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Assembly
of Ontario



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(Hansard)**

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Wednesday
22 April 2026

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Mercredi
22 avril 2026

Speaker: Honourable Donna Skelly
Clerk: Trevor Day

Présidente : L'honorable Donna Skelly
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 22 April 2026

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 22 avril 2026

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ESTIMATES

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

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: I have a message from the Honourable Edith Dumont, the Lieutenant Governor, signed by her own hand.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The Lieutenant Governor transmits estimates of certain sums required for the services of the province for the year ending 31 March, 2027, and recommends them to the Legislative Assembly.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PROTECTING ONTARIO'S WORKERS
AND ECONOMIC RESILIENCE ACT, 2026

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

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 21, 2026, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

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

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

MPP Wayne Gates: I guess I'm speaking.

Interjection: And sharing your time.

MPP Wayne Gates: And I'm sharing my time with Jamie West.

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

MPP Wayne Gates: The member from Sudbury—holy God. What are you guys doing to me? It's 9 o'clock in the morning. I was up until 2 o'clock in the morning watching the hockey games last night; they all went into overtime.

Let's get to Bill 105 and the speech. I was here yesterday, fortunately, to listen to the minister speak on this bill. There are a lot of things in this bill that I certainly want to talk about. I did a press conference this week. As we talk

about labour and, obviously, the environment—I won't get to the environment; I'll probably leave that to some of my other colleagues. If you listen to the minister, you would say, "It looks like everything is wonderful in the province of Ontario when it comes to labour." I listened to him intently yesterday. But if you take a look at what's really going on with labour in our communities right across the province—including in the ridings of the members there, the Conservative members.

CUPE had a press conference with workers that worked in long-term care, retirement homes. These are workers that really, really care about our moms, our dads, our aunts, our uncles, our brothers and sisters. But what they were telling us at the press conference is that they are struggling. They don't have enough staff. They have staffing shortages on every shift. They have more violence in their workplaces. They are feeling not respected. And a lot of that deals with—including their wages, their benefits, their working conditions.

We had workers come and do, at the same time that afternoon—I want to thank colleagues from the Liberals and the Greens. I did ask the Minister of Long-Term Care to come. Unfortunately, she couldn't make it. They talked about their workplaces and how passionate they are about it. But they were trying to say, "We're not getting support. We have so many people who still need long-term-care facilities. We have people that are in alternate level of care in our hospitals that can't get into long-term care to open up our rooms."

Then at 10 o'clock, ONA—and this is why it's important, because it is not just CUPE; ONA, who represents the nurses—the same thing, a press conference, talking about their working conditions, that they're short-staffed.

So when I listen to the minister say how wonderful it is in the province of Ontario, it's not remotely accurate—because I'm not saying it. This isn't coming from Wayne Gates, who's the MPP for Niagara Falls, Fort Erie and Niagara-on-the-Lake; this is coming from workers who are giving every ounce of energy to their workplaces, but they don't feel like they're getting the same kind of respect from the government—and again, their working conditions, more violence.

People are living longer: more dementia—severe dementia, quite frankly, tougher. I can tell you from a personal point of view. My wife and her aunt just over the last few months—her aunt needed to get into a long-term-care facility. And the steps that they had to go through to get in, the wait time they had to do as her aunt had a hole in her leg about this big, trying to get it taken care of because she couldn't get in a place to stay. It's happening all over

the province. So when the minister says everything is wonderful, it's not. I want to be clear on that.

And then I listened to them talk about WSIB. And listen, in the bill—there are a couple of things here, and when I really get into my speech, I'll talk about them. We've been fighting for years to have WSIB coverage if you're working past 65. And again, it wasn't me; it was unions; it was people that were standing up for WSIB, like Willy Noiles. I know the member from Niagara West is here. I know he knew Willy really well, who passed away last year. I can tell you today, Willy is looking down on this House with a big smile on his face because he was up there almost every day. Somebody was introducing Willy, fighting for WSIB for almost his entire adult life.

So when you put into the bill that they're going to cover people who have to work—and this is the key: have to work—past 65, we know that's happening more and more every day because of the affordability crisis that we have in the province. People, quite frankly, can't afford their groceries; they can't afford their rent. Seniors are being renocted because of the cost of rent. So I say to Willy, I support that part of the bill. And I'm sure my colleagues would too, or will, and will speak on it. I'm sure our labour critic, Jamie West, will speak on that too.

So I want to say it's not like I'm saying this bill is terrible; what I'm saying is we've got to work harder. If you want to be a face for workers, then you've got to cover what we need. So this is a good one. I think we should expand it, quite frankly. I think, hopefully, we'll do that during the amendments at the committee stage. I firmly believe that it should be retroactive from when it was stopped. I raised that yesterday in a question, Madam Speaker, to the minister. I'm hoping we do that because I'm a firm believer that if you get hurt at work, you should be covered.

That leads me in—because I'm going to stay on WSIB just for a minute. Like I said, I'll get to my speech as soon as I figure out where I want to go.

It leads to deeming. I've been here 12 years. I've talked about deeming almost every year I came here. I've put bills forward on deeming a number of times. I want to congratulate my colleagues from the NDP who supported that bill every single time. The Liberals, even though they didn't do it when they were 15 years in power, and they should have but they didn't, at least when we've done the bill over the last eight years, they've supported it. The Greens have supported it.

0910

On the deeming issue, we've worked really hard to work together to say, "This is something that is important to workers." The only party I can't convince is the Conservative Party. I don't know why, because they have said that they are the face of workers now, that they care about workers more than the NDP, that we've lost the support of labour. By the way, we were supported in the last election by the OFL, which covers one million workers in the province of Ontario. So I don't think it's completely accurate, but I understand why you say it.

But on deeming, I can say this very clearly: I think my colleague from Welland—Niagara Centre as well—has been a worker his whole life. He represented workers. He was a rep. I believe it was for SEIU, if I'm not mistaken. He understands about workers.

I worked in a plant for close to 40 years. Some would argue that I worked, but I was certainly going to work every day in that plant. And then I got involved with the union. It was the best move I ever made in my life, because then I understood what unions were. Unions were obviously about treating workers with respect and dignity and taking on issues that sometimes aren't popular.

I watched workers get hurt on the job. They get metal-working fluids disease, cancers in the workplace, and they go on WSIB, and WSIB would then deem them. What that means is they have a phantom job or a job that they can't do because of the injuries and the cancers they have. They say, "Oh no, you can do this. Here's a phantom job for \$20 an hour," and then they cut the benefit. Now they're forced into going on social assistance, which would be ODSP, and what would happen with the deeming—they would end up starting to live in poverty. All they did was go to work, just like we go to work every day. We don't face some of the challenges that workers do in a plant, in a factory, construction workers. Construction workers are getting hurt as well, when they talk about their trades.

But getting back to the plant: I watched my colleagues go out, who are coming to work every day, and all they wanted to do—well, we had a lot of fun on the line too, by the way; in the old days it was fun sometimes. But at the end of the day, all they wanted to do was come to work, earn a fair day's pay for a fair day's work, go home to their family, get a paycheque so they can have their kids go to play hockey, dance, play ball, do all those things, play the piano—whatever they wanted to do, but so they had the resources to do that. All of a sudden, they get hurt on the job or they get a cancer in the workplace. They were going to rely on WSIB, and what WSIB found is that they can just deem them and force them into poverty.

I can't tell you how many times they came to my office when I went to—Jeff will remember—I went through the thing. I was a back-shift committee man for 20 years. I worked steady midnights for 20 years. That was crazy, but I did it. But I did it for a reason: I wanted to coach my kids. I had enough money. I was getting a paycheque. I wasn't getting hurt on the job.

And then, one of my colleagues gets hurt on the job. He didn't do anything wrong, by the way. He went to work, comes to work on time, was working on the—at that time, it was called the rotor line, what I was working on, before I became president of a local union. He got hurt on the job, and then they deemed him. He had to live in poverty.

I've said to the labour minister: He had seven Working for Workers bills. I have no idea why labour is included in this Bill 105. I don't understand it at all. I don't know what an economic resilience act has to do with labour. But I have talked to the minister. I believe that Niagara West has talked to the minister. I know Jamie has talked to the minister. We say, "You've had seven opportunities to take

care of workers. If you really care about workers—I'm saying really care about workers—the one worker you should care about is the one that went into work to try to get a fair day's pay for a fair day's work, gets injured on the job and then they deem him and put him into poverty." That is the worst thing that can happen to a worker—a worker who has pride in his job and is doing nothing wrong.

So I'm saying to the minister again, I'm saying to the colleagues—I know some aren't listening on that side. I wish they'd listen to this because they've got a friend in every one of their ridings who is being deemed in the province of Ontario. Every one of you guys have it. You should be ashamed of it. You can take the surplus, which you've been doing for the last number of years—instead of giving it to the workers who are getting injured on the job you are giving it to corporations and businesses. That surplus belongs to the workers.

You can very easily eliminate deeming in the province of Ontario—not because Wayne Gates is saying it, not because Jeff Burch is saying it, not because Jamie West is saying it, but because that's what workers deserve. Because without workers, this province is nothing. Without workers, corporations are nothing. Without workers, small businesses are nothing. It's the workers that make the province run. And if I'm good enough to get a job in that workplace, in a corporation—I use GM as an example because that's where I've come out of. I'll use them as an example. I give my heart and soul to that company. I make sure that I'm putting out a good product. I'm doing productivity better than anyone. But one day I go into work and end up dying—not dying, getting injured. I'll talk about dying real quick, though. I believe everybody on that side—everybody on that side—doesn't want a worker to live in poverty just for going to work. I believe that. But you have got to tell your labour minister that you have got to get rid of deeming in the province of Ontario.

I have got another one I'd like to see in the bill. I'm going to tell you; I have talked to colleagues here about this one. When I was president of 199, I got a call at 6:30 in the morning. At that time, I was president; I didn't go into work until about 7:30. I got a call about 6:30. They had an accident in the plant. Joel Murray was his name—young man, had two kids. His wife's name was Wendy. I go into the plant. I'm not sure what happened. I go down to side gear, and Joel—who had called me a number of times, by the way, when I was in the plant on health and safety issues; he was very safety conscious. General Motors had put him on a job he hadn't been on in a year. He didn't know—no retraining, no talking to him, no fault of Joel's. He goes in, he starts changing tools because that's what you do. When you work in a plant—I did it too when I was in the plant—the first thing you do you change your tools; that way they are good for the whole shift, right? So you know you're putting out a good product. Joel went in, he's got his head in the machine, not knowing—because he hadn't been on the job for over a year—that somebody had bypassed the light, the switch to stop the part from coming into the machine. As Joel was

in that machine, the machine cycled and crushed him to death. Joel was an outstanding member of Niagara-on-the-Lake. He coached his kids' hockey team. At that time, it was the U11s.

I walked Joel out of the plant that day with EMS, with the coroner. It was General Motors's fault. The supervisor was charged. General Motors was charged. It went to court. Obviously, it was terrible on the kids. I got to know Wendy better; I got to know the kids a lot better. And what happened? It went to court. General Motors was fined \$350,000. The plant manager was there at the court case. I'll never forget this. I won't say his name because I don't think that right, but he was sitting right in the front row; Wendy, the kids and myself were sitting behind him. When they said, "How do you plead?" General Motors said, "We plead guilty." He never turned and said "I'm sorry" to Wendy or the kids. He never once turned and said he was sorry—\$350,000.

So when I went back into my workplaces—because I represented over 20 of them—they said, "Well, at least the family is going to get \$350,000 to help the kids go to school." That money doesn't go to the family. It goes back into general funds. I believe, and I think everybody in this room would believe, that money should go to the family so the kids can go to school, maybe go to university.

0920

Because it affected everybody in that workplace—Joel was loved in the workplace; he was funny; he was a great guy—everybody decided to do a gate collection. This is going back 21 years now. They did a gate collection, and the gate collection was the highest one that we ever had. We do gate collections for Christmas and stuff. For this one here, it was over \$20,000 that went to the family; it helped a bit for the family.

But you know what never happened with Joel when he went to work at 6 o'clock in the morning that day? He never got to say goodbye to his family. He never got to kiss his kids again. He's never seen his grandkids because his life was taken from him because of a safety incident in the plant.

I wanted to tell that story because I really believe that collectively we should put a bill together and say that if you get killed on that job, that money goes to the family. I really believe that.

I don't want to bring you down early in the morning, but that was very, very hard. That was one of the hardest things I ever did, walk out one of my brothers in a plant, who got killed on the job.

We had another one who got killed on the job too. It was in hydro. He got electrocuted. I didn't know him as well. Obviously, I'm not a hydro worker; I'm not a skilled trades guy.

I should start my speech now, I guess. So I'm going to say I'm proud to rise today on behalf of the people of Niagara Falls, Fort Erie and Niagara-on-the-Lake to speak to Bill 105, the so-called Protecting Ontario's Workers and Economic Resilience Act. I've already said this, but I'll say it again: Why are these two together? This makes absolutely no sense—none. Maybe this is a step—I guess

maybe the labour critic, who's in front of me here, Jamie West, knows better than me that maybe they've finally gotten off Working for Workers. Working for Workers is a hard thing to defend when you don't work for workers, and I gave you some examples of where you're not working for workers.

I talked about nurses today, Jamie, and what struggles they're going through. You talk about education workers with our members from London who talk about education and the problems we're having in education. It's everywhere: Classroom sizes are too big, way too big, violence in our schools, staffing shortages, and that's the things we know. We have 700,000 people today that are unemployed—unemployed—and we have staffing shortages in education and in health care. Does that make sense to anybody? That means it's funding. If you're not funding our education system and you're not funding our health care, what do you do?

You're making hospitals lay off people. In my riding—I don't know about everybody else's riding because I really stay on Niagara—we had 99 people get laid off just before Christmas, had their jobs cut. They say they're going to place them here and place them there, or they'll get laid off. But what happened that same day—and this is where I talk about priorities and where you've got to think about workers. I'm talking to the Conservatives on this one, because the same day in Niagara, Speaker, when they announced they were cutting 99 jobs in Niagara to save \$10 million because of their deficit, this government made an announcement of \$125 million that was going to go to private clinics—private clinics. There's the problem with health care. You're privatizing it. Instead of spending every single tax dollar—because we've got to pay extra taxes for health care—take that money and put it into our public system, publicly funded, publicly delivered. Why are you giving \$125 million to a private system when we're laying off close to 100 people in the public system? Can somebody explain that to me? Why not take that money and put it back into the public system, and then we wouldn't have to lay off nurses and PSWs.

We just had another announcement in Niagara: PSWs just got laid off. I don't have the numbers on it, because I got a call on it Sunday morning and they couldn't give me the numbers Sunday morning; they're probably out now. PSWs are being laid off. Some are going to have to go back down to part-time. We're going to have no PSWs on our midnight shift in our hospital.

Before I get into some more stuff in my speech—I'm going to stay on health care. I've only got a few minutes left; I think my colleague wants to speak as well. Well, he called me this morning and told me he was speaking. It wasn't like—he kind of advised me. He's the critic; he's going to do whatever he wants. But he was kind when he said it this morning at 8 o'clock, when we talked.

I just don't understand, on the health care file. I have been talking about this now for a number of years. Actually, it's about 22 years. I think my colleagues from St. Catharines and Niagara have been doing the same thing with the Port Colborne urgent care centre.

The Fort Erie urgent care centre was a hospital. Twenty years ago, under the Conservatives, they wanted to close it. That community rallied, with 5,000 people. I think Jeff was probably there at that time. I think Malcolm Allen was there as well, from Welland. Some 5,000 people came and fought for that hospital. They were able to save the hospital, but it became an urgent care centre over the last number of years.

What have they done now? The Conservatives have done this, nobody else. I'm not blaming anybody else. The Liberals should never have allowed it to happen in Fort Erie, either, when they were in power. But our urgent care centre in Fort Erie now, instead of operating 365 days a year, 24 hours a day, is now being operated 10 hours a day, and it's shut down after 8 o'clock at night, at a time when our population has gone from around 28,000 people up to 37,000 or 38,000, at a time when—I don't know if anybody notices—a lot more seniors are everywhere in our communities, especially in Niagara. I think we are about 30% seniors. In Jeff's riding, they did the same thing in Port Colborne with their urgent care. They want to close it. What are we doing?

This goes back to what I was saying, about how you're laying off people in a public system. You're giving money to the private system, to CEOs, so they can make money. As a matter of fact, there are billions of dollars to be made in health care if you are giving it to private, because it's about profit; it's not about care. We saw that in long-term care. You can say whatever you want about long-term care. That became private, and the minute it became private, we had all the problems. It was exposed during COVID. When we lost 6,000 of our moms, our dads, our aunts and our uncles during COVID, 78% of those were in a private setting. Think about that: Some of our moms and dads died from the basic needs of not getting enough water. They died of dehydration. Privatization doesn't work.

But getting back to Fort Erie: On Saturday, we had a rally. Actually, it was a town hall. The community showed up again, like they always have, with story after story after story talking about how important the urgent care centre is in Fort Erie. We had somebody come and tell the story that they were having a heart attack. They wouldn't have made it to St. Catharines, Jennie Stevens's riding. They wouldn't have made it to Niagara Falls. They went to the urgent care centre. The urgent care centre stabilized them, and then they took them to Hamilton. He told the story that without the urgent care centre, he'd be dead today. He was crying when he spoke about it. His wife was crying when they were speaking about it. They were hugging.

Urgent care centres are important in every single community—Port Colborne and Fort Erie. And then the AG report made it even clearer because, as we know, in our hospitals today our emergencies are 12-, 14-, 16- or 18-hour waits. And it just happened. I'll give you a quick example. I'm probably not going to get my speech done now.

I'll give you a quick example. My daughter had some health issues. We took her to the St. Catharines hospital;

she lives in Fenwick. She goes there, she goes in the emergency room, she goes to triage, and then they tell her, "Go wait here." She waited there for about six hours. She finally gets called in, thinking, "Okay, I'm going to go see the doctor." Well, that's not what happens.

You go from there into another room where they sit you down for another six hours. Then after about six hours, they say, "Okay," they call your name and then you go to a waiting area where you wait for the doctor to come. Now you're looking at another two, three, four hours. It doesn't make any sense to me.

0930

My daughter took 18 hours to see a doctor. I won't tell you what the issue was; it's not important. That doesn't happen at an urgent care centre because you get in right away. The wait time in the urgent care centre in Fort Erie is about an hour and a half, maybe two hours. Our member, Jeff—what would it be in a Port Colborne urgent care centre? A couple of hours?

Mr. Jeff Burch: At least.

MPP Wayne Gates: Yes, a couple of hours to get in and see a doctor. So you go to the emergency room and it's four, six, eight hours. And we have people laying all over the halls there. We have hallway medicine there.

I'm saying to the government, instead of investing \$125 million into private clinics, invest it into urgent care centres in Port Colborne and Fort Erie and keep them open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. What will that do, Madam Speaker? That will alleviate the wait times in your emergency rooms because, as we know, most people don't have a family doctor today. You've got two choices if you don't have a family doctor: You can go to an urgent care centre—which would make sense, by the way—or you can go to the emergency room and wait 12, 14, 16 hours.

I would say—like the AG report has said—invest that money back in your urgent care centre. That will alleviate the problem that we're having in our emergency rooms, and the flow would be better. Yet what are you doing? You're closing urgent care centres. It makes no sense. Everybody is telling you, "Don't close urgent care centres. It's not in the best interest of health care." And they're saying, "Well, it costs too much." You can't argue that when you're spending the kind of money you're spending in private clinics, investing in private.

I'm going to finish by saying this: Some of you say, "Well, private works." It didn't work in long-term care, and we've got the facts there. Some 6,000 people died during COVID—78% were in private long-term-care facilities and retirement homes. We've got the proof, but here's the biggest proof: the number one killer, the number one reason people claim bankruptcy in the United States of America—does anybody know what it is? It's health care costs. And why is that? Because it's private. Do we want to go down a system where we're having a private health care system when it's the number one reason in the States for bankruptcy? Is that what you want to do to our seniors and our families? I say no.

I'm going to turn this over to my colleague Jamie West to finish up the next 30 minutes.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): I recognize the member for Sudbury.

MPP Jamie West: Thank you to my colleague from Niagara Falls for his lead debate on Bill 105.

This is an odd bill. I know when people are watching this, it looks like we're always arguing back and forth, but I have a good working relationship with the Minister of Labour. We had a meeting, maybe two weeks ago, talking about what was going to be in this bill. The end result from the conversation we had was, I said that there won't be a lot for me to criticize. He went, "Hmm," and I think he went, "Hmm," because he didn't tell me all the stuff that was in the bill.

Instead of this being a labour bill, this is an omnibus bill. It was tabled by, I think, red tape reduction, but it's a mix of weird parts. It's 170 pages, and I think the reason it's 170 pages is so they could throw in some poison pills, so they can point their finger and they'll say, "Oh, so you don't care about people paying for the uniforms. Oh, you don't care about actual workers. Oh, you don't care about"—but they don't want us to talk about the decertifying of unions that this bill enables. They don't want to talk about the bad parts.

So because it's such a large bill and I have such a little amount of time to speak to it, Speaker, what I'm going to do is I'm going to break it down into sections: good, fine and bad. I might go through it a little quickly just so I can get through all of them and expand on them if there's enough time at the end.

But the opportunity right now is ripe for a labour bill—it has been for the last eight years, honestly. There have been several—I'll put those in quotes—"Working for Workers" bills. They kind of nudge the line ahead, but they haven't made great changes for people. They've helped a lot of people in small ways, but people are looking for real help and real support. We're in a situation right now where there are 60,000 people in Ontario who have lost their jobs. And so people are thirsty for that sort of leadership that you're not really seeing in this bill.

Let's start with what's good: The good part of the bill has to do with talent agencies. It's going to create a director of talent agencies to regulate who can be a talent agent. It's going to have some regulations to define what agencies are and what talent workers look like. And it sets some prohibitions on charging fees for entertainment workers.

These are all things that ACTRA is very supportive of. These are things that are long overdue. If you had a membership of workers, especially actors—you know, we often think of the actors who are in People magazine and stuff, but when you're starting out as an actor, you're not working as often and so you're counting on fair support. If you're getting gouged and ripped off in your wages, it's not fair for you. We know that ACTRA supports this, and I think it's a good thing.

I want to maybe remind the government that something else you can do to help ACTRA is you could help the ACTRA commercial workers. The ACTRA commercial workers, Speaker, have been locked out since April 26,

2022. Today is April 22, 2026, so we're looking at four years of being locked out, and they're commercial actors. Not only has the Conservative government not supported them or helped them with this, they've actually—in those many, many ads you see promoting all the great stuff the government is doing, they used replacement workers for them. So instead of just saying, “Hey, we won't work at that agency. The agencies have locked out these commercial workers,” they said, “Well, we can't get involved, but also, we're going to buy ads from the commercial agents who have locked out these workers”—so four years of being locked out without support from the Conservative government.

And so that's a good part of the bill. I think it would be improved if you started helping out those locked-out commercial workers.

Schedule 6 of the bill is the Ombudsman Act. It basically requires the provincial Ombudsman to be bilingual.

In 2023, the Conservative government appointed Paul Dubé, and despite his last name sounding French, he couldn't speak French—so pretty embarrassing for the government. We're in a country that is bilingual, French and English, and so it got criticized a lot by French advocates. I think that makes sense, and I think it's important.

My colleague across the way—il parle français. La culture de la langue française, c'est très important pour les francophones de l'Ontario. So I understand why they got upset and frustrated, and I think that the French Language Services Commissioner was right when he expressed his concerns about this undermining access to services in French.

There are a lot of communities, including in Sudbury, where about 33% of my community speaks French. My wife is French. More and more newcomers, especially from Africa, speak French primarily. And farther north, you get to Hearst and you may not be able to find someone who's bilingual, right? They primarily speak French.

So when you're trying to reach out to the Ombudsman and they don't speak your mother language in a country that purports to be bilingual, that's pretty embarrassing. And so I'm glad they're putting it into writing. They're going to make this happen for them.

The next one—I know I said I'll do “good” and “fair” and “bad.” This one I put under “unsure” because this literally was tabled two days ago and started debate yesterday, and I haven't had time to look into it thoroughly. Like I said, it's 170 pages, this entire bill—an omnibus bill.

This is about retirement homes. It basically replaces the authority of the Lieutenant Governor in Council. I haven't had enough time, really, to look into this. So it's probably fine, I guess. I don't really know. It wouldn't be a deal-breaker anyway, mixed into the rest of the bill, unless someone brought something really tragic forward to me.

The part that's fair—and “fair” can be a mix of “sort of good but could use some improvements,” is schedule 1. It's basically that employees no longer have to pay for their uniforms. If you watch the news, that's how it came across. You wouldn't have to pay for purchasing and

laundering your uniforms, except in some cases. I think the intent is for small businesses, in certain cases. So the part that's sort of—when I say it's fair, it's that we have to ensure that this is actually enforced and available and not just a speaking point, because many workers aren't able to enforce things.

We know that there is a severe reduction in the number of employment standards inspection officers who are out there to police this sort of thing. We know that there is—I think the note I have is \$60 million of uncollected stolen wages for workers. I think the actual number is closer to \$100 million. And that's money that workers actually reported and had basically investigated and proven to be stolen. We know the actual number is probably much higher than that.

So if you're an employee in a lot of these workplaces who are provided a uniform—you're thinking of small franchises; many people are making minimum wage at those places—and you are desperate for work, you're not going to fight your employer over this, because it's so easy to dismiss an employee, find lack of work and just write them off. We need to ensure that this is actually happening.

0940

I believe, in the slide deck that was provided, I mentioned the franchisees. There was a little conversation—I'll connect with the minister just to confirm—but I believe that if you're in a franchise, you won't be considered a small business. They won't be just looking at that specific franchise location. Look, it's like Tim Hortons—they will look at all of the employees for the total number.

The other part—a bit of a loophole in here—is that the legal definition of a small business is any business with less than 99 employees. So I'd be interested in further looking at the bill to see if the bill actually stipulates what the government is considering, in this situation, a small business, because I don't think the general public would consider somebody with 99 employees a small business and have them be exempt from this situation.

