just, again, put that in perspective: When the Ford Conservative government came to power in 2018, that rate was 55%. So 55% of young people between the ages of 15 and 24 were working in 2018. Speaker, if the rate today were 55% instead of the 49.8% that it is today, we would have an additional 108,000 young people with jobs. The unemployment rate for young people would be cut in half almost, if they had been able to maintain the employment rate for young people that they had when they took office. But Speaker, they didn't. They have not. The failing Ford Conservative government is failing young people.

There is no strategy for youth. The unemployment rate has been getting worse since 2022 under this government. And Ontario's employment rate is the lowest in Canada. Part of that, of course, is because of the poor job availability. It's also because young people are deciding to stay in school longer, because they know it's very hard to find a job. So that's another reason contributing to the lower number of people in the workforce.

The participation rate for youth in the workforce is the second-lowest in Canada. Again, this government is setting terrible records—records for unemployment, records for low housing starts—and it's because they just do not have a plan. The minister talked about their failing Skills Development Fund. What he didn't talk about was that the Auditor General called that fund out for being not fair, not transparent and not accountable. Speaker, a program where you spend over a billion dollars, and it's called not fair, not transparent, not accountable—it's no wonder the plan is not working to address the unemployment rate for young people or the unemployment rate for workers in general.

1430

In Ontario, the youth unemployment rate is increasing four times faster than the national average, again, setting a terrible record. The unemployment rate for youth is growing four times faster than the national average, since the beginning of this year. So it's no wonder that young people are feeling discouraged and they're leaving for other provinces. They know that their job prospects here are difficult. They know that they face an uphill battle. They know that they have to wait a long time—the wait for young workers to find a job has increased to more than

four months since the beginning of 2026, the highest in at least three decades; when the Conservative government took office, people were only waiting about two months. Again, the failed Ford Conservative government is failing young people. It's taking young people twice as long to find a job.

The Ford Conservatives called the unnecessary election, as we know, last year, saying that they felt they needed a new mandate. But instead of creating jobs, we're losing them. Since March 2025, 52,000 young workers lost their jobs. That's not protecting Ontario. That's pretending to protect Ontario.

Our strategy would put 37,000 young adults to work and bring Ontario's youth unemployment rate back down to 14.7%. That's a real plan to help those young people and those families who are trying to get their first job and get their footing and maybe buy their first home.

We know that their plan is not working, and we know that it's hurting our young people in particular.

Speaker, we also know that the total jobs created since March 2022 for all age groups is 495,000, but for 15- to 24-year-olds, it has gone down 7,000.

So again, it's hard to find good news when it comes to this government's plan for young people. I think that's because the government just isn't focused on young people. They're not focused on fixing this problem. They don't need to listen to me; they can listen to all the data that comes out from StatsCan that shows they are failing young people when it comes to finding their first job. I think it's because they're focused on things like buying a new, shiny jet for the Premier, and then, of course, now they're trying to sell it. They're focused on things like that.

They're focused on expanding the Billy Bishop airport so the Premier can land his expensive jet. We've got a Premier focused on flying around like a billionaire, landing at the Billy Bishop airport in downtown Toronto. We know that plan to put an extended runway at Billy Bishop will also hurt young people. Do you know why? Because it means fewer homes will be built. The towers that they are planning to build cannot be as high, which means fewer homes. So that's hurting young people who are trying to find their way into the housing market.

I just came from a meeting with the mortgage brokers, and they're calling on the government to give more relief to first-time homebuyers. That would help young people—to give them a few more thousand dollars towards their down payment.

Certainly, this government needs to focus on what is within its control. Those are the kind of things that are—creating a youth career fund to help young people, help small businesses, help businesses across this province. That would actually be a real solution that would help those young people who are desperately trying to find their first job and feeling forced to remain living with their parents because they either can't afford rent or they're desperately trying to save up for that first home. A few decades ago, most people bought their first homes by the time they were 30. Guess what? Under this government, it's up to 40. Most people, Speaker, will not be able to afford their first home until they are 40.

Doing everything we can to help young people find a job, to give them that opportunity, is absolutely something this government should be focused on. Yet, again, we know that they're focused on helping their friends through the scandal-plagued Skills Development Fund—over a billion dollars that the Auditor General said was given out to organizations with lobbyists who are friends of the government. Speaker, I think that is part of why Ontario's employment rate continues to struggle.

The other thing they're now focused on, we find, is helping their friends, like Carmine Nigro. Speaker, you may have read an article, if you followed the story, a number of months ago: One of the Premier's close personal friends sued the Premier's government, his friend, for half a billion dollars. I remember thinking to myself, "Am I reading this right? This seems very strange, that a friend of the Premier is suing the Premier and the Premier's government for half a billion dollars for air rights that he never owned."

This, again, is a friend who has been given a position on the LCBO board, the Ontario Place board, on an Invest Ontario board. Do you know what I find curious, Speaker? Carmine Nigro, as far as I know, as of today is still on those boards. I find it kind of funny that someone who sues you for half a billion dollars doesn't immediately go on the "no friend fly zone" list. Yet, he's still in those positions.

It kind of makes you wonder what the government really did know about that settlement, Speaker. They won't tell us. They direct Metrolinx. Metrolinx is a creature of the province. I'm pretty sure Metrolinx didn't settle with the Premier's friend, Carmine Nigro, without talking to the Premier and his government, his cabinet, somebody in government about settling.

Of course, we will continue to work to hold this government to account on that, Speaker, because while they're doing all that, giving millions of dollars in a settlement to Carmine Nigro, they're not putting those millions of dollars into a fund that could help young people with their first job.

That is the problem with this government. They are not focused on the right things. They are not doing what they need to do, what they could do, Speaker, to help young people. They don't need to blame the US. They don't need to blame the federal government. Every other province except one has a lower youth unemployment rate than this province. That means this government needs to wear that. They need to stand up and take accountability for that. Finding solutions, like a youth career fund, like a plan that can help young people get their first job and get into the workforce, is the kind of thing that they absolutely should be focused on.

I spoke with a young person in my riding in Don Valley West who's looking for work, preferably in their field, but at this point, they will take almost anything. They've been sending out résumés, showing up in person, looking very hard—no job offers. That is the case for many, many—hundreds of thousands of—young people, Speaker.

It's not just about tariffs. Again, the government will try to blame tariffs. Unemployment has been getting worse

and worse and worse in this province long before the threat of US tariffs. The reality is that this government has been unable to create the right conditions for a strong economy, for job growth where people who need a job can find one and where young people have the promising opportunity that they thought they would have in Ontario.

It's another broken promise of this government. We used to believe that if you studied hard, you worked hard, that you would get a good job. You could expect to start your career here in Ontario, but that promise is broken, with a 17.7% unemployment rate for youth here in Ontario. What does the Premier say? He tells them to look harder. They're not looking hard enough.

1440

Speaker, that is not a responsible response to a very serious crisis. It shows how tired and out of touch this Ford Conservative government is when they think that it's the fault of young people who aren't looking hard enough to find a job instead of looking themselves in the mirror and saying, "You know what, we are letting our young people down and we need to do something to help them."

Supporting this motion would be something that the government could do to help young people. Absolutely, Speaker, I will be supporting this motion. We all need to be thinking more, especially the members on the government side, about how and what they are doing to help young people here in Ontario.

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

MPP Wayne Gates: It's a pleasure to rise on youth unemployment. It's at 17% in the province of Ontario. That makes no sense. Last year in Niagara, youth participation in employment for young people was down 9%. Last summer, our returning students faced the worst summer job market since 2009—under the Harris government, by the way. Nearly one in five can't find work. And what do these jobs do? They help pay for their tuition, their rent, their transit, their groceries and help young people build a résumé.

In my community—and this is interesting because I know the minister talked about it—in Niagara, we have Brock University and we have Niagara University. They prepare 30,000 students every single year to go to work in Niagara. That could be in the wine industry; it could be in the tourist sector, anywhere in Niagara. They go to school, they get an education and they go to apply for a job to try to build for their future, and guess what happens? The government hasn't lived up to their promise.

Rents in Niagara are \$2,500 to \$2,700. It's \$100 for a tank of gas today. The cost of living has never been higher—groceries, rent, affordable housing. They failed to build affordable housing for our young people. They've failed to create jobs for young people. And what did they do? They took rent controls off new builds, which has driven rents to go from \$2,500 to \$2,700 in Niagara, but it's also—I talked to somebody here in Etobicoke where the Premier lives; it's \$4,200. Who can afford to pay that kind of money for rent? It's on you, every one of you.

Every one of you is faced with the same thing I'm facing in Niagara, and yet every time we bring a bill like

this, today or last time, to help young people, help people in our community, help young adults, young families to get better, you vote against it. You guys stand up and talk about the NDP voting against anything. You vote against everything that helps young people in the province of Ontario.

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

Mr. John Fraser: Good afternoon, Speaker. Before I get started, I want to apologize to the member from Niagara Falls for parking in his parking spot on Saturday. I moved my car this morning, and I just want to apologize. They let me park there, but I moved it last night.

MPP Wayne Gates: You took mine?

Mr. John Fraser: Yes, and I moved it. They called me and they gave me a hard time. I wanted to make a public apology because I felt so badly about it. I came here at 10 o'clock last night and I moved the car because they couldn't get in the lot, and there we go.

We're here, actually, to talk about youth jobs, and I'm happy to be supporting this motion. The member from Don Valley West gave a great presentation. She put forward our youth career strategy earlier this fall—very similar, and sometimes you can have similar things on the order paper and not worry about it too much. We're glad that it's on the order paper.

When you have a youth unemployment rate that's 17.7%, that's not great. That's not great for our economy. It's really bad for young people. How is it that the Premier can buy himself a luxury private jet when we have a 17.7% youth unemployment rate? You guys are going to hear about this until the door slams in the corner office, because it's the symbol of everything that's wrong with this government. You've lost your way—17.7% of our young people don't have work and the priority is a private jet and an airport. The member from Kiiwetinoong talked about 29 airports in the north that need to be fixed or repaired, but we're spending \$29 million on a jet.

We're here to talk about youth jobs. Many of us were lucky enough to have a summer job, either through a government program, or we got—we went there, we went to the store, we put in an application, somebody helped us get a job. Right now, it's really hard, so governments have to do something to help job creation. A summer jobs plan is a great idea, and it should be something that we're debating.

The government likes to talk about its record and how it has done so much for manufacturing here in Ontario. Manufacturing jobs—there are actually 9,000 less than there were in 2018.

When you took over in 2018, Ontario led the G7 in jobs and growth. Yes, we led the G7 in jobs and growth. We had the best unemployment rate. Now we have a government that's over 7%—7.5% overall; 17.7% for youth. And the Minister of Trade gets up and talks like nothing is wrong, everything is just peachy keen, it's going great, there are no problems.

Literally one out of every five young persons in your riding doesn't have a job; that's even worse than your record on family doctors—which is one in six.

I don't know why you haven't yet used the final 15 minutes you have left in debate. Maybe you can take that time to refute what has been said here on this side.

This government is focused on private luxury jets. We're actually paying a close personal friend of the Premier an undisclosed sum for air—for air. It's all around us here. You can't see it, but it's here. There's lots of it. But we're paying him an undisclosed sum for air, or air rights.

Interjection.

Mr. John Fraser: Air? No, no. We take credit for a lot, but we don't take credit for air; I'm sorry. Member from Timiskaming, I appreciate that. We did a lot of good stuff. Air is not one of them. But we did get rid of coal and reduce the smog. So I want to thank the member from Timiskaming for reminding me about coal plants.

The thing is, one out of five young people in your riding don't have jobs, and you're getting the Premier a luxury private jet. The Premier has lost his way, and apparently he lost the private jet too. There we go. That's for you. Full credit to the member from Oshawa. She's funnier than me. She suggested that this morning.

MPP Wayne Gates: It's not hard.

Mr. John Fraser: Check your parking spot, buddy. I hope you got a spare.

I was talking about the Premier's luxury private jet. We haven't forgotten that yet, have we? It's on a runway in some undisclosed location. We don't know who owns it right now. We don't know what's going to happen with Billy Bishop. We don't know how much money Carmine Nigro got. We don't know what's actually happening at Therme, which isn't Therme anymore, because apparently they can't use that name, because they took that name without permission.

This government is lost. It has lost its way, lost the plot, lost the plan.

When you have 17.7% of young people not having work—that's almost one out of every five in your riding. Think about that.

I genuinely believe that on the other side you do care about young people and you care about their jobs. So you should be supporting this motion. You should be saying to your government, "For the young people in my riding, I'd like to have a youth jobs strategy or a jobs strategy to help people get their first job." That's what you should be asking for—not like the front bench, who said, "Yes, Premier, the priority for this government is to buy the Premier a luxury private jet." We don't know where it is or who owns it, how it got here, whether it has leather seats and a mini-bar. We don't know what was done with that luxury private jet.

I can see a member over there shaking his head like, "No, we don't want to talk about that anymore. You shouldn't be talking about the luxury private jet." But we're going to keep talking about it, because it is the perfect thing—it is the perfect symbol of a government that has lost its way, that is out of touch, out of gas, eight years in, can't figure it out.

1450

And the kicker is—I know you're all going, "No, don't talk about it. It's okay. The Premier said he sold it." Well, he hasn't sold it. But here's the thing: He thinks he deserves it. He still says, "It's my jet. I should have had it and I'm hard done by, because I am actually the most accessible politician in the world." Right? "And you know what? As well as being the most accessible politician in the world, I am the most scrutinized politician in the world." All right, well, if we could actually find something to look at—if you hadn't shredded everything and burned the records and hid the cellphone number.

The other line that was great about the Premier—I love this one. I'm sorry. We get a bit of leeway here, but the Premier says, "See how many messages I have? I have 9,000 messages. That's great service." That's great; he's got 9,000 messages on his phone. That's the rationale for a luxury private jet. "I'm the most accessible politician in the world and I am the most scrutinized politician in the world. Please, please feel sorry for me and give me the jet. I want the jet."

We've got this going on and you can't answer simple questions—simple questions, like how much money did Carmine Nigro's company get for the air that he didn't own, but did own, but we're not quite sure? And where is the Premier's private luxury jet? Do we still own it? Do the people of Ontario still own it? Nope.

It's a simple question, and actually, you've got a few minutes left, so if you can tell me who actually owns it—if somebody wants to stand up and say, "You know what, this person bought it." Now, I know why you're not saying it: Because (a) I don't think it's sold yet, and (b) once you say who you sold it to, then you've got to say who you bought it from. And then you've got to say, well, what did you do with it after you bought it.

Mr. John Vanthof: It takes a while to fence a jet.

Mr. John Fraser: It's true. Okay, it's true. And the price of gas went up, right? Way up. So that was going to be an expensive jet to run. And I just wonder what happened to the pilots. Well, I know where the co-pilot sits and the pilot was here this morning to talk a bit about things.

But you know, folks, I'm happy to be supporting this motion. I really look forward to what remaining debate we have here and all of you taking an opportunity to stand up and fiercely, fiercely defend the luxury private jet, fiercely defend not disclosing a settlement with the Premier's close personal friend and saying, "You know what, folks? We're going to support this motion because we want to send a message to the Premier: Young people matter, so you need to create a summer jobs program."

I want to thank the Leader of the Opposition for bringing it forward.

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

MPP Lisa Gretzky: It's a pleasure to stand on behalf of my constituents in Windsor West to talk about our motion for a comprehensive youth summer jobs program,

which would invest directly in Ontario's future workforce while strengthening local communities at the same time.

I am going to start by talking about what I heard from the Minister of Labour. He talked a lot about the trades and he talked about apprenticeships. What he failed to mention is that under their government, we have seen a sharp increase—an explosion, if you will—of unlicensed apprenticeships, which is exploiting the youth in this province. They are in unsafe workplaces. The hours they are putting in do not count towards their trade and they are getting paid well below what a licensed apprentice would. That is exploitation; that is not something this government should be patting themselves on the back for, Speaker.

We have a 17% youth unemployment rate in this province. And in my community, what that looks like is like in many communities, where we're seeing a record number of people, including youth, accessing food banks. The government likes to talk about records and being historic: Under this government, we have a historic number of young people experiencing homelessness, a historic number of youth visiting food banks.

When we are talking about supporting youth summer jobs, we're talking about many youth who rely on those jobs in order to be able to support the rest of their family, so they have a roof over their head and they're not going to food banks. We're talking about early work experience, which, when they don't have it, it becomes harder to build skills, harder to gain independence and harder to imagine a stable future.

Summer jobs are more than a paycheque; we have to remember that. We are talking about real human beings and real youth. And so, what we are calling on this government to do is to invest in a program that invests in our youth. Those youth go on to work in our parks. They go on to work in our non-profits, like women's shelters, like the Welcome Centre Shelter for Women in Windsor, and they go on to work in our municipalities. They deserve to have that opportunity provided to them by this government.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): I recognize the member for Toronto Centre.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: I rise in support of our NDP motion, which calls on the government to establish a comprehensive youth summer jobs program, to ensure that every young person under 30 in Ontario who wants to work can access meaningful, paid employment or training opportunities in their communities this summer.

Youth unemployment in this province has reached an eye-watering 17.7%, the second-highest in Canada, only ahead of Newfoundland and Labrador. One out of every five young people in your riding, Speaker, and in ridings across the bench is unemployed.

Early work experience is critical for building skills, gaining confidence and establishing pathways to long-term employment and economic stability. But an entire generation of youth feels locked out of a job market, and this government is to blame after eight long, painful years of Conservative rule.

Youth employment solves many problems all at once. It puts money in the pockets of young people to help them

stay out of debt. It keeps young people busy and learning, especially youth at risk in Regent Park and Moss Park, as well as St. James Town in my riding and many in yours. It protects them from recruitment of street gangs because they will have real, meaningful work this summer, if the government supports our motion to do the following: create paid jobs, paid training and placement pathways, and a subsidized employer placement with wraparound supports, including certification and licensing. Unlike this failed government, we have a youth summer jobs plan.

As I conclude my remarks, Speaker, I want to share the words from a high school student, Artemis, who told me, "I was a math tutor, a hospitality ... worker and a co-op student teacher, and a ... placement student right here in the Legislative Assembly. I'm finishing high school with a 95% average and am simultaneously obtaining a certificate from George Brown. Despite all of this, I cannot find a summer job." Should the government support our NDP motion, we can get Artemis working this summer.

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

MPP Lise Vaugeois: I also rise to support our NDP motion to create a youth summer jobs program. I think this is extremely important.

We had a wonderful town hall this week in Thunder Bay, organized by an amazing group of high school students. Their goal was to educate themselves, their peers, their parents and their grandparents about the decades of underfunding of post-secondary institutions and the effects caused by changing OSAP from mostly grants to mostly loans. This is great as permanent revenue for banks, but a betrayal of young people in this province.

The anxiety rates amongst young people are extremely high, and that anxiety gets worse every time they see the government blow up billions of dollars on projects built on lies, like the Therme spa at Ontario Place, the Skills Development Fund that went to the strip club and the Premier's personal dentist, and then there's the luxury plane. It's hard to have hope when you see your government blowing money like that and having no interest in actually supporting youth.

The program offered by the NDP gives those starting places and pays properly. We have so many non-profit organizations desperate for help because they are also so underfunded. There's a lot of work that needs to be done if the funding were there to do it and were there to support young people.

I'll just say that my first job was a summer job program, and I met all kinds of people there I would never have met otherwise. It was an extremely formative experience and well worthwhile. We know how important those jobs can be. It also lets young people experiment, try things out and have some sense of what kind of path they would like to follow, if only they'd had a chance to actually work, do something meaningful, get paid and support themselves.

I fully support this motion.

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

Ms. Jennifer K. French: The government of Ontario should establish a comprehensive youth summer jobs pro-

gram to ensure every young person under 30 who wants to work can access meaningful, paid employment or training opportunities in their community.

1500

Young people deserve a clear path to reach their potential, to build skills, follow their dreams and build a life that they choose, but that isn't the reality in Ontario today. Young people have barriers instead of a clear path. They can't find jobs because jobs aren't there. So building a résumé or skills is not happening and the life they would choose to build for themselves, they can't afford or even imagine. They are getting hit on all sides. The recent changes to OSAP brought students out in droves to defend their ability to make lives for themselves in this province.

Kai wrote to me as a student at Ontario Tech in Oshawa deeply concerned by the recent changes to post-secondary funding. He says, "It feels deeply unfair that we're being asked to take on more debt. Students here are already under pressure from housing costs, food costs and job insecurity, and this policy makes that worse. Replacing grants with more debt and raising tuition doesn't just make things harder, it quietly locks disadvantaged students into a permanent waiting room where potential talent and ambition never get a fair chance to turn into actual opportunity. When access to education is taken away, you're cutting off real people from the chance to build the lives we've been promised we could earn."

This Premier decided to rip up the path for young people to pursue higher education. This Premier hollered at young people to get a job when they came to stand up for their futures, and this Premier needs to believe young people who are asking for a better future and for jobs in their communities.

Today we are asking this Premier and government to clear the way for young people and give them the opportunity to become workers in this province. They need employment. They need financial stability. They need training and to develop skills. And for crying out loud, they need hope. Show leadership, support our motion today to create a comprehensive youth summer jobs program for tomorrow.

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

MPP Jamie West: I want to thank Marit Stiles, the leader of the official opposition, for this opposition day motion to really help the young people in Ontario.

As parents, the thing that we want most for our kids is to have a better shot in life than we had. The Premier—the Conservative government has been a jobs disaster, especially when it comes to young people. They have made life stacked so hard against them in terms of rent and affordability, removing rent control so that rent is going to skyrocket high, removing OSAP grants so the cost of education is incredibly high. And now with an unemployment rate of almost 20%, one in five kids out of work, not able to find work, not able to pay their bills, move forward and move out of their parents' houses.

The leader of the official opposition, the NDP, brings forward a plan that can fix things and make things better

for our kids. The opportunity is here for the Conservative government just to take it and move forward with it. Or, as she said, if you're not going to support it today, just take it and make it your own.

But do what's best for the young people of Ontario. Stand up for our kids. Make life more fair for them. Let their parents have a decent shot of ensuring that their kids are going to be successful as things go forward in life.

That's what we need here. We need leadership and vision that the leader of the official opposition is bringing forward for the people of Ontario. We don't need somebody who was born with a silver spoon in their mouth. We don't need somebody who dropped out of college and got into his dad's business. We don't need somebody who thinks he deserves a \$30-million luxury plane.

We need regular folks with good ideas, like the leader of the official opposition, standing up for the young people today and standing up for those parents. They need to support this.

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

This is the right of reply which marks the end of the debate. I recognize the leader of the official opposition.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I would like to thank all of my colleagues in the official opposition NDP and other opposition members for their comments, because really, you raise so many important points and I appreciate your support.

I also want to thank David, Madeline and Amanmeet, who actually spoke this morning at our press conference to endorse it. These are young people who spoke from personal experience about what this summer jobs plan would mean for them, for their families. I want to thank them, and I want to thank Kim Patel from First Work for also lending their support to this plan. Those are the folks who would be delivering and are ready to deliver this program, right away, any minute now. Let's go.

But anyway, madame la Présidente, les jeunes de l'Ontario sont fatigués de lutter simplement pour survivre. La réalité, c'est qu'ils ne peuvent pas payer leurs courses ni faire le plein d'essence à cause du coût élevé quotidien. Et de plus, c'est tellement difficile de trouver un emploi pour les jeunes en ce moment. J'entends ça tout le temps. Les jeunes de l'Ontario ont tant à offrir. Ils ont besoin d'un gouvernement qui reconnaisse leur potentiel et qui investisse en eux, parce que nous avons besoin d'eux. Nous avons besoin de jeunes dans chaque domaine, et la vérité, c'est que les jeunes font tout ce qu'il faut et ils veulent une chance de combler les lacunes et de servir leur communauté.

C'est notre plan, le plan du NPD, qui leur donnerait un coup de pouce. Nous pouvons leur fournir aujourd'hui un plan qui leur donnerait les compétences, la confiance et les perspectives qui les aideront à s'épanouir.

For those who weren't following along in French, I will say, to repeat some of the things I mentioned earlier, this is really a plan—our plan; the official opposition NDP plan is to give young people a chance and a good start; a good opportunity to learn, to earn some money—yes—to

get some expertise, some experience. Others here spoke about how important those first jobs are for so many people, but today, with record unemployment rates for young people in Ontario—some of the worst in Canada—now, more than ever, Ontario’s young people deserve that chance.

This is an opportunity for the government to put their money where their mouth is. I heard the Minister of Labour talk about how people have to just get out there, get a job, and that we shouldn’t put programs like this in place. But, my goodness, this is not the moment for that kind of, frankly, ideological stuff. This is the time to come together, to put the government funds behind programs that are actually going to give regular people an opportunity, not just the Premier and his private jet or some luxury spa in downtown Toronto. These are not helping young people today. I don’t know on what planet this government is living, but it isn’t this one. This is not going to help young people.

So I would ask, as I mentioned earlier, that the government consider supporting this youth summer jobs plan. I know that the members opposite don’t want to have to return to their communities next week and answer the questions from young people, “Why did you not back up that plan? Why didn’t you come through for us, when we so desperately need opportunities and experience?” The federal government does it; why can’t we?

I want to point out again that this was a proposal from First Work, the folks who actually provide a lot of those opportunities now and are seeing that there are so many more jobs needed out there in our communities. They’re asking for this opportunity to deliver those jobs to young people; to connect young people to those jobs and opportunities, tomorrow—we could do this tomorrow. So why won’t the government do it? What could be more important? Luxury jets for the Premier? I don’t think so.

I want to tell young people this, finally, as an opportunity at close here, because I know that you’re counting on us. You’re counting on every single one of the people elected here, on the government side, on the opposition side; you are counting on us to fight for you.

And I want you to know this: Do not lose hope, because whether or not this government decides to vote this motion down or not, we are going to keep fighting. We are going to keep fighting every single day. I want to assure you of this: As Premier, an NDP government, we will deliver a youth summer jobs program for the young people of this province. We’re not going to rest until we get it to you.

Thank you, Speaker. Let’s do the right thing for the young people of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): MPP Stiles has moved opposition day motion number 5. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

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

All those opposed to the motion will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. There will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1509 to 1519.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): MPP Stiles moved opposition day motion number 5.

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

Ayes

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gilmour, Alexa	Sattler, Peggy
Bell, Jessica	Glover, Chris	Schreiner, Mike
Blais, Stephen	Gretzky, Lisa	Shamji, Adil
Bowman, Stephanie	Hazell, Andrea	Shaw, Sandy
Clancy, Aislinn	Hsu, Ted	Stiles, Marit
Collard, Lucille	Lennox, Robin	Tabuns, Peter
Fairclough, Lee	Mamakwa, Sol	Vanthof, John
Fife, Catherine	McCrimmon, Karen	Vaugeois, Lise
Fraser, John	McKenney, Catherine	West, Jamie
French, Jennifer K.	McMahon, Mary-Margaret	Wong-Tam, Kristyn
Gates, Wayne	Pasma, Chandra	
Gélinas, France	Rakocevic, Tom	

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

All those opposed to the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

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

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day): The ayes are 34; the nays are 62.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negatived.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): I will allow for a few minutes for the chamber to empty of those members who are not staying on for orders of the day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon. Steve Clark: I move that, pursuant to standing order 50 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 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;

That when the order for second reading of Bill 114 is next called, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

That no deferral of the second reading vote on the bill shall be permitted; and

That, if a recorded division is requested on the second reading vote on the bill, the division bells shall be limited to five minutes; and

That upon receiving second reading, the bill shall be ordered for third reading, which order may be called the same day; and

That when the order for third reading of Bill 114 is called, two hours shall be allotted to debate, with 36 minutes for the members of His Majesty's government, 36 minutes for the members of His Majesty's loyal opposition, 36 minutes for the members of the third party, and 12 minutes for the independent members as a group; and

That at the end of this time, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of the third reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

That no deferral of the third reading vote on the bill shall be permitted; and

That, if a recorded division is requested on the third reading vote on the bill, the division bells shall be limited to five minutes.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): Mr. Clark has moved government notice of motion number 18.