It would be heartbreaking, as an employee, if you got a job and you had to buy a uniform—or several uniforms, say, if you're full-time, because you can't wear the same clothes every day. You thought that it would be covered by the employer because it's a requirement of the employer, and then you found out that, “Oh, they have 98 employees, so they don't have to follow this rule.” That would be really unfair.

The next part that I would consider fine is schedule 5. It's from the Occupational Health and Safety Act. There are a couple of parts in here.

The first one is they're changing the definition in the act from “occupational disease” to “occupational illness.” I'm not really sure, because the broader definition of “occupational illness” has “occupational disease” in it. I think it may be an opportunity where the Conservative government might feel like “disease” has a negative impact when people hear about it. If they haven't enforced it properly and somebody is ill or sent to hospital or dies

from occupational illness, it might sound better than “occupational disease.” But I’m not really sure.

The next part, and this is why it falls into “fine” and not “good,” is that the ministry can reimburse employers for the cost of required protective headwear—hard hats. From my understanding with the conversation I had with the Minister of Labour, construction employers, or construction places, are going to require chinstraps for certain types of work. We know that in construction head injury is one of the leading causes of critical injuries and fatalities. I think changing requirements of what you need for PPE makes sense.

I don’t know if it makes sense to say that, for a company like EllisDon, the taxpayers of Ontario will subsidize them for their personal protective equipment. It just doesn’t make sense to me. EllisDon—I tried to figure out how much they made in Ontario. I couldn’t really find it. But I know in Canada they made \$5.6 billion—somewhere between 50% to 70% of that came from Ontario. So just as a ballpark, let’s say \$3 billion was made in Ontario by EllisDon. Now the province is going to subsidize their hard hats? Look, it’s the cost of doing business, man. We shouldn’t be paying for it. They should be paying for it; they’re making a healthy amount of money. That makes sense.

The next part of that schedule 5 sets out the terms that the provincial Chief Prevention Officer can collect personal information. A while ago, there was an announcement that people could self-report occupational exposure. This just allows the Chief Prevention Officer to look through that information. I think it makes sense. It’s fine. The only problem is that this self-reporting Occupational Exposure Registry—it’s only good in workplaces with workers who actually know about it and promote it, and probably for those who already have a well-functioning joint health and safety committee.

If you have a bad employer, or you have an employer who’s pretty good but just doesn’t know, it’s not going to do anything for any kind of workplace. If you’re thinking about reducing occupational disease—and that is a looming number of people that are compensated, traditionally, at the end of their work life. It costs us literally billions of dollars to cover this. If we can be helping people before they’re inhaling things, before they’re absorbing things that are causing occupational disease, we’d be much further ahead than having a stack of papers that some people were able to self-report and maybe the Chief Prevention Officer will have a look at one day.

The next part, and this falls into the “fine” category, is about safety training harmonization. In our conversation, I was told that this meant that Ontario was going to look across all the provinces and see what the highest level of training was, and we would move to that highest level of training so our workers could work anywhere. And if somebody wanted to work here, they would have the highest level of training, and the best training generally brings down incidents of accidents, fatalities and injuries.

But the bill actually says, “recognizing ... for training, personal protective equipment or other equipment that

comply with the requirements in another Canadian jurisdiction or the requirements under an agreement entered into between Ontario and another Canadian jurisdiction.”

The way I read that, basically, is that if we agree with you, we use your training. And it cautions me because—I almost picked up the Kleenex box as a prop—the Occupational Health and Safety Act of Ontario is about this thick. It’s a hefty thing. There are lots of regulations for different industries, but the main act is substantial, maybe an inch thick. In Alberta, it’s about the size of a People magazine. It’s not as thick. I’m not saying Alberta is doing anything wrong, but I’m just saying that the Occupational Health and Safety Act is written because people have died. Everything in there is because someone has died, and that’s how they make these changes.

If the minister now has discretion to decide what is adequate protection for Ontario workers, that is a step backwards. I don’t mean this as an insult to my friend the minister, but I’m a health and safety expert. I have worked in health and safety for about 16 years. I taught at a university for health and safety. I’m not sure if I’d be qualified to determine what was adequate protection for other people. I don’t know the background of the Minister of Labour right now, but he doesn’t have that same background in health and safety that I have, so I’d be cautious about someone completely unqualified making determinations for workers who could be injured or killed in the workplace.

There are a couple of changes to WSIB that originally I thought were fine, and as I talked to injured workers’ advocacy groups they tell me they’re are not great at all. But I’ll keep them in the “fine” section because they’re generally a positive step forward: not perfect, but a positive step forward.

There is a cap, so if you are injured and on WSIB, you automatically retire when you turn 65. It’s unfair for a lot of workers who plan to work longer than 65. For example, I don’t plan to retire at 65. I plan to continue working. If I retire here, if the Conservative government somehow gets lucky and replaces me here, I return back to the smelter. I don’t want to retire when I’m 65. I have plans, and I have kids I want to help get through school and that sort of thing.

And so now, instead of just saying, “Look, we’re going to move it to 70”—because we know that the amount of money people on WSIB make is ridiculously low. Instead of saying, “We’ll just move it to 70 instead of 65,” the worker now has to appeal to continue past 65, and they’ll have to prove that they intended to work beyond 65.

Someone like me, we have some savings towards post-secondary education for our kids. I could point to that and say, “I didn’t plan to retire at 65. Here are some savings. Here are the ages of my kids who are planning to go to college, university, trade school, whatever else.” I could make that argument. Or maybe you could show your mortgage: “Well, my mortgage isn’t going to end until I’m 68.” That’s a reasonable argument.

The only problem with that reasonable argument is that WSIB is best known for denying people. Somewhere

around 70% of occupational disease claims are denied, and you have to fight and you have to appeal two to three times in order to be successful. That worries me, because in a perfect world for sure this will work, but it's not a perfect world. It's the world we live in right now, and WSIB is not really good at quick decision-making unless it's to deny people. They're really good at frequent denials and multiple appeals.

The other part that worries me with this is that there are many people who are living paycheque to paycheque. What if you don't have a mortgage? What if you don't have any savings for your kids? Maybe your plan is to continue working because every extra cent you have will go to help your kids when they're in post-secondary. That could be your plan, and that's a lot of people in Ontario. This bill does not address that, and so I understand now why the injured worker groups said that this may not be a positive step forward the way it sounds. It sounds really good. It may not be helpful to as many workers as it should be.

The next portion of this section is about returning loss of earnings to 90%. Not to go too long into this, but basically, right now, you get about 85% of your loss of earnings with WSIB. My colleague from Niagara Falls had mentioned, probably, deeming and how deeming can say there's a job at a parking lot, potentially. It doesn't matter if the job exists. They could just say, "You could work at a parking lot, make this much money and we'll carve off some of that WSIB that you can get." You may not have the job; they just say you could get one, and then they cut it back.

But let's say, in a perfect world, you're making 85%. They're going to increase this back to 90%. This is something that we've been calling for as New Democrats for a long time, injured worker groups have called for for a long time and unions have been calling for for a long time. Injured worker groups—in previous labour bills, we moved this as amendments; the Conservatives have voted against it—but I had asked them once, what does that 5% mean? It means the world to them, and so this is a very positive thing that is happening here. I want to recognize that. It's just that whole—that section ends in the fair part.

0950

The part about this is—two parts catch my eye. One is that it's great that they're doing this, that the Conservatives are doing this. In our first conversation, they told me it was the Liberals who had reduced it to 85%, but I did the research. It was actually the Mike Harris Conservatives that cut it back on January 1, 1998, so that was a while ago.

Then what Mike Harris did was—actually he said, "There's an unfunded liability" and so more workers were denied, and because more workers are denied, they have to fight for it, and many get exhausted and can't do the fight so a surplus builds up. And what they do with the surplus is they give billions of dollars back to employers. So when my colleague from Niagara Falls was talking about that worker who died in his plant, it's possible that that plant could get a refund—in a plant where somebody

had been killed. I know this because I worked in a plant where someone had been killed, and they got a refund.

So what happens is the Conservative government of Mike Harris, the Liberal government as well, the Conservative government again now—I think three times, under Doug Ford—they have done this again and again, giving back money to employers, even employers who have horrible safety records and saying they have this surplus—and the surplus is basically from injured workers who aren't receiving the money that they should be getting.

There's another section in this: Section 44.1 says, "if a material change in circumstances occurs, the board may review payments to a worker for loss of earnings for any period beginning on or after the specified date and may confirm, vary or discontinue the payments." There are some bad employers—there are some great employers, but there are some bad employers out there who harass their workers, who threaten them that they'll be fired, who do all sorts of horrible things to injured workers. This is a loophole that opens for them that will encourage them to continue to harass them or continue to appeal to the WSIB to reduce their loss of earnings so that worker gets off their books, and so that's not really great.

Another part of this section is WSIB benefits for residential care facilities. My colleague from Ottawa South, I believe, has brought this up many times during different amendments for certain labour bills. It's a positive step forward. It's basically people who are working in, let's say group homes, residential facilities, who will now have WSIB care.

I was actually surprised that there are workers out there who don't have—this was a few years ago when I learned about this—coverage, because in all of my workplaces we always had coverage, and so I wasn't aware. So there are approximately 1.5 million workers in Ontario who do not have WSIB coverage. If those workers get injured at work, there's no coverage for them. That's about one in four workers in Ontario. That's a startling number.

There are some people who are excluded from this coverage, and we need to expand the coverage. Child care workers, for example: I don't understand how they wouldn't have WSIB coverage. Kids jump around and move around and knock things over and bump into people, and some small children, especially for child care workers, have to be picked up, brought to places, carried, that sort of thing. There is that potential for injury. It's weird that they would be excluded. So it's generally a fair thing, but one of those we could do better, we could do a little more.

The next section is schedule 3. I've got about 10 minutes; I hope I'll get through all of this. It's fine, but it makes it also bad. They're changing the open period. So basically there's a three-month period in a collective agreement where unions can raid each other. I'm not in favour of raiding; I think it's a bad practice to begin with. We should just outlaw it completely instead of changing it. So what they're doing is they're going to change it. They're going to reduce it to two months. And if your contract goes beyond three years—some people have a collective agreement that's four years, five years; it

depends; you might sign that for stability in the industry—it will just start on the second-last month of the CBA. I don't know why we wouldn't just eliminate this. I don't know why we'd want unions to raid each other. It causes instability in the workplace. There are processes where workers are not happy to form their own union, to decertify and everything else. This is the poison pill in this bill. Everything basically for labour is fine in the bill. The poison pill for labour—and it seems like the Conservatives always want to have some horrible parts so that they can say, “Oh, you didn't like the carrot,” and not want to talk about the rotten garlic in the bill.

This bill will allow for an employee to apply to have their union decertified if they don't have a collective agreement with the employer within six months of forming a new union. And the Conservative government knows this—they won't make eye contact with me because they know this.

When you first form a union, it's unlikely that you'll have a first contract in the year. Many of them get forced farther and farther along. There are all kinds of delay tactics that are put in. There are, in fact, industries of anti-union, union-busting organizations who will come in to help stop a union from forming, that employers will spend literally hundreds of millions of dollars on to stop a union from forming, and then will pressure the workers.

And typically, what happens is, whoever organized the union—let's say my colleagues around me, we formed a union. We all come from union backgrounds, and so we organized our workplace. The NDP, by the way, is the only workplace out of the three parties that have unionized employees. We're very proud of them: COPE and OPSEU.

But let's say we organized it. Well, what can happen is—we're in another workplace, we're all working together, we organize a union, and the employer, actually, would probably fire all of us—the first thing they would do to the people who organized it. And then what the employer would do afterwards is he would delay contracting out.

Now the Conservative government is allowing another feather in the cap of the employer to have the place decertified because all that employer has to do is hire a friend of the family, a brother, somebody else—salt it with someone anti-union—to apply for decertification. And if they don't have a first contract, that means the adjudicator more than likely will have to agree with them. So basically, this is a union-busting bill just hidden in here. That's a horrible part of the bill. It's something we cannot support at all. It will have to be removed if you want any support from us.

Let's get into the bad part. The government is fascinated with reducing environmental protections in general, and the public's right to know information about environmental protection. The bad part of the bill is schedule 2. They put it nice in front, in the beginning.

Under environmental assessments, the public can no longer request that the minister refer an environmental assessment to the Ontario Land Tribunal. So the public basically can't ask questions, can't request experts look into this. The minister no longer has to conduct, and he no

longer has to publish, a review of the comprehensive environmental assessment. The minister no longer has to provide an opportunity for public comments. So you can't ask them to do stuff; you can't comment on it.

And this part I find—I mean, all of this is egregious. But the fourth part of this: The minister can refer an environmental assessment to cabinet for a decision. The Ontario Land Tribunal is typically where they would go. Now, you can send it to cabinet, and we know already that cabinet agreed to buy the Premier a \$30-million plane, so I think they can be whipped into making whatever decision the government wants them to do.

But more importantly, the OLT has subject matter experts. They are experts in their field. We're not. I don't care who we are in this room. There may be a handful of us, our background may be in the environment, but I'm saying that a majority in cabinet are not experts in this field, and we should have expert decisions left to experts.

Think about building your house. Do you want your house built by somebody who's never built a house, or do you want it built by an architect? Right? The bridge you're driving on: Do you want it built by whoever is in this room? We're all great people; we're just not engineers. Maybe we shouldn't be the ones designing and building the bridge. Pulling us out isn't about quick decision-making; it's about making the decisions that the Premier wants. We cannot support that because that's bad.

Another part of this section is about landfill expansions. Bill 5 was touted as a mining bill, but buried in Bill 5 was the Dresden landfill project. This is really embarrassing for one of the Conservative members because he knocked on doors and promised to be opposed to this landfill project, and then, shortly after his election, the Premier buried into Bill 5 the expansion of the Dresden landfill, which I believe is five kilometres from downtown. So you'll have dump trucks back and forth through downtown all the time. This is a picturesque kind of small town—picture a Hallmark movie area—and now there will be dump trucks randomly back and forth as they go into it. So basically, I guess there are other cronies and greedy donors who have approached the Conservative government and said, “Hey, my landfill, too.” That will allow what happened in Dresden to happen to any landfill in Ontario. It sort of slipped under the door.

While the Conservative government is out there making announcements about how much they love workers and everything else, they don't want you to think about how they're going to be able to decertify unions. They don't want you to think about how they're trying to bypass public opinion about landfills as well.

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The next part that's bad has to do with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care Act. So basically this is a weird thing, and it was floated earlier and then pulled back. The idea of this is it's going to prioritize international medical graduates who are from Ontario. On the surface maybe that sounds good because we want people who are training here to stay here, to work here, to whatever else.

They made these criteria, if you're an international medical graduate—and we all need doctors, right? Many people in Ontario—I don't know the number off top my head—are on a waiting list, and that waiting list might as well be forever. It's not a short waiting list. There's a shortage of family practitioners; there's a shortage of medical practitioners across the field.

If you are an international medical grad and you are a good doctor, you can't come here to Ontario unless you've gone to an Ontario high school for two years—in my head I picture people who have done their MD and then go back, like an Adam Sandler movie, to grade school or high school for two years so they can qualify for this—or you have to go to an Ontario university in-person for two years, or you have to have lived in Ontario for at least 24 weeks leading up to your application.

I don't know why we're putting barriers up to doctors. If you are a doctor, you are an expert in the medical field and you want to come to the city of Sudbury—in fact, there is a doctor who is an expert in his field, who's been in the city of Sudbury, Dr. Koka. He's been in Sudbury for probably 40 years, maybe a little more. Dr. Koka is one of the reasons that Sudbury has the Northern Ontario School of Medicine, also in Thunder Bay. He fought for it and brought it here. But Dr. Koka is originally from India, and then practised medicine somewhere in the UK—I don't remember off top of my head—and came to Sudbury, decided to practise in Sudbury and expanded medical care. He's excellent in his field, and he's brought more doctors over and he's a strong advocate. He comes here regularly to speak on behalf of the OMA. I don't care where he went to school. I care that he can practise medicine and do the job.

My colleague from Niagara Falls talked about how long people are waiting: four hours in the waiting room and emergency room to go to another waiting room. You're not actually seen by—the waiting room doesn't get super huge. You just get to a secondary waiting room for another four hours, and then you get to a third waiting room for two to three hours. If we had doctors, that would eliminate that.

A lot of people who are in emergency rooms are people who don't have family physicians, and so when they have an illness they can't get rid of, when you have a cold and after two or three days it doesn't go away and you think, "Maybe I need extra care"—they end up in an emerg; they end up in walk-in clinics. They don't have primary care.

Why you would want to throw a wrench into this makes no sense to me. It feels like red meat to the base, right? There are certain people that hear this as a dog whistle. "We need local doctors," and some people hear that as a dog whistle, and I think that's something that's disgusting that we shouldn't be having in legislation.

The Ontario Medical Association president, when they floated this last time, said the policy may end up deterring internationally educated physicians at a time when the government is trying to attract them to our province. Of course, there has been significant push back, not just from the medical community, but from patients as well. Because

this is frankly racist—or I guess not frankly; its subtext is racist—

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Questions?

Mr. Sherif Sabawy: I really enjoyed the discussion and the perspective our colleagues from the other side have been presenting, especially the member from Sudbury. I would like to comment on a few items, especially on the health care part. Talking about the changes proposed here to give priority to Canadians who became doctors: Speaking about the two years of high school—it's giving some advantage for the Canadians who graduated from high school here, and they've gone and they did their study outside Canada. They are still Canadians; they have every aspect of the Canadian citizenship.

My question is, why do we not look into the absolute benefit of the bill instead of talk about the stuff which is not in the bill?

MPP Jamie West: The question is about doctors. I think that if you have legislation that the Ontario Medical Association comes out against, then maybe your legislation is not great.

The other part of the question was about why am I talking about things that are not in the bill instead of things that are in the bill. I talked about all the things that were in the bill and the reasons they were wrong and the way to improve them. That's actually our role, as opposition: to improve bills and find ways for the bills to be better. Your role is actually to listen to our feedback and say, "I think they have a point. Let's make this bill better. Let's make it as good as possible."

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

MPP Lisa Gretzky: My question is to either one of my colleagues who got up and spoke today.

There were 200 workers who worked at Diageo who are now currently not employed there anymore. The plant is closed. This government would like to say, "Well, 80% of them found jobs or retired." They were forced into retirement; let's be real. The reality is, there are 200 jobs from our community gone—gone.

Interjection.

MPP Lisa Gretzky: Good-paying jobs. And the government did nothing to actually directly support those workers.

To the point one of my colleagues made about union-busting baked into this bill—union-busting: Right now in my community, for nearly nine months, the workers at Titan Tool and Die have been locked out by the company. The company has shipped equipment to the States and said, "We're not operating anymore." And yet, the company is using scab workers to do the work of the Titan workers.

So can either of my colleagues say where in this bill is anti-scab labour legislation, or maybe why this government hasn't supported it the numerous times that we have tabled it?

MPP Wayne Gates: I thank my colleague for the question. There are two things in the bill that are a problem.

The problem is that they're going to try to get unionization quicker—taking it away from workers. The minute you attack that, the workers on that, it's an issue.

On her workers in Windsor, that she has done a great job on—you cannot have scabs take our jobs. That should have been in Working for Workers bill number one. We should have got rid of scabs. Some 98% all collective agreements are settled without strikes; why are you fighting for the 2%? In their case, can you imagine being on the picket line and watching that bus show up with a bunch of scabs to go in and do your job? If you forced the scabs not to be used, they'd be back at the bargaining table tomorrow to get a closure agreement for these workers. That's what should be happening. The anti-scab should have been in Working for Workers bill number one. We've told the minister; our labour critics told the minister—everybody has told you what you need to do.

You can't be working for workers if you're allowing scabs—

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): I recognize the member for Beaches–East York.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Good morning, Madam Speaker. It's always so amazing to see you in that chair.

To anyone over there beside me, I have a question: Just when you think there's nothing left to kill with environmental protections in Ontario, we see the environmental assessment section in this bill, and I'm just wondering about your thoughts on that.

MPP Jamie West: There's a pretext out there that the environment is too overburdening and there's a tiny grasshopper or something—that is not the reality of what's happening.

The government, more and more, muzzles the ability of the public to ask questions. We work for the public. We're responsible to the public. We should be listening to them. The government muzzling people on questions they have about protecting the environment doesn't make sense. The government deciding that they know better than subject matter experts on the environment that the government actually employs doesn't make any sense either. And the government deciding that the minister is no longer accountable to the public doesn't make any sense either. I'm not saying that every time there's an appeal or a question, that person is right. What I am saying is that the public, who we work for, has a right to get answers from ministers.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

MPP George Darouze: Thank you to the member from Niagara Falls for his presentation this morning. I appreciate listening to him.

I heard the member mention that the NDP is in favour of our proposed changes to the WSIB that would allow eligible workers to receive benefits after age 65.

I was wondering whether the member and his party are also in favour of our proposal in schedule 9 to increase loss-of-earning benefits from 85% to 90%, which is the first increase in 30 years.

MPP Wayne Gates: Well, I'm glad you were listening to my presentation. I appreciate that.

I'm certainly in favour of increasing the 65—there are some problems there, and hopefully we'll get them fixed at the amendment time, so hopefully that happens.

1010

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Mr. Jeff Burch: Thank you to my friends from Sudbury and Niagara Falls for their presentations—both great champions for workers.

To my friend from Niagara Falls: The practice of deeming is something that he has been fighting for many years. My father actually worked at the General Motors plant in St. Catharines; Wayne was the president of the local when my dad worked there. I can remember the deaths and injuries that he talked about, because when you're a family member and you see that happen in a place where your parents work, you remember that kind of thing.

The practice of deeming, we often forget, has a huge effect on workers' families. I'm wondering if my colleague from Niagara Falls would like to comment on the effect that the practice of deeming has on the families of workers.

MPP Wayne Gates: Deeming is one that we've been fighting for a long, long time. Back to the family: You go to work every day. You're getting fair wages, fair benefits. You're taking care of your family. You've got your kids ready for university. It could be playing hockey, playing baseball.

What happens when you get deemed is you drive your family into poverty. And a lot of times, what happens is the family makeup disappears. You end up having marriage split-ups; you end up having mental breakdowns because of the fact that you're now living in poverty. You can't provide for your family. So deeming is one of the worst things that can happen to a worker who just goes to work every day to get a fair day's pay for a fair day's work, and gets injured on the job through no fault of their own. It kills the family. It kills their opportunity to live a quality work life. This government should make sure that they put deeming in the next bill they do.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Mr. Stephen Blais: I listened intently to both presentations this morning. The bill has a number of measures that will continue to centralize power within cabinet. I think we can agree that there have been some pretty big concerns about the decisions cabinet has been making recently—the bobbleheads approving a private business jet, as an example, for the Premier's use, because apparently flying commercial is too scary and there's turbulence, and somehow a luxury business jet will deal with that particular problem.

So I'm wondering if you can take the remaining time in your debate this morning—50 seconds or so—to elucidate a little bit about the concerns with centralizing more power with cabinet.

MPP Jamie West: It's an interesting question, because right now in the news it's been about the Premier purchasing this giant jet that can only land in a handful of airports in Ontario, spending \$30 million. The Premier said cabinet universally signed off. That means everybody signed off on it.

But it's at the point now that there's so much conversation about this jet that I'm actually thinking it's a smoke-screen about the FOI, and that people won't be able to find information about other scandals: scandals like the SDF boondoggle, the greenbelt scandal, the Therme project. The science centre has a roof that was going to collapse imminently, even though we had record snowfall and it did not collapse, and the engineers said the roof was perfectly safe.

I think that this government makes many bad decisions, and then having cabinet sort of circulate the power means that the Premier basically has all the power in the public—

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): We're now moving on to members' statements.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK

Mr. Matthew Rae: This week marks National Volunteer Week, an opportunity to recognize individuals who strengthen our communities through service.

This past weekend in the town of St. Marys, I had the privilege of celebrating Terri Iredale, who was recognized as a life member of Kin Canada. Terri is a true community-builder, with decades of service to the Kinette Club of the town of St. Marys and to Kin Canada. She served as national president during the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, a time that required steady leadership and commitment. Congratulations, Terri, on a well-deserved recognition.

I also had the opportunity to attend the U13 A OHF Championship in Listowel, Ontario, where the Southeast Surge captured the gold medal. Events like this do not happen without volunteers. Parents, coaches, local businesses and community members came together to organize a successful provincial tournament and raise the support needed to host it. Volunteerism is a strong foundation of our community. It's the quiet, consistent work of people who choose to give their time and energy back to others.

We're fortunate to live in a province where the spirit of service continues to thrive. Happy National Volunteer Week.

ARK AID MISSION

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I rise today to recognize the extraordinary work of Ark Aid street mission in London and to call for a more responsible, sustainable approach to funding homelessness services in Ontario.

Ark Aid provides roughly 25% of London's shelter capacity, serving some of the most vulnerable residents with dignity and compassion. Over the past year alone, they have delivered more than 300,000 meals, provided over 36,000 overnight shelter spaces and supported more than 1,000 individuals on their path towards stability and housing.

Yet despite their critical role, Ark Aid organizations and organizations like it are forced to operate on unstable, short-term emergency funding. This start-and-stop approach wastes resources, burdens staff and prevents long-term planning.

Seniors are the fastest-growing demographic turning to Ark Aid shelter. At the same time, local hospitals discharge between five and 13 unhoused individuals each day into the shelter, which is not equipped to provide ongoing medical or personal care.

In Ontario, 85,000 individuals experience homelessness, and, with over 2,000 of those in London alone, I urge this government to commit to matching the federal government emergency funding and to partner with community agencies like Ark Aid street mission to build a funding system that is reliable, coordinated and that is prepared to address homelessness.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Ted Hsu: The government hit the skip button for its budget bill and detailed examination in committee. That's the stage where mistakes are fixed, but this government likes to rush and is too lazy to check its work.