I return to the member to start the debate.

Hon. Steve Clark: I'm pleased to join in the debate of this bill. I first want to take the opportunity to introduce the members in the assembly to one of the oldest—if not the oldest—school Parliaments in our province and in our country. These are students from Athens District High School's model Parliament. Please welcome them to Queen's Park.

Speaker, if I might, through you to members of the House: Last Monday, I brought members of the opposition into my boardroom. We had a nice pancake breakfast in the spirit of co-operation. We had Ministry of Finance officials there, and Ministry of Finance officials, including the chief of staff to the Honourable Peter Bethlenfalvy, Ontario's Minister of Finance, walked the opposition through this very important Bill 114. Bill 114 is a bill about delivery, certainty and getting the job done.

During the budget deliberations, we talked about the HST on new home construction, what our government felt would be the best opportunity to kick-start new home sales in the province. We outlined to the opposition that morning in the briefing a couple of things: first of all, that Prime Minister Carney and the federal government asked that our government table this legislation and pass this legislation in very short order. Eligible buyers need to get

full relief. The question for the government and the question that I posed to the opposition is, should we move quickly enough to make the process both simple and clear?

The goal that Bill 114 lays out is a one-window CRA delivery, so the Canada Revenue Agency needs to be involved in this. It's the simplest path for buyers and builders. And from our perspective in the government, we want to be crystal clear that delivering the full 13% HST relief for eligible new homebuyers in Ontario is a priority, and we asked at the time that the opposition consider quick passage so that we have that certainty.

So I asked for their indulgence. I had given them a commitment that other than the budget we would have a full nine-hour debate at second reading, a full six-hour debate at third reading, we would allow bills before the committee. We were unable to come forward with an agreement amongst all the parties for fast passage of second and third reading with no committee. So once the bill received six and a half hours, I asked that debate be closed so that we could table this time allocation to send a clear message to the federal government that Ontario is all in. And we want to make sure that new homebuyers understand that we're doing every single thing we can do here at the provincial level so that we put ourselves in that mode.

The CRA cannot administer Ontario's remaining 5% top-up unless our province first passes legislation creating the authority for that payment. The federal government—Prime Minister Carney, with his discussions with the Premier, with the finance minister, interaction with the finance minister federally. This needs this authority so that regulations can move forward to support a one-window delivery through CRA. I hope to goodness that we all agree that having that one-window delivery would be the most desirable.

1530

I have a feeling that the opposition helped quick passage of the budget, and I appreciate that they stopped debating the budget so that we could pass it quickly. I think they might have gotten into some problems with their supporters, so this might be some form of recompense—that we're not going to be able to pass this bill in an hour. It was good. I enjoyed the debate from all parties. I have a feeling that, depending on who was speaking, there were maybe mixed emotions—because I know that the opposition members are getting just as many calls and emails to their constituency office wanting to know how quickly this can go.

We've been very open and transparent, on the government benches, that there needed to be a Bill 114; that from our perspective, we needed to pass it as soon as possible, and I hope that after the debate today, we'll be certainly in a better position to do that. I'm certainly trying to provide certainty to buyers and to builders on rules, on timing and how the rebate will be received.

Just to recap, we were asked by the federal government to pass this bill. We decided we wanted to pass it as soon as possible to provide that delivery, that certainty and that authority for the CRA to be able to work with the province so that we could realize this.

Speaker, I'm not going to belabour it anymore. I think I've been very clear. I'm looking forward to, again, hearing from the opposition members. I'm certainly not deterred. I decided to send a very clear message today that there would be no night sitting today. So I'm not trying to belabour this.

I really, truly think that this is a good bill for Ontarians. It needs to pass fast. We want to make sure that the feds know that Ontario is all in. And it would be nice if, at the end of the day, regardless of the rhetoric, we all support this bill, are able to move forward and can tell buyers and builders that this is something that's a good thing for Ontario.

So I'll just leave it at that. I look forward to hearing from members of the opposition.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to stand in the House and speak on behalf of the residents of Timiskaming–Cochrane—and today, on behalf of the official opposition, regarding this time allocation motion on Bill 114.

I did listen intently to what the government House leader was saying. I enjoy the House, and I try to listen to what people say. I would like to thank him for calling and organizing the briefing on Monday with all the House leaders and finance critics. That doesn't happen very often. We may not agree on a lot of issues—and it was something that hasn't happened very often with this government. It was a true briefing. When we asked questions—non-political, but “how is this going to work?”—we got real answers. I give credit where credit is due. The pancakes weren't bad either. I've got to say, of all the handshakes-and-pancakes meetings we've had, that was probably the best one.

I do want to make a few points. The government House leader thanked us for the quick budget debate. There is still some debate on whether there were perhaps some games played a little bit to hasten that debate. Actually, it would have been better for the government if that debate continued and if the budget had gone through the committee process, because perhaps, if you hadn't time-allocated the budget, you wouldn't have had to create this bill. Because really, this bill should have been part of the budget.

Now, I've said this a few times, but I'm going to say it again: You were in such a hurry to hide the ability of the press, the opposition and the public to gain knowledge, to have the freedom-of-information process to find out what the Premier did, what cabinet knew about regarding the green belt and who knows what else—you were in such a hurry to cover that up that whoever was writing the budget forgot to include the HST for new homes. That's basically as simply as I can put it.

So you time-allocated the budget to rush it through and then, after it was through, somebody said, “Oops.” And you know who really said, “Oops”? The federal government. The government House leader said that Prime Minister Carney wanted assurance. I can see why. I can imagine the phone call. “Hey, Premier, we had this budget.

We had this HST. I thought we were working together on this and you seem to have forgotten to include it. What's the deal?”

I get it: They want certainty. They want certainty because there have been a few other cases where the federal government has tried to work together with the province and it didn't actually work out the way it was planned.

On this one, with the one window, we get that. We get the idea that what's trying to be facilitated here is that you don't have to pay the HST for a new home and then get it rebated. That's basically what you're trying to eliminate. Then your qualification for your mortgage isn't as high. We get all that. And what the government is hoping to do is spur home building by having an HST sale. Both the federal and the province are working together on that. It's going to cost a couple of billion dollars if it works the way it's supposed to. I believe there is \$800 million that is going to be put in by the province on this.

Now, we don't know if that \$800 million is actually going—that the taxpayers of Ontario are putting in. We don't really know how beneficial that's going to be. But the HST rebate for a new home purchase, we get that.

What this rebate is also largely for—and I asked this question at the briefing—is a lot of unsold condos that are already built but have never been sold. That's really one of the reasons that this is going forward.

I get that for somebody who wants to build a house, this is a really good incentive. But it's also a big incentive for people to buy those condos, something that isn't focused on a lot. This is not a first-time home buyer thing, because there are not a lot of first-time home buyers who buy new homes. For a \$500,000 or an \$800,000 or a \$900,000 mortgage, you need to be pretty established to be able to pay that. So it's for all buyers who are buying new builds.

It could also be—and please correct me if I'm wrong, since we didn't have much time to debate the bill itself—an investor who buys 100 condos and gets the HST back. I'm not saying that's bad; I'm just saying that's not what people are thinking about, but that's what could very well happen, and that will.

1540

Why the condo market needs to be, or why developers—and I'm not anti-developer. I get it. You need people to build housing. I get that, but the last quarter from January to March is the first time since they've started keeping statistics that no condo development was started. The first time ever.

I heard the Minister of Housing: “Year over year, everything's doing great.” No, not really—not really, because if you talk to people who know real estate, you need about 5,000 condos a year to come on the market. That's what you need, about, in a year, and you've got the last quarter—not one was started. That might very well be the next quarter as well.

So you're trying to spur condo developers. I get that.

MPP Jamie West: But the price would come down.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes, but the price would come down. But there's no guarantee of that either. Again,

philosophically, I get what you're trying to do, or not, but it's a double-edged sword. When you have to pay the HST and get it back, the one thing is, you know for sure who's getting the HST back. Right? Because when the buyer has to pay it, and then the buyer is rebated, you know that the buyer is getting it back, and the buyer is putting pressure on the builder to lower the price. When the rebate is basically in the pre—the builder is not facing as much pressure. I'm not saying this is going to happen, but it could—that there's price creep because of the HST. The pressure is taken off the HST. It could be.

Again, we're bringing these issues up because they've never really been discussed here. Because of the way this is structured, they're never going to be discussed at committee, where you're supposed to get people who really know about these things. Having me talk about the condo business? Come on, man, I rent a condo because I got this job. I know nothing about condos, or very little.

MPP Jamie West: How many dairy cows can you fit in a condo?

Mr. John Vanthof: There's not too many cows in condos.

But they are legitimate questions. They are legitimate questions that actually should have been asked during the budget committee because this is the bill that wasn't supposed to be, because it was supposed to be part of the budget.

Now you can say "Oh, that's not"—well, the budget was like a couple of weeks ago, right? If this bill had come a year after, like home housing bill number 18: "Everything's working but we need one more bill"—but this came so close after the budget, and it was part of the budget advertising. I get that the government is under pressure because the builders are advertising on the radio thanking the federal government and the provincial government for passing this legislation. It hasn't been passed provincially.

I get that the government's under pressure. I get that. I get that, but I hope as we move forward—and I don't think it's rocket science to everybody: this bill's going to pass—that this government, the people behind the scenes, the people in these chairs, tries to look back and, "Okay, so what could we do better?" or, "What could we do?" Because when I heard the government House leader say they are doing everything they could for housing—okay, I have some issues with that.

This \$800 million that is the provincial part of this rebate program—perhaps the government could do some work. So, if they took \$800 million and actually incentivized the construction of affordable housing to help get first-time homebuyers or renters into affordable housing so they can start their careers—start their lives. We just had a motion about a job program for young people, right? Young people are facing problems getting jobs, but they're also facing problems getting their first home.

If you want to say that's not true, I would like to take a poll. How many people my age or a bit younger have kids in their basements? There's quite a few of them, like my colleague right here—and me once in a while, too. I love

my kids, right? But they're not doing it because they love me that much. I know everybody here loves me, but my kids—no. My kids always love me, but they don't always want—our kids all love us, and we love our kids. But they want to be able to fly.

There are things that this government could do that it's unwilling to do philosophically.

You believe—or whoever is calling the shots there believes—that the free market is going to solve all the issues. Affordable housing will not be solved by the free market. And as much as I like developers—and I do—and as much as I like building contractors, and as much—and add to that, like, framers. I really respect people who build housing. But they're not going to build housing unless they make a profit on it. I get that. I was a business person before I got this job. I didn't do things to lose money, right? Well, affordable housing is not as profitable in many cases to build as the bigger stuff. They're going to need some kind of incentive or regulation—inclusionary zoning or something else that you guys don't really like.

But you're going to need to do something to get the starters, the people who are starting their lives, into housing. That's why it's not limited to first-time homebuyers, because it didn't work that well with first-time homebuyers. Because a first-time homebuyer, the first time you want to buy a house—again, you know?

I'll use my kids as an example: My daughter has got a very good job. Her husband has got a very good job. And for their first house, they had to move out of the GTA. And they make collectively more than twice what I make, and they could not afford a home in the GTA. You know, a home big enough for two kids—no. Do the math. They would have had a bigger mortgage than I had on my farm, and we could barely pay the mortgage on the farm.

So, yes, there is an issue, but you need to look—I'm getting lost. If you want to do everything you can do, you need to look at a way to get people who are starting their lives into housing. And so far, you haven't done it. And why you haven't done it is because you haven't actually been looking at housing. You have been looking at solving problems for certain segments—segments who talk to you a lot.

1550

The greenbelt had nothing to do with housing; it had to do with some people who, if they had access to the greenbelt to build housing, would have made a lot of money. We get that. It would have been good for them, and you would have gotten some more houses, but it wasn't really about housing. It was about a profitable deal.

That might be one of the things—why you passed this freedom-of-information stuff to hide that: So we'll never be able to see it, until the next government changes it and opens it up. Unless you're doing like the member of Humber River–Black Creek suggested this morning—that the shredders are working overtime. I don't know.

But I remember the speeches: That was going to solve the housing crisis. "The greenbelt, the greenbelt—if only we had more land"—it wasn't about housing. It wasn't. The MZO's weren't about housing. This is, at least a little bit—it's doing something for your inventory.

You're doing some good things, believe it or not. You're putting some money towards infrastructure, right? Because you're saying to the municipalities that they have to lessen development charges because development charges are killing housing. Okay. But development charges are what builds water and sewers and parks. So if you're telling the municipalities that you have to lower development charges, how do you get the water and the sewers and the parks built? Now, your argument is, "Oh, but municipalities are building up huge surpluses"—I don't know; maybe some of them are. But the ones in my part of the world aren't.

So if you took \$800 million and put that into infrastructure for communities who can't now afford to put it in, would that maybe do more for the housing than this? Now, maybe we should take another \$800 million. Maybe we should take the \$2 billion for the garage mahal. And maybe, before we did that \$2 billion, maybe you should have—where could this \$2 billion be the best spent? Maybe Billy Bishop international isn't the best way to drive this province forward, but I'm not sure. We're not sure that whoever's calling the shots isn't actually thinking that way.

If you want to solve the housing crisis—and we have a housing crisis; I think we all know that. And I say this; I'm going to say this every time: You're doing very well creating tent cities. You're number one on tent cities. So this is not helping that. Again, does it help? Yes. What are we on now: housing bill number seven or eight? They're all so successful and you keep having to come up with new ideas. There is a problem.

So I'm not going to belabour this a lot, but I'm fairly confident that Prime Minister Carney is going to get his assurance that the province is actually going to follow through on this, because this bill is going to pass. You know, sometimes, I wish I could be a fly on the wall, but that phone call must have been great.

I don't think—I'm going to get myself in trouble. No one is expecting me to be the scholar who found that this wasn't in the budget, but our research team did. But they assumed—and maybe that's what the government assumed too—that this could be done by regulation after the fact. It couldn't be. We didn't know that, but we don't have the Ministry of Finance; we've got a couple of researchers. We don't have the Ministry of Finance—and all at their disposal—who have been thinking about this for quite a while, because you would assume—and perhaps we should never assume, but you would assume that this has been in the works for a while, right? But it didn't seem to be, because it was one of those, "Oh, d'oh." It was like the Homer Simpson moment of the HST.

Again, I give credit where credit's due; I want to end this on a good note. I give credit to the government House leader for organizing the briefing.

Hon. Nolan Quinn: And pancakes.

Mr. John Vanthof: I even liked the pancakes.

But if there were more briefings like that, if the government actually took the time to be serious about committees—because we get it: You have a majority mandate.

You don't have the right to put forward bad legislation, and you're going to get caught with that. At some point, people are going to wake up, just like they've woken up to—the guy who wants the private jet isn't your buddy next door, unless you put a Tim Hortons little kiosk on the private jet. And maybe that was there. That might have been part of it. You don't want Starbucks on a private jet.

But, please, for the sake of Ontarians, for the next three years—next however long—take this place seriously. Because that's the problem: You're not taking this place seriously. You come late. You maybe leave early. You put as much legislation as you can, and then Ontarians pay the price. And Ontarians have already paid the price several times with this budget, with changing the freedom-of-information laws—and then I listened: "Oh, things have changed a lot in the 40 years. We didn't have email. We didn't have cellphones. We didn't have"—okay. But the one thing that hasn't changed is we had ethics 40 years ago. We should still have ethics now.

When you change legislation retroactively, no, that doesn't pass the smell test. That doesn't pass the smell test. That is where the people of Ontario are losing, because something went wrong. Maybe several things went wrong, or maybe they went wrong on purpose. And when the Premier was forced by the courts to release the records, he had the power—enabled by you—to change the law to make himself and to make yourselves above the law. You didn't get the mandate to do that, and at some point you will pay for that.

With the plane, he threw the cabinet under the bus. It wasn't his plane; the whole cabinet agreed to that. Remember? The whole cabinet—it was unanimous. It was unanimous. Everybody wanted the plane. And at some point—at some point—when whatever comes out, when you're trying to hide, it will be the same thing: "It wasn't me. They all agreed." You will get thrown under the bus.

1600

Now, you might be able to avoid the bus. No problem. But you might not. So, are we—I almost lost my glasses. I haven't used them yet. I'm running out of steam.

Obviously, we're going to vote against time allocation. How we're going to vote—I think I've been fairly clear how we're going to vote on HST itself, on the principle. You won't be able to say we voted against everything. Because that drives me crazy, too, right? Why, when this government—continually, your only defence every time is because we voted against X and we voted against the budget. This one, you gave us a big out. The freedom of information, no one with a conscience would vote for that. Sorry.

The Minister of Energy and Mines, I once called myself a PC. He said—"No," I said, "I'm a principled conservative, which you guys aren't." Because I—

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: Because you gave us an out. You gave us an out. But if you think that people are going to buy that just because we vote against a budget, that we want to destroy this province, eventually, that is going to wear really thin. Like the 50% of the time when you were

in opposition that you voted for the Liberals—50% of the time, right?

MPP Jamie West: Propping them up.

Mr. John Vanthof: You were propping them up, right? You are assuming that people—people don't pay a lot of attention to what goes on here, but you're assuming that your constituents, that the people of Ontario are dumb, and they're not.

So, again, we are not going to be supporting this time allocation motion. I understand that the government House leader made it very clear he needed to get this through the House as quickly as possible, and he is taking the steps to get it through the House as quickly as possible. I fully understand that and I appreciate that. And we are doing everything we can to make sure that this bill and all bills are fully scrutinized. That's our job. And our job is also to propose, so we proposed a summer jobs program for young people, and you turned it down. Okay. It's our job to scrutinize and propose. It's your job to hopefully use your mandate to help the people of Ontario instead of hurting them.

Thank you for that, Speaker.

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

M^{me} Lucille Collard: For the last 10 minutes, I've been expecting the member to sit down. I keep picking up my papers, ready to go, but then I have to say I really appreciate his ability to speak elaborately on pretty much anything he stands up for.

But I don't like standing up and speaking ad nauseam for things that don't require that level of attention, and the member just mentioned that very few people pay attention to what's happening here, so I think it's important to try to be efficient.

And with that, I will start by saying that, here we are again, speaking about a time allocation motion. It feels like déjà vu all over again, but I can't say that I'm against this for once because of the circumstances. It will allow the government to fix a mistake that they made, and I think we can support that, because it's going to be for the benefit of Ontarians.

It is true that the government House leader tried to buy our collaboration with breakfast, and the briefing was appreciated. Unfortunately, this is now a boy-who-cried-wolf situation. This government has used and abused time allocation motions to the point where even when it might make sense to use one, we get suspicious. Maybe that's why the government didn't get the co-operation it was hoping for. I don't know.

We can't forget that this government chose to extend the winter sitting break unnecessarily. This means that the government had over three months to do their due diligence for the budget. That's a period when the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the Attorney General, the Premier, their offices and their ministries should have been dotting the i's and crossing the t's to actually make their budget measures ready to implement. I don't know what you guys were doing. Clearly that was not done, meaning that we now

have to use some of the precious limited time we have in this chamber to double back and patch the mistakes.

Now, I can appreciate that the budget process is a long one and a task with many, many people involved. Through this long process, though, I find it puzzling that no one thought to check if the measures proposed could even be implemented under the current Retail Sales Tax Act.

This is what happens when legislation is rushed and, just as importantly, when stakeholders are not consulted and decisions are made behind closed doors without input.

Speaking to Bill 114 itself, it will allow for the implementation of measures that our caucus has been calling for for quite some time. In fact, we tabled an opposition day motion with similar measures, giving a rebate on the federal portion of the HST on primary home purchases—through 2030, though, instead of the proposed limit of March 31, 2027. I'm glad that the government has chosen to somewhat agree, but just one year of rebate, in my opinion, will not give a significant boost to home building.

But this bill is not the issue. The issue is a government that is putting slapdash legislation on the order paper. This is a symptom of government that thinks that speed is more important than accuracy and effectiveness, that we'll rush things through to avoid debate and worry about the consequences and the holes to patch later.

This government has time-allocated more bills than not since the last election, a year ago—or 15 months, I would say. That's a very bad precedent that the government is setting. Maybe the government of the day should also think about what could be coming back to bite them down the road, setting that precedent.

But beyond carelessness, this is also a story of arrogance. With a majority, this government is unconcerned about making sure their legislation is solid. They feel certain that, no matter the state it's in, their legislative agenda will pass.

So I hope the members opposite take this experience as a lesson. Take the time to be diligent, to be thorough and use our fulsome legislative process to pass meaningful and well-drafted legislation. I'll even offer that on this side of the House, we're happy to help you do just that, with important feedback and thoughtful proposed amendments during committee review. This is a serious offer. Think about it.

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

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: It's always an honour to rise in this chamber on behalf of my constituents in Don Valley West, and this afternoon, it's on time allocation of Bill 114, the HST Relief Implementation Act.

The government tabled this bill, and we talked about, as a caucus, supporting it, because the government certainly needs all the help it can get, because they've made such a mess of the housing file.

I certainly support the idea of removing HST off of all new homes, because it actually was Ontario Liberals who first introduced that idea. We called for HST relief for homebuyers on October 29, 2025, but, sadly, the govern-

ment voted against it, but they did talk about doing it. They started to talk about doing it last fall, and I just want to point out that since all of this has been going on, I've actually had a number of emails from constituents who are kind of confused about all this. The government started talking about doing it. That was a positive sign. A number of them actually thought, "Well, they'll probably make it retroactive, like they did with the HST rebate for first-time homebuyers." So I'm actually having to talk to constituents and, sadly, explain to them that, unfortunately, because they're not first-time homebuyers, they will not be eligible for this because it's not retroactive. So it's one unfortunate consequence for homebuyers who were hoping for some relief, especially during this very serious affordability crisis.

1610

Speaker, the government announced with great fanfare that they would waive the provincial portion of HST on qualifying new homes for all buyers. That sounds positive. But the 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 a fourth consecutive year in 2025. And the level of home building—around 65,000 units—was more than 30% below the 100,000 units built in 2021. So under this government and all these housing bills, it's actually getting worse.

In fact, the dismal Ford Conservative government has done such a bad job with their housing policies that the government, including the finance minister, who included the \$1.5-million target in his budget a few years ago, won't even utter that phrase—won't even talk about his government's promise to build 1.5 million homes by 2031, because it's another broken promise of this Conservative government.

So while Bill 114 may be necessary to help the government fix this housing mess, it will only do small measures, because we know it's temporary.

I would like to spend some time, as my great colleague from Ottawa-Vanier did, discussing this government's almost religious devotion to time allocation. Time allocation is supposed to be an extraordinary tool reserved for exceptional circumstances, but, instead, this government has normalized it to the point where it has become routine. How many times have we all stood up here and had this very fun debate about time allocation? It feels much less like a procedural necessity and more like a mechanism to shield the government from scrutiny, from accountability.

This government certainly has shown an increasing discomfort with public scrutiny, especially recently.

We know that the budget bill also included changes to FOI laws, which the finance minister didn't mention once in his budget debate. I can only assume that he's not that proud of those changes, because he did not highlight it during his budget debate nor in the introduction of the bill.

The 2026 Ontario budget was the government's second budget in the last three years to be time-allocated, meaning there were no hearings before committee, no expert testimony, no engagement with municipalities, industry, labour or the public. Think about that, Speaker. The

budget bill is the most important bill that a government introduces in a year. It determines their priorities, how they're going to spend money, how they're going to deliver public services.

And in this year's budget, a real zinger—the changes to FOI laws. I think that's the only reason that this government decided to shield itself from public hearings on that bill. They didn't want to hear what the public had to say about that. So the public has resorted to talking about it online, emailing their MPPs, talking to the media. It's very clear why they've introduced this bill. One of the ministers stood up and said, "Don't worry. Nothing is changing." Well, if nothing were changing, they wouldn't have had to put the FOI changes in place. It's a little bit ironic, isn't it?

We know that, in fact, things are changing. Patricia Kosseim, the Information and Privacy Commissioner, talked at length about that. Here's what she had to say: "Taking away Ontarians' access rights—retroactively and into the future—denies them the information they need to understand government decision-making at the highest levels and hold their governments to account. Such a change would not modernize access laws, strengthen privacy, or enhance security; it would weaken transparency and accountability for generations to come. This should be concerning for all Ontarians, regardless of political affiliation. We urge the government to reconsider its proposal and keep public trust onside."

The government says one thing; an independent office says the exact opposite. You have to wonder if anyone except the members on the government benches believe what the government has to say. I would say no, Speaker. And we know that they've introduced those laws because they want to hide. They want to hide what's on the Premier's cellphone. As the Premier says, "Oh, yeah, don't break the rules; change them." That's what he said, Speaker.

Here's a perfect example of the Premier taking his own advice: "I didn't like the rules, so I'm changing them. I'm not going to allow people to see my personal phone records even though I use them for government business. And I want to shield myself because the RCMP is investigating this government for its changes to the greenbelt." The government side was pretty happy when that bill passed, and they knew that they could turn the lights off on transparency in this government.

Speaker, again, in the essence of time, I will close my remarks. Again, the idea to time-allocate this, to try to get HST relief on homes done as fast as we can to help this government fix its housing mess, is certainly something I can support.

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

Pursuant to standing order 50(b), I am now required to put the question.

Mr. Clark has moved government notice of motion number 18, relating to the allocation of time on 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.

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

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

All those opposed to the motion will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

Vote deferred.

KEEPING CRIMINALS BEHIND BARS

ACT, 2026

LOI DE 2026 VISANT À MAINTENIR

LES CRIMINELS DERRIÈRE

LES BARREAUX

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 11, 2026, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 75, An Act to enact the Constable Joe MacDonald Public Safety Officers' Survivors Scholarship Fund Act, 2026 and to amend various other Acts / Projet de loi 75, Loi édictant la Loi de 2026 sur le Fonds Joe MacDonald de bourses d'études à l'intention des survivants d'agents de sécurité publique et modifiant diverses autres lois.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Speaker, I want to share my time with the members from Toronto Centre and Niagara Falls.

I rise today to speak with my community of London—Fanshawe in mind, because I'm considering the utmost importance of their safety and concerns that they have brought to me regarding the criminal justice system.

There are measures that are worthwhile in this bill, such as schedule 1. As a member representing London, I can tell you that the reports of unethical animal testing happening in our community were deeply disturbing. They shocked residents, they angered animal lovers and they exposed a gap in oversight that should have never existed in the first place. People in my community expect better. They expect that animals are treated humanely and that scientific advancement never comes at the cost of basic ethics.

I want to acknowledge that the government did act swiftly when that issue came up in London. The proposed restrictions on breeding cats and dogs for research, the increased penalties and the new licensing requirements are meaningful steps forward. These are changes that are worth passing, and these are changes that are worth protecting.

1620

I want to read right now some of the committee deputations that happened during this bill. Animal advocates such as Animal Justice were supportive of Bill 75, while also recommending additional protections, including:

- a more expansive ban on invasive testing, including animals in registered research facilities under mandatory animal abuse reporting laws;

- ending pound and shelter seizures for research; and

- establishing positive obligations to rehome obtained animals from pounds and shelters at the conclusion of research.