I easily found a typo in the budget bill regarding freedom of information: "The sources of the personal information that is intended be collected" should read "intended to be collected."

I easily found a grammar mistake in the budget bill regarding conservation authorities: "When appointing a person ... who are not members" should be "When appointing a person ... who is not a member."

Because the government is skipping committee stage, these typographical and grammar mistakes won't be fixed. These small errors are symptoms of a larger disease: the reckless haste of a tired government, sloppy, careless and drunk with power.

What about more serious errors? We shouldn't have to wait for a crisis to find out what more serious errors they missed.

Send this bill to committee. Hold the public hearings. Fix the bill.

3M CANADA

Hon. Steve Clark: I rise to celebrate a great corporate citizen, both in my riding and in Canada. On May 1, 3M Canada celebrates its 75th anniversary since opening its first plant in Brantford in 1951.

Today, 3M operates three R&D labs, as well as seven manufacturing plants—six of them in Ontario, in Perth, London and Brockville in my riding. 3M Canada's 1,200

employees, including 340 in Brockville, manufacture products that Canadians use every day to make their life easier and safer. From duct tape to masking tape, sandpaper, Scotch-Brite pads and lint rollers, these iconic products are proudly made in Ontario.

One of my highlights as MPP was opening 3M's N95 plant in Brockville, built in just eight months during the pandemic. 3M stepped up when our country needed them most.

3M's contribution goes far beyond creating good jobs and supporting our economy. The company is deeply committed to giving back. In Brockville, 3M supports our United Way through its annual Harvest Lunch. 3M also invests in young learners by supporting St. Lawrence College's mobile skills labs, the Boys and Girls Club STEM and education centre, and the Girls Inc summer STEM camps.

Speaker, I ask everyone to join me in congratulating 3M for 75 remarkable years in our country. Thank you so much.

ASSISTANCE TO FLOOD VICTIMS

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: As we approach the final week of April, communities across the far north are preparing for spring flooding. Record snowfall across the northeast, thick ice on the Albany River and rising water levels in rivers flowing into the Moose River basin are all increasing the risk of emergency evacuations.

Evacuations can happen with little notice and with significant consequences that go far beyond the immediate emergency. Evacuations disrupt education, isolate families and friends, and they place pressure on communities already in crisis.

Too often, communities are left managing these risks with limited resources and delayed support. There has been little progress on basic accountability measures like performance indicators and reporting on risk, despite these gaps being identified in the 2022 Auditor General's report and again in the 2024 follow-up.

1020

Coordination matters. Compassion matters. As we move into peak flood season, compassion and coordination with First Nations municipal leaders must continue and increase to make sure the ministry's evacuation planning meets the needs of the reality on the ground. Let's work together with communities to respond to emergencies, address long-term relocation needs and support local leaders who understand their communities best so we can ensure safety, stability and resilience.

EVENTS IN MARKHAM-UNIONVILLE

Mr. Billy Pang: I rise today to celebrate remarkable milestones in our community. Recently, I had the pleasure of honouring residents marking significant birthdays, including their 90th and 95th birthdays, as well as retirements. These achievements reflect a lifetime of experience and wisdom. They remind us of the rich contributions our

seniors bring to our community. As the local representative, it's always my honour to share in their special moments.

I also had the pleasure of celebrating 53rd and 60th wedding anniversaries. Over the past few days, I was delighted to distribute dozens of happy couple certificates, recognizing couples who have reached 25 or more years of marriage or partnership. These certificates honour their enduring commitment and love. These milestones inspire us all and remind us of the importance of family, community and lasting relationships.

I am glad to be part of these joyful life journeys, and I look forward to celebrating more milestones like these with our residents in Markham-Unionville.

GIRLS GOVERNMENT

MPP Alexa Gilmour: With us today in the galleries are 16 grade 7 and 8 girls from Dr. Rita Cox-Kina Minagok Public School and Holy Family Catholic School in Parkdale. They are a part of this year's Girls Government program in my riding.

Now, Girls Government is a non-partisan initiative designed to get girls excited and involved in the political process from a young age. It was started in Parkdale-High Park in 2008 by former MPP Cheri DiNovo and has been implemented across Ontario by MPPs of all parties.

It has been such an honour to continue the program this year. The girls have continually inspired me with their vision of an inclusive neighbourhood and their commitment to working together to create those visions to reality through research and through lifting up their voices.

The students' own community of Parkdale has long been at the forefront of Ontario's housing justice movement. Programs like MURA and organizations like Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust, Parkdale Activity-Recreation Centre and the new Dunn House provide deeply affordable supportive housing for many residents, and the girls today will be advancing this important work here at Queen's Park by advocating for affordable housing.

I also want to thank the teachers for sponsoring the program this year because they made it possible.

Public schools: If we want the future for our children, we have to invest in the future of public education.

GOVERNMENT INVESTMENTS

MPP Bill Rosenberg: Today I rise to speak about the municipality of Wawa and its importance in advancing the province's vision for growth in northern Ontario. Wawa is a regional service hub, providing essential services to five surrounding communities in Algoma-Manitoulin. There are five major gold mines operating within a 200-kilometre radius, with more planned to come online.

Recently, the province invested \$6 million in housing-enabling water and sewer infrastructure, a contribution that has been welcomed and deeply appreciated by the community. This historic investment positions Wawa to advance housing development for the first time in nearly

30 years. It represents a practical and meaningful step forward, aligning directly with Ontario's broader objective to increase housing supply across the province.

While this funding has made Wawa development-ready, the next critical step is ensuring projects move to reality by attracting investment supporting construction in our northern communities. Algoma–Manitoulin region is open for business, ready to grow, welcome investment and contribute to Ontario's economic future. We understand that northern Ontario development comes with unique challenges, and continued collaboration and partnerships are essential.

Wawa is committed to working with the province, the private sector, mining industries and Indigenous partners to support responsible development and long-term regional prosperity. With available land and strong partnerships, Wawa stands prepared to contribute to Ontario's housing and economic development priorities.

SIX PACK HOCKEY TOURNAMENT

Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady: I want to give a huge shout-out to the Langton Oldtimers, who held its 29th annual Six Pack hockey tournament last weekend.

Their tournament is a true highlight of our community calendar, bringing together players, families and fans under one roof of what I say is the best barn in this province. Langton Six Pack boasts five days and nights of hockey and showcases some of the very best hockey in the area across multiple divisions. OHL, AHL, NCAA and pro players grind it out in the carded division. There is also an open, an old-timers' and a women's division. Hockey fans most definitely get a variety of action, and players get a workout because the name "Six Pack" means there are only six players per team.

I want to thank the Langton Oldtimers for their efforts ahead of the tournament and over the course of the five days. Everything is well thought-out and everything runs smoothly. By the end of the weekend, these guys are exhausted, but their enthusiasm never wanes.

I'd like to give a shout-out to the small crew of Norfolk county employees who worked day and night to keep the arena spotless, despite the revolving door of players and fans.

Congratulations to all players, but I'd like to do a little shameless kudos to the two teams iced by Underhill's Farm Supply and me. The women's team I played on clinched the championship, and I can finally hang up my skates.

In the carded division, my son and his NCAA teammates ended up first in their pool, but lost a hard-fought, very entertaining battle in double-elimination overtime. What an incredible final match up to cap off the weekend.

We all look forward to the 30th anniversary in one year's time, and it's events like these that remind me how fortunate I am to live in small-town Ontario, where events like these are plentiful.

SIKH HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: I rise today to recognize Sikh Heritage Month and Vaisakhi, an occasion of profound significance for Sikh communities here in Ontario and around the world.

Vaisakhi marks the creation of the Khalsa in 1699 by Guru Gobind Singh, the 10th Guru, a defining moment that represents the core values of Sikhism: equality, service and justice. Throughout the month of April, Sikh Heritage Month provides an opportunity for all Ontarians to learn more about the rich history, culture and contributions of the Sikh community.

Madam Speaker, in Brampton and across our province, the Sikh community continues to play a vital role in strengthening our social fabric. From acts of "seva" and community service to leadership in business, health care and public service, their contributions are deeply valued and widely felt. It is also time to reflect on the importance of inclusivity, diversity and unity—principles that make Ontario stronger.

On behalf of this Legislature, I extend my warmest wishes to everyone celebrating Sikh Heritage Month and Vaisakhi.

HOUSE SITTINGS

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I beg to inform the House that the Clerk has received written notices from the government House leader indicating that temporary changes in the weekly meeting schedule of the House are required, and therefore, pursuant to standing order 9(h), the House shall commence at 9 a.m. on Monday, May 4, 2026, for the proceeding orders of the day, and pursuant to standing order 9(g), the afternoon routine on Wednesday, May 6, 2026, shall commence at 1 p.m.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Rob Flack: I want to welcome to our House Ontario's Big City Mayors, chaired by Mayor Marianne Meed Ward—they represent 70% of Ontario's population—here for their first advocacy day. Welcome to Queen's Park. Thank you for coming.

1030

MPP Lisa Gretzky: It is my great pleasure to welcome two of my constituents, Dr. Darren Cargill and Amy Seibel, who are the parents of the Windsor West page who is also the page captain today. Welcome to Queen's Park, and congratulations, Owen.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It is also my pleasure to introduce the family of co-page captain Livy Matthews from the riding of Toronto–Danforth: parents Joseph and Maya Matthews, and her sisters Camilla, Emilia and Aurora Matthews. Welcome to the Legislature.

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: I'd like to welcome all of the representatives from the Canadian Credit Union Association. In particular, I'm meeting later today with Duncan de Chastelain, James Craig and André Brisebois, and a

special welcome to Sandy Stephens, Nick Nestico and Brent Furtney. Welcome to Queen's Park.

MPP Mohamed Firin: I'd like to recognize, from my riding of York South–Weston, Paolo Abate; his wife, Stephanie Mandrapilias, will be joining us shortly; Maria Mandrapilias, his mother-in-law; and his two children Athena Abate and Leonardo Abate. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady: I'd like to welcome to the House the mayor of Haldimand county, Shelley Ann Bentley.

Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: I'm so honoured to introduce eight fabulous guests from various long-term-care homes and AON Inc. here at Queen's Park today: Michael O'Keeffe, Courtney Jilesen, Tera Pollack, April Coulter, Julie Parcels, Dominic Adesanya, Ray Barlow and David Friedman. Thank you for your service to our seniors. Welcome to your House.

Hon. Trevor Jones: I'd like to offer a warm welcome to my staff in the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness, as well as the Dairy Farmers of Ontario; the Beef Farmers of Ontario; Ontario Federation of Agriculture; the Christian Farmers Federation; Grain Farmers of Ontario; Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers'; Holland Marsh Growers'; Ontario Dairy Council; agriculture, food and rural affairs tribunal; and the College of Veterinarians of Ontario.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: The members of the Girls' Government are in the House. I want to welcome members from Dr. Rita Cox-Kina Minagok and the members of Holy Family Catholic School, and a special thank you to Karen Ridley, who has run this program with us for many years. Welcome to your House.

M. Guy Bourgoïn: J'ai le plaisir de vous introduire Emilie Lemieux, qui est la directrice du Manoir à Kapuskasing, et aussi Sophie Mondoux—je vais vous dire son titre en anglais : « behaviour support team lead ». Bienvenue à Queen's Park et aussi dans votre maison.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Happy Earth Day, everyone. Today, I would like to introduce you all to Mother Earth. Some of you respect her more than others, but let's all take care of her today.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): That is not an introduction.

I recognize the member for Cambridge.

Mr. Brian Riddell: I'd like to welcome the mayor of North Dumfries township, Sue Foxton, and her AEO, Andrew McNeely.

MPP Tyler Watt: It's my pleasure to introduce in the Legislature page Nihaal Singh and his father, Harpreet Singh, who are both constituents in my amazing riding of Nepean.

Today is Nihaal's page captain day. I would like to give you a warm welcome, and good luck today. You are making Nepean proud.

MPP George Darouze: I would like to welcome an amazing constituent from Carleton who is also the executive director of the Manotick Business Improvement Area, Kelly Belair, to Queen's Park. Earlier this week, the MBIA was recognized by the Ontario Business Improvement Area Association with an award of excellence for

their Taste of Manotick event in 2025. Congratulations on this recognition, and welcome to Queen's Park.

MPP Bill Rosenberg: I'd like to welcome representatives from the Chicken Farmers of Ontario, Egg Farmers of Ontario, Land Improvement Contractors of Ontario, Flowers Canada, Meat and Poultry Ontario, Northern Ontario Farm Innovation Alliance, Ontario Association of Veterinary Technicians, Ontario Broiler Hatching Egg and Chick Commission, Ontario Dairy Goat Co-operative, Ontario Processing Vegetable Growers, Ontario Sheep Farmers and the Ontario Veterinary Medical Association.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I apologize to the members and to all of our guests; I have a hard and fast rule that we have a limited amount of time for visitors. But of course, you're all welcome to come back at 1 o'clock for introduction of visitors to introduce your guests.

QUESTION PERIOD

HIGHWAY SAFETY

M^{me} France Gélinas: I want to start this question period on a different tone, by saying thank you to all members of this Legislature for voting in favour of the NDP motion to make Highway 11 and Highway 17 a nation-building project. Thank you.

During the debate, the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation said, "When we take a look at some of the work that has been done to date, more than 50% of the corridor has been widened to four lanes..." I'm strong in math, Speaker; half of Highway 11 is not four lanes. Can the member explain?

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: Our government is committed to supporting northern members. Our minister is in the north today talking to members of the community about the great work that we're doing under the leadership of Premier Ford.

To date, we've invested over \$650 million through the northern highways program and \$150 million in that stretch of the highway that the member opposite is speaking about. The expansion of Highways 11 and 17, the widening from Coughlin Road to Highway 582, the section east of Highway 587 to Pearl Lake: Those are some of the things that we've done when it comes to widening, 2+1 and other projects that our MTO officials are looking at and working with the municipality on.

As well, I'd like to mention that a letter has been penned by the Minister of Transportation, as well as the Minister of Northern Economic Development, to make this highway a priority project not just for Ontario but for Canada.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member for Mushkegowuk–James Bay.

Mr. Guy Bourgoïn: I also want to thank the Legislature for supporting the NDP motion. We hope the government will not play political games by blaming the federal government for dragging their feet, but with the response he just gave to my colleague, I can see the games have

started. This is just like saying, “We have the safest roads in North America.”

My question to the minister: Can you clarify again what you meant when you said 50% of the corridor has been widened to four lanes? Because we don’t see it.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: Thank you to the member for that question. But working with our municipal and federal partners isn’t playing games, Speaker; road safety is a non-partisan issue. It doesn’t matter which political stripe you belong to.

We need to make sure that Ontario has the strongest and safest roads across North America. That’s why our Minister of Transportation and our Minister of Northern Economic Development wrote that letter to the Minister of Transportation for Canada: so we can make sure that this is a project of national significance. That’s why we need investment from the federal government: to ensure that we have smooth transportation not just through the province of Ontario but throughout Canada.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The member for Timiskaming–Cochrane.

Mr. John Vanthof: Thanks for the support for the motion. Thank you for writing a letter to the federal government. Perhaps as a sign of goodwill to the federal government and to show that it’s also an issue of provincial significance, you could return the over \$150 million that your government has diverted from northern Ontario road projects to the south. Perhaps that would be a sign of good will.

Will the Ford government return the \$150 million to the northern Ontario roads budget that it took from the south? It’s going to take more than a letter; it’s going to take cold, hard cash.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: There’s no need to talk about returning money, because our government is investing money in the north. Our government is supporting northerners.

Every single initiative that this government has put forward to support the north, the NDP voted against it. Everything that we do to make sure that we’re twinning highways, that we’re supporting growth—improving winter maintenance, hiring more transportation enforcement officers, putting on more blitzes, making sure that roads are safer in the north—every one of those measures, that member opposite and that team voted against, but our team believes this is a non-partisan issue. That’s why we all voted last night in favour of the member opposite’s motion to support the northern highways and make sure that it’s a critical project for the growth of not this province but this country.

1040

HOSPITAL FUNDING

MPP Robin Lennox: Speaker, in Scarborough, people are waiting nearly 20 hours in the emergency department before they get a hospital bed. Meanwhile, at Hamilton General Hospital, the Urgent Medicine Day Unit is providing hospital-level care, testing and consultation while

ensuring patients can return to their own beds at night. It’s reducing pressure on our emergency departments and preventing hospital admissions.

To the Minister of Health: Why aren’t we learning from innovative initiatives like these and scaling them up to ensure that they are available in communities like Scarborough that need them?

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

Mr. Anthony Leardi: We continue to make record investments in our hospital system. Since taking office in 2018, our government has increased operational funding to our hospitals by approximately 50%. That is an enormous increase in operational funding.

Of course, in addition to operational funding, we have enormous investments—multi-million dollar investments—in the capital stream of hospitals as well. As we speak today, there are 17 major multi-million-dollar capital projects under way in the province of Ontario building new hospitals, renovating hospitals and making additions to hospitals.

These are the investments that our government is making in the hospital system to give people the care that they need in our publicly funded medical system.

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

MPP Robin Lennox: I think the member opposite may be mistaken on his math because it’s actually been the greatest cut to our hospital budget that we’ve seen in the past year.

I think I can speak for everyone when I say that Ontarians are tired of hearing how much money the Conservatives are throwing at the problem. They want to hear about impact, they want to know what has changed and they want to know that care is going to be available where and when they need it.

So can the minister point to one single measurable outcome—not investment, an outcome—that has improved hallway health care in communities like Scarborough after eight years of the Conservative government trying to fix it?

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I’m a little bit surprised that the member, being a medical professional herself, is unaware of the remarkable progress that we’ve made.

Let me underline just one remarkable statistic that every member of this House will appreciate: Since this government took office in 2018, we have had a net increase of 15% in the number of nurses working in the publicly funded medical system. That is according to the Canadian Institute of Health Information, which compiles that information. I underscore the fact that it is a net increase in the number of nurses working in this publicly funded system because that takes into effect not only the 100,000 new nurses that have been added but also those who have left the system due to retirement or other reasons. It is a net increase.

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

MPP Robin Lennox: As the member opposite pointed out, I'm a health worker, which is why I care about results, not false promises.

One in six people in Scarborough right now do not have a primary care provider. International medical graduates can be part of the solution, and they want to be. We know that many of them plan to enter into careers in family medicine. But this Conservative government is putting up more barriers for them to train and practise in Ontario. IMGs even had to take this government to court to get them to pull back their thoughtless policy.

So my question, through the Speaker, is for the Minister of Health: Why are you creating barriers for international medical graduates hoping to contribute to our Ontario health care system and improve access to health care in diverse communities like Scarborough?

Mr. Anthony Leardi: On the contrary, this government is actually making it easier for internationally trained individuals in the medical field to practise in Ontario. Not only are we doing that, but members of this House will have the opportunity to vote on those measures and tell us where they stand.

In addition to that proposition, we have increased the number of individuals being trained in the medical field for doctors by approximately 350 additional training positions by 2029. And in addition to that, we have increased by over 500 positions the number of residency positions that will be available across the province of Ontario. A residency position is a training position for a medical graduate. That is a huge increase, Madam Speaker, making opportunities abound.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Jonathan Tsao: My question is to the Solicitor General. The government lost 150 prisoners, and no one is being held accountable. The minister knew and never told the public. The minister knew and failed to act. The minister knew and did nothing—zero transparency, zero accountability. But yesterday the Premier let it slip that there are at least—at least—six prisoners on the run in Ontario right now.

So to the minister: In the name of public safety, can you confirm how many prisoners are actually on the run right now on our streets? What crimes did they commit, and were the victims notified?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: Thanks to the member for the question. It's very simple: We inherited a system that was broken. We were committed, and we are committed, to fixing it. We're committed to fixing it by making sure that we have additional resources, which includes 3,330 new correctional officers. It includes the new technology. It includes, for the first time, having the courts speak to the jails in real time.

But something else, Madam Speaker, and this is very important: In the rare event that there is an improper release, the police of jurisdiction will never hesitate in issuing a public safety announcement. The member knows that. And in the absence of receiving such an announce-

ment, people in the community should know that the police feel there's no inherent high risk.

At the end of the day, we're not going to stir up fear like the opposition. We're going to get the job done, we're going to fix the problem, and we're going to keep Ontario safe.

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

Mr. Jonathan Tsao: Listening to that answer, it's no wonder why the public is fed up with politicians. Just look at who is running the show over here.

Yesterday morning, a security guard in my riding was shot. He was shot while trying to stop a jewellery store robbery at the mall. And do you know what? That shooter is still on the run right now. Criminals are running wild in the streets, shooting up jewellery stores, terrorizing people in their homes, and these are the answers we get.

Meanwhile, you have a Premier over here who has been caught with his hands in the cookie jar buying himself a private jet. What world are you people living in?

To the minister: Will you finally hold yourself accountable and admit that you were asleep at the switch?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: Let me just clarify for the member opposite, since he may not know what the role of the Solicitor General is: The Solicitor General's role is to set policy, pass legislation and make sure that we have investments in police service, like our police service in Toronto. The Solicitor General must never interfere in day-to-day operations of police matters. And, again, to the member opposite: If there was a situation where there was any threat to any community across Ontario, whether it's the OPP, municipal or First Nations police services, they would never hesitate to make sure the public is aware by putting out a public safety announcement, and they do it from time to time. In the absence of seeing this from an improper release, there's no inherent higher risk to the community.

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

Mr. Jonathan Tsao: If the Solicitor General wants to talk about what his role is, I'll tell him what his role is: His role is to keep the criminals in the jails.

Our questions have been clear and they have been simple: How many criminals were lost in 2025? How many in 2026? What have they been charged with? Were any of them violent offenders? What are their sentences? What is the risk to the public? Zero answers—zero accountability.

1050

But do you know what? Maybe if this government funded schools properly, they'd be able to educate themselves on what accountability actually is.

After eight long years, this tired Conservative government is out of touch and putting the public at risk.

So I'll put the question to the minister once again: Will he hold himself accountable and provide the public with the information they need to keep themselves safe? Yes or no?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: Madam Speaker, in the rare incidences when an improper release takes place—and I want to put this into proportion for the member opposite. This represents a fraction of 1% of the total discharges, and 1%—less than 1% of a fraction is not acceptable. That's why we are working very hard to fix a problem we inherited.

The investments that we're making in our public safety are without modern-day precedent. It's about the 2,100 new police officers who are on the street, and that's 360 in Toronto—my police service, and it's actually your police service too.

We should stand with our police services and feel confident that God forbid there was a threat to any of our communities, the police will not hesitate in issuing a public safety announcement. That's their role. I've got full confidence in them to do their job.

GOVERNMENT JET

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: My question is for the President of the Treasury Board.

I've been involved in government procurement for most of my adult life, in one way or another. I have had the privilege of leading organizations, managing significant budgets and being accountable for my actions. An important part of being a leader is being answerable for those decisions.

Yesterday, the Premier said that the cabinet unanimously approved the purchase of the Premier's private luxury jet.

To the President of the Treasury Board: Why did she think it was a good idea to buy the Premier a \$29-million luxury private jet?

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

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Good morning, Madam Speaker, and through you to the member opposite: Do you know what is unanimous? Our support for the Premier of Ontario, unanimous in support for building this great province—\$1.2 trillion.

I don't know if you noticed, but we have to grow our economy. That's what pays for our great health care, our education, our social services. We have to continue to invest in our workers, in our training, into our schools, into our colleges and universities. That's what I think this government stands for. That's how you pay for the great investments.

It would be great if the opposition would support our budget and vote for the budget, which has a lot of measures to boost this economy, to support workers, to put more money back in the pockets of individuals and families, to put money back in the pockets of businesses. It would be fantastic—maybe a little bit of leadership from that side of the House—to vote for the budget.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The member for Kanata–Carleton.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Well, that was truly, truly disappointing on so many levels. I would have hoped the

President of the Treasury Board would have had the courage to answer. But all we have is non-answers to legitimate questions.

Since the Minister of Finance was so willing to answer that question on behalf of the President of the Treasury Board, I have a question for him: Where in the budget is the line-item purchase of a luxury private jet for the Premier, and if it's not there, why isn't it, and where did the money come from?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Madam Speaker, first off, I am very fortunate and privileged to work with the best President of the Treasury Board that we've ever had, the MPP for York–Simcoe.

I don't know if the member opposite understands that this is a team sport and our budget is supported—\$244 billion, almost a quarter of a trillion dollars, to support the families and the individuals, the workers, the businesses small and large in this province.

So I'd ask the member opposite: Are you going to support this budget? Are you going to support Ontario? Are you going to support Team Ontario in this time of challenges economically?

This is the time for true leadership. We'll see if they stand up.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: It was really a very simple question.

Okay. Yesterday, the Premier said that the cabinet unanimously approved the purchase of a \$29-million luxury jet. Those are the words from the Premier himself.

Does any minister here know the price of a loaf of bread or a litre of milk or a carton of eggs? Have you any idea of the financial pressures that the people of Ontario are currently under?

The question is simple, to any minister—any one of you. Any minister can answer this question.

Interjections.

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

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Can any one of you tell me why you all thought that it was a good idea to approve the purchase of a \$29-million luxury private jet for the Premier when so many Ontarians are struggling?

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The Minister of Education has been warned.

The member for Don Valley North has been warned.

Interjection.

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

I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. You know, the fact is not only is that in the budget, but there are \$244 billion of investments clearly in the budget for the people of Ontario:

—\$210 billion of investment in infrastructure to build hospitals: Are you going to support the builds for hospitals?

—\$70 billion for transit: Are you going to support the investments for transit?

—\$35 billion for highways: Are you going to support that?

—\$60 billion for long-term care as part of the health care sector;

—\$40 billion for our builds right across the province for education, for health care and lots more colleges and universities.

Madam Speaker, while I'm at it, the HST cut: 13%, helping a lot of families in Ontario.

I've got to ask the opposition, are they going to vote for or against putting a \$130,000 tax cut into the pockets of families?

PRIDE FUNDING

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: My question is to the Premier. Today in the chamber we have representatives from local Pride organizations of all sizes, from Toronto to Timmins. They are part of a coalition of over 60 organizations for Pride festivals across Ontario. They are asking this government to create a dedicated Pride fund with a small investment of \$1.5 million annually for three years. This modest request represents less than 1% of the taxable revenue that Toronto Pride generates for government coffers each year.

Will the Premier establish this Pride fund and make it available to these organizations before Pride Month in June?

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

Hon. Stan Cho: Thank you to the member opposite for that question. I know this is a very important issue for the member, and I deeply respect the Pride community and what they offer the great mosaic that is Ontario. Of course, the community enriches our community and increases tourism. We know that. That's why, since 2018, our government has invested in Toronto Pride specifically, with funding of nearly \$2 million. In fact, when you look at last year's funding for Pride festivals, nine festivals were funded to the tune of nearly \$500,000.

Speaker, through Experience Ontario or through the great minister of multiculturalism, we are continuing to fund. In fact, that minister—the Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism—announced \$25.5 million over two years to make sure that faith and cultural communities, including the Pride community, have safe and secure places to practise their faith, showcase their culture and, of course, celebrate who they are.

Speaker, this government will continue to support the great Pride community here in Ontario.

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

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: To the minister: He would know that Pride organizations are not eligible for the security funding that he has just cited.

Speaker, my question is to the Premier. Of the more than 60 Prides in Ontario each year, most are small, volunteer-run events in towns like Timmins and Sioux Lookout—the only 2SLGBTQIA+ organizations in their communities. These Prides aren't expensive, but artists, spaces and permits still cost money.

Small and rural Prides save lives and ease the burden on our mental health care system. They generate well over half a billion dollars to Ontario's GDP.

Through you, Speaker, to the Premier: Will you release \$1.5 million today to ensure Prides big and small across Ontario can continue supporting their communities?

1100

Hon. Stan Cho: Look, we on both sides of the House agree that the Pride community is, of course, an important community in Ontario. That's why this government has been there, in eight years of being elected, supporting these festivals with \$2.5 million in investments for festivals not just in Toronto, but in every corner of this province.

I mean, look, we're a big province. We can fit 14 European countries in here, and Pride communities are important in every single corner of Ontario. That's why we continue to fund these festivals to the tune of millions of dollars, as I just said in my first answer.

But Speaker, the reality is we need both sides of the fence to be, when cameras are off, just as equally supportive. Before us, we have a budget bill that includes those supports once again for the Pride community. The members need to vote for that, not just when the cameras are on through their words, but also when the cameras are off and we're doing what's most important in this Legislature and voting for this.

Let's continue to support Pride communities in Ontario.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: While this failing Ford Conservative government talks big about being accountable, their flagrant action of evaporating freedom-of-information laws speaks louder than their words.

Speaker, it's interesting: The finance minister introduced these changes in his budget bill, but he didn't make one mention of them in his debate, and he certainly didn't mention the purchase of a private luxury jet.

Would we expect an accountable finance minister to say nothing about the overhaul of a major law?

Interjections: No.

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: Would we expect an accountable finance minister to say nothing about buying a luxury jet?

Interjections: No.

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: This government is doing everything in its power to keep its dark deeds from seeing the light of day.

Through you, Speaker, to the finance minister, why did you approve the purchase of a private luxury jet?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Madam Speaker, I think the House leader has addressed that. The Premier has addressed that.

But you mentioned the budget, so let's talk about the budget. Let's talk about the \$101 billion in the health care sector for the Minister of Long-Term Care, the Minister of Health to fund primary care. Are you going to support us in supporting doctors in this province, the \$3.4 billion, yes or no?

Hon. Paul Calandra: No.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: The Minister of Education has answered it on their behalf because he's got the courage to answer what they're going to do—not vote for investing in our health care family doctors in this province.

Are you going to vote for the extra billion dollars we put into home care?

Interjection.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Did I hear a no? I heard a no. I'm doing your job, Speaker; I heard a no.

Madam Speaker, it's very clear—

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

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: Speaker, I understand why the finance minister doesn't want to talk about that. It's kind of embarrassing.

But let's talk about why this government wants to change FOI laws. It's because FOI requests are the reason we know about the shady Ford Conservative government's \$8.3-billion greenbelt giveaway. It's because of FOIs that we know the Conservatives gave hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars to their friends through the Skills Development Fund. And changing the FOI laws now? It's all about hiding the Premier's phone records.

Now, Speaker, the Premier is feeling the heat about buying a private jet. He told reporters, "There is no one in this country that is scrutinized more than I am." Well, it's because this Premier's actions deserve a lot of scrutiny.

My question to the finance minister: What else are you hiding?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Oh, boy. Okay.

Madam Speaker, it's all there. I'm out every 90 days, 300 pages in the budget.

But let me ask this House very simple questions. Let me phrase it this way: Is that side of the House going to support an HST tax cut—simple question—yes or no?

Interjections: No.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Are they going to support a small business tax cut helping 375,000 businesses, yes or no?

Interjections: No.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Are they going to support investing \$236 billion in infrastructure to put people to work right across this province, yes or no?

Interjections: No.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Are they going to support this budget and support 16.2 million people in our \$1.2-trillion economy, yes or no?

Interjections: No.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: So I put this to you, Madam Speaker, to this side of the House or that side of the House: Are you on this side of the House going to vote for this budget, yes or no?

Interjections: Yes.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Will Bouma: My question is to the Minister of Energy and Mines. Global demand for critical minerals is rising rapidly, driven by advanced manufacturing, clean energy and new technologies. At the same time supply chains remain highly concentrated in just a small number of countries, creating economic and security risks for Canada and its allies.

Ontario has a unique opportunity to step up and leverage our resources, workforce and expertise to become a stable and reliable supplier in an increasingly uncertain world.

Can the minister outline how our government is positioning Ontario to meet this growing demand and strengthen our economic security?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member for Mississauga–Lakeshore.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: Thank you to the member. We recognize this is a critical moment for Ontario and for Canada. Global demand for minerals will increase by over 500% by 2050, with countries like China controlling up to 85% of processing capacity.

Unlike the previous Liberal government, we're taking action to position Ontario as a stable, reliable partner in the global economy. Ontario already has a strong foundation: over 371,000 mining claims, over 400 exploration projects and over 77,000 jobs in the sector. These are good-paying jobs in northern and remote communities. And we're building on this strength with a competitive 10% mining tax, targeted incentives and support for development.

This is how we create jobs, strengthen our supply chain and ensure Ontario is a reliable partner in a rapidly changing economy.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member for Brantford–Brant.

Mr. Will Bouma: Thank you to the parliamentary assistant for the encouraging update.

Speaker, we know that mining is not just about resource development; it is also about the long-term economic opportunity it creates for workers, for communities and for the broader economy. From jobs in remote and northern communities to the local businesses that support them to the industries across the supply chain that depend on these resources, the impact is significant.

Can the parliamentary assistant explain how our government's long-term plan is ensuring that Ontario continues to create these opportunities, attract investment and build a stronger, more resilient economy?

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: We understand success in this sector requires a long-term strategic approach, supporting exploration, enabling development and strengthening the

broader supply chain. Under the leadership of Premier Ford, we're seeing growing investment and activity. Over 300 companies are working on almost 400 projects, creating jobs and opportunity, particularly in the North.

Today, Ontario is home to 37 active mines, the majority in northern Ontario. These projects support local business and services and drive job creation across the entire supply chain, from exploration and processing to manufacturing and advanced industries.

Unlike the previous Liberal government, which allowed red tape and delays to drive away investments and jobs, our government is creating the conditions for growth. This is how we build a stronger economy, create jobs and support communities, securing Ontario's place in the global supply chain.

TENANT PROTECTION

MPP Alexa Gilmour: It's always a privilege to rise on behalf of the people of Parkdale–High Park. My question is to the Premier. This weekend, history was made in my riding as hundreds of tenants from Scarborough to Etobicoke to North York gathered for the founding convention of the Toronto Tenant Union. As tenants continue to face exorbitant rent hikes and unfair treatment by corporate landlords city-wide, they are building a movement to fight back—but they shouldn't have to.

When will this Conservative government close the loopholes and bring back real rent control so that tenants don't have to fight so hard just to afford a decent place to live?

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

Hon. Doug Downey: It's important to note that the tenants do have avenues for resolution. They have the independent tribunal of the Landlord and Tenant Board, and we've been working very hard to put the resources in that space so the tenants can have their day to have their matters dealt with. I applaud anybody that gets together to share information, and hopefully the tenants can be educated on the tools that they have available to them to have their matters heard.

1110

I can tell you, if the opposition is interested in helping the system generally, they can stop blocking appointments to the Landlord and Tenant Board by pulling them for standing committee and putting them on hold for 30 days. I would ask the members opposite if they would agree to do that.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The member for Parkdale–High Park.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: I'd like the member opposite, if he could, to read the report by Tribunal Watch—just how much this government has destroyed the Landlord and Tenant Board.

Speaker, this is not just theoretical. Residents at 77 Spencer Avenue just learned that their corporate landlord has been approved by that board for a 4.38% above-guideline increase, retroactive to 2023. Low-income

neighbours in my riding are facing thousands of dollars in back rent, and they are talking about having to leave. Right next door, tenants at 75 Spencer are on their second month of a rent strike, fighting a 5% AGI—all the while, the building is in disrepair. Whole communities like mine are being destroyed by unfair building and rent practices.

Will this government ban AGIs that are unfair so people aren't pushed out of the neighbourhoods that they love?

Hon. Doug Downey: Thank you for the opportunity to address this. I'm wondering if the member opposite wants the landlords to invest in the buildings to fix them, which is what I would like to see happen. And if that is the case, how does she expect it to get paid for? I'm a little bit confused because I'm hearing contradictory things about saying, "Fix up the building"—but I don't know where the money comes from.

There is an independent process to deal with above-guideline increases. It is dealt with through the Landlord and Tenant Board in an impartial, independent way, to make sure that the tenants have an ability to address an independent, impartial individual at the board.

She's trying to make hay with a political point that makes no internal logical sense.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Ontarians expect much from their government, relying on us for vital services, fact-based decisions that improve quality of life and strong accountability. But the people of Ontario are not seeing any of these things right now. Instead, they are witnessing a three-ring circus gone awry.

This government is ripping apart any environmental protection that ever existed, and with the bogus excuse of efficiencies. They're amalgamating 36 conservation authorities into nine. And currently, there's mass flooding all over the province—including a state of emergency in Minden. They're completely gutting environmental assessments. So now it will be the Wild West for landfill sites, contaminated areas and more.

My question to the Premier: How do you expect to keep Ontarians safe when you are deliberately removing all environmental oversight?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: Well, speaking of the environment, I'm proud to confirm that today is Earth Day. One of the things that I will be doing in the coming days, as an annual tradition, is joining the residents in Durham to clean up the litter around Lake Ontario, on the shoreline, and I know that I won't be alone, as we all do our part to keep our communities clean.

As I've said in this House before, we do not have to make a choice—we can build the Ontario of tomorrow while also protecting our shared environment. That is what our measures are all about. They're about balance, making sure that we streamline processes, making sure that we make it easier to navigate how we protect our environment with a new registration-first system. It's also about strong

environmental oversight through the environmental compliance approval process and the environmental assessment process.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the member for Beaches–East York.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Speaker, we are at Queen’s Park to lead and make sound decisions for the betterment of Ontarians. Unfortunately, this is not the case right now.

This government is playing games by removing all targets for greenhouse gas emissions. It must have been in anticipation of the Premier’s snazzy new jet. But they should not be messing with air quality; erasing green development standards, taking Ontario back to the Dark Ages when the rest of the world is seeing the light in developing the green economy and building sustainably; destroying the Endangered Species Act, ignoring the importance of biodiversity to human survival.

Speaker, my question to the Premier: Why even have a Ministry of the Environment when it is all a complete charade?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: Madam Speaker, I love my history to give context. Which government created the Ministry of the Environment in 1972? A Progressive Conservative government did so. Which government has strengthened and created the proper balance in terms of the mandate of the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks? The government of Premier Doug Ford, this Progressive Conservative government.

By making investments—in public transit, \$70 billion, record investments; investing in clean, reliable nuclear energy, \$10.9 billion; half a billion dollars in investments in green steel—we’re producing outcomes. We are continuing to lead Canada in terms of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Ontario is leading all other provinces combined.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady: I’ll give the members opposite a reprieve from talk of planes this morning, though I’m not certain the Minister of Transportation will ever get the reconstruction of the Argyle Street bridge in Caledonia off the ground.

All winter, my office was inundated with complaints about potholes on the bridge large enough to bury farm animals in. The good-natured people of Haldimand county posted memes of swimming in those potholes, fishing in those potholes. But now there are a stack of claims for damaged vehicles sitting in the ministry.

This weekend, MTO officers were out across the villages of Haldimand–Norfolk pulling people over. The minister seems to have misplaced his priorities, because the greatest threat to traveller safety in Haldimand–Norfolk isn’t minor infractions; it’s the deteriorating bridge that the minister seems to ignore.

Speaker, through you to the minister: For years, this government has said this project is a priority. Can he please detail what milestones the ministry has achieved over the past 12 months on this file?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The member for Brampton West.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: Thank you to the member opposite for that question. Absolutely, we understand the challenges the member is facing in her community with that old bridge that was built almost 100 years ago. But do you know what never happened over the last 15 years of the previous government? Investments in our infrastructure, Speaker, and that’s exactly what this Premier is doing. We’re building infrastructure across this province. We’re building highways, we’re building roads, and we’re building bridges.

Currently, the situation in Haldimand–Norfolk with that particular bridge: It remains safe for limited use, including emergency service vehicles, and is closely monitored to limit load restrictions. That’s enforced, and our enforcement officers are there to make sure that that road safety aspect is being taken care of and looked after.

But with the leadership of this Minister of Transportation and this Premier, we’re making sure that that bridge construction is going to move forward as a detailed design of the bridge replacement is complete, and our government is now in the process of obtaining final approvals to head towards construction.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The member for Haldimand–Norfolk.

Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady: The mayor of Haldimand county is actually in the gallery today because the minister dodges her at AMO and ROMA. I’ve asked for meetings—crickets.

Recent correspondence from the ministry: “We are currently finalizing the contract package”—just like the parliamentary assistant just said—“completing consultation, and ensuring all permits and approvals are in place to move towards the construction of a new bridge.”

That sounds promising. until I reach back in my files from September 15, 2022—under a previous minister—that says, “The design and engineering of the contract to replace the bridge is complete. All property, permits, and environmental assessment approvals are now in place.”

So the parliamentary assistant can blame the previous government—this is four years ago, the same verbiage that was sent to me a few weeks ago. I’m beginning to have trust issues with this ministry. I sit here, day after day, listening to how this government is accelerating infrastructure projects, breaking ground on major transit, and yet the minister spins his wheels with respect to a 100-year-old bridge.

Speaker, through you to the minister—

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

Mr. Hardeep Singh Grewal: Thank you to the passion coming from the member across the aisle from Haldimand–Norfolk. We understand how important this bridge is to you and to your community.

Speaker, our government is committed to building infrastructure across this province, like I just said. The design detail of this bridge replacement is complete, and our government is now in the final process of obtaining approvals to proceed with construction.

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I remember, Speaker, the conversations that that member has had previously with our ministry and the conversations that we had back in 2022, but we're trekking forward. We're going to make sure that this bridge gets built.

I'd also like to welcome the mayor of Haldimand county that is here with us today. If she'd like to have a conversation with the Ministry of Transportation, we're all ears. I'm available if she'd like to do that, and as well for the member opposite, Speaker.

RURAL ONTARIO

Mr. Matthew Rae: My question is to the Minister of Rural Affairs. Rural Ontario is the backbone of our province, home to strong, resilient communities and key sectors that drive our economy forward. Our government is committed to protecting Ontario in all corners of our province, including rural ridings and regions, and ensuring it remains the best place to live, work and raise a family.

At last year's ROMA conference, we announced the doubling of the Rural Ontario Development Program to \$10 million annually over the next two years. This is a significant investment that reflects our commitment to supporting rural communities and strengthening their local economies.

Can the minister please inform this House of the benefits of this funding for rural communities and how it is helping them attract investment and create new opportunities for workers and families?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I appreciate the question from the member from Perth–Wellington very much because it's my opportunity to stand in this House and confirm that our government is protecting rural Ontario as well through programs like the Rural Ontario Development Program. Since 2019 to 2024, we've leveraged a ratio of 4 to 1 in terms of investment. We're attracting business, we're enabling opportunity and, most importantly, we are giving confidence to our small towns and rural communities across this province.

But we have so much more to offer over and above the Rural Ontario Development Program. We also have business retention and expansion programs. We facilitate summits that engage community leaders to take a look at their communities and determine what their needs are so that they can continue to attract business as well.

We also need to celebrate Rural Ontario Week, and we'll talk about that in the supplementary.

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

Mr. Matthew Rae: Thank you to the minister for that important update.

Speaker, rural Ontario is an integral part of Ontario's economic fabric. Rural regions are the economic powerhouse of this province, contributing over \$116 billion to our GDP through sectors like manufacturing, forestry and, obviously, agriculture. Since creating the Ministry of Rural Affairs, our government has prioritized building communities that are resilient and thriving.

Recently, this House showed its shared commitment to rural Ontario by giving unanimous support to a motion from the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke on designating the third full week of September as Rural Ontario Week.

Speaker, can the minister please elaborate on how this new designation will build on the work our government is doing to highlight the vital role these communities play in Ontario's success and future?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: The member from Perth–Wellington is spot-on. We need to celebrate everything that's happening in rural Ontario. For instance, jobs are being created. Businesses have confidence in our government. I want to highlight a couple of businesses in light of the fact that Egg Farmers of Ontario are in the House today.

I want to talk about the very expansion and modernization that's happening in Listowel, Ontario. P&H is investing \$35 million to expand Gray Ridge Egg Farms. I can't say enough about the modernization and the pride that farmers have in that investment.

Furthermore, there's a company called Burnbrae Farms, and the matriarch challenged their children to do their bit. Speaker, our government is doing our bit not only to build a resourceful, resilient rural Ontario, but we're going to be celebrating it as well—such like Kinectrics, who have brought 250 jobs to suit the nuclear sector in the laundry facilities that have been established in Teeswater, Ontario, and isotope development—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member for London–Fanshawe.

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Health. A year and a half ago, I shared the story of Carolynne, a now 80-year-old woman waiting to receive surgery for her prolapsed bladder. This condition is extremely painful.

I'd like to provide an update to the Minister of Health. Carolynne is still waiting for her surgery, and it has now been seven years since the first time she went to see her doctor.

Can the minister explain why, under this government, senior women are waiting years in severe pain to receive surgery?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: The member highlights exactly why we need to continue to focus on ensuring that we not only expand through capital builds of new builds, expansions, renovations, but we also make sure that we have sufficient health human resources, which is why we have had such a focus on expanding our health human

resources. I am proud to say that as of yesterday, the CaRMS matching, that residency between their specialty for medical students, has happened. The second round has happened. Ontario had three vacant spots; across Canada, 181.

So what we are doing in Ontario is absolutely building capacity, and the example that you raise is exactly why we have to continue to focus on making sure that we have those options available in the province of Ontario.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Speaker, studies show that more than 40% of women will experience pelvic organ prolapse, and almost 15% of women will require surgery. With an aging population, that number is expected to increase. Carolynne has been waiting years for surgery, but if she goes to a private clinic, they offer shorter wait times—for a price.

Does the minister think it's fair that women like Carolynne are forced to pay out of pocket to avoid years ago of suffering to access health care?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Absolutely not, and the member opposite knows full well that every publicly funded service in the province of Ontario is covered by OHIP. If there is an example where someone is trying to access through the private system, there is absolutely a complaint process, and I would encourage you to work through that process with your constituent.

But I think that we really need to focus and show that the progress that we are making, whether it is in capital builds, whether it is in additional health human resources, is making an impact. And when can we see that? We see it when people from across and around the world want to practise in the province of Ontario, want to come to Ontario, because we have that world-class health care system.

We're going to keep funding it, and we're going to keep investing in it because that's the right thing to do.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. John Fraser: My question is for the Premier. The failed Ford Conservative government is tired, out of touch and out of answers, but last week we learned two things: The Premier bought himself a fancy luxury jet, and he lost 150 criminals. So maybe the Premier should have spent less time dreaming about jetting around with the rich and famous and more time on the Solicitor General and his office, because it's a mess.

Since the Solicitor General won't or can't or doesn't know: Can the Premier tell us how many criminals have been mistakenly released since September 2025?

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

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: I said earlier today very, very clearly that there is a very detailed protocol that takes place when a person is discharged from our correctional institutions, and it's the same in the courts as well.

I said that we're fixing a problem that we inherited by hiring 300 new correctional officers who provide the

additional administrative support. I also said that the police services of jurisdiction, which this government has great respect for—if there is any risk of any nature to any community on any matter, they have a right to issue a public safety announcement. In the absence of such announcement, communities should rely on the fact that police are doing their job, the government is doing their job and the correctional service officers are doing an amazing job, and we support them fully.

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

Mr. John Fraser: So Speaker, in the Home Depot parking lot, the Premier is Walker, Texas Ranger—that's who he is; he's a tough guy—but losing 150 criminals? That's giving Chief Wiggum.

We know that he told us yesterday that six criminals were on the loose, something that the Solicitor General has been unable to tell us, and he only told us after the Premier told us. I don't know who's in charge over criminals behind bars, but it's between the Premier and the Solicitor General. If they can't figure it out, maybe they should get together, hang out, try to keep criminals behind bars, Premier.

1130

Can you tell us, of those six criminals, what were the crimes that were committed? How long have they been out? When did you know they got out? How long did it take you to find out they got away? If the Solicitor General can't answer any of those questions—and we've asked him dozens and dozens and dozens of questions—maybe you'll give us an answer, because I know you're Walker, Texas Ranger.

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: I'll repeat for the leader of the third party—and he knows this as well—the role of the Solicitor General has always been to set the policy, to pass the legislation, and to make sure that we have critical investments in our public safety, policing and corrections.

Most importantly, Madam Speaker, the member opposite knows that the Solicitor General cannot, nor can any member, direct the police service. The Solicitor General does not speak up when there's a joint force operation with the OPP or anything else. The Solicitor General makes sure that he does not interfere with the operations that take place every day in public safety.

LAND USE PLANNING

Mr. Anthony Leardi: My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness. At a time of trade disruptions and global uncertainty, our ability to produce food here at home is critical to our national security. While Ontario's farmland is some of the most productive farmland in the world, it is an important limited resource that should remain in the hands of Ontario farmers. That is why our government is taking action to keep farmland under Ontario ownership and protect Ontario's food independence.

Speaker, can the minister please tell the House what our government is doing to protect Ontario's farmland and

ensure Ontario families will always have a reliable supply of fresh, local and high-quality food?

Hon. Trevor Jones: I want to thank my neighbour and my colleague the member for Essex, who is also a champion for food, food producers and farmers. Our government was elected on a mandate to protect Ontario, and that includes protecting Ontario food producers. We listened to our farmers, we listened to our food producers, and we're taking action.

Yesterday, I had the pleasure of joining my colleagues at beautiful Kinghaven Farms in nearby King City to announce something special. We're listening to our farmers, our food producers, and we're protecting our ability to remain food independent. To do that, we're going to restrict the foreign ownership of our farmland, our food production land, to make sure it stays in the hands of farmers and food producers in Ontario.

More than that, Madam Speaker, we want new first-generation farmers to be able to access affordable land and not be some line item on a foreign company's—

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

Mr. Anthony Leardi: It is great to hear that our government is taking proactive steps to protect our farmland and Ontario's food supply, not only in my county of Essex county but across Ontario, where farmers make a living. Ontario families deserve to know that they will always have access to a strong supply of the local, high-quality food that our province is known to produce. Our province's reputation for great food is known throughout the world.

Speaker, yesterday's announcement included new action to unlock crown land in the Clay Belt. This change will have a profound impact on agriculture in northern Ontario. Can the minister share with the House how these changes will unlock new opportunities in northern Ontario, create jobs and—

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

Hon. Trevor Jones: Madam Speaker, I'd like to share with our House and our guests here today, our food producers in the House today, that the great Ontario Clay Belt and beyond are going to be open for business under this government.

I want to thank my members in the north from both sides of the aisle. I want to thank, in particular, our Minister of Natural Resources, who's going to help us unlock the possibility and the potential for 11 million acres of arable land.

With the right investments, with the right expertise, with the right guidance, we can produce food closer to home, Ontario-grown, including the big, beautiful province of Ontario. That needs confidence—the investment from this government; it needs tile drainage; it needs lime and minerals that we're going to operationalize—

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

The House recessed from 1136 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Deepak Anand: Speaker, it is an absolute pleasure to introduce someone who has been a visitor to the 42nd Parliament, the 43rd Parliament and now the 44th Parliament, my daughter Suvidhi Anand, in the Speaker's gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park, Suvidhi Anand.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It gives me great pleasure to welcome Julie Nobert-DeMarchi, the founder and treasurer of Fierté Timmins Pride; Kiel Hughes, the board chair and director of events at Pride Hamilton; Callie Metler, the executive director of Fierté Capital Pride, out in Ottawa; Kojo Modeste, the executive director of Pride Toronto; Jacob Gal, the program manager of York Pride; leZlie lee kam, Rainbow Senior and Pride Toronto member at-large; as well as Chris Evelyn and Kema Joseph. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Laura Smith: I think he was in the House earlier; I'm not sure. But regardless, I want to welcome His Worship, Mayor Frank Scarpitti, from the city of Markham.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It's also my honour to introduce Josh Morgan, mayor of the city of London. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Graham McGregor: All mayors are great, but the greatest one is in Brampton. Welcome to Mayor Patrick Brown, from my community.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I see a visitor in the gallery from my riding, Drew Spoelstra, who is the newly crowned junior farmer of Ontario, something like that.

Congratulations, I didn't know you were here. Welcome to Queen's Park. Great family.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): He's a junior farmer; that's right.