Speaker, on the opposite side, life sciences experts such as Life Sciences Ontario shared concerns that proposed amendments to the animal research act:

- may affect patient access to new therapies;

- Ontario-based research capacities may relocate to other jurisdictions;

- drug development and supply chains may be disrupted; and

- animal welfare outcomes may worsen globally as a result, as research shifts to jurisdictions with less comprehensive oversight systems.

Those are two different opinions there, which is very important, and that's why we take things to committee—which is exactly why I have to ask this government, when the London community likes schedule 1 and asked for schedule 1, why this government chooses to jeopardize them. Because bundling the important welfare reforms into a bill that includes provisions that are, frankly, constitutionally questionable—why risk all this on schedule 2?

Schedule 2 introduces something that should concern every member of this House: cash bail. Let's be clear what it means: It means that whether someone goes home or remains in custody before trial could depend on not their risk to the public safety but their ability to pay. That is not justice. It's a two-tiered system: one for those with means and one for those without.

We have already heard serious concerns from legal experts that this proposal may not even be within the provincial jurisdiction. Under the Constitution, criminal procedures, including bail, are a federal responsibility. So the question becomes, what is this government doing here? Are they genuinely trying to improve public safety or are they picking a constitutional fight they know they can't win?

This government has heard from numerous legal advocates—like the Canadian Criminal Justice Association, the Criminal Lawyers' Association—that stated that schedule 2, Bail Act amendments, including cash bail, is outside of provincial jurisdiction, as criminal laws fall within the federal jurisdiction under the Constitution Act of 1867. I think we all know that federal laws are under the federal government. Legal advocates also have submitted that schedule 2 may also be unconstitutional for running contrary to the guarantee to reasonable bail in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Speaker, this is something the government is choosing to ignore and it could jeopardize the bill entirely, because if this provision of schedule 2, the Bail Act, is challenged—and all indications are that it will be—then the taxpayer dollars will be spent defending a law that ultimately will be struck down.

This is something we see over and over again: This government creates laws which actually get challenged because they are unconstitutional. I reference Bill 124 as one of those unconstitutional laws, which cost the legal

system excessive amounts of money for this government to defend an unconstitutional law. They lost, and then they had to pay, retroactively, the damages that resulted because of that unconstitutional law in Bill 124.

And if that happens, if it gets challenged, what's going to become of schedule 1? What becomes of those animal protections that people in my community have been contacting my office and pleading for? This is the problem with omnibus legislation. When you tie good policy to bad policy, you risk losing both.

Speaker, if the government is serious about public safety, then I suggest they start fixing what's already broken, because Ontario's bail system is not failing due to lack of harshness; it is failing due to lack of resources, coordination and basic functionality.

Bail hearings are supposed to happen within 24 hours. In many parts of this province, that simply does not happen. Crown prosecutors are overwhelmed, carrying caseloads so high they cannot properly assess risk. Court backlogs are so severe that serious cases—and I mean excessively serious cases—are being thrown out due to unconstitutional delays.

So when members across the aisle talk about “tough on crime,” I have a simple response: Fix the bail courts. Fix delays. Fix the system that's already in your hands, because introducing cash bail does nothing to address the underlying failures of this justice court system. There are better, smarter and more effective ways to improve public safety. One of them is ensuring people actually have access to legal counsel at bail hearings. Too many individuals are navigating this complex system alone—trust me; it's complex—which means it leads to delays, repeated adjournments and poor outcomes.

Another way is investing in the bail supervision and verification programs. These programs actually work, Speaker. They provide supervision, yes, but they also provide support such as housing connections, mental health services and addiction treatment. They help address the root cause of offending, and they do so at a fraction of the cost of keeping someone in a correctional facility. We also know that residential bail bed programs can provide safe, supervised environments for individuals who are otherwise being detained simply because they lack stable housing or financial resources.

These are practical solutions. These are evidence-based solutions. And Speaker, I want to refer to the wonderful outcomes and the reasons why we need to invest more into bail supervision and verification programs: because in recent data, it shows exceptionally high rates of clients attending all their scheduled court cases; 96% of people who have been charged or allegedly charged under this program will appear in court. That, and also these programs cost—and I talked about efficiency—\$7.65 per day compared to over \$400 per day for detention. That's a significant cost savings.

What they do is nearly 50% of the percip-, parcip-, parcipants—you know what? Today I'm all thumbs.

Interjection.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Parcipants—say it again.

MPP Jamie West: Participants.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Participants—yes; I haven't had lunch, so my blood sugar is a little low—eventually have their charges withdrawn or stayed, suggesting that they may have been detained unnecessarily without these programs. That's the success of some of the way that this works.

This program also—most clients complete their supervision without any breach or new charges. It's low breach rates. So when the government talks about letting people out—we shouldn't let people that are high risk out in public, absolutely. But again, creating this system is going to imbalance whether or not you can afford bail. The ones that are low risk and can't afford that bail, this is where you need to have these programs because, rather than detaining them and costing the system more, they can actually be in a program that verifies them and has supervision and where the success rate of not reoffending and going back or creating more long-term cost for justice is better.

The core functions of the programs are that they provide courts with neutral factual information to determine an accused person's suitability for release, so they actually are experts in assessing people like that to verify if they're a candidate for this supervision and verification program. The supervision—they monitor clients to ensure their compliance with bail conditions like reporting to caseworkers.

Again, there's an opportunity for them to be in the community, but with proper supervision. They also, as I mentioned, offer supports, because oftentimes when people get bail—let's say you can come up with the money, if the government makes it so hard to do that. But they get bail, but then if they don't have housing or if they don't have mental health supports or they have addiction and they can't find treatment for that, that problem escalates. But under this program, they offer those supports.

1630

The impact on the justice system, if we look at how successful these programs are, is that it reduces overcrowding. So it diverts, as I mentioned, low-risk individuals away from jails, freeing up the space for those with serious risks. It also helps individuals who lack the financial means or social ties, like a surety—because you've got to have that—to secure their own release. So they actually try to connect those two things. And then, also, there's a dedicated team. Early verification helps expedite bail hearings and reduce time-to-trial delays, because we know that it can take a long time for someone to get to a trial.

Organizations like the John Howard Society of Ontario advocate for expanding these programs as common sense to fix a system that's currently crushed by the human and financial costs of unnecessary pre-trial detention.

I want to read what the John Howard Society has said on June 21, 2025: “This program serves all people, ages 16 and up”—because, remember, youth sometimes end up in this cycle of incarceration; these programs really help lower recidivism and reconviction—“accused of criminal

offences and required to attend bail court. It provides information to courts to speed up the court process for those who qualify for bail, without the resources or support to meet bail conditions, we also offer supervision to those released while awaiting trial. Eligibility is determined by the JHS court worker. The program supports the reduction of delays in criminal court and represents a cost-effective alternative to remand in jail, by enabling the release of an accused individual. An assessment is completed upon release. The results of the assessment help the client and the bail supervisor in developing a case plan to address the concerns that may have contributed to the alleged offence and/or be causing difficulty in a person's life. Referrals are provided to other community agencies and resources to aid the client in reaching their goals. This program is funded by the Ministry of the Attorney General."

I talk about this program because these are the kinds of investments that we can see where it's—people are going to be held accountable, absolutely. But this unconstitutional schedule 2 where if you can't come up with the money, you're struck in jail—and at what cost, as well? This program costs \$7.65 per day, as opposed to \$400 for incarceration. So those who are eligible to come out and they can't come up with that money, this is the type of program we should be investing in.

And because we can't talk about bail without talking about people behind these cases, here's where I want to take a moment to talk about my own experience—not in jail; I have never been incarcerated yet—as someone who worked in corrections. When I went to Loyalist College in Belleville—

Interjection.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Yes, I applied. I wanted to be a police officer when I was a young teenager, and I set myself on that path. In high school, I found my own co-op placement at Bishop Cronyn centre, which was a halfway house for federal parolees. At 17, I talked the counsellor into allowing me to have a co-op placement in this halfway house of federal parolees. I did some time there working there as a volunteer, because my thought, wanting to be a police officer, was—I look back and I think I'm still in that same mindset. I take a holistic approach to things I want to do, so I want to know the persons I'm going to be in contact with. So having that co-op, I thought, "You know what? I'm going to meet people—face to face—who've been incarcerated, and kind of get the different sides of what I'm going to do as a police officer." That was my one way of starting to get to know that.

Then the other thing I did, of course, is I enrolled in Loyalist College's policing and corrections—law and security, it was called back then; I don't know what it's called now—and went through the whole program. I had excellent grades, but what happened was my eyes are so bad that if I take off my glasses, I couldn't see across the aisle if my life depended on it. Unfortunately, back then, they were very particular about eyesight—as they should be—and there weren't laser treatments and all that kind of stuff, so I changed my course of study into corrections

instead of policing. And so this is where I talk about—I have some experience in that.

And so what happened was, I finished the course and got hired, of course. Back then, young people could come out of school and find a job, especially in the field that they studied, right? It was exciting actually, because you could put that knowledge to work and experience on the ground.

I got hired by the youth detention centre on King Street, right across from the police station. I did work there. I got hired by St. Leonard's Society on King Edward Street. They had a halfway house; they still have a halfway house. They actually took a three-storey walk-up or a four-storey walk-up and renovated it for a secured halfway house complex. And I also worked on Egerton, where there is a halfway house. I couldn't obtain a full-time job, I kind of had to work my way in. But that's what I did and enjoyed it thoroughly. I often did the night shift.

But one thing that I found in that work was that a lot of those—and it was usually a male parole halfway house that I was working in. And what I found was that a lot of people who were incarcerated, they had addiction problems. And more prevalent back then was alcohol, so I'm very keen on smelling things like alcohol. I can smell that right off; probably across the way if someone was impaired, I could smell that alcohol. But what happened is there was two incidences where I smelled alcohol on a couple of parolees and they had to be sent back.

At that point, I decided that really this is maybe not my career, simply because, first of all, I wanted to be in policing, and I had to redirect myself. And also, alcoholism is a disease, it's an addiction and, really, treatment should have been enforced or given more options so someone could do that. Sending someone back because they broke that parole of alcoholism, it wasn't a crime. I understand it was a breach of parole but there should be more support.

So that's why I look at the verification supervision program as a way, if someone has lower risk of an offence, that these are great programs instead of keeping them behind bars. Because we know that when you continue being incarcerated, sometimes you pick up different habits and it's not a good environment.

In the work that I did, as I say, I saw first-hand that people entering our justice system were people in crisis, and there are people struggling with many things, as I mentioned earlier. They're committing what they often call survival crimes: acts born out of desperation and not malice. And what happens when we release someone on bail without supports, we send them right back into that same environment that led them there in the first place. So that's why it's really important to have this.

The same instability that they get released into, the same lack of opportunity and the same desperation, that's not a recipe for safer communities, Speaker. As I said, if we look at—can you tell me the time, Jamie, when I'm ready?

I challenge the government in this: If we look at this program and we say, "This is the cost of the program," and it's relatively very inexpensive compared to incarcera-

tion—this is the cost of the program, but I'm about outcomes too, right? So if it's a cost, a heavy cost or low cost, I want to know the results are there.

So this government should look at this program because there's not very many of these programs available—I think it's 17 in Ontario, right? And if we look at these programs and if they are successfully having people on bail with this supervision and they're not reoffending and they're not a risk to society because they have this program following them, it is worthwhile, right? And they will also hopefully get supports that they can draw upon later in their life.

What's the time thing?

MPP Jamie West: You've got 20 minutes right now.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Twenty minutes, so I've got five more minutes—sorry, I just want to make sure I don't go over time.

So if we're serious about continuing to break this cycle, Speaker, I think then we need to invest in supports like this and not just impose stricter conditions or higher financial barriers. Public safety is achieved not just through slogans and shortcuts like “We're going to be tough on crime.” It's achieved through thoughtful and proper investment and respect for the rule of law, including the constitution.

Yet these are areas that we can support. There are areas we can support in schedule 1 of this bill and schedule 3. I met with police officers and they talked about the Constable Joe MacDonald public safety fund and now, in schedule 3, they're going to actually put it into provincial law, which is a really good thing because we do need to make sure that our first responders—we had some tragedies, obviously, in the last little while when they pass for reasons, on duty. Maybe that also should be expanded, some of those definitions, where children of the officers are able to get funding to continue their post-secondary education.

1640

It's a devastating thing to lose a parent and to have a parent who is putting their life on the line every day—and that risk is exponentially high. We need to ensure that their families don't fall into a cycle, as many families that I described—don't fall into a pattern and a cycle where they're not set up to at least allow them to succeed, because that loss of income is crucial to that family.

I just want to say to this government that creating good legislation and intertwining it with questionable, unconstitutional elements, as I described, makes this legislation look weak. It is not that strength that you want to accomplish the goals that you've put in this legislation. You're actually jeopardizing the good things that you want to happen.

This government needs to focus on the real work of strengthening Ontario's justice system. We've talked about staffing, we've talked about judges, the delays—those things are real. Now, if you do get somebody like the verification and supervision program, that can alleviate some of it, but there's, again, a holistic approach that we have to take because our communities deserve to be safe. We all know that; we all are in agreement to that. They

deserve to have a government that gets the job done—not halfway, and that's what I see this government, with much of the legislation that comes out here—it is half done. It's not serving people well.

If we analyze—and I say this again—the whole picture of when this government is being challenged in legal courts on legislation after legislation, that is a waste of public tax dollars. I'd like to see those tax dollars be used in so many different ways that are benefits to people. Because with those tax dollars, you're also paying out damages. We've got things like truly non-market affordable housing—that would be something that could help. Our health care system, our education system—and then trying to help people who are incarcerated to not repeat those things and to eliminate some of those costs of the correctional and the justice system. That's, again, by investing in things like the Bail Verification and Supervision Program.

I just have a small amount of time now and I'm going to say thank you, everyone, for listening. I hope some of this got through to the government's leadership here across the way and that going forward, any other legislation that you produce, please consult. Please talk to people. Don't keep repeating the same mistakes that you've made in history.

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

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: I'm happy to rise and speak in this debate regarding government Bill 75. I want to begin my remarks by just taking a moment—and before I get into the substance of the bill, I want to just speak about the triple femicide that took place in Brockville. This is a heartbreaking tragedy. I believe that it's rocked many communities—certainly in Brockville. I think that all of us in Ontario really want to take a moment to reflect upon the loss that has taken place there. I'm thinking about the community members who are working so hard to end gender-based violence, intimate partner violence and those who have been calling on the government to do more to end femicide.

Last Thursday at 11:30 a.m., a mother with her two teenaged daughters, ages 15 and 17, were found dead in their home, an apartment on Cartier Court. A 17-year-old boy was taken into custody and charged with three counts of first-degree murder. The police have since learned that he was in a relationship with one of the girls, one of the daughters, and the police believe that all three women were killed with a knife. This is a tragedy and I can't imagine the grief that the family is going through, as well as their friends and the wider community that is not without harm. This is literally a living nightmare.

This government can do so much more to prevent senseless crimes like this from happening. Intimate partner violence, Speaker, as you know in your wisdom, is preventable. It's predictable. We have hours of testimonies from survivors, experts and service providers who have all come to committee, to the Legislature, to talk to us about the solutions. This government has everything they need to act, to prevent, to predict and intervene in situations like this so it never happens again.

Yet we are failing to act. The government has not funded any new programs or opened any new shelter beds. They haven't re-examined the Partner Assault Response Program. They haven't taken any steps to reform family law. They haven't invested in positive parenting, nor have they done anything to invest in school-based violence-reduction programs or a myriad of other improvements that could have made a tangible difference for this family.

In my heart, I'm holding the people of Brockville, and this family in particular. I'm holding them in my heart as I deliver my speech because everyone deserves to be safe and to be safe in their home. They deserve to be safe in their communities, and they deserve to be safe in their relationships.

Bill 75 is before us again. I have just concluded talking about the right that Ontarians have to a sense of safety. But we know that we cannot be safe in our communities, we cannot be safe in Ontario unless we have a justice system that actually works. This includes a functional bail court. Tougher penalties and mandatory cash sentences will not improve Ontario's underfunded court system. It won't reduce the crime, and it won't make our jails functional to the point of rehabilitation to reduce recidivism. More than half of the criminal cases being thrown out before us have never received a verdict. They've simply never gone to trial. And 86% of the people who are held in government detention, whether it's in jail or detention centres, are waiting for their trial. They are legally innocent. Taken altogether, this paints a clear picture of a justice system in Ontario run by this government into the ground.

How is tougher bail going to operate within a court system that's already clogged and dysfunctional? This government's mandatory cash bail creates a two-tiered justice system, one for the wealthy and one for everyone else. Under the government's Bill 75, you go home or you go to jail. That is all predicated on how much money you have in the bank or how much money you have access to, if you have any rich friends and relatives who are able to come up with the immediate cash. It is not predicated on whether or not you have a criminal record or if you are a first-time offender. Mandatory cash bail is fundamentally undemocratic and unjust. This will only exacerbate the injustice we see in the justice system. That includes the exacerbation of racism, class inequality. It will make it much more difficult for people who are homeless and living with addictions to find a path to recovery, find a path to a home.

This government is spending taxpayer money defending a law that is unconstitutional. Every single legal expert that appeared in the committee—the Standing Committee on Justice Policy—raised the same point. We know that the government is gambling these public funds. We anticipate that the law will be challenged, and crown lawyers will have to be sent to court to defend the indefensible. We are going to spend more time, more money, as opposed to fixing the system upholding and defending an unconstitutional, unlawful piece of legislation. It's a losing proposition bankrolled by the government on the backs of the taxpayers.

1650

We—the Ontario NDP, the official opposition—do support ending the invasive testing and research on cats and dogs, but I don't think that this government deserves to get any credit for half measures that are riddled with loopholes. The bill leaves animals still unprotected. It allows for exemptions, and it does nothing to stop facilities from importing animals for research. We flagged this for the government members; they ignored us.

We worked to make this bill stronger, and we put forward many amendments to do so, but the Conservative government members on the committee voted them all down. The NDP put forward amendments to limit shelter animal seizures. We voted to extend the scholarship eligibility for survivors of officers who die by suicide. We moved up the implementation for tougher Highway Traffic Act penalties. The government members all voted it down, didn't even speak to most of the amendments, didn't have anything to say, were just ideologically driven to voting it down, so the party of no brought no solutions.

The Ontario NDP calls on this government to invest in the courts, invest in supervised programs to ensure bail verification and supervision, invest in bail beds and invest in the tools and the programs that have been proven to work that will actually keep communities safe. Of course, this includes the grossly underfunded and under-resourced bail supervision and verification program.

We call on this government to expand bail beds across Ontario. Do not release people into the community without a pathway to housing. You will find that they will land back in jail because the system doesn't work. It's very costly; it's highly ineffective.

The government needs to invest in court staff. Hire the professionals needed to run the court system efficiently to clear that backlog. Ontario has the longest court backlog in the country. For the richest and most prosperous province, we are failing.

I want to share a very powerful quote from Kimberly Hyslop. She is an attorney from the County of Carleton Law Association who had this to say at our committee: "Building more" prisons "to deal with crime is like building more cemeteries to deal with cancer: By then, it is too late."

I could not agree with Ms. Hyslop more, and I'm going to be quoting her a lot today because she had some very powerful things to be said. I think that the committee members were enriched by hearing them, but members in this House would gain from listening to her words.

Bill 75 is reactionary and imagines that the best way to deal with crime is to make punishment harsher despite a dysfunctional court system and overcrowding and ineffective corrections system. Everything that the government has responsibility for, they are failing at.

We know from decades of research, Speaker, that what the government is proposing simply doesn't work. If building more jails was to make a country safe, then the United States would be the safest country in the world, and they are not. This bill and this government are focused on incarceration as the first and only solution.

We know that focusing upstream—investments—can do a lot more to prevent crime. It is far more cost-effective to ensure it never happens than to jail someone for a very long time afterwards in this dysfunctional system.

Overall, community results are better, including the fact that those community members eventually go home in an improved capacity to be with their family so they can contribute to society once again.

Jails need to be a place of true reflection, correction and rehabilitation—not holding pens where people become traumatized, more harmed, less connected to their communities and less able to lead productive lives afterwards when they are released.

Ms. Hyslop shared this sentiment: “When the majority of a person’s sentence is served pre-conviction in these conditions, they miss out on the rehabilitation that prison should be offering. It is rehabilitation that makes communities safer. By the time inmates are sentenced, there is insufficient time left in their sentence for meaningful programming to occur, and they are released back into the community often far worse than when they first went in.”

Why, Speaker, is this government not listening to the experts?

This bill does nothing to create the kind of jails that we need—ones that are focused on rehabilitation programs to reduce recidivism. We need to ensure that we reduce the overcrowding, the understaffing and the under-resourcing of the correctional facilities. Otherwise, you are wasting a lot of money with no outcome for a safer community. In fact, it’s not even guaranteed. You are actually guaranteeing that people come out more harmed—potentially more violent—because they have been more harmed and traumatized and not getting the support that they need.

“Worsening jail conditions increase the risk that individuals found guilty will have decreased sentences and little time for actual rehabilitation to occur.” Ms. Hyslop submits “that the effect of Bill 75 will be directly the opposite of the intent suggested by the name”—which is Keeping Criminals Behind Bars. “It will keep presumptively innocent people behind bars while convicted criminals have their sentences reduced or charges stayed completely.” This is something that the government has been failing upon, as we hear about rapists, human traffickers, violent offenders and repeat offenders being released without ever serving any time because the charges have collapsed around them.

During all this time at the committee, we tabled several motions—18 of them—amendments, as a matter of fact. The amendments that we tabled were to improve the bill. And we walked into this committee ready to work with the government to ensure that community safety was prioritized. We needed to do this work together. We needed to stand up for Ontarians and to ensure our communities are safe. It is so disappointing that, once again, this government is ideologically charged and bent. They couldn’t accept any changes.

You don’t have all the solutions, Speaker. This government does not. And time and time again, their arrogance has proven to be very, very damaging for how we create laws and provide governance for this province.

We need to recognize that the amendments that were voted down would have gone a long way in supporting those who appeared before committee to ask us for their support.

The government voted down amendments to schedule 3, the schedule that awards scholarships to the surviving families of first responders who died in the line of duty. These amendments, tabled by the member from St. Catharines on behalf of the Ontario NDP, were recommended by the Ontario police association. They included an amendment to add “first responders who died by suicide” to the list of circumstances in which their families can then access those scholarships.

This amendment recognized the significant instances of PTSD-related suicides that affect first responders. I oftentimes have said I serve the public, but I do not have to wear a bulletproof vest. And my chances of going home every single night after work are 100%—just about. That’s not the case with our officers on the front line.

Shockingly, this government voted that down, along with an amendment to schedule 5. For the record, our amendment to schedule 5 would have ensured tougher penalties for dangerous driving and distracted driving. And we would have advanced how quickly this bill would come into effect, which would have been much sooner than what the government is proposing today, which is that one day in the future it would happen under the Lieutenant Governor in Council, versus the NDP amendment which is to make this bill come into effect—that section of the bill, schedule 5—as soon as royal assent is given. If this government cares so much about community safety and public safety, why are you delaying the implementation of the bill?

1700

We also tabled motions to close the loopholes around the Animals for Research Act. We wanted to ensure that research facilities would make all reasonable efforts to rehouse the animals. We wanted to make sure that it was adoption and care and not the killing of these animals that would take place afterwards. The government voted it down.

We moved to legally strike out pound seizures. Ontario currently is the only province in the country that mandates pound seizures. And if you don’t reclaim your lost animal—your lost cat or dog—within three days, that pound can turn over your beloved lost dog or cat to an animal research facility. You kept it on the books by striking out and voting against our amendment.

We tried to do everything we could to respect the speakers and the witnesses who came before our committee, asking us to support them because they knew that they had an opportunity, because the books were open on the Animals for Research Act. And this government—all the government members—voted against it. It was astonishing for me to sit in that committee, as I did during the intimate partner violence study, and see motion after motion, carefully drafted upon the advice of those witnesses, then be discarded by government members as if it was nothing.

I want to recognize how challenging it is for Ontarians who care so deeply around the issue of community safety—all the lawyers and all the witnesses and all the legal observers who came forward to give us their very best advice, to say that what you're proposing is not going to work. They were willing to work with this government to fix their flawed legislation, and this government wouldn't have it. Somehow this government knows better than the Ontario Bar Association and the federation of Ontario law societies. Somehow this government knows better than the Canadian Civil Liberties Association. Somehow this government knows better than every single legal expert who came before us and said that you've got to fix this.

Before I turn my time over to my colleague from Niagara, I want to talk about something that this government has on the books today that has never been enacted: a bill that is entitled the Correctional Services Transformation Act from 2018, a bill that is supposed to address the crisis that we see in corrections, a bill that could easily be slipped into this bill right now to fix the problem that we see in corrections.

The 2018 Correctional Services Transformation Act was passed in May 2018. That bill was spurred by the horrific abuses of Adam Capay. The Ontario Human Rights Commission found that this Indigenous man spent over four years in solitary confinement in an Ontario corrections facility while awaiting trial—four years in solitary confinement. Obviously, the previous government of the day was trying to find a path forward to make it work and to find some fixes. Sure, the bill was not perfect.

I have just tabled a bill asking the Solicitor General to present a timeline to implement the Correctional Services Transformation Act. Don't wait any longer, because that bill will sunset in 10 years, and you're approaching the 10-year mark.

I asked them to make sure that you can strengthen whistle-blower protection for those who work in corrections. I called upon the Solicitor General and this government to bring forward the inspector general of corrections. Put it under independent oversight, just like you have in policing, which I support, Speaker.

That bill from 2018, strengthened by my new bill to build out and improve, the Safety and Accountability in Corrections Act, would go a long way in making corrections services work the way it should, which is where someone who is serving time after they've done the crime and after they've been convicted in a trial in a timely fashion would then receive the rehabilitation programs that are needed so that they can get better and healthier and they can come back out and become a contributing member of society. It would be so much more cost-effective and so much more effective in terms of rehabilitation if this government did as we suggested.

I know that it takes a lot of effort to pass a bill, Speaker. I get that, which is why it's so perplexing that the government won't allow a bill as important as that, which is to fix the corrections crisis we have. Why are you sitting on the 2018 bill? There's no reason for you to do that.

Please, I implore you: Work with us to fix the justice and corrections system. We're not going to be safer if we have a justice and a corrections system that doesn't work. You have the powers to make it work, and we are ready to work with you. Ontarians expect us to work on this.

Public safety, community safety, is one of the most important issues that we have in Ontario. We cannot delay it any more. Let's do this together.

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

MPP Wayne Gates: I'd like to talk to Bill 75. Speaker, we all support tools that respond to serious crimes. But if this House is serious about safety in our communities, then we have to acknowledge what's not in the bill. We have to acknowledge how we got here. It makes no sense to define public safety only as a punishment. Supporting public safety and accountability cannot begin and end after the harm has already happened.

What this means is that we also have to talk about what this government is not including in this bill, what they're failing to fund before people end up in a crisis—things like homelessness, drug addiction, high unemployment, untreatable mental health issues in our province. These problems are a choice. And when you look at the Association of Municipalities of Ontario's pre-budget submission, year over year, they flag the same flag.

The municipal association represents 444 municipalities. Speaker, AMO has put it plainly: Municipalities are being left to subsidize provincial obligations. Their 2026 submission said that municipalities' funding of social services—listen to this—as a provincial responsibility has increased 150% since 2019. It's that government—they're all over there. They stand up all the time. They say, "We haven't raised any taxes. We're the only government that hasn't raised taxes." But the reality is, what they've done is they put all the responsibility back on the municipality, and what that means is the municipality has to raise their taxes.

In Niagara, we've raised them substantially because this government is not living up to their responsibility. And listen to how much this is, Speaker: It amounts to \$5 billion per year, \$5 billion—that's with a B—they're downloading on municipalities.