INTRODUCTION OF GOVERNMENT BILLS

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

Mr. Jones moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 109, An Act to enact the Farmland Security Act, 2026 and to amend various Acts / Projet de loi 109, Loi édictant la Loi de 2026 visant à protéger l'autonomie alimentaire de l'Ontario et modifiant diverses lois.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Hon. Trevor Jones: Yes, Speaker, I would; thank you.

Madam Speaker, I would like to first offer a special thanks to my deputy minister, John Kelly; his staff, our brilliant public service professionals at OMAFRA; my ministry team, led by Ryan Puviraj and Sehar Malik; and all of Ontario's food producers, because you're our inspiration.

Agriculture is a major contributor to Ontario's economy. It employs one in nine of us. It contributes \$52 billion to our economy annually, forming the backbone of economic output in our communities.

Keeping this sector strong and competitive is essential to protecting Ontario during this time of global uncertainty. The new Protecting Ontario's Food Independence Act, if passed, would reduce red tape, streamline administrative processes, promote Ontario-made agricultural products and provide tools to protect Ontario's food security for generations to come.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. Steve Clark: I'm going to move government notice of motion number 17. I move that, pursuant to standing order 7(c), the House shall continue to meet past the ordinary hour of adjournment until midnight on the following dates: April 22, April 23, May 4, May 5, May 6, May 7, May 11, May 12, May 13, May 14, May 25, May 26, May 27, May 28, June 1, June 2, June 3 and June 4, 2026.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The government House Leader has moved government notice of motion number 17 relating to night sittings. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

PETITIONS

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I present a petition brought forward by the Ontario clean energy coalition and the organization ClimatePath that calls on Ontario to put in place a new climate plan, to put in place an energy plan for this province, one that will triple wind and solar power, increase battery storage across the province, allows for development of Great Lake wind power, rapidly phases out reliance on fossil gas and upholds our obligation to ensure free, prior and informed consent over any projects happening on Indigenous lands.

This petition was gathered in honour of Earth Day, and I agree with it. I've signed it, and I give it to page Hagop for introduction to the Clerk.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Ms. Chandra Pasma: With thanks to Dr. Sally Palmer, who is absolutely tireless in her advocacy on behalf of the lowest-income residents of our province, I'm rising to table a petition entitled "To Raise Social Assistance Rates."

I hear daily from people if my riding who are struggling to deal with the rising costs of rent and groceries, and of course, the government just tabled a budget that doesn't mention those two words. Among the people who are struggling the most are people who are on social assistance.

ODSP was indexed so far below the rate of poverty that people are still not able to afford even a basic apartment in Ottawa and the level for Ontario Works hasn't been increased in so long that you can't even really afford a room on what people get; it's \$733 a month. But we know that there's widespread support in Ontario for increasing Ontario Works and ODSP to a level that would actually be livable, including an open letter that was signed by more than 230 organizations recommending that social assistance rates be doubled.

We also know that the basic income pilot showed that providing people with a stable and more adequate income led to improved health outcomes. We know that from the Canada benefits during the pandemic as well that people really benefited from having a stable income, that it helped them to obtain housing, food, which help them get back on their feet and into employment if they can.

So these citizens are calling on the Legislative Assembly to double social assistance rates for Ontario Works and ODSP.

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

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Dave Smith: I have a petition. I'd like to thank C.J. from my riding for it. It's entitled "Imagine a Place Where Government Is Concerned with Helping the People." It's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario with respect to Ontario's budget and all of the measures that are in it.

We know that over the last seven and a half years, times have changed for the people of Ontario. We know that there has been a cut in the small business tax rate of 30% as a result of this budget.

1310

We've heard, when we were travelling with the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, that we had 38 different days of consultation between the Ministry of Finance and the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, and through that we heard consistently from people that affordability was one of the things that we needed to work on.

What this petition says is to continue doing those things that are helping with affordability, like the removal of the HST on new homes—a savings of almost \$130,000 for most people; initiatives through primary care, to increase

primary care here in Ontario, to make sure that people have—

Mr. John Vanthof: Point of order, Speaker: I believe that the standing orders were changed to summarize petitions. Can we respect that? What we're hearing here is basically the whole budget. If we could keep it down to a reasonable minute or a minute and a half for petitions, it would give other people a chance to petition as well.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Continue.

Mr. Dave Smith: This petition is 5,000 words. I speak at approximately 150 words a minute. If I didn't summarize it, I would be here for more than half an hour reading it. I am summarizing what's in it. As the member can see, it is a very long petition.

I've lost my place in here.

The gasoline tax, just as a perfect example of affordability—permanently reducing the gasoline tax, saving the average person in Ontario more than \$400. One Fare, saving the average family more than \$1,600.

These are all things that are part of the budget. It's because we listened to the people of Ontario to make sure that we were looking after affordability.

Mr. Deepak Anand: How long is the petition?

Mr. Dave Smith: The petition is more than 5,000 words.

What they're basically asking us to do in this petition is to continue looking at ways that we can make life more affordable for people and to pass Ontario's budget as quickly as possible. I firmly agree—

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Petitions?

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Ms. Jessica Bell: This is a petition that I received from Sally Palmer. Sally has gathered signatures from individuals who are calling for a significant increase to the Ontario Disability Support Program and the Ontario Works program payments. We have many individuals in our riding who are on both programs, and it's safe to say that they are living in very difficult circumstances: can't afford the rent, can't afford basic needs, living in poverty. And it's something that we in this Legislature can fix.

I support this petition. I'll be affixing my signature to it and giving it to page Saasana.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I'm honoured to be rising on behalf of the residents of Ottawa West–Nepean to table a petition entitled “Reinvest in Post-Secondary Education” that has been signed by hundreds of people from around the province.

We know that in Ontario we have the lowest level of per-student funding in the entire country, and not by a little bit—by a lot. In fact, we don't genuinely have publicly funded colleges and universities. What we have is publicly assisted colleges and universities. That's how low the level of public funding is for them. And that's despite the fact

that we know that public universities and colleges are essential to building a strong workforce, to training the skilled workers that we need in Ontario to meet market demands, to build a strong economy in the face of tariffs and economic threats globally.

We know, as well, that they meet the needs of our local economies, that they train critical thinkers of the next generation. But, because of the underfunding, we are seeing widespread program closures and service cuts. We're seeing layoffs. We're seeing students being told they can't pursue the programs of their choice. And we are seeing tuition increased for students at the same time that the government has rolled back OSAP grants, making it more expensive and challenging for students to go to university.

This makes no sense, Speaker, and so the petitioners are calling on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the Minister of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security to permanently increase base funding for all colleges and universities in order to stabilize the sector and ensure equitable access for all students.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BETTER REGIONAL GOVERNANCE ACT, 2026

LOI DE 2026 POUR UNE MEILLEURE GOUVERNANCE RÉGIONALE

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 21, 2026, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

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

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Further debate?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: It's always an honour to rise in this House on behalf of the residents of Ottawa West–Nepean. Today I'm speaking about the government's Bill 100, Better Regional Governance Act, which, like many government bills, is ironically titled to represent exactly the opposite of what is in the bill.

I think there must be a competition for cabinet members on that side to see who can come up with a title that is most diametrically opposed to the content of the bill. I think that this is a strong entry from the Minister of Municipal Affairs, although, of course, the Minister of Education is giving him a good run for his money with a bill that's supposedly about student achievement but only says “student achievement” three times. So well done to the Minister of Education, although I could suggest far more appropriate titles for both bills if they were interested.

Yesterday, I was here for the debate in the afternoon. We heard numerous expressions of contempt for our

democracy from members on the other side of the aisle, including from the member for Essex, who said that municipalities only exist because the provincial government lets them—noblesse oblige, I guess, Speaker—which was very reminiscent of the Minister for Education telling us that school boards exist because he allows them to. I'm sure that comes as news to the people of Ontario, that we have local governments solely because the Conservative government deigns to bestow them upon us. We're definitely very fortunate that so far they have deigned to bestow them on us.

We also heard the Minister of the Environment tell us yesterday that if you vote for one level of government, that's good enough, which is a surprising thing for a subnational government to be saying because, of course, we could just vote for the federal government only.

But it fails to reflect, Speaker, that democracy is not a gift of the government. Democracy is not something that the autocrats in charge give to the people of our province, of our country. It is something that has been fought for, that people have bled and died for. It is something that we must always fight to preserve. We can see from our neighbours to the south and from other countries around the world how easily democracy can be lost when people don't fight for it, so I think that we should never take our democracy lightly.

That's why it's incredibly concerning to see another bill from this government that is attacking our democratic rights, that is attacking our democratic representation in the province—another bill that is centralizing power in the hands of the government while reducing accountability to the citizens of Ontario. This is something that we've already seen in the government's actions in the education system, where they are diminishing the accountability of elected representatives, of the people who are making decisions, to the people who are most affected by these decisions, to our students, to parents, to communities. There's a parallel here between the regional chairs that this government wants to appoint rather than have citizens elect and the supervisors that the Minister of Education has appointed now in eight school boards in the province.

What we see in this case is that rather than people who are selected by people to represent them—people who will be accountable to the population for the decisions that they make through democratic elections—the government is deciding who will make all the decisions for us without considering any of our input into who we think should be empowered to make decisions for us. They make the people accountable only to the government, not to the population that they supposedly serve.

What we're seeing with the supervisors that the government has appointed is that they are Conservative insiders who are receiving very big paycheques while deciding on cuts to services behind closed doors. They are not talking to the constituents that they supposedly represent. They are not answering their questions and concerns. They are not even talking to the media; in fact, the supervisor in Ottawa told the media he does not have to answer their

questions. So people have no input any longer into the decisions that are being made that affect them.

1320

When we look at what their qualifications are, there is a former Conservative MPP; former candidates, provincial and federal; former staffers, including Stephen Harper's privatization czar; a deputy chief of staff to Mike Harris, who was the original education hatchet man; the chief of staff to the former Minister of Long-Term Care during the pandemic, which, when you think about the conditions in long-term-care homes during the pandemic and the fact that they had to call in the military, that is not somebody I want making decisions for our children in the province, and I believe many parents would feel the same way. The supervisors are also Conservative donors.

You have to wonder who these appointees will be at the regional level for these new regional chairs, because the supervisors aren't the only area where we've seen a really questionable track record from this government on appointees. The Premier tried to appoint his best bud Ron Taverner to be head of the OPP, and he even had to change recruitment rules to do it. When he lost that opportunity because of the public blowback, he created a position at the LCBO for his friend. And when his friend actually had the better sense to say this was a bad idea and didn't take the position, they never filled the position, which just goes to show that the whole creation of the position was to give somebody connected to the Premier a really great plum position.

We've seen government's family, friends, former staffers, donors receive appointments left and right. At the Premier's daughter's wedding, not only were people at his table handed public appointments in the province, but he handed out MZO's as if they were party favours.

Now, the Minister of Municipal Affairs said yesterday, "Don't worry. We're going to vet these appointees. We're going to vet them thoroughly." Well, the last regional chair they appointed, Bob Gale, the Niagara regional chair, had to quit recently after it turned out he owned a copy of Mein Kampf. So did they not vet him, or was their vetting so poor that they managed to overlook that?

We've seen questionable vetting as well with the Skills Development Fund where funding is going to a nightclub and funding is going to an organization that the government itself had to refer to the OPP for fraud, and yet they still got money out of this government. So I don't think anybody can trust this government's judgment when it comes to appointees or when it comes to vetting of appointees.

And these appointees are going to have strong-mayor powers. So like the supervisors in education, like the mini-CEOs that the Minister of Education is creating, they're just going to be able to run roughshod over what other people think. They're going to be able to dismiss the perspectives of the people that they supposedly serve to do whatever they want.

And these people are going to be only accountable to the government because only the government can dismiss them. It doesn't matter how egregious their behaviour will

be; if the government doesn't care to dismiss them, they will be there. People can disagree as much as they want with the decisions that are being made in their regions. If the government doesn't want to dismiss them, they can continue making those decisions.

When you have that kind of unfettered access to power—and unfettered access that includes regional budgets that, again, they'll have strong-mayor powers over so they can determine how the budget is being spent—and they're accountable only to this government, then you have to question what kinds of decisions will be made.

What kinds of decisions are people who are accountable to the Premier making? Well, yesterday, we learned that cabinet approval for the minister's private luxury jet was unanimous. We have an affordability crisis in the province, people can't afford rent, they can't afford groceries, and the cabinet said unanimously, "Yup, a good use of your hard-earned taxpayer dollars is a private luxury jet for the Premier that can't even land at 90% of the airports in Ontario."

So if we're appointing people who are solely responsible to this government, solely responsible to the Premier, what are they going to think is the right decision? What are they going to think is a good use of taxpayer dollars? Are they going to think that tunnels are a great idea? Are they going to think that expanding some of those 90% of runways that aren't fit for the Premier's private jet—that expanding them so that his jet can land there is a great idea? Are they going to think that building islands in Lake Ontario is a great idea? Are they going to think that giving billions of taxpayer dollars to broke Austrian companies is a good idea, is a good use of taxpayer dollars? Are they going to think that closing down valued public institutions like the science centre is a great idea, if it means that you can justify building a parking garage for a broke foreign company?

These are the kinds of financial decisions that this government thinks are great decisions. So are these are the kinds of decisions that their new regional appointees are going to be making as well?

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Mr. Matthew Rae: Thank you to my colleague from Ottawa West—Nepean for her comments this afternoon on a very important bill before this assembly—really focused on streamlining our regional governance, improving how we're getting things done with our municipal partners in key, high-growth parts of this province.

Speaker, I know there has been lots of discussion around the potential, if passed, appointment of chairs in these regions. I've mentioned in this place, not every year do I have an opportunity to vote for the warden in my county. So that warden may not be voted by MPP Rae because they may not live in the part of the county that I live, in my riding. And I still don't question their democratic legitimacy, because they're obviously not elected by me and they serve in that position.

So does the member opposite believe our wardens across this great province aren't democratically accountable?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Well, Speaker, the member for Perth—Wellington started by saying that this is a government that is getting things done for people across the province, and I just have to say, where? Because we're not seeing it.

In Ottawa, where I live, which is one of the fastest-growing parts of the province, we are not seeing affordable housing being built that is accommodating the needs of our population. We are not seeing public transit be built or invested in. We have an LRT that doesn't function because the prior Liberal government insisted on it being a private-public partnership. And now, this government, rather than properly funding it so that we actually have an LRT system that works, wants to hand it over to Metrolinx, an agency that has 124 VPs and a track record of not being able to deliver transit in 16 years.

So I have to say that this government is not getting things done for the people of Ontario, and I would really appreciate it if they could start.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I would like to thank my colleague from Ottawa West—Nepean for an excellent discussion of Bill 100.

Since this government first took office, we've seen so many different attacks on democratic institutions, whether it was jumping into the Toronto election midstream; destroying ranked balloting, which affected my community of London; also, installing these strong mayors, people who basically do the Premier's bidding.

We've also seen Bill 33, with the attack on trustees—the removal of trustees—school boards under supervision and the installation of supervisors, highly paid people who don't necessarily show up to meetings.

Now, with Bill 100, this attack on local democracy is just yet another example. But I wanted to particularly ask, with the EQAO office, did this government, or did they not, appoint one of their insider friends to a very well-paid position at the head of EQAO?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Thanks to my colleague from London North Centre for that great question and for that summary of some of this government's track record on democracy.

I have to say that not only did they appoint one of their friends at the head of EQAO, but just to make sure that he brought home a really lucrative paycheque, they increased the job from part-time to full-time and increased the salary despite the fact that the work was not increased commensurately, which is part of a pattern that we've seen from this government creating entirely new jobs.

I already mentioned, for the Premier's best bud Ron Taverner, the job that they created for him at the LCBO. We've seen other positions like the new deputy chief of staff in the Ottawa office, which has been apparently the post-Kanata—Carleton employment opportunity for Conservative candidates there.

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If a job doesn't already exist for a friend of this government, they are more than happy to use our public dollars to create one and make sure that it comes along with a really good paycheque.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Ms. Laura Smith: Through you, Speaker: I think everyone in this room will agree that consistency and, really, accountability are a priority and should be a priority for all of our ridings. We've seen that there is an inconsistency when it comes to regional governance across this province, particularly in areas of Simcoe and Niagara. Niagara has a bloated system of governance with respect to the members elected. It's inconsistent and outdated. That's literally become inefficient when it comes to creating new housing.

This legislation ensures that the regions are better aligned with provincial norms and improves the clarity, coordination and accountability throughout. Will the member agree that this will possibly help speed up efficiencies and explain how other ones that she might come up with would do better?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I am very pleased to hear that the member is a recent convert to accountability. The member voted for Bill 33, but I look forward to their "no" vote on Bill 101, because people should be accountable to the population that they serve.

It may come as a surprise to the member opposite, but despite the fact that Canada has first-past-the-post, New Zealand has multi-member proportional representation and there are Australian states that have ranked ballot, they are all, nonetheless, democracies. Despite the fact that the United Kingdom is a unitary state, despite the fact that Canada is a federation, we are both democracies.

Democracies don't need to look identical in order to be democratic. What makes them democratic is that it is the people who choose how they are going to select their representatives, that they are able to select their representatives and that they are able to hold their representatives accountable. That is what is core to democracy, not whatever this government decides to say is or is not democracy.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Ms. Jessica Bell: I read this bill with alarm—this idea that they're going to get rid of an elected representative and replace them with an appointed head. Why I was alarmed is because I think about school boards and what has happened with the erasure of the responsibility of school board trustees and replacing them with a hand-picked, unaccountable, unelected supervisor—in some cases having zero experience in the classroom, zero education experience.

As the education critic, what has been your observation with the impact of having a supervisor being appointed to run school boards? What impact has that had on the quality of teaching in the classroom?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Thanks to my colleague for the great question. I think you're right to be alarmed when we

look at what this government's track record is when they appoint people.

These supervisors are making decisions behind closed doors without any consultation, but they're not just making any decisions. What they're doing is making cuts, Speaker. They're making cuts that are taking away supports from our kids. They're cutting programs, language and learning supports. They are closing special education classrooms. They are eliminating caps on class sizes. They are cutting Indigenous programming. They are harming our most vulnerable children, Speaker.

I shared an example just last week of a four-year-old who was in a shelter in my riding of Ottawa West–Nepean because the supervisor in Ottawa who is billing the government nearly \$400,000 a year could not be bothered to find this four-year-old girl a full-time EA so that she could be at school full-time. And as a result of that, her parents lost their housing.

This is somebody who is completely unaccountable to her parents and to all Ottawa residents. We can't vote him out of office. He won't even answer our questions. He won't answer questions from the media. And it's four-year-old Arizona who pays the price, while Bob Plamondon sits untouched—

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I want to thank the member from Ottawa West–Nepean for her speech today.

I think back to—at home recently, our county level, despite every lower-tier municipality having the same contract for solid waste, they rejected an upload in co-ordinating the systems to make it all aligned so that the truck could continue to cross the municipal border. Now we have a more inefficient solid waste system because of the lack of understanding how this kind of measure could actually help improve service and save money. It suggests to me that we do need stronger and aligned regional leadership structures.

So my question is, what governance model would exist that the member opposite would support in lieu of these changes?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Given the member's opposition to inefficient decisions of government, I will look forward to his "no" vote on Bill 101, where the government created an entirely new layer of bureaucracy that will be paid out of school board budgets.

We've already seen what level of pay government appointees can expect. That's nearly \$350,000, \$400,000 that will be coming out of classrooms to be paid to somebody with no educational experience who's not adding a single thing to the education system or to the education of our children. I think you would agree that's very inefficient, so I look forward to your "no" vote on Bill 101.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Further debate?

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I'm very pleased to rise today in support of Bill 100, Better Regional Governance Act, 2026. This legislation, Speaker, reflects truly an important step in ensuring that our systems of regional governance

are able to respond to the realities facing communities across here today.

Speaker, before I go further, I will be sharing my time with the government House leader today.

This bill builds on a broader effort by our government to improve how decisions are made, how priorities are aligned and ultimately how results are delivered for the people that we serve. Speaker, we are debating this legislation at a time when Ontario is facing a number of very real pressures. The global economic environment remains uncertain. The cost of building has increased. Across the province, we see challenges in keeping pace with demand, particularly when it comes to housing and infrastructure.

But at the same time, Ontario continues to grow. People are choosing to live, work and raise families here. I've seen it my own community. That growth creates both opportunity and added responsibility for governments at every level.

Municipalities in particular are playing an increasingly central role in managing that growth. They are responsible for planning, for infrastructure and for the delivery services that support truly complete communities. Their ability to do that effectively depends not only on resources but truly on governance structures that allow them to make decisions in a clear and coordinated way.

Speaker, I'll throw my eight years as municipal councillor in here, where the process to develop a piece of property will take years and years and years, and housing is needed today. The system design is something that does need to be looked at, and I'm grateful to see this bill come forward.

This government has taken a number of steps in recent years to support municipalities in meeting these challenges. We've invested in critical infrastructure through programs that help build roads, bridges and water systems, investments that make housing developments possible. We've introduced legislation to streamline approvals, reduce duplication and improve the efficiency of service delivery. We've also taken steps to modernize how municipalities operate, including the introduction of strong-mayor powers, which have helped local leaders advance priority projects and respond more effectively to local needs.

I'll throw in a mention of Windsor mayor Drew Dilkens, who, thanks to his decision as a strong mayor, is saving the taxpayers \$8 million a year on transit costs that otherwise would have been born if not for his decision.

These measures reflect a consistent approach, removing barriers, improving coordination and creating the conditions for growth. But as that work has progressed, it has also become clear that there are structural challenges within regional governance that can slow down decision-making, and Bill 100 addresses those challenges.

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Speaker, one of the central ideas behind this legislation is that governance systems must evolve alongside the communities that they serve. I'll give an example from my time on a municipal council. When I was first elected—11,000 constituents in my ward. The town had 24,000, so

you can do the math; the other councillors divided up the rest. We had a ward boundary redistribution in which I ended up with 3,000 and change in my ward—a dramatic reduction, but it was truly better representative of representation by population. We do need to look at our governance systems from time to time.

Many of Ontario's regional governments were established decades ago, at a time when population growth was more modest and service delivery was less complex. Today those same regions are responsible for coordinating across multiple municipalities, managing large-scale infrastructure and supporting rapidly growing populations.

In my riding of Windsor–Tecumseh, the city of Windsor is building the Banwell Road and E.C. Row Expressway interchange. It's right on the boundary of the city of Windsor and the town of Tecumseh but had been stalled since 1983 because it's undoubtedly a regional asset, one that's used by people of all municipalities. Because of the regional structure of the different municipalities, no one was able to come forward with plan to build that. I'm delighted to say that our government is kicking in \$50 million toward that project. It helps to get that project off the ground—sorely needed, literally 40 years in the making and it's finally being built today.

The level of responsibility that municipalities have requires a governance structure that is clear, coordinated and capable of functioning effectively and efficiently. Those structures often can create duplication, delay or misalignment. I'll highlight what I mentioned a few minutes ago in debate, the solid waste issue with Essex county, where despite the same contractor being present in every municipality, we couldn't amalgamate the contracts to save some money and optimize the network so that the truck could continue going across the road instead of turning around and going back in the other direction. That's why this legislation focuses on improving how regional governments operate, rather than simply maintaining the status quo.

This bill includes targeted changes to the composition and governance of certain upper-tier municipalities, including Simcoe county and Niagara region. These changes are intended to support more focused councils—structures that allow for clear accountability and more effective decision-making. The objective is not to remove voices from the table but to ensure that those voices can translate into decisions and into actions.

In addition, the bill provides the ability to implement tools such as weighted voting, where appropriate. We're very knowledgeable of that in Essex county. We have upper-tier city of Windsor, upper-tier county of Essex and lower-tier local municipalities, whereas in regional bodies we have to have a weighted vote because populations are widely different, with the same number of representatives around the table.

Another key component of this legislation is strengthening leadership at the regional level. Currently, there's no single, consistent approach to how heads of council are selected across upper-tier municipalities in Ontario. Depending on where you live, the method of selection can

be different, and sometimes that evokes questions as to the why. Some are directly elected, others are chosen by council and others are appointed. This is a lack of consistency, and it creates challenges in coordination and alignment, particularly when municipalities and the province need to work toward shared priorities.

Bill 100 proposes a more consistent approach by enabling the appointment of regional chairs in certain municipalities, along with an extension of enhanced leadership authorities. This is intended to support a clear direction, improved coordination and more timely decision-making.

Most importantly, the role of the regional chair remains one of coordination and facilitation. I'll go back to my case of the Essex county solid waste system. With such a person in charge, that problem with the contracts—or, actually, opportunity with the contracts—could have been realized, and we would have had a savings and an efficiency to our local governments that was otherwise not possible because of the decision of the lower-tier municipalities represented at the county.

It's worth taking a moment to consider the purpose of regional government itself. Regional governments were created to coordinate across municipalities to manage infrastructure, planning and services that extend beyond local boundaries. The days of thinking about us alone in a municipality have to be over. We need to think regionally. We have to think of our impact collectively.

We set an industrial park in a given area; it has a regional benefit, so we should all be participating in those opportunities to zone appropriately, to site appropriately. These play a critical role in bringing municipalities together and aligning priorities across the region. Priorities also mean opportunities: opportunities for jobs, opportunities for housing, and opportunities to leave a little bit more money in the pockets of property taxpayers that don't carry the burden of intentionally expensive decisions for the sake of some potential flexibility down the road.

That role depends on having governance structures that allow for coordination, not fragmentation, because when systems become overly complex or unclear, the ability to fulfill that coordinating role is diminished. This legislation is about strengthening that function, ensuring that regions can do the job that they were designed to do.

Speaker, in closing, I also want to address the question of representation. It's important to be clear that the changes proposed in this legislation do not reduce representation for communities. Municipalities will continue to have a voice at the regional table, and the perspectives of those communities continue to be reflected in decision-making. What changes is not who is represented, but how effectively decisions can be made. A more focused and coordinated structure allows for clear accountability and helps ensure that decisions can be taken in a timely way.

In that sense, the legislation strengthens representation by ensuring that it leads to outcomes. We know that delays have real consequences. Decisions take longer, and that means projects take longer. And when projects take longer, costs increase.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Ms. Jessica Bell: It's interesting hearing the members opposite tie themselves into knots, using words like "accountability," "transparency" and "representation," when what you're doing is, you are replacing a democratically elected chair with someone who's hand-picked by this government, giving them strong-mayor powers so that they can override democratically elected officials. It's mind-boggling to me.

What bothers me most, and I think this is probably what's going to bother a lot of your constituents as well, is that this hand-picked individual will have the right to increase taxes and individuals cannot vote this individual out of office. Do you think it is appropriate to have taxation without representation?

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I want to thank the member from University–Rosedale. Indeed, as the member from Perth–Wellington mentioned, those of us who have a county structure already experience this with wardens. We don't get to pick our warden, but the warden is the leader of our local government.

The intent of this legislation is certainly not to diminish democratic accountability, but really to strengthen the ability of regional governments to deliver on the priorities that residents are consistently asking for, whether it be housing, infrastructure or efficient services. Really, the approach reflects the reality that housing and infrastructure challenges do not respond directly to municipal boundaries, but coordinated leadership is truly essential to getting shovels in the ground faster.

The accountability measures are there. We, as MPPs, get to wear the decisions of those regional chairs, and so there is a relationship, absolutely, through elected officials.

I thank the member for the question.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Ms. Laura Smith: I want to thank the member. He talked a bit about collective responsibility and coordinated work within regions. This proposed legislation would enable the use of weighted voting in upper-tier municipalities. Can the member please explain how this tool will support fair representation while also improving the decision-making efficiency?

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I want to thank the member from Thornhill very much for her question.

Weighted voting is truly important as a tool for council decisions, especially where you have differences in population. Some municipalities have two people around the table, yet their population is radically different from another municipality that also has two people around the table. By assigning votes based on factors like population, we can ensure that representation will always remains fair, even as councils become more streamlined. We know that this approach is used successfully in places like Simcoe county and the province will work with municipalities, particularly those in Niagara, to develop the appropriate frameworks going forward.

At the same time, Speaker, this tool supports more efficient decision-making by allowing smaller councils to function effectively without sacrificing representation. It's truly an example of how we're modernizing governance to deliver a better outcome for residents.

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The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: I'm always happy to rise in this House.

I want to just ask the member across—thank you for your presentation, number one—a question specifically around how this will reduce itself and lower taxes. We know that regional governments have a lot of control over budgetary measures, operational measures. And now that the budgetary and operational responsibilities are being uploaded here to the Premier's office, it looks like they can control and manipulate the budget as they see fit. As the member from University–Rosedale said, it looks like taxation without representation.

So I want to know, how will this government guarantee that the taxes of this area will not rise under this Premier, and more importantly, what accountability will there be to the local people who live there?

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I want to thank the member for Toronto Centre for their question.

The role of regional government in Ontario is one of coordination. They don't replace the local democracy. We will always, always elect strong municipal officials, undoubtedly. And really, the regional government supports those voices by coordinating the services and the infrastructure that will cross municipal boundaries. So, the savings is, single contract, single contractor. You get efficiencies of scale for certain services. That's why certain municipalities also share water and waste water.

My municipality where I reside, the town of Tecumseh, purchases its water and waste water capacity from the city of Windsor. It's more cost-effective for the property tax base to join into services together. So this legislation ensures that regional leadership is best aligned with the needs of the people that they serve, specifically for housing and infrastructure delivery, and there are many, many opportunities to work together in regions all across the province.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Mr. Anthony Leardi: First, I want to wish the member from Windsor–Tecumseh a happy birthday.

There has been some discussion about the title to this bill. It's An Act to amend the Municipal Act, 2001 and the Municipal Elections Act, 1996. That's the title of the bill. It's right on the first page of the bill.

I think it's called an act to amend the Municipal Act because it actually amends the Municipal Act, and I think it's called an act to amend the Municipal Elections Act because it actually amends the Municipal Elections Act.

So it seems to me that An Act to amend the Municipal Act, 2001 and the Municipal Elections Act, 1996, is a very appropriate name for this bill. And then, there's a nick-

name inside, but all bills have nicknames. You can get any nickname you want.

My question to the member is, do you think the official title of this bill is accurate?

Mr. Andrew Dowie: Do you know what? Accuracy is very, very important to those of us in engineering because if you get it wrong, you are going to suffer the consequences for decades to come.

So I do agree with the member; the title is an accurate representation of what is contained within the bill. I appreciate his question.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: First of all, I just wanted to add to that. I think it would be more accurate if it was “an act to amend the Municipal Elections Act and reduce democracy in the province of Ontario.” Then that would be a lot more accurate and representative of what's actually occurring with regard to this bill.

I just want to understand from the member how they believe that it is more efficient to remove elected individuals and replace them with an appointee by the Premier. What on earth does it have to do with efficiency? It's only about one thing, which is, will the people running this region bend the knee to the Premier of Ontario? That's all it is: “Don't be accountable to the people, be accountable to the Premier.”

Could you please just admit it? Let's just move on. Just say, “Yes, you're right” and move on, please.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I appreciate the comments from the member opposite.

I look at some of the regional governments that we have across the province, and this system is actually in place in many. I haven't heard those particular regional governments that have appointed chairs characterized as being anti-democratic so far. If they are, it has been several decades of their successful implementation.

Every resident will continue to be represented by an elected municipal council; that's your opportunity to have a strong voice. Then that municipal council sends to the regional government, and that's the case today with multiple regional governments or even the county governments where, typically, mayors and deputy mayors are elevated by virtue of their position.

Really, this is more of the same, in my view, because this has been implemented in multiple regions across the province of Ontario today.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Member for Orléans.

Mr. Stephen Blais: I appreciate that last answer, although I'm not entirely sure that it's completely accurate. Regional governments take care of the big stuff. It's the big roads and it's the big rec centres. It's often emergency and protective services.

And so, an appointed, unelected political hack who only needs one-third support of council will now be able to issue fiats and make decisions without any feedback—or will not be required to take into consideration feedback of elected officials. I'm wondering how the member from

Windsor–Tecumseh can stand up and honestly say that that’s democratic.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I appreciate the question from the member from Orléans. Ultimately, the same way that appointed chairs are today—you have elected officials, and we, as MPPs, are also elected officials and we are also bearing the burden of their decision-making. In the event that your local regional chair is not undertaking the best possible principles of local government, then, as elected officials, it’s incumbent on us to take the opportunity to make a change.

At the provincial level, certainly, I’m willing to have conversations, should I ever have a regional chair, to ensure that they are always looking out for the best interests of taxpayers and residents.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Further debate?

Ms. Jessica Bell: I rise today to speak about a very concerning bill, Bill 100, the Better Regional Governance Act. To start off, I’m going to summarize what the bill does, or the concerns that I have most with it. Essentially, this bill lets the province appoint heads of council for regional municipalities across southern Ontario: Peel, York, Durham, Halton, Niagara, Waterloo, Muskoka regional councils, plus Simcoe county.

What that means is that an elected regional chair—that democratic process—is going to be replaced by the Conservative government hand-picking individuals to hold incredible positions of responsibility, and they will have a huge amount of power. These powers include the ability to reorganize bureaucracies, hire and fire most high-level positions and, crucially, the ability to veto some measures or affirmatively push forward measures because they’ve been given strong-mayor powers.

Now, I have heard across the way from the members opposite that this is about efficiency, this is about accountability, this is about representation and everything is going to be fine. There’s nothing fine about this. This is just terrible. It’s outright terrible. What I find most concerning about it is that it’s going to be affecting about five million people—a third of the province—and many of these people are in ridings held by Conservatives. I hope that there are constituents in your ridings that are learning about this bill and saying, “No, no, no, no. If this local or regional level of government is looking at raising taxes, then they need to be accountable to citizens like myself.” That seems pretty reasonable.

As my colleague opposite from Ottawa West–Nepean mentioned, democracy is not a nice-to-have; it is something that we fought for. Getting rid of an elected process for an entire level of government, a regional government, is an example of democratic backsliding. As a result, I firmly believe that we will be worse off as a province and that that level of government will not make better decisions than they would have made if there were was a democratically elected chair.

What I find also very frustrating—it makes me angry, in fact—is that this is just one of many examples of the Conservative government taking steps to consolidate

power, to behave in a less transparent way, to be less accountable and to thumb their nose at democratic norms.

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Shortly after we were elected in 2018, one of the first terrible things the Conservative government did was to rewrite the City of Toronto Act and dramatically change how elections were run in the city of Toronto. We originally had 44 positions and it was dramatically decreased to 25 in the middle of an election. It resulted in chaos, absolute chaos. And at the same time, they banned Kingston and London and Toronto from using ranked ballots, which is a move that those three municipalities decided through a democratic process to move forward on, to use a different voting system. The provincial government said, “No, thanks. We don’t like that,” and it’s pretty obvious why; they didn’t like the potential outcome of that.

We have seen this government eliminate the responsibilities of school board trustees at a school board level. School boards are one of the oldest examples of a democratic institution in Ontario. School board trustees allow parents, educators, teachers and students to have a say over the quality of the education that takes place in the classroom and what the school board is going to prioritize when it comes to budgeting season. Do they put more money into special education? Do they put more money into keeping pools open in high schools? Do they take steps to cap class sizes in certain grades? These are just some examples of decisions that the Toronto District School Board made in order to do what it can with the budget limitations it’s been given to improve the quality of education in the classroom.

The Conservative government didn’t like that. They came in and they decided, “Actually, it’s better off if we hand-pick, identify individuals with no experience in the classroom and we are going to have them make these key decisions at the school board level.” It’s safe to say—I have two kids in the public school system—the consequences of that decision have been, quite frankly, terrible. I regularly receive calls from constituents who have very serious issues: Their kid is being denied access to school because there isn’t an educational assistant available to help them; there are safety issues in a playground and the school does not have the resources to deal with it; issues with overcrowding in other classes.

Many individuals have reached out to the supervisor to say, “Hey, it’s your responsibility. You get paid over \$350,000 a year. You’ve been given the significant powers to run our school board. Can you answer our questions? We’re parents. We’ve got issues with our kids.” And, unfortunately, the supervisor in those instances doesn’t even respond to an email—\$350,000 a year and doesn’t even respond to an email. No experience in the classroom, and it shows.

My concern is that what is happening in school boards—what this government has done at a municipal level—those kinds of issues that we are seeing are going to be applied here in the regions that are going to have their democratically elected regional chair replaced by a hand-picked, Conservative-government-appointed person who

will earn a lot of money. I hear rumours that they will be earning upwards of \$250,000 a year. I believe they get a car with the job and an allowance. That's nice. It's very nice.

So the constituents who live in Peel, in York, in Durham, in Halton, Niagara, Waterloo, Muskoka and Simcoe county will be paying for this individual to make some very significant decisions, including raising taxes, but they will have no ability to hold this individual to account. How does that make sense? How is that good government? Is that transparent? No. Does it improve representation? No. Is it more democratic? No.

It's also safe to say that I don't think it's going to result in better decisions being made. I wonder why the Conservative government is moving forward with this kind of new level of representation. Part of me thinks, well, partly, it's because this government does not have a healthy respect for democratic processes. That has already been clear.

Then another reason why I think this government is doing it is because developers have approached them and said, "Look, we are not getting the approvals that we need approved in a timely fashion and we would really like it if the regional head of government could pay for the infrastructure that we need to connect these new subdivisions to the sewerage and the water and the roads that we need to get approvals going. They're just not doing it as quickly as we want." That's what I suspect has happened.

And because this government has received an obscene amount of money from developers, their executives, their staff and so on, they've turned around and said, "Do you know what? You're right. Let's make it easier for you to build the kind of housing that you want to build. We want to set it up in such a way that we're going to make constituents pay for those additional costs."

That's what I guess has happened, and they know that that's not going to be loved by some people. So you've decided, "Well, how about we just get rid of this elected regional chair and replace him with an appointed chair? They'll get to deal with all the heat and let's see how that goes." It's very concerning.

The final reason why I think this is concerning is because this government has thrown the desk, the chair and everything at the wall to try and get housing starts to stop the downward trend and everything this government has tried hasn't worked. Giving the private sector everything they want, or anything they want, has not actually resulted in an increase in housing starts.

So my statement to you is: Go back to the drawing board. Try something else.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Mr. Billy Pang: Twenty-five years ago, when I first landed in Canada—I can still remember how Highway 7 north had nothing. Now, in the city of Markham, it is way, way, way beyond Elgin Mills. So the world changed. Now it's time, I believe, to amend the Municipal Act, 2001 and also 1996.

Given the urgent need to get more homes built for Ontario families and the fact that housing supply continues to lag behind population growth and economic demand, can the member opposite explain why they would oppose measures that strengthen regional governance to improve coordination and speed up approvals?

Ms. Jessica Bell: I think it's reasonable to say that we can have democratic processes and achieve our housing targets at the same time. We don't need to sacrifice one in order to meet the other.

If this government is serious about building the kind of housing that we need to meet demand, then we've presented a lot of proposals to you—a lot of proposals. Get government back into the business of building housing. Speed up approvals of needed housing, especially affordable housing. You basically have thrown in the towel on building affordable housing. You've literally thrown in the towel.

Make zoning changes. You appointed your own Housing Affordability Task Force to come up with recommendations on how to build affordable housing and there was nothing in that task force that said, "Hey, how about you replace democratically elected chairs with hand-picked, appointed Conservative government supervisors who are going to be earning over \$250,000 a year?"—nothing in that report.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Thank you to my colleague from University–Rosedale for your thoughtful comments on this bill.

The member referenced other areas where we're seeing very well-compensated Conservative appointees who don't feel like they're accountable to the people that they are supposed to be serving. And in the member's own riding of University–Rosedale, there are two supervisors appointed to oversee the Toronto District School Board and the Toronto Catholic District School Board, who have cut teachers: 607 for the TDSB, plus 186 support staff and 40 vice principals. In the TCDSB, they've cut 77 instructors and they've eliminated language and literacy programs.

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What is the member hearing from her constituents about how they're feeling about these decisions, and what might that mean for people in Durham and Niagara and Waterloo who are going to be affected by this government's new unelected, unaccountable appointees?

Ms. Jessica Bell: Individuals in the areas that are going to be impacted by Bill 100—Peel, York, Durham, Halton, Niagara, Waterloo, Muskoka and Simcoe—should be very worried about what this could mean to their level of government and what kind of service they get.

If you look at what's happening at the TDSB and the Toronto Catholic District School Board, we are hearing from parents and teachers in particular, who are seeing all these decisions being made in secret, and they don't even find out until after the decision has been made. A lot of the decisions that are being made are quite drastic. We've seen

increases to class sizes for kids in special education classes. I honestly can't believe you would do that, but the supervisor did. We're seeing threats to close schools because enrolment has been cut down, and the parents don't even know if the school is going to be closed or not. All they're hearing from the supervisor is that enrolment to grade 9 is being—

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Ms. Laura Smith: Thank you to the member opposite.

I want to talk about collaboration and ask her a question about that. Collaboration makes a difference. You talked about affordable housing. We recently had Habitat for Humanity here, actually, just yesterday. I was there with them, and we talked about a partnership with the city of Toronto and the province of Ontario, 33 new modular homes that are happening as a result of collaboration. But things get dysfunctional. This legislation is designed to strengthen that collaboration between regional leadership and how they function to ensure that the right decisions are made in a timely manner.

So if you do not support these reforms, what specific mechanism would you rely upon to ensure that municipalities can work across all kinds of purposes when it comes to land use planning, service capacity and housing approvals that span multiple jurisdictions?

Interjection: They do this now.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Yes, exactly. There are already processes in place to make decisions to pay for the infrastructure that's needed, to build the affordable housing that's needed; what's lacking is funding.

I went to the Habitat for Humanity lobbying day, and what we heard from them was gratitude that the HST on new homes was being eliminated. But what we also heard is that there is a real need for more funding, there's a real need for financing for affordable housing and there's a real need for public land to be made available to build the housing that's needed.

Yes, there are a few piecemeal projects that are happening here and there. But we also know that there are over 85,000 people in Ontario who are homeless, who are living in encampments, in ravines, on friends' couches, so the need is much greater than what is actually being constructed.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank my friend from University–Rosedale for an excellent overview of Bill 100. I'm sure the member has recently been following the news with a purchase of a private plane for the Premier, something that was blamed on cabinet for all voting in favour of, and now we've seen that the Premier is now going to have a fire sale for this plane and yet won't produce any receipts for it. It makes one wonder whether this plane was actually a paper plane, if it's an in-and-out deal to enrich only certain pockets, and it also makes one wonder whether this plane is actually a red herring or a false flag, something that's hiding even worse things that this government is up to.

But my question specifically on Bill 100: This government has a very strong track record of insider deals and backroom deals. How is Bill 100 a recipe for corruption?

Ms. Jessica Bell: The chances of corruption increase when you reduce transparency, reduce representation, reduce accountability, make it harder to find decisions, make it so that basic decisions do not see the light of day, and that's pretty much the course of business with this government.

In the latest bill that I think we'll be debating tonight—it didn't even go to committee; once again a budget bill that didn't even go to committee—we are seeing changes to the freedom of information act which will make it even harder to find information, like the government buying a \$30-million plane for the Premier to jet around. It will make it even harder for that kind of information that the public wants to know about to see the light of day.

It was the freedom-of-information process that resulted in the greenbelt scandal being revealed, the Skills Development Fund saga, and also the gas power plants issue that was the stain on the former—

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Mr. Matthew Rae: Thank you to my colleague for her remarks this afternoon on Bill 100. I don't want to presuppose how they may vote when we get to that portion of this bill, but it sounds like they won't be supporting it. So my question to my colleague across the way is, what would they do to streamline and improve municipal governance in our fastest-growing parts of this province to get more homes built, see more economic development, get more infrastructure built?

The \$4 billion we're investing through the municipal housing infrastructure fund—we want to ensure that obviously goes to shovels in the ground.

Ms. Jessica Bell: To the member opposite: It's safe to say that we're not going to be supporting this bill.

This government has not made the case at all that replacing democratically elected regional chairs with their hand-picked, highly paid Conservative government appointees is going to improve coordination and increase the number of housing starts that we're seeing in the province of Ontario. You haven't made the case; it's very flawed.

You've had eight years to increase housing starts. You've had eight years to build more affordable housing. On every single housing affordability measure, on every single housing start measure, you've failed. Housing starts are at a record low.

Please go back to the drawing board. Try something else. It's not working. Invest more in infrastructure. Invest more in the construction of affordable homes. Open our public land; we've got a lot of it. I think you'd get a lot more support from this side of the House if you did that.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Further debate?

I recognize the member for Perth–Wellington.

Mr. Matthew Rae: Thank you, Speaker.

Interjections.

Mr. Matthew Rae: Thank you to my colleagues for their robust applause this afternoon.

Speaker, now that I have the floor, I actually want to make a very brief introduction to a constituent in the gallery: James Craig, who works for Kindred Credit Union, is sitting up in the gallery. It's great to see people from Perth–Wellington in this place here today.

Bill 100, the Better Regional Governance Act, is an important piece of legislation. I really just want to thank the Clerks, and the committee clerks in particular, for the work they did a couple of years ago now. I have been with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing in my parliamentary assistant role for over three years now—

Interjections.

Mr. Matthew Rae: I know some members are quietly clapping on that. I'm paying it forward for my next life, my colleagues.

I know the committee did consult extensively on regional governance. We had seven total public hearing meetings across—we didn't meet in downtown Toronto. We met in the communities that are in the bill before this place today to discuss what they would like to see in the regional governance, what they would like to see reformed.

I know in Niagara and Simcoe in particular, there was discussion around how many politicians—I know the member from Niagara West talked about it in his remarks earlier in this debate: There are more local politicians in the region of Niagara at both the regional level and the municipal level than the entire Legislative Assembly here—126 in Niagara and 124 in this place currently. I know a key component of this bill is obviously streamlining that and making sure it's brought forward in an efficient manner.

As I mentioned in my question to my colleague just recently now, we are spending now \$4 billion to the municipal housing infrastructure fund. Until recently, until the federal government finally decided to come to the table with infrastructure money, we were one of the largest infrastructure funds under Premier Ford and Minister Surma—now Minister McCarthy is acting infrastructure minister—investing, most likely, the largest infrastructure program currently in the province and country to get shovels in the ground, to ensure that we get pipes in the ground. Because at the end of that pipe is a new home or a new apartment that an Ontarian and a new Canadian can move into. That really is a key theme of this bill, ensuring we're improving efficiency and improving how we're getting infrastructure, economic development and, ultimately, new communities and current communities built in this great province.

1420

In the spirit of that efficiency, I look forward to seeing this at committee, and so I move that this question now be put.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Mr. Rae has moved that the question be now put. I am satisfied that there has been sufficient debate to allow this question to be put to the House.

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

All those in favour of the motion that the question be now put, please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion that the question be now put say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

Vote deferred.

PROTECTING ONTARIO'S WORKERS AND ECONOMIC RESILIENCE ACT, 2026

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

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 22, 2026, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

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

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Further debate?

Interjections.

Mr. Stephen Blais: I'm honoured by the rousing applause for the second straight day, Madam Speaker; I'm going for a record here.

I'd like to point out, Madam Speaker, that I'm going share my time this afternoon with my friend and colleague from Ottawa South.

I'm rising to speak to Bill 105, Protecting Ontario's Workers and Economic Resilience Act. At first glance, this is the kind of bill that sounds difficult to oppose. Who would not want to protect workers? Who would not want to make Ontario's economy more resilient? Who would not want to cut unnecessary delays, support business, improve worker safety and help people get into jobs more quickly?

That is the challenge with an omnibus bill like this one. The title is very attractive; the press release is very attractive; the government deck is very attractive. But the Legislature doesn't vote on titles. We don't vote on slogans. We don't vote on glossy decks and carefully chosen headlines. We vote on what is actually inside the bill, and this bill is a little bit of a mix.

There are parts that appear quite reasonable, and there are parts that deserve support. There are parts that may genuinely help workers and businesses, but there are also parts that should give every member of the Legislature a moment of pause, because buried inside the bill about workers and economic resilience, there are changes that reduce public oversight, changes that centralize more power in ministers and in cabinet, changes that weaken the ability of workers to organize, and changes that make it easier for government to approve controversial projects

with fewer questions and fewer checks. For those reasons, that means that we should not rush this bill. We should not simply applaud the title and move on. We should examine it carefully. We should ask what is being improved, what is being weakened and, I think, as it relates to this government, who benefits.

This is especially true because the government has developed a habit in recent years. Whenever there is a problem, the government's answer is always the same: cut the process, shorten the review, remove the oversights and concentrate the power. I'll repeat that, Madam Speaker: cut the process, shorten the review, remove the oversight and concentrate the power. That's the government's mantra. If there is delay, cut consultation. If there's disagreement, remove the appeal. If there is scrutiny, narrow the decision-making process. Now, the government calls that efficiency, but often it means less accountability.

Madam Speaker, the job of this Legislature is essentially for us to know the difference. There is a difference between reducing red tape and reducing protections. There is a difference between streamlining and sidelining. There is a difference between making government work faster and making it easier for government to avoid difficult questions.

So, as I said, I approach this bill with an open mind, but not a blank mind. I'm prepared to support measures—and we are all prepared to support measures that genuinely help workers. We're prepared to support measures that make approvals more predictable. We're prepared to support measures that remove duplication. But we're not prepared to give the government a blank cheque simply because it has wrapped everything inside a bill that has a catchy name.

Madam Speaker, there are several parts of Bill 105 that appear constructive. For example, the bill would prohibit employers from charging workers for required uniforms. That's common sense. If an employer requires a worker to wear a specific uniform with the company logo, the cost of that uniform should not come out of the worker's paycheque. A young person starting their first job should not lose part of their first paycheque because they're required to buy a branded shirt, jacket, apron, ball cap etc. If the government wants to stop that practice, that is something worth supporting.

The bill also includes changes to strengthen regulation of talent agencies. At present, performers and entertainment workers can face delayed payments, unclear commissions and a lack of transparency. Bill 105 would require agencies to pay workers within two business weeks, keep separate accounts and follow clear rules. Again, that seems very reasonable. Workers in the arts and entertainment sector deserve the same fairness and certainty as workers in any other field.

There are also positive changes proposed to workplace safety. The move toward better hard hats—including the type 2 hard hat that protects against side impacts—is very sensible. If construction workers face risks from impacts not only from above, but from the side, then safety standards should reflect that reality.

Likewise, Madam Speaker, recognizing equivalent training and safety standards from other provinces also makes a lot of sense. Ontario needs more workers. We need more labour mobility. Ontario needs fewer barriers that prevent qualified people from working simply because they crossed a provincial border. If a worker has already completed legitimate safety training elsewhere in Canada, we should not force them to start from zero.

We also like the fact that the bill increases WSIB loss-of-earnings benefits from 85% to 90%. That's a significant improvement. For decades, injured workers have argued that they should not lose more of their income simply because they were hurt on the job. When someone goes to work, follows the rules, unfortunately gets injured and can no longer earn a living because of that, the system and their government should stand behind them.

And because more Ontarians are working later in life, allowing some workers to continue to receive benefits beyond the age of 65 may also be justified. Our labour market has changed, medical science has changed, people are staying in the workforce longer. Some do so because they want to, others do so because they have to, and the law should recognize the reality.

1430

Madam Speaker, there may also be merit in prioritizing Ontario-connected international medical graduates for residency positions. Of course, we know that Ontario faces a shortage of doctors. We know too many people do not have a family doctor. We know many Ontarians study medicine abroad and want to come home. If there is a fair and legally sound way to give those people a better opportunity to practise here in Ontario, then of course that is worth discussing and worth making a reality.

But even where this bill has good ideas, there are still many questions. For example, will the uniform provisions apply fairly to small businesses, or are we only talking about the big chains and boxes? Will talent agency rules be enforced? Will the new medical residency rules actually increase the number of doctors, or is it simply going to rearrange who gets access to a limited number of spots?