Community housing and social services are the provincial responsibility everywhere else in Canada, but not in Ontario. The Premier expects the local property taxpayers to pay it. How does that impact public safety?

1710

In 2018, when I got here—well, I got here before that, but since this government was in place—I'd never heard of encampments. I don't know how many people here—I don't know if my colleagues ever heard of encampments. Well, this contributes to what we are seeing in Ontario, with 85,000 homeless in our streets. That's according to the AMO report. That's not a report by Wayne Gates; it's a report by the AMO. But you don't need a report to know that this is true. Just look at our main streets. Talk to our small business owners, who are calling me all the time. Talk to our mayors, who are struggling. And I'll be honest;

some mayors are better than others on the homelessness issue, on mental health issues. We still have to educate some of our mayors. Make no mistake about that.

According to the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness, homelessness has risen 50%. I know they're not listening a lot—they're all over there talking—but it's under their watch. They can't blame anybody else but themselves. It's up 50% since 2021, 8% from 2024 and 2025. When people are desperate—and that's what we're going to talk about here, on how the streets—they have no money. Don't you think that in a situation where you might try to steal food, when they have nothing—go talk to any owner, any store, and they'll tell you their biggest concern, biggest hit on their profit is because people are coming in, they're desperate, and they're stealing. They're stealing food, they're stealing clothing. Everywhere you go, talk to the business community. That's right on there.

According to Feed Ontario, as high as 40% of food banks are scaling back, because that's how much people are using food banks and they just don't have the food to supply for everybody. That's because people are working two jobs. We already debated that today. We need a new solution for young people, people that can't find jobs. I was actually surprised, I'll tell you. Now, I shouldn't be surprised with the PC government, but I was surprised today that you didn't support our young people—our own kids, by the way. I look out here; they probably have kids—some probably have grandkids—and they decided today not to support it. It makes no sense to me.

We know from public health data that ER visits from overdoses are increasing—increased by 700% from 2014 to 2021. So how does this government rise to the moment to tackle an addiction crisis? They close the very services that were providing that support.

The Trillium report that in Guelph, after they closed their consumption site support, outreach workers are cleaning up 340% more discarded drug use supplies in their streets. That's not public safety. I don't see addiction funding in this bill. It should be—a failure in the policy and a failure in public safety. Isn't that an environment where crime is more likely to succeed?

On mental health: Some people are waiting—listen to this, and this is crazy—for over a year to see a therapist to get some kind of help. Does that make sense to anybody on that side—those that are listening? We know what happens when people wait for months and months to get help with their mental health issues: They lose their employment, they lose their income, they lose their home and, in some cases, they take their own lives because we don't get them the help.

In Niagara—and I want the guys to listen to it, even my own colleagues. They probably forget this a bit: In Niagara, we had a solution, one you agreed with. It had all-party support. You supported my motion to establish three 24/7, 365-day-a-year mental health drop-in centres to provide immediate crisis service. In December of 2018, it was supported by all parties: the Liberals, the Greens, the NDP and the Conservatives. Do you know the cost of turning that down? A major crisis in Niagara, one right across the province of Ontario.

Speaker, a bill like this one about public safety ignores moments like this when the government party has decided to turn their backs on people and communities right across the province. The result—and listen to this, those that want it, that are interested, who actually care about the bill—are less safe. We have more crime. It makes no sense. People with mental health issues and drug addictions are waiting for four years to get supportive housing.

Here's probably the biggest crisis that we have—if you want improved crime, because this is a crime. Here's one of the worst examples: OW and ODSP. How do you expect people to live on \$700 or \$1,300 a month? That's not enough to even pay for a small apartment. I can tell you—let me get to this; I don't know if I'll get to it in this speech—in Niagara, to get a to get an apartment, it's over \$2,000. Two bedrooms are \$2,500, \$2,700. How are you going to pay when you're getting ODSP at \$1,300 and OW at \$700? These Ontarians are forced into poverty by this government.

I invite any of the members opposite to try to live on ODSP. It's about setting people up for failure. Again, that's when you see crime goes up across all our communities. I'm looking at my colleagues here. I challenge anybody to stand up and say crime is not going up in your community. We have to talk about the root causes. We have to make sure we're supporting people, supporting young people, supporting the people I talked about during this speech here.

We have an affordability crisis in this province. Nobody is going to deny that. Our rents are up. Housing is up. Our food costs are up. Costs for kids to play hockey are up, for kids to go to dance are up. That's what's going on in the province.

We have a mental health crisis in this province, and this government is just not cutting it on those issues. In fact, it's gotten worse. What's the position of that government? Instead of investing in people, investing in communities, investing in businesses, what do you think we should do? Anybody know? Yell it out: "Let's build more jails."

Does that make sense to anybody?

Let's give people help, people that need help in this province. We don't need more jails. We need more investment in mental health. We need more investment in young people. All the things that would help with this bill make no sense.

Take a look at rent prices across the province. People are paying \$2,500 for a two-bedroom apartment in my riding of Niagara Falls, according to a rentals.ca report. People are working hard. Maybe they make minimum wage. They work at a clothing store or restaurant—a lot of tourist jobs in my area. They cannot afford to live in this province.

Unemployment: 8%. Youth unemployment is at 17%, as we already discussed earlier today. But what did you do? You had an opportunity to send a clear message to young people that you care about them, that you want to get them a job, you want to make sure they're going to school. What did you do today? You voted our bill down. Nobody over there should be proud of that, and you're

going to hear about it, I'm sure, when you go back to your ridings. Because you know what? My riding is no different than most everybody else's riding, I can tell you that.

This government doesn't understand. Crime is not something that appears out of nowhere. It comes from desperation and poverty. I know what it's like to live in poverty. I've known what it's like to be hungry on a daily basis; it's not just an idea for me. What is this government doing to help people who can't afford a decent meal?

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

Ms. Laura Smith: Thank you, for the member opposite and his statements.

One of the things that the Solicitor General did not too long ago—and I had a small part in it—was modify Christopher's Law. It actually didn't modify Christopher's Law, but it stopped people who were sexual offenders—these are heinous individuals—who are on that registry from making an application to change their name. It seems very strange, but they were actually capable of doing that. I was very proud when the Solicitor General embedded that into legislation.

It was great to meet the parents of Christopher, who are still working so hard on that sex offender and trafficker registry, which is something that's part of this bill. Bill 75 proposes exploring options to make portions of Ontario's sex offender and trafficker registry publicly accessible so that communities and families can have greater access to information, so that they can help keep people safe.

1720

So I'm going to ask: Do you oppose giving families access to that information? And would you support this bill for the protection of our communities, especially our most vulnerable citizens: our children?

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): The member for Toronto Centre.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Thank you very much to the honourable member from Thornhill for her question. I know that she has been working very hard on that particular component, so I want to just say thank you for your advocacy there; it is recognized, certainly.

Interestingly enough, the component of the bill that you speak about—we didn't really have what I would describe as witnesses who flagged it. Therefore, there was no one who came forward to speak either in favour of it or opposed to it—none that I am aware of. Perhaps there might be something that came in submissions afterwards. But most of our conversations at the committee were focused primarily on schedules 1, 2, 3 and 5, I believe, so hopefully that is helpful to you.

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

MPP Lisa Gretzky: My question is to my colleague from Toronto, who spoke about the three women who were killed within the last few days in Brockville by intimate partner violence. To hear that it was a 17-year-old male who was the perpetrator of that violence and that murder, those three murders—and I heard my colleague from Niagara Falls talk at length about some of the social

determinants when it comes to people who do perpetrate various crimes, including IPV, and talk about what the government is doing in order to educate and to provide interventions.

And it's interesting, because the member from Peterborough–Kawartha yells across the floor, “We're building more jails because there's more people,” which I think speaks to the heart of what is wrong with this government's ideology: They just think they should just build more jails and put more people in it, rather than actually providing key interventions to address some of the root causes.

So I'm wondering if my colleague could maybe talk about what could have been in this bill that isn't, that would actually provide interventions or some sort of supports to people, so they don't commit crime in the first place.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): The member for Toronto Centre.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Thank you very much to that member for the question. I think some of the things that are missing from the bill are, really, recognition from the government around the root causes of criminal activity.

In particular—if I can just focus on IPV for just a moment, Speaker—with respect to the case in Brockville, one thing that we know is that when it comes to intimate partner violence, it's oftentimes a title and a label that's applied to adult relationships, but when it comes to young women and dating violence—which is a form of intimate partner violence—it is grossly under-reported, grossly unrecognized.

In this case, if we understood more about what took place in the relationship amongst the teenagers, we could call it intimate partner violence, as the police are doing. But I'm sure that the signs were there, including the fact that there was probably dating violence, which we know is wildly unreported amongst young women. So we need to broaden that thinking of how we apply intimate partner violence and dating violence to that lens, to ensure that we can keep people safe and none of that is addressed in this bill.

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

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: Thank you, Madam Speaker, to my friend from Niagara Falls.

The flawed reality of his logic is that as we're investing in our correctional system, that will only address what he says are “the root causes of criminality,” which he believes are homegrown. I don't believe it is. I believe part of the root cause of criminality is what's going on in the rest of the world. I believe that if you make investments in the correctional system, you will keep your province safe, because that acts as a deterrent, because people in our communities see us taking our public safety seriously.

I want to ask my friend opposite: When we see the record investments and our commitment and what we're doing in Bill 75, does he believe that everything in the rest of the world is not present in what we're seeing in Ontario? Is that influencing our decisions to look at the rest of the

world and say, “That criminality which is coming in must be dealt with”?”

MPP Wayne Gates: Thank you for the question. But I guess what I’m saying is, very clearly, in my community of Niagara Falls, Fort Erie, Niagara-on-the-Lake, we have a crisis. We have a crisis of mental health, for sure. We have a crisis with people who have drug addiction. And before you, I put forward that motion. It still hasn’t been acted on.

We’ve had people in Niagara wait a year to get help. We see in our jails—do you want to talk about the jails? Eighty-six per cent of the people that are taking up our jails are waiting for trial. Why aren’t we investing in those issues to get that taken care of? Why aren’t we investing in our community? That’s what I’m saying.

I’m not saying anything about where we get to. What I’m saying is, you’re not investing where you need to, and that’s in young people, that’s in people who have addictions. There are people who are desperate on our streets. And if you get a chance, talk to those owners who own the businesses and what they’re going through every single day because they’re not getting the help they deserve.

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

MPP Jamie West: Thank you to my colleagues from the New Democratic Party for their debate on Bill 75.

I grew up in a neighbourhood called the Donovan. It’s a working-class neighbourhood. People struggle to find work. Both parents are working—if they’re finding work. Most people are living below the poverty line or making ends meet.

In that neighbourhood, there’s a program called Better Beginnings Better Futures that ensures that kids have after-school support and other wraparound support, learn co-operative games, things like that. I’m thinking about it in all three of their debates, Speaker. They talked about the services that can prevent people from having problems with crime in the first place.

I was wondering if one of them wanted to expand on what’s missing from the plan on crime that would help deter people from getting there in the first place.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): The member for Toronto Centre.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Thank you very much to the honourable member from Sudbury.

What’s missing is any recognition around prevention. It is much more cost-effective, it is much more effective in making sure that you can invest in people upstream so they don’t fall through the cracks downstream.

I’ll just give you one example. This afternoon, the government voted against the NDP’s youth summer job program. I talked about the youth at risk in my communities in Regent Park and St. James Town and Moss Park who will be restless this summer and will be on the streets and will be preyed upon by the street gangs because nothing is keeping them busy. And if you had voted to support our youth summer jobs program, then our kids and your kids and all the young people in our communities

would have employment or paid opportunities for training. That would divert them from gang activity.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): We’ve got time for a very quick question and response.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: This bill contains bail reform that is very concerning, I think, to a lot of experts that you’ve certainly heard at committee. What are some of those negative impacts that we could see happening from that bail reform that is proposed in the bill?

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos): The member for London—Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: As mentioned, it will be a two-tiered justice system: those who can afford the bail and those who cannot. Rather than imposing that schedule 2—which is going to be challenged as unconstitutional, and it isn’t the responsibility of the provincial government; it’s really the federal responsibility—the government would be proactive in maybe looking at that and removing it so all the other good things in that bill can pass.

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

M^{me} Lucille Collard: I will start by saying that I will be sharing my time with the member from Kanata—Carleton.

I’m rising today to speak about Bill 75 for third reading—a second time—and the Pandora’s box that this government is attempting to open through schedule 2 of this legislation. There are many aspects of this bill that, though imperfect, contain some positive measures. I do not deny that. There are provisions relating to animal testing and changes regarding eligibility for the Joe MacDonald scholarship fund that are constructive.

1730

I am also not going to stand in this House and pretend that our justice system is working fine—it’s not—or that the bail system as it currently exists is beyond critique. Every member of this Legislature wants safer communities, wants accountability and a justice system that functions effectively and fairly, but this bill threatens to take some of the worst, ugliest and most harmful aspects of our justice system and elevate them into the first line of defence.

That is why we must be extraordinarily careful before moving forward. When governments legislate in moments of fear, when they govern based on headlines instead of evidence and when they prioritize symbolism over outcomes, it is vulnerable people in front-line communities who ultimately pay the price.

I want to talk about the legality of the proposed bail reform before addressing the devastating impacts that the legislation will have if passed. I would like to begin by underscoring something fundamental. According to experts we’ve heard, this legislation has a big potential of being unconstitutional. I guess we’ll find out when and if the legislation passes because there might be some legal challenges on that front. But we need to know, we need to understand that under section 91 of the Constitution Act, the federal government has authority over criminal law and criminal procedure. The provincial government, meanwhile,

is responsible for the administration of justice in the province.

That distinction matters. It means that the federal government, through the Criminal Code, determines not only what constitutes a criminal offence but also the procedures and standards for adjudicating those offences, including bail. The province administers those procedures; it does not rewrite them.