Good intentions alone are not enough. The details matter. And too often with this government, the details are light.

The most troubling part of Bill 105, we think, is what it does to environmental protections. Once again, under the banner of efficiency, the government is reducing oversight. The bill removes the requirement for the ministry to prepare and publish a review of comprehensive environmental assessments. It removes the opportunity for the public to comment on that review. And it removes the ability of the public to ask that a project be referred to the OLT. That's not a small change. That's not housekeeping. That's a fundamental reduction in public accountability. The government says that these steps take too long. The government says that they rarely change the outcome. But if that's true, if they rarely change the outcome, why is the government so eager to get rid of them?

Public comment matters. Independent review matters. The right to appeal matters.

Sometimes the people closest to a project know the most about its impacts—the people who live beside a proposed landfill, the people whose water may be affected, the people whose community may carry the consequences long after the ribbon-cutting ceremony is over. Those are the people who deserve more than a notice after the decision has already been made. They deserve a real opportunity to be heard.

And this bill does more than simply remove oversight. It also transfers more power.

Today, final approval for a comprehensive environmental assessment is supposed to involve cabinet. Under Bill 105, that authority moves to a single minister. That means less collective responsibility, less scrutiny and less transparency. Perhaps that doesn't matter with this cabinet. We know that very recently they all nodded their heads up and down to buy a \$30-million luxury jet for the Premier. I would have hoped that their talent, their experience, their wisdom and their good sense would have at least caused some of them to ask difficult questions about that, but according to the Premier, it was a slam dunk, an easy-peasy decision. I still think cabinet should have those conversations and have that decision-making responsibility—not simply one minister with one signature and one decision.

Madam Speaker, the government often speaks about local voices. The Premier is very proud of the fact that he returns phone calls and doesn't use—well, I guess he can no longer claim this, but in the past he has claimed to never use government-owned private planes because he's a man of the people and goes out to talk to real people. Too often, and certainly now, eight years later, and especially as it relates to the environment, the government is moving completely in the opposite direction. They want fewer voices. They want fewer opportunities to object. They want fewer checks on power.

Obviously, as we see temperatures continue to rise, the impacts of global warming and climate change manifest themselves, including, as we speak, in Ottawa, as the Ottawa River—the Outaouais—and I believe the Gatineau River are overflowing their banks. This is now the fourth or fifth time in the last decade that they're having 50-year and 100-year flooding events.

We understand that these situations are getting worse, they're getting more frequent and more common, and we should not be ignoring experts who are giving us advice and we should not be fast-tracking or ignoring their advice in the name of expediency.

Another change in this bill that is concerning: the change to environmental assessment requirements about fill rates at landfills. Think about this for a second, Madam Speaker: A landfill could expand, more waste could be brought in, the impact on surrounding communities could increase and yet the public would have fewer opportunities to review or challenge that change.

That might be faster, but faster is not always better, because when government makes the wrong decision the people who pay the price are not the minister in the ivory tower in Toronto, it's not the consultants; it's the families

who live nearby, it's the community and it's future generations who will have to deal with those problems and clean them up.

This is where the government should remember a simple principle. We can, of course, build faster, we can approve projects faster, but we should not silence people faster. We need to ensure that we're getting feedback from those neighbours, from experts, from the people who will live with the consequences long after decision-makers have retired or moved on, etc.

Madam Speaker, there's another part of the bill that deserves careful examination. I think I'm going to leave that aspect to my colleague from Ottawa South, though, because it's more directly related to labour concerns and he is the expert there.

Before the Legislature votes on Bill 105 and certainly before it gets passed into law, there are several questions that need answers:

How exactly will the government protect public input after removing environmental assessment reviews and appeals?

What safeguards will exist to ensure ministers can't simply approve projects behind closed doors without appropriate feedback?

How will workers challenge decisions if inspections replace investigations under employment standards?

What benefits will be clawed back from injured workers under new WSIB rules?

Will workers actually receive more support or will one hand give while the other hand, actually, is taking away?

Will new residency rules increase the number of doctors or simply shift around the numbers that exist today?

Perhaps more importantly, Madam Speaker, how many of these changes are truly about efficiency and how many are truly about concentrating more and more power in fewer and fewer hands?

Bill 105 is not all good and it's not all bad. There are provisions in this bill that deserve support. There are provisions in the bill that deserve amendment, and there are provisions in the bill that should probably be removed entirely.

The government wants us to see the bill as simple, but it's not. I think everyone's antenna should go up a little bit when the government says, "Trust us. We're just cutting red tape." The Legislature has the duty and the responsibility to ask difficult questions, because when you're cutting red tape, what else are you cutting?

Is it duplication, or is it accountability? Is it unnecessary process, or is it the public's right to be heard? Is it bureaucracy, or are you cutting important protections?

1440

That's really the choice before the Legislature. Until those questions are answered, the Legislature should approach Bill 105 carefully, it should approach it thoughtfully and it should approach it with the seriousness that it deserves.

I appreciate the opportunity this afternoon to express my concerns as it relates to Bill 105. I hope that the government has heard these concerns; will contemplate

their choices; will ensure that it receives robust conversation, consultation, amendment at committee; and ensures that it actually does the things that they say that it will do, without harming the public's ability to provide feedback.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): I recognize the member for Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: Speaker, good afternoon. I want to thank my colleague for sharing the lead-off with me and the opportunity to speak to Bill 105, the Protecting Ontario's Workers and Economic Resilience Act.

Now, if you turn that into an acronym, does anybody know what that spells?

Interjection.

Mr. John Fraser: "Power." The minister knows. We'll bring that up later. I want you to remember that, Minister. You already knew it. I think it's important, because it relates to some of the measures in this bill and what I might call an abuse of power.

But actually, right now I want to say nice things. I'm going to say nice things because in schedule 9, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, there is a provision in there that is something I have been working on for about nine years, but the people who are looking for this change have been working on it for about 20. That is WSIB coverage for workers in residential care, which are retirement homes and group homes. Once this bill passes, it's going to change this.

Right now, those workers don't have WSIB coverage, and they essentially do the same work as other workers who, because they work in a facility that's provincial—like a long-term-care home or a hospital or a group home that is provincially run—don't get coverage. The coverage is only to those who work for the provincial government, so by virtue of who their employer is—not the type of work, not the risk—they weren't getting it.

I first found out about this in 2017. I introduced my first private member's bill, which was WSIB for residential care workers. Since then, I introduced the bill six times and I debated it twice. During that time, I spoke to every Minister of Labour up until now, just saying, "Adopt it. It's unfair," because these workers often work more than one job, sometimes two or three jobs. When you're not covered by WSIB and just a single insurer, you're covered for the work that you do in that one job. If you get hurt at that one job, you don't get covered for the other two jobs. So the change in the rating of their loss of income, if we pass this bill, will be really significant.

We all expect that when we get hurt at work—we expect to come home safe from work, but if we get hurt at work—we have workplace safety insurance. It was something that we did collectively to protect workers and, I'll say, at the beginning, also to protect employers from litigation.

So I had introduced the bill again. I can't remember the number that the bill was—it's on the order paper right now—and I was going to debate it in my slot this week. But after talking to the minister a number of weeks ago, I

learned that they're going to make this change. It's really great news. It's really great news.

And although I love this, I'm really concerned with some of the things in the bill, so it puts me in a real dilemma. Something that not just I have worked on for nine years, but a whole bunch of people like Sandee Green from SEIU and a whole bunch of people—Ian DeWaard from CLAC—have been putting years and years of work into it. For almost 20 years, they have been trying to make this change. So I'm in a dilemma. I'm trying to figure out what it is I can do, because this is really important. It's really good.

I want to congratulate and thank the minister. I think I asked him a question about it three or four weeks ago, and somebody sent me a text. They said they thought it was the friendliest question in the history of the Legislature and that we were going to hug it out on the floor in between us. And we probably could have, because it is actually a really good thing. So I do want to thank the minister for getting that done. He's probably the fourth or fifth minister I've spoken to. It is a really, really good thing.

As a legislator, it doesn't really matter whose name goes on it. We don't put private members' bills forward—at least my colleagues that I've shared this with. We just put the bill out. We want the thing to change. We want the idea to go. We want it to work.

What we'll say about private members' bills is: Just take it. Run with it. Do the thing. Because it's so hard to make a change with a private member's bill when you're not in government. And even when you're in government—trust me; I've been on the other side. I know there are some members on the other side who have had private members' bills before that they really wanted to do, but they couldn't get it passed.

This is a really, really good thing. It's going to protect workers. I want to protect everyone in CLAC, SEIU and CUPE, who fought so hard for this, and all the workers who came and told their stories over the years here to try and get this change. It's really important.

In this schedule, because we're talking about schedule 9—I'm talking about the things that I think are good in this bill—are also changes to workplace safety insurance: the continuous loss of earnings past 65 if the board determines the worker could have had the ability to continue working; increase the LOE benefit from 85% to 90%—the payments going forward; and again, the change that relates to group homes and residential care and WSIB coverage.

I'm supposed to talk about the nice stuff and I just saw some of the bad stuff here, so I'm trying to avoid it.

The Occupational Health and Safety Act—better. New hard hats—the government is going to pay for it. People aren't going to be out-of-pocket because they have to buy new equipment that's going to be safer for them. On the face, that looks like a very, very good thing.

With regard to the Ombudsman Act: It's interesting that we're doing this now how many years since we started the Ombudsman? It's probably 35 or 40 years or maybe more. It requires the Ombudsman to be proficient in English and French. It's something that hasn't come up because the last

two Ombudsmen, Ombudspersons, were both fluent, bilingual and, actually, they were francophones.

I think that that change is something that's good. Franco-Ontarians, quite frankly, do have a challenge with access to services, whether it be in health care, whether it be something like the Landlord and Tenant Board, whether it be in social services. So it would be important, or it is important, for the Ombudsperson, Ombudsman, to be able to respond and speak to, in a general sense, the people of Ontario in both official languages.

Strengthening Talent Agency Regulation Act: This is interesting because I've been here for a while, and I won't say it's a follow-on, but there was kind of a debate here at Queen's Park a couple of times, and we eventually did it, which was work to protect child actors. Child actors had very little workplace protection. It was kind of a big grey area.

Paul Miller, who was a member for Hamilton—anybody know over there? Centre?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: No, he was—oh, my gosh. Hamilton East—Stoney Creek.

Mr. John Fraser: Hamilton East—Stoney Creek. He put forward that bill a number of times here, and he was eventually successful at protecting child actors. It was really quite amazing the things we heard at that committee.

So I'm not surprised when I see the Strengthening Talent Agency Regulation Act, because we all assume that people are protected in the workplace. I suppose it's just something like an industry—like talent, the movie industry, the entertainment industry. I haven't dug deep into this, but it sounds like it's a step in the right direction.

1450

I'm just trying to get through all the good stuff because the bad stuff is coming, folks, the stuff that's very, very concerning.

Oh, one more good thing—there are some good things in here, Minister, and that is making sure that employers can't charge workers for their uniforms. I come from the grocery business, and we didn't. We made sure that, if you want people to wear a uniform, then you should provide it for them—within reason, right, which is you get X number. This might be in regulations, but you only get so many uniforms. If you're not good at taking care of a uniform, that's another problem altogether.

I did talk the other day about being in the grocery business and, yes, we had uniforms. In 1976, when I was 15, I worked at Loblaws, and we had to wear a white shirt. They actually didn't provide the uniform. We had to wear a white shirt, but what they did give us was—wait for it—these little bow ties. They were like about this big—that's how old I am—and they were on the end—a minister is laughing over there. I won't say who it is because he's probably almost in the same age category. They had the elastic band, right? You didn't have to clip it. It wasn't a clip-on; it was like an elastic band. So you could be missing the top button on your shirt and still get it on, which happened to me on a number of occasions—not being very good with shirts.

Employers can take advantage of people because they need work. People shouldn't have to pay for uniforms. If an employer is going for a consistent look and for them it's a brand, then they should be paying and supporting employees by providing them a uniform. That's something we always did.

I can remember the last one we had was Hansen's Your Independent Grocer: "I'm here to help"—which, actually, I use continuously and have used around my constituency. I don't say Hansen's, but "I'm here to help." If you've got a problem, if there's something wrong, just come see us. Don't worry about what the problem is. Don't worry if it's provincial, federal or whatever. I'm here to help. So something actually stuck with me from my 25 years in the grocery business, that I'm here to help.

Our business, without getting into it too much—because I've got 30 minutes to go, folks, and I don't want to put you all to sleep—

Interjections.

Mr. John Fraser: You're already there, guys. We're already there. I can't blame you, listening to me drone on and on. I just don't want to get everybody too excited, because I can do that on occasion. Anyways, I digress.

Now we're going get to the stuff I'm not quite sure about and the stuff that's really bad. I'm going to start with the stuff I'm not quite sure about.

In the Labour Relations Act, and this is in schedule 3, the shortening of the opening periods where unions' representation can be changed or replaced as you're coming up to negotiating a contract—that's being shortened from two months to one month. I've been around this place for a long time. I've never heard anybody request this. So my question then becomes, who wants this? I've actually heard from one party who said, "We don't want this, and somebody else is asking for this." But I don't know what the benefit is to the worker, right? Is the benefit to the worker or is the benefit to large organizations? That's the question that I had there. I don't know what the answer to that is. To be open and honest with everybody here, it's just kind of like—I guess my question would be, if I get an answer in the questions, why is this in here? Can someone explain to me how it got here? It looks a little out of place. It doesn't look to me like it's something for workers. You would think that if it was for workers, you would want to give them a longer period of time, right? If you're being open and transparent, democracy—and I'm going to talk about that a little later on this week about how our writ period is now too short because you can call an election when you wake up on Wednesday morning in this province now. There are no more fixed election dates. And I would like to hear the answer to that. I'm hoping we can hear an answer from the minister—not Minister Khanjin, because I know it's not necessarily your portfolio. But I would like to understand why that's there, from the ministry's point of view, the Minister of Labour's point of view. I would also like to understand why it's there from a worker's point of view and a large-organization point of view, and whether it was something that one group of people asked for or one organization asked for or multiple

organizations asked for. So those are the questions in and around there. I won't say that's a bad thing; it just doesn't smell right. I think it's fair to say that.

Here's where the power comes in, Minister—the acronym for this bill, POWER: the Environmental Assessment Act, the government giving itself more power over locals. That's what's happening here. Bill 5 wasn't enough. Bill 5, which is what we were going to do for economic development—everybody remembers Bill 5? I'm talking about this in relation to the Environmental Assessment Act. Bill 5 was the bill that we were going to use to protect Ontario, to build the economy, to open up the north. And where is the first place that we use Bill 5? Does anybody know? Billy Bishop airport, right in the heart of northern Ontario—no. Actually, it's right at the shore of Lake Ontario.

And now, since we're talking about that—private jets. I know that we can't land the Premier's luxury jet, which we don't have but he still bought. And he's going to own it from now until the next election; he doesn't think so, but he's going to own it from now until the next election. Because when you buy a luxury private jet, when you run the provincial credit card up to half a trillion dollars, people go, "Hey, what's going on?" Or when you buy a luxury jet when people can't afford groceries or rent or gas, "What's going on?" Or when you buy a luxury jet and you're saying to kids who are getting OSAP, "You're going to need to go in more debt," and when you buy a luxury jet and hospitals are short a billion dollars, "What's going on?" When you buy a personal luxury jet and kids with special needs in schools aren't getting the help they need, you're going to own that. You're going to own that forever.

With respect to all the cabinet ministers, who apparently voted unanimously to allow the Premier to buy a luxury jet that he would hope to land at Billy Bishop once they extended the runway, I just want to say, not only does the Premier own the luxury jet but all of you do. I don't know if you ever would have gotten a ride on it—I think they took out some seats because they were putting some other stuff in. I hear it was pretty nice.

Of course, everything is okay. We returned it for the full cost. I know people have a lot of questions about this personal luxury jet. I don't have any questions. This is what it's all about. You bought the jet; you own it. You're going to own it until 2028-29, and trust me, you will be reminded of that frequently, not just in the next few weeks but in the months and years to come.

Maybe we will even create an award—a personal jet award or something like that—so that every year we can celebrate the excess to which the government goes to. I digress again, but, you know what—does everybody know we could name the jet? We could name the jet like they do—you know when they got Boaty McBoatface and things like that; we could do that.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Jetty McJetface.

Mr. John Fraser: Okay. I digress. Sorry, Speaker. I'm getting back into this.

If we want to talk about largesse right now—I've just been reminded of this. Do you know that the Premier's office—and if I've said this before, I apologize—salary went from \$2 million in 2018 to \$8 million. That's this Premier's office salary cost: two million bucks to eight million bucks in eight years. That's a lot of money, and I don't know what we're getting for that.

1500

It reminded me of another thing. Executive offices in the Ford government: 2018, \$34 million—sounds like a bargain—2026, \$82 million. That's 243%—

Mr. John Vanthof: At least the Premier's jet is probably airworthy, as opposed to the Ornge helicopters.

Mr. John Fraser: That's true, too. That's true, but apparently—that was good, John, I'll have to give that to you.

Interjection.

Mr. John Fraser: You shouldn't be laughing over there. You're the guys that are excessive, right? You have a trillion-dollar debt. I wouldn't laugh over there, but you can, I mean, just not a lot—enough, I'll take it. He's funny; funny peculiar, actually. But anyhow, I digress.

But that's a 243% increase, just in case anybody who has a challenge with math over there needs to find out, because apparently there's some people who have a challenge with math over there—

Interjections.

Mr. John Fraser: Googled, well. We haven't talked about whether—what was it?—the Premier's plane was going to be on l'émission française « Pimp mon char »?

M. Stephen Blais: Pimp mon char.

Mr. John Fraser: Pimp mon char. Fix my car—roughly translated. Thank you very much.

Heading back to the Environmental Assessment Act, because I got a little bit diverted there, just like the river: What it's doing is it's removing power from local people, from communities. This government is doing it with the legislation we were debating before this. That's what they did with Bill 5. It's actually what they're doing with Bill 101 and a consolidation of power in education, because schools belong to the families and the communities that they serve. So there is—

Interjection.

Mr. John Fraser: Are you still gloating about the Ornge helicopters over there? Okay.

There's a very clear pathology to what's going on in the government. It's a centralization of power. So people have to ask themselves, on the government side, because of this consolidation of power here that's happening here, "Do I represent my community at Queen's Park, or am I representing Queen's Park in my community?"

It's not just in environmental assessments; it's not just in municipal governments; it's not just in conservation authorities; it's not just in schools. Trust me, it's coming to a hospital near you soon. That's what's going to happen. It's very clear what this government believes is the best thing for people, which is to try and run everything here out of an office at Queen's Park, and that's what schedule 2 does.

The government needs to understand, the Premier needs to understand: Local matters; communities matter, whether it's in health care, whether it's in education, whether it's in protecting the environment, whether it's in transportation. Our job is to represent our communities here. Sometimes it's a real challenge when you're in government, because sometimes you have to disagree with the decisions that other people make. I realize and respect that it's hard to do that out loud, but what I would hope is that, when it comes to caucus, they speak up.

Now I do see—Speaker, I digress a little bit—there were changes. What came out in Bill 101 wasn't exactly what we thought it would be. The trustees were not—I'll put it this way: The appearance of really silencing democracy didn't happen; it's still happening. It's still there.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Eventually they have no power.

Mr. John Fraser: They have no power, but the minister was prevented from doing what he wanted to do, which was to cut—to stick the knife in and make sure that there would never be another trustee in Ontario. So I know that people on the other side spoke up, because you should be concerned because I'm sure you were hearing from your communities on that.

I missed one thing here, and that is schedule 4, where the LGIC will make regulations governing the admission of graduates of medical schools outside of Canada to an Ontario medical residency program. I guess the question is, does this help or hurt the two million people who need a family doctor?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Hurt.

Mr. John Fraser: It hurts. Thank you very much to the member from Nickel Belt.

I felt that the government is saying they're withdrawing this high school requirement, but then they're doing this. And the reason that it concerns me is there was a thing called—and it relates to this residency because it would support helping more people get a family doctor, because we know two million people don't have a family doctor. It was called the physician readiness program, which took people who were trained somewhere else, foreign-trained physicians, and helped to get them into the system. It was a good program. I think we started it in 2016; if I got the date wrong, let me know.

And then, the government, of course, came in and ended it, as they ended a whole bunch of other stuff, and stopped that program that would bring more family physicians, more doctors, into our system. And then, about two years ago, they brought it back because it was a good thing.

When you take that thing that the government did, which was basically make it harder for foreign-trained physicians to work in this province, and you look at this, which does the same thing, just in a bit of an obtuse way, you've got to wonder where they're coming from. Who's in the Premier's ear? Because if it doesn't help people get a family doctor, if it's actually hurting—and I will look for an answer that says, “No, it's not”—then why are we doing it? What's the reason? I know the questions will

come to me, but if somebody has a quick answer on that one when they ask a question, that would really be great.

I've got to sum up here. Thank you for staying awake.

Interjection.

Mr. John Fraser: With the exception from the member from—there we go. No, that's okay. I don't take it personally. That's okay. It is afternoon, and sometimes in here in the afternoon, it's quiet. It feels like church. But it feels like I'm preaching to empty pews. I digress.

Again, I want to go back. I really need to understand—maybe there's somebody here who can explain the open-period change. How that's good for workers, I don't know. But do you know when something sticks out? When something goes like, “What's that doing there?” I've been around for like 27 years, and I've never seen it. Nobody has asked about this. Nobody has said, “We need this. This is the most important thing we can do to help our members.” I think there's some questions around there, and I'd like to get some answers.

I'm sure there are representatives of trade unions who might be hearing this, and I'll get a call at my office, which I would really appreciate, or an email, explaining to me what their position is on it, how they feel about it, whether it's good for workers. For those that are listening, that would really be great. I know some of my colleagues, some of the people who work with me, are calling people. But the sooner you get to me, the better, because legislation in this government is like the autobahn: no speed limit, and if you crash, too bad. Everything is so fast.

1510

Do we have midnight sittings tonight? Are we sitting to midnight?

Interjections.

Mr. Stephen Blais: What we're debating depends on us?

Mr. John Fraser: No, it doesn't depend on us.

We could have some bell-ringing here, but we're all having too much fun. I've only got 11 minutes yet. Between now and then, maybe we'll just have them invite everybody back for a vote. I'm not sure.

But the thing is, we're going to debate the budget bill under the cover of darkness, under the cover of night, because we're trying to cover up the cover-up—the FOI legislation in the heat of the night. In the darkness of the night, we're going to talk about the budget tonight, and that's because—I would be too. I would be embarrassed by the freedom-of-information changes.

First of all, it's there to protect people. It's there so people can hold all of us to account, that we're answerable for the things that we do and say when we're in government, the decisions and the choices that we make, the people who we deal with. It's really important. What you have to do is take the whole perspective.

I know you're going to laugh when I say this, but it's quite possible and likely that you'll be sitting over here. You're going to want to find out things on behalf of your constituents that you're not going to be able to find out.

We would never have found out about the greenbelt. We would never have found out about the Skills Development Fund. We would never have found out—

Ms. Jessica Bell: The gas plant scandal.

Mr. John Fraser: The gas plants, right—no, actually, that was committee.

Interjections.

Mr. John Fraser: I'll give that to you.

It's so hard being beside my colleagues who are pure white. I couldn't resist.

Ms. Catherine Fife: What are you talking about?

Mr. John Fraser: Well, not you; you're okay.

Interjections.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Nine minutes, 16 seconds.

Mr. John Fraser: I know; it's so bad. This is so painful. It's worse than a root canal, right? It's a root canal without the gas or the freezing.

But back to the FOI laws: They're important to all of us. We need that. If you're over here, you're going to need that. Quite frankly, there's probably stuff that you don't know about that went on that's happening inside your government that when you got information, you kind of go like, "Oh, I'm not too happy about that." I'm just going to say this quite openly: It happens in all governments.

Interjection.

Mr. John Fraser: Yes, I'm not saying it's just you—

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Speak through the Chair.

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you, Speaker. I apologize, Speaker.

It's probably just you and us, because these guys never do anything wrong. Never in the history of NDP governments has anything ever happened that is untoward. I know it's not a long history—it was long at the time, but it's a distant memory now. That's why it's so hard to bring things up.

Although I do have a colleague who, although young in age, has a very, very long memory. I think he was in high school or just getting out. Would that be right?

Mr. Stephen Blais: Very beginning of high school.

Mr. John Fraser: Wow, grade 9—that's a great memory.

I know that on a regular basis—God, this can't end soon enough—he reminds my colleagues to the right, who are actually to my left, of all the things in the years from 1990 to 1995 that were produced by the Rae government. I said that out loud on purpose just to make my colleague laugh.

Speaker, just to recap—I'm sorry. It's late in the afternoon. I'm very tired and I still have visions of Chief Wiggum in my head from this morning.

Interjection.

Mr. John Fraser: Yes. It was fun. I couldn't resist. I had to unload it.

In all seriousness, this bill and what it does for workers in retirement homes and group homes is really a very good thing, and I can't thank the minister enough for doing it. It will change people's lives; people will be more secure. A lot of these workers are workers who don't make a big income, they work more than one job, and they care for

the people we care for most. I do take that very seriously and I thank them for all the work that they did. And the minister is making other changes to WSIB that I think are a good thing.

I do have concerns with schedule 2 and the Environmental Assessment Act. I think it's a consolidation of power again. I think it's going to remove local voices. It doesn't speak to community. But it's part of what this government has been doing, really—I won't say over the last eight years, but the last three to four years. In particular, in the last year and a half it's become particularly intense.

If I want to relate schedule 2 to Bill 5, when you see what actually happened with Bill 5, which was that it wasn't used to protect northern Ontario or to build up northern Ontario; it was used as a power play by the Premier. The first use was to do something in downtown Toronto. Not everything happens here in downtown Toronto.