We can see the distinction clearly when we compare the Criminal Code and the Ontario Bail Act. The Criminal Code outlines the types of bail that can be imposed and the legal principles governing release. The Bail Act, as it currently exists, is administrative in nature. It deals with matters such as how sureties provide information, how liens are processed and how bail administration functions operationally.

The powers of the federal and the provincial governments are not optional. They are not suggestions. They are certainly not subject to the political whims of whichever government happens to hold power in Queen's Park, and yet this government is attempting to blur that constitutional line.

I'm sorry, I must be tired too. It's the end of the day.

This legislation covers an area that falls squarely within federal jurisdiction. Cash bail powers already exist under the Criminal Code, so a judge can already request cash bail. That authority already exists. Specifically, section 515(2)(d) of the Criminal Code permits cash bail in exceptional circumstances. The Criminal Code also requires that bail conditions be the least onerous possible while still ensuring public safety and court attendance. That's what we call the ladder principle.

That principle matters because, in Canada, we do not punish people before they have been convicted. The presumption of innocence is not a technicality. It is a cornerstone of our justice system. That is exactly why cash bail is not commonly used—not because judges are careless, not because prosecutors are soft on crime, but because the law recognizes that pre-trial detention and onerous release conditions carry enormous consequences. The Supreme Court of Canada reinforced this principle in the Antic decision in 2017. The court then recognized that cash bail has no greater coercive effect than no-deposit bail. In other words, the evidence simply does not support the government's approach.

Additionally, under both the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Canadian Bill of Rights, an accused cannot be denied bail without reasonable cause. Yet this government is attempting to create a framework that would allow the Attorney General, through regulation, to effectively impose upfront financial barriers on release. What it means is this legislation would allow the government to require an accused person, or their surety, to pay money upfront before release, not after violating bail—before. That is a profound shift in philosophy, and that's very concerning.

Perhaps more concerning is that this government is not even placing the details directly into the legislation. Instead, it is handing broad regulatory powers to the

Attorney General. I would like for the members to understand just how extraordinary that is.

Currently, under the Bail Act, there is only one area where the Attorney General can make regulations, and that's prescribing forms. That's it: forms. The current regulation under the act simply prescribes forms such as certificates of lien and discharges—administrative paperwork, nothing more.

But Bill 75 dramatically expands that authority. It brings us somewhere else. This government is attempting to take an administrative statute and transform it into a vehicle that allows cabinet to influence bail conditions and judicial decision-making through regulation. That should concern every member of this House, regardless of party, because once governments begin centralizing powers that properly belong to the courts, we weaken the independence of our justice system.

Frankly, this follows a pattern we've seen repeatedly over the past eight years. This government is consistently centralizing authority away from independent institutions, away from municipalities, away from local voices, and into the hands of cabinet. We've seen it in municipal governance, we've seen it in education, we've seen it in health care, and now we're seeing it in the justice system.

It is also not surprising coming from a government that has repeatedly relied upon the “notwithstanding” clause to push through legislation that infringes on charter rights. In fact, this government's use of the “notwithstanding” clause has been so egregious that I previously tabled legislation intended to curb abuse of that extraordinary constitutional power. The “notwithstanding” clause was never meant to become a routine legislative shortcut. Yet here we are again: a government introducing legislation it likely knows will face constitutional challenge; a government prepared to spend taxpayer dollars defending legislation that experts across the legal community believe is unconstitutional. That is not responsible governance; it is reckless governance.

One of the unusual things about this bill is that the government actually allowed it to go to committee. That was unusual. As we said earlier, the majority of bills don't make it that way. But not only that, it was also not rammed through committee under an aggressive time-allocation motion this time. We were actually able to hear from stakeholders. We were able to listen. What we heard should have caused this government to pause, because we heard from many experts. We heard from the Canadian Criminal Justice Association, the Canadian Mental Health Association of Ontario, the County of Carleton Law Association, the Criminal Lawyers' Association, the Ontario Bar Association, the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, the John Howard Society of Ontario, the Federation of Ontario Law Associations. We also heard from the Tamogo Foundation. We heard from Dr. Andrew Thomas, an attending physician at the Central East Correctional Centre. So there was a lot of material there for the government to consider and to ponder. The message from these organizations was remarkably consistent: This legis-

lation is misguided. It is harmful. It is ineffective. And it risks making our justice system worse than it is already.

1740

I want to specifically highlight the concerns raised by the Ontario Crown Attorneys' Association. The crown attorneys are the very people responsible for prosecuting criminal matters in this province, who have quasi-judicial decision-making authority when it comes to every aspect of a criminal trial, including bail determinations. They understand how bail functions in practice, because crown attorneys are the ones who advocate for detention during bail hearings when they believe it is necessary for public safety or to maintain confidence in the administration of justice. And the crown attorneys raised concerns about this legislation.

The Ontario Crown Attorneys' Association warns that Bill 75's mandatory cash bail—that's included in schedule 2—undermines the ladder principle of bail. That's the principle I mentioned earlier. It's the principle by which judges should apply the least restrictive release condition necessary to manage risk. This change has real potential of violating constitutional rights by creating a two-tiered justice system that penalizes poverty. Prosecutors warn that the legislation will increase administrative burdens, cause even more court backlogs, and likely result in more people being detained rather than released.

But instead of listening to experts, the government has chosen ideology. Instead of investing in what works, it has chosen optics. And this is where we must discuss the human consequences, because legislation like this does not impact everyone equally.

Cash bail systems inevitably create two-tiered justice systems. If you have money, you go home; if you do not, you stay behind bars. That is the unavoidable reality. And who is most likely to be harmed? Those are low-income Ontarians, Black Ontarians, Indigenous Ontarians, people struggling with addictions, people experiencing mental health crises, people without stable housing. Those are all people who need help. We already know this because the evidence exists.

The John Howard Society has documented the disproportionate impact that pretrial detention already has on marginalized communities. Even short periods in remand can cause catastrophic consequences. People lose housing. They lose employment. They lose custody arrangements. They lose access to treatment and support networks. And once someone's life destabilizes, the likelihood of future involvement with the justice system actually increases. So when the government presents this as a public safety measure, we have to ask: Public safety for whom? Destabilizing vulnerable people does not make communities safer; it often makes things worse.

I want to talk about the conditions in jails, because this is very concerning because of the impact this bill will likely have. I think we're going to see more people detained if this legislation is passed and implemented. We need to acknowledge the conditions inside Ontario's correctional facilities.

Ontario's jails are already in a state of crisis. Reports have shown that provincial institutions are operating at approximately 132% capacity. Triple bunking and even quadruple bunking have become commonplace. Just a few weeks ago, the Ombudsman wrote in his final report, "Few areas illustrate the need for urgent reform more clearly than correctional services. Throughout my tenure, conditions within Ontario's jails, detention centres and youth justice facilities have remained among the most persistent and troubling issues brought to this office."

This is a long-standing issue, Madam Speaker, and that's why I introduced a private member's bill last year after visiting several correctional facilities. My bill is a proposal to address this problem and to require the government to take action to improve the conditions in jails and address the crisis that is happening beyond their walls.

Let's remember something else: The majority of individuals in provincial remand facilities—that's actually 82% of these people—have not been convicted. They're just waiting for their day in court. Meanwhile, those who have been convicted and are serving provincial sentences are generally serving sentences of less than two years, often for non-violent offences. Yet this government's response to overcrowding, understaffing, mental health crises and deteriorating infrastructure is not to invest meaningfully in rehabilitation or community support. Instead, their answer is simply more incarceration.

This government's approach to justice can best be summarized by the phrase, "When all you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail." If your entire understanding of crime begins and ends with the belief that more people need to be behind bars, then naturally, every problem appears to require harsher detention. But evidence tells us otherwise.

The overwhelming majority of people on bail comply with their conditions. According to testimony to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy ahead of their report on modernizing bail, referenced during committee, over 80% never breach their release conditions at all. And among those who do breach conditions, approximately 98% are administrative breaches, such as missing a court date, violating curfew or some other technical non-compliance. Fewer than one in 300 individuals commit a new violent offence while on bail.

So if the government truly wanted to target high-risk repeat offenders, there are already tools available. There are existing legal mechanisms. There are judicial hearing processes. There are estreatment proceedings. But many of those mechanisms remain underutilized because the system itself is under-resourced. That's where we need to look. That is the core issue.

The failures in Ontario's justice system are not primarily caused by overly lenient bail conditions; they are caused by chronic underinvestment. Court backlogs are enormous, cases are delayed for months and sometimes years, legal aid remains dramatically underfunded, mental health supports: clearly very insufficient, bail supervision

programs are just not being used because they are under-resourced.

This government is trying to solve systemic failures with punitive shortcuts. And not only will it fail; it will likely worsen the very problem it claims to address. In fact, the conditions in Ontario jails may mean that an accused may spend less time behind bars, not more.

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In 2025, the Superior Court of Ontario reduced an offender's sentence by five years because of the conditions he was subject to after his arrest. I'll just quote from the verdict because this is a very egregious example of what people can face in jail:

"The offender has been in custody since his arrest on December 13, 2022. As of today, he has spent a total of 903 days (or nearly two and a half years) in pre-trial custody. According to his institutional records from Maplehurst, as of March 11, 2025, the offender spent nearly 80% of his time in custody triple-bunked, with one prisoner sleeping on the floor (651 days); nearly a third of his time in custody confined to a cell for 24 hours per day while in full lockdown (232 days); 126 days in partial lockdown with limited access to a dayroom; and 18 days in segregation. The jail records state that the lockdowns were the results of 'correctional officers/staff shortages or redeployment, searches, contraband issues, unscheduled maintenance repairs on unit, etc.' The offender also spent 13 days in lockdown and nine days triple-bunked at Toronto South Detention Centre after being transferred there in April 2025."

This offender got his sentence reduced by five years because of the conditions he was put through, those conditions I just described, and this offender was actually a case of attempted murder. We're letting somebody back on the street five years earlier because our jail conditions are just inhumane. There's no other way to describe it. With this change in the legislation, it is likely that that type of situation will become more common.

Speaker, one of the most frustrating aspects of this debate is that there are better alternatives readily available. Community bail supervision programs work. They do work. Programs run by organizations such as the John Howard Society and Elizabeth Fry Society have demonstrated strong success rates. They are respected by police services, they improve compliance, they reduce unnecessary detention and they are dramatically cheaper. It costs approximately \$357 per day to keep someone incarcerated in Ontario; supervised community release programs can cost as little as under \$10 per day. Why are we not using this more?

Imagine what we could accomplish if we would invest seriously in prevention, rehabilitation, mental health support, addiction treatment, supportive housing and core efficiency. Imagine if we invested in legal aid, so individuals could access representation earlier. Imagine if we addressed staffing shortages in the courts, and imagine if we ensured crown attorneys, duty counsel and judges had the resources they need to move cases efficiently.

Those are the reforms that would actually strengthen public confidence in the justice system, because right now what Ontarians see is a system that is strained to the breaking point. Victims wait too long, and accused wait too long. Front-line workers are exhausted, and correctional institutions are overcrowded and unsafe. Yet instead of addressing those root causes, the government is choosing a headline-driven approach.

The irony is that this government's own 2023 report on bail reform warned against exactly this kind of broad, tough-on-crime strategy. The Standing Committee on Justice Policy specifically recommended focusing reforms on repeat violent offenders and high-risk cases, and that is not what Bill 75 does. Instead, it creates broad powers that could impact large numbers of low-risk individuals.

Speaker, I also want to speak about the broader philosophy underlying this legislation. Justice is not supposed to be about wealth. Freedom is not supposed to depend on the size of your bank account. And yet cash bail systems inevitably move us in that direction.

A wealthy accused person may have no difficulty paying upfront. A low-income family may be forced into debt. They may mortgage their home, they may drain savings or they may simply be unable to secure release at all. That is not equal justice.

We should be especially cautious importing failed, American-style policies into the Canadian system. Many American jurisdictions have moved away from cash bail precisely because of the inequities and inefficiencies it created. They recognized that wealth-based detention systems criminalize poverty rather than improve safety. We should learn from those mistakes, not repeat them.

Speaker, I know there will be members opposite who say that if someone is dangerous, they should remain detained. And in genuinely high-risk situations, our current legal framework already allows for detention. That is not the issue. The issue is whether broad financial barriers should become a routine feature of release. The issue is whether we should undermine constitutional principles in pursuit of political messaging. The issue is whether we are willing to accept deeper inequality and more overcrowded jails in exchange for policies that experts overwhelmingly say will not work.

I do not believe Ontarians want that. Ontarians want communities that are safe, but they also want justice systems that are fair, evidence-based and constitutional. And I believe Ontarians understand something very important: A justice system that treats people unfairly ultimately loses public trust.

Throughout committee hearings, witness after witness urged the government to reconsider this approach. That breadth of opposition should matter. This is not a narrow, ideological disagreement; it is a broad consensus among people who actually work within the justice system. And when experts across virtually every corner of the legal community are raising alarm bells, governments should listen. Unfortunately, this government has developed the habit of dismissing expertise when it conflicts with political narratives.

Madam Speaker, the role of legislators is not simply to appear tough; it is to govern responsibly. Responsible governance means respecting constitutional boundaries. It means relying on evidence. It means investing in systems before declaring them failures. And, most importantly, responsible governance means recognizing that public safety and human dignity are not opposing values.

We can protect communities while still respecting rights; we can address repeat violent offending while still avoiding policies that criminalize poverty; and we can modernize the justice system without undermining judicial independence. But Bill 75 fails that test.

Speaker, I want to conclude by returning to a simple but essential principle: A justice system should be measured

not by how harshly it treats the powerful, but by how fairly it treats the vulnerable. And right now, this government is proposing a system that would make freedom more accessible to those with means and less accessible to those without. That is not justice; that is inequality codified into policy.

Ontario deserves better than legislation built on fear. It deserves better than constitutional brinkmanship and better than overcrowded jails and underfunded courts—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos):
As the time is now 6 o'clock, this House will stand adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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