So the government isn't the Premier's personal piggy bank, and he doesn't get to do whatever he wants because he passes legislation that allows him to do that. There is a greater thing that we have to look at, and that's what's right and just in terms of representing people and their interests—all the people. It's ironic—maybe not ironic; maybe that's not the right word to use. With all this stuff that we're talking about the jet, and it's been the topic of conversation, it really does show—and schedule 2 shows this as well—that the government is tired, out of gas, out of ideas and aren't connected to what's happening in people's everyday lives. They aren't connected to the fact that people can't afford their groceries, or gas, or rent, or kids' clothes. We're looking at luxury when people are just trying to get by, trying to put food on the table. That's disconnected. And right now, Ontarians don't need a Premier and a government that's disconnected from the reality of their everyday lives, and schedule 2 shows that.

I do want to come back to the change—schedule 3—because I've got about two minutes left. It sticks out and I would like an answer. Maybe I'll have to do an order paper question. Anybody at home, any union folks who are watching, who might want to give some feedback about this, please do. I'm trying to understand why it's there. It doesn't fit. It sticks out like a sore thumb. It smells. It just doesn't really fit in a bill—at least the way that I see some of the things in this bill—which is to benefit workers. There is obviously more we can do, but I just can't see that.

1520

I've got about a minute and 50 seconds left here, so you're almost all—except we'll have questions. You don't have to ask any, actually, if you don't want to, but I'm happy to answer, as you can probably tell.

Speaker, we're supposed to be representing our communities here, and there's a big risk when you're in government, to represent the government in your community, because the government is a big powerful thing. The corner office tells you what to do, what to say, and you have to resist that. You have to resist things that end up in

omnibus bills that don't look right or might hurt people, even though they're sugar-coated and they've got some really good things in there. You have to be able to say, "No, that's not right" or "No, we shouldn't have that in there." I'm saying that I know it's hard because I've been there; I've been on the other side, and it's not easy to say things when you think things aren't the way they should be. It's hard to say that publicly. But the first step is, you have to say that internally. The first step is, stand up for your folks inside the caucus room, stand up for your folks inside the cabinet room, and when the Premier says, "I want a luxury plane," just say no.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): I recognize the Associate Minister of Energy-Intensive Industries.

Hon. Sam Oosterhoff: I appreciate the member opposite speaking. I always love to hear Liberals talk about this subject because it's such a foreign concept—the concept of reducing red tape and of trying to make life easier for workers, for families, for businesses, and, ultimately, to retain these jobs. I heard him go on a lot about things he didn't like—"I have concerns with this schedule. Well, I guess that thing is okay." I think the analogy I'm sure we'll hear from the New Democrats at one point is like the pair of socks for Christmas—it's not terrible, but he could have done a whole lot better. I think some of the members love to use that line. Yet, when they were in power, they very rarely came forward with red tape reduction. So I get that it's a foreign concept to them.

I'm just wondering, when the member served on the government benches—I believe it was five or six years in government, from 2013 to 2018—how many red tape reduction packages did that government ever bring forward?

Mr. John Fraser: The House leader knows—he put up a big goose egg. He knows that's not true. It was probably three or four, because you're always trying to get regulations down.

The thing is, it's like there's collective amnesia; you forget all the things. The other day, the member from Belleville or Quinte said, "You lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs." But he didn't say there were 809,000 manufacturing jobs in 2018 and now there are only 800,000; you've lost 9,000. You went backward—so it's kind of this collective amnesia and selective cherry-picking of facts.

I hope that answers your question.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Ms. Catherine Fife: The member from Ottawa South was talking about how disconnected this government is from the real issues of workers. And of course, we're debating the latest version of Working for Workers. I wonder how those workers feel about a government being so arrogant in purchasing a private jet for their personal issues. I just want to say we also learned today that that same jet couldn't land on 90% of Ontario's airports. We also learned this morning that the jet had been returned to Bombardier, even though Mr. Ford claimed last week that they took ownership of the same jet a week ago.

I guess my question to the member from Ottawa South is, do you know if this Premier knows how to tell the truth?

Mr. John Fraser: Here's what I know, and we're talking about the plane. All of the cabinet, except for the House leader because he's not in the cabinet—he made sure everybody knew that the other day: "It wasn't me." They all said, "Premier, you can buy a luxury jet that can only land on 12 runways." It can't land on gravel in the north.

But there is one place that it can land that's not a major airport. Can anybody guess? Muskoka. Oh, yes, it can land in Muskoka. And why can it land in Muskoka? Because "Chez Ford" is there. The luxury villa is there where the Premier entertains the rich and famous.

The Premier should have spent less time dreaming of jet-setting with the rich and famous and more about how he can help Ontarians afford their everyday lives.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

M. Ted Hsu: En 2018, ce gouvernement conservateur a modifié la Loi sur les services en français afin d'abolir le Commissariat aux services en français et de transférer ses compétences au Bureau de l'ombudsman. Ce projet de loi visant à rendre le poste d'ombudsman bilingue compense-t-il cette abolition?

M. Stephen Blais: Oui, bien sûr, tous les francophones de l'Ontario ont le souvenir de quand cette décision a été prise par le gouvernement pour changer cette position et éliminer les droits des Franco-Ontariens.

Il y a des manifestations dans chaque coin de l'Ontario. Il y a 5 000 personnes à l'hôtel de ville à Ottawa pour manifester contre ce gouvernement conservateur pour leur attaque contre les Franco-Ontariens. C'est le même type d'attaque contre la communauté franco-ontarienne que la proposition de fermeture de Montfort dans les années de Harris.

Ça fait huit ans que ce changement est fait par le gouvernement. Ils n'ont même pas changé les besoins de cette position d'être bilingue. Ils ont eu un processus de trouver un nouvel ombudsman sans avoir cette position d'être bilingue. Ils doivent annuler ce processus et recommencer. Donc, c'est clair qu'on ne pense pas aux francophones—

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): I recognize the member for Carleton.

MPP George Darouze: We're going to come back to the subject of the bill that we're discussing.

During my time at council as a councillor of the city of Ottawa, one of the constant things we heard was that red tape slows down the planning processes. This is extremely important during a time where we want to help housing affordability by increasing supply and reducing red tape.

Schedule 2 reduces some of the regulatory burden for environmental assessments while still allowing for environmental oversight, input and consultation. I was wondering whether the members from the other party support this effort to reduce regulatory burden to help the approval process.

Mr. Stephen Blais: My friend and colleague from Carleton well knows that one of the biggest regulatory issues that we both faced as councillors in the city of Ottawa was the potential for a massive landfill facility in rural Ottawa, adjacent to many communities that he represents. And one of the changes in this bill will actually allow landfills to expand with a much shorter, less fulsome, less consultative process with neighbours who will be affected by that potential. So I would suggest that the member should go home to Greely and Metcalfe and Carlsbad Springs and perhaps talk to those residents about how they feel about this new mega landfill which is coming to Boundary Road.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): I recognize the member for University–Rosedale.

Ms. Jessica Bell: My question is about the jets. Now, I've noticed all week that the Premier is having a lot of difficulty admitting that he was wrong and that he needs to say sorry. One thing that amused me was when he pointed to other levels of government and other provinces and said, "Well, they have jets too." And the example he gave was Quebec, and then Quebec turned around and said, "Actually, those jets are used for medical evacuations. They're not actually used for personal travel by our Premier."

1530

My question to you is, why do you think the Premier is having such a hard time saying sorry?

Mr. John Fraser: Well, there's this pattern, which is: The Premier gets caught, he reverses his decision and then he says, "I make mistakes." Then he says, "Oh, you're all so hard on me, poor me," and then he argues to get the thing that he apologized for.

It took a while to discern this, but the apology is actually—here's what he said: "I'm sorry for telling you the wrong way, because I deserve the jet anyway." That's exactly what he said. "I'm sorry that I told you about it this way. I still want the jet. It was my mistake. I didn't communicate it properly."

It's not about communication. You can't put lipstick on a pig.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Ms. Laura Smith: I want to thank the member opposite. Let's talk about nuggets—good pieces of information that are a part of this bill. It's a good bill, but I think I like to talk about good things, so let's continue that conversation.

I think everybody in this House appreciates that Ontarians are working past the age of 65, and under the old WSIB rules, an injured worker's loss of earning support could still end because of an outdated threshold—I can see somebody raising their hand; don't worry, we got you. Because even if that worker intended to remain in the labour force—

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Ms. Laura Smith: Does the member opposite believe that there should be a barrier to support when that labour market has clearly changed?

Mr. John Fraser: No. And I don't think we're covered, by the way. I put up my hand because I am working over 65. That's a good change; that's an important thing to do. There's always more that we can do for workers. As you can tell, we have Working for Workers and we're in edition 12. It would be better to do it in fewer iterations—maybe a couple of big bills.

But I can't rail against the changes that were made there. I said they were positive. I'm positive about the changes to workers in residential care and—

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Further debate?

Mr. John Jordan: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak to this bill in support of the Protecting Ontario's Workers and Economic Resilience Act. Yes, it is known as the POWER Act.

I'll just run down, basically, some key things. We are fortifying our economy by eliminating needless red tape, boosting productivity and strengthening Ontario's economic resilience to meet the global challenges we face. There have been a number of red tape bills, and those red tape bills are all targeted at the same thing. This is how we make life easier, more affordable. This is how we keep people safe and our economy strong. This is how we protect Ontario.

Like previous red tape bills, through this packaging, the Ministry of Red Tape Reduction is helping lead a smarter, faster and more effective approach to government approvals and economic growth. Simply put, this package is about getting things done, reducing delay, improving certainty, and helping projects, workers and business move forward faster. It builds on the historic achievements of our government since 2018. Ontario is among the top provinces in Canada for cutting red tape, and we now have the lowest regulatory burden per capita in the country. We have reduced Ontario's regulatory burden by nearly 6%, saving people and businesses nearly \$1.3 billion and 1.8 million hours annually, while continuing to protect health, safety and the environment.

At a time when every dollar counts and every minute matters, we are unlocking new opportunities for growth, investment and job creation across Ontario. This package would help protect, move forward faster, support labour mobility, strengthen worker protections, and create a more stable and predictable business climate that attracts investments. The initiatives in this bill would help us keep building a smarter and more effective regulatory system that works better for people, smarter for businesses, keeps workers safe and keeps Ontario strong and competitive.

These bills tie into so many things, and I'm going to focus on schedule 4, mostly, in my presentation.

Last year, our government was elected with a historic mandate to protect Ontario, and that is why we are making historic investments in our health care system. Through budget 2026, A Plan to Protect Ontario, we are investing over \$100 billion across the sector this year alone, and we

are not stopping there. As part of the POWER Act, our government is ensuring that Ontario residents are treated like Ontario residents as they complete their medical education. We will welcome them; we will bring them home, where they want to be; and through this bill, we will facilitate their return to Ontario.

We're doing this by revising the Canadian Resident Matching Service to give Ontario residents studying abroad prioritized access to the first round of matching. This includes:

- those who have physically resided and lived continuously in Ontario for at least 24 weeks in the year prior to their application;

- those who attended an Ontario university full-time and in person for two or more years; or

- those who have attended a secondary school in Ontario for two or more years.

As has been the case for years, any Canadian medical school graduates, Ontario international medical school graduates and non-Ontario medical school graduates who do not match in the first round have an opportunity to apply for the second round of matching. This change modernizes Ontario's matching system and brings it in line with other jurisdictions, including Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island. We know that doctors are more likely to stay and practise in the communities where they train.

When we began the conversation about making these changes, Minister Jones and her office received an outpouring of support and relief, listening to Ontarians who are studying medicine abroad, but want to return to the province and serve in their communities.

For example, we heard from Max, who said: "As an Ontarian studying abroad in Ireland, it has and remains my goal to return to Ontario to practise as a physician upon graduation. This new policy makes accomplishing my dream of returning home to Ontario to work as a physician more realistic. Not only that, it reinforces my desire to return home to practise in Ontario and more specifically, as a family physician in Peterborough, ON."

"We as Ontarians studying abroad truly appreciate the leadership the government has taken to further strengthen Ontario's health care system by investing and retaining talent that is committed to Ontario for the long term."

"Thank you and your office for this progressive reform which demonstrates a commitment to understanding the aspirations of Ontarians studying medicine abroad and addressing our health care needs in Ontario."

We also heard from Madison, an international medical student who was born and raised in Vaughan, Ontario, who said: "This change is incredibly meaningful ... and has brought me a lot of hope, as my ultimate goal has always been to return home and practise as a physician in Ontario."

That says it all, but Madison goes on: "I know that implementing policy changes is never easy and is often met with mixed responses, but please know that the work you and the government are doing is deeply valued and appreciated by all Ontario residents studying abroad."

"This change will have a profoundly positive impact on so many of us and it's truly inspiring to see policies that recognize and support Ontario residents training internationally, reaffirming that Canada and Ontario genuinely value their own future physicians."

As Premier Ford says, Ontario is the best place in the world, and that includes to study medicine. Whether it be the University of Toronto's faculty of medicine just down the street or the Queen's University School of Medicine serving my own community, this province is home to a number of world-class medical institutions, and we are proud of that.

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That's why our government has launched the largest medical education expansion in over a decade. As part of this expansion, we are delivering two new medical schools: the Toronto Metropolitan University School of Medicine in Brampton, which welcomed its first group of students this past fall; and the York University School of Medicine in Vaughan, which will be the first medical school in Ontario's history with a focus on training family doctors.

Speaker, we have also begun expanding capacity at existing institutions, including the University of Toronto, the Northern Ontario School of Medicine, McMaster University and the University of Ottawa, to name a few. This historic expansion to medical education will see an additional 340 undergraduate seats and 551 postgraduate resident training positions brought to the province. With this expansion, Ontario now has over 1,700 residency seats across the province. That's more positions to be filled by both domestic and international medical graduates than ever before, all of which we expect to continue fully filling for years to come.

We are also breaking down barriers and expanding opportunity for international family physicians and general practitioners through the Practice Ready Ontario Program. This program removes the requirement to complete lengthy re-education programs, allowing internationally trained doctors to practise immediately in Ontario's northern and remote communities. Successful candidates must complete a three-year return of service in an eligible community, defined as locations with a rurality index of 40-plus and northern urban referral centres—Timmins, North Bay, Sudbury, Sault Ste. Marie and Thunder Bay—that meet the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario's registration and practice standards.

This program is ensuring that the communities that need it most are getting the care they need where and when they need it, and international medical graduates that want to practise in Ontario can do just that. In 2025, this program supported 100 physicians and is projected to connect an additional 120,000 people to care.

Our work to increase opportunity for international professionals doesn't end there. Ontario's as-of-right exemption is a first-in-Canada approach that aims to expedite the process for health care workers registered in other Canadian and American jurisdictions to begin practice in Ontario.

Subject to conditions, the as-of-right exemption enables physicians, nurses, respiratory therapists and medical laboratory technologists registered in another Canadian province or territory, and board-certified physicians and nurses licensed in a state of the United States of America or the District of Columbia, to start working and caring for people in Ontario without having first registered with an Ontario Health regulatory college. Remember: As long as they are registered in any of the other Canadian provinces or territories or board-certified in a state of the United States or the District of Columbia, they can continue to work.

Under the as-of-right exemption, eligible individuals may practise for up to six months whilst completing the registration process and waiting for their application to be approved. This six-month period reduces administrative barriers associated with the registration process that can delay an individual's ability to begin caring for patients in Ontario immediately. Any delay of a qualified health care professional practising is unacceptable.

As Kimberly Moran, then-CEO of the Ontario College of Family Physicians and current CEO of the Ontario Medical Association, put it: "This initiative will expedite the integration of internationally trained physicians into Ontario's health care system, allowing them to provide much-needed care to Ontarians faster. This is one of several important steps included in our plan of action to ensure that every Ontarian has access to a family physician."

Access to primary care is the cornerstone of a strong and responsive health care system. It is where prevention begins, where chronic conditions are managed, where mental health concerns are first addressed and where patients build long-term relationships of trust with those who care for them.

Today, many Ontarians do not have that connection. Across the province, families are searching for a family doctor, a primary care provider; seniors are navigating the system without a consistent provider; and emergency departments are being asked to fill gaps they were never designed to serve. These pressures did not appear overnight. They are the result of long-term workforce challenges, population growth, an aging demographic and the extraordinary strain placed on our health care system during the pandemic.

That is why our government has made a clear and important commitment to attach every person in Ontario to primary care. The dial is moving in the right direction. This is not just a policy objective; it's a fundamental promise about fairness, access and quality of care. It means that every person, regardless of where they live, their age or their background, should have a regular primary care provider who knows them, coordinates their care and advocates for their health over time. We've made investments, as you've heard before: \$3.4 billion for primary care, \$101 billion for health care in general in this province.

Speaker, achieving this goal requires a comprehensive approach. It means expanding access, modernizing how

care is delivered and ensuring we have the workforce needed to meet the needs of Ontarians today and into the future.

First, our plan focuses on strengthening and expanding team-based primary care. Team-based models allow family physicians—family physicians are the core of the team-based model—along with nurse practitioners, nurses, pharmacists, social workers and other allied professionals to work together in coordinated settings. This approach improves patient outcomes, reduces unnecessary duplication and allows providers to practise to the full scope of their training.

For 21 years of my career, I worked in a team-based environment in the CHC sector. It does build capacity. You have your physician rubbing shoulders with your nurse practitioners, your nurses, your social worker, your dietitian. They can walk them down the hall and introduce them to the right provider at the right time, and they get the right care. For patients, this means more timely access, better continuity of care, fewer visits to emergency departments for issues that can and should be addressed in the community. For providers, it means shared responsibility, reduced burnout and more sustainable practices.

A good example of team-based care is the lung health program. When people with asthma or COPD were introduced to the lung program, we saw a 50% reduction in our emergency department visits. Attaching people to primary care is not about one clinician doing everything; it's about building teams that reflect modern health needs and provide care that is proactive, not episodic.

Second, Speaker, attaching every person to care requires us to grow the health care workforce. This bill is addressing some of that pressure. Ontario, like many jurisdictions, experiences a global competition for health care professionals. We cannot meet today's needs or tomorrow's without expanding the pool of qualified doctors, nurse practitioners and other primary care professionals. If our young doctors want to come home to work in Ontario, we need to accommodate that as best we can. That is why our government is using targeted, practical tools to attract medical professionals from outside Ontario, including other provinces, and internationally trained practitioners. We are streamlining credential recognition processes, accelerating licensing timelines and reducing unnecessary administrative barriers, all while maintaining Ontario's high standards of quality and patient safety.

Qualified professionals should not be held back by red tape when communities are waiting for care. For physicians and nurse practitioners trained outside of Ontario, we're making it easier to transition into practice, particularly in underserved, rural and northern communities. This includes enhanced assessment pathways, practice-ready programs and support for supervised practice where appropriate.

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Speaker, this approach recognizes a simple truth: Talent exists beyond our borders. Our responsibility is to ensure Ontario remains a place where skilled professionals want to work, live and build their careers.

But recruitment alone is not enough; retention is equally important. That is why our plan also focuses on improving practice environments, so that once health care professionals arrive, they choose to stay. This means supporting mentorship for early-career clinicians, expanding administrative support to reduce paperwork burden, and ensuring primary care providers have access to digital tools that allow them to spend more time with patients and less time on forms. When clinicians are supported, patients receive better care. When workplaces are sustainable, continuity improves. When professionals feel respected and valued, the entire system becomes stronger.

Another key part of attachment is making it easier to come back to Ontario. This includes better use of centralized intake tools, community-based attachment programs and data-driven planning, to identify where gaps exist and where new capacity must be built. It also means working closely with Ontario Health, local providers and communities to ensure solutions reflect real, local needs, not one-size-fits-all approaches.

Attachment is not just about assigning a name to a roster; it's about meaningful, ongoing access that patients can rely on when they need care, guidance or insurance. This is an important element in this bill—and there are many things in this bill, like I said—but when our young physicians are wanting to come home for their residency, when they work and do their residency in Ontario, there's a higher probability that they're going to stay and work in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I was listening to the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston, and he was referencing the importance of connection to real issues in the province of Ontario. You mentioned doctors' education. You didn't mention mental health, but obviously mental health is a big issue that we all face.

I'm just wondering how you reconcile that call to be connected to the real issues of Ontarians with your Premier's desire to buy a private personal jet at a cost of \$30 million in an affordability crisis. How are you navigating some of those conversations? Because that is, I hope we would agree, a serious disconnect, for the Premier of the province to prioritize that purchase against the words that you just spoke, which is being connected to the real issues of the people of this province.

Mr. John Jordan: Well, the real issues of this province right now are affordability, health care, long-term care, mental health, as you mentioned. These are all important issues, and these are the issues that we should be discussing in this chamber.

When we look at health care, it's about a number of things. It's a number of components coming together, and all those components include human resources, the facilities that we need, the innovation to come together and address those top issues in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Mr. Ted Hsu: I want to start out by saying that I think my colleague from Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston, who is the PA for health—when I listened to his speech in detail, it sounds to me like he really understands, in detail, the strains on our health care systems and where things need improvement. I know that he also understands why the age of our old hospital in Kingston makes it more expensive to run and also constrains patient services in the Kingston hospital.

I want to ask a bit of a technical question. The bill uses this term, “connection to Ontario,” and then presumably the regulations will define what a connection to Ontario is. I'm just wondering if he could tell me a bit what he thinks that definition should be so that we can decide how to vote on this bill.

Mr. John Jordan: Certainly, there's many competing needs for health care in Ontario, and the Kingston Health Sciences Centre is no exception. I've had multiple calls and conversations with the president and CEO of Kingston Health Sciences Centre. The minister is fully aware of the demand, and I think they've taken the right direction in breaking that down into—I won't call it bite-sized projects but smaller steps that are more palatable in a budget.

But like I say, there's many competing interests. So, connection is the awareness of the minister. Staging those—there's over 50 capital projects currently in Ontario, thanks to the minister, and we're continuing down that path to address the infrastructure deficit that this province has and that this government has inherited.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Ms. Natalie Pierre: Thank you to my colleague for his remarks earlier. In my riding of Burlington, I know several Ontario students who have studied medicine in Ireland. These are students who grew up in Burlington, they attended university in the province of Ontario and their families paid taxes here in Ontario and in Canada. All of these students want to come home and practise medicine here.

Can the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston explain how the proposed CaRMS revision in Bill 105 strengthens our physician pipeline and helps prioritize Ontarians who are connected—or how we might connect our international medical graduates back to Ontario so that they can come home and practise here?

Mr. John Jordan: It's important because a lot of these students, they are Ontarians. They've lived here all their lives, but to get into the program they want to pursue and the career they want to pursue, they've gone outside of Canada, and Ireland is a good example, as are other places. They lose their identity as an Ontarian when they apply for residency. So what this does is it reidentifies them as Ontarians and gives them a preferred status to come back to Ontario and do their residency. They are more likely to stay. As the quotes that I used in my presentation—that's their desire, to come back and stay. But we have an artificial barrier right there now that this bill is taking out. We're removing that barrier.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Ms. Jessica Bell: This is a question to the member for Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston. I was very surprised this week to see that the Premier had bought a personal jet for \$30 million. Later on this week, we learned that cabinet knew about the decision, signed off on the decision. I have a question to you personally: Did you know about the decision that the Premier made to buy a personal jet, and did you support it?

Mr. John Jordan: No, I'm not in cabinet.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I was just curious; I know the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston was in public health. I read in this document that the government is going to remove environmental assessments for the expansion and modification of landfills. I'm concerned about our difficulties with garbage and the impact that will have on our water, on our air and our land. We're at about 50% recycling rates whereas the rest of Canada is about 80%. I worry that it's because wealthy, well-connected insiders actually own landfills. Why are you removing environmental assessments on the expansion of landfills? Garbage contains a lot of toxins, and that's not good for Ontarians.

Mr. John Jordan: First of all, we're not removing environmental assessments, but we are concerned about the amount of time that not just environmental assessments but other processes take. A good example in my riding: I've been trying to get a spotlight up at a very dangerous intersection since I started in 2022, and an environmental assessment process is still ongoing.

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So those types of delays are what red tape bills are all about. They don't take any safety measures away, but they streamline the process. They take out duplication and they ask the question, "Why? What value is this time delay?" That's the purpose of a red tape bill.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): I recognize the member from Windsor–Tecumseh.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I want to thank the member from Lanark–Kingston—shoot; I've got to get your riding name right.

Mr. John Jordan: It's long, but it's good.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: It's long, but good. But, MPP Jordan, thank you so much.

I know that your background is one that works with Ontario seniors over and over again, and we know that seniors deserve safe, high-quality care. That means we have to have the right professionals on the job, without unnecessary barriers to action. It's not just about encouraging people to get into the sector but also making sure that our seniors are well supported.

So as we expand as-of-right labour mobility, it's critical that these professionals have, really, the same protections when they report concerns about resident harms or risks. Can the member explain how this change strengthens staffing, while protecting resident safety in licensed retirement homes?

Mr. John Jordan: Thank you very much. It's a good question.

It really provides the professionals—our physicians and others who work in those retirement homes—the mobility to go in and work in those homes with the same protections they have if they go into a long-term-care home, for an example. That provides incentive for practitioners to provide services within that home.

We do get calls from time to time in our constituency office about retirement homes. So better accountability in the retirement homes and a better process for investigating problems, but mobility of practitioners will put those professionals in where the people can get the care they need in the home for as much as possible.

It will also help our emergency departments. There will be no need in our primary care, no need for them to go away from their retirement home for a lot of services that they can get right there—

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Further debate?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: As I rise, it's an incredible honour for me to rise today to add the voices of the wonderful people of London North Centre.

Today we're discussing Bill 105, and it has one of those catchy titles that Conservatives just love. It is the Protecting Ontario's Workers and Economic Resilience Act, 2026, and you see that builds the acronym of POWER. I can just see across the way—when someone figured this out, when someone designed this, when someone wrote this, I can see so many dorky high-fives going around. They must have been so thrilled with themselves that they built the acronym POWER.

But in some ways, it actually says a lot about this government. We've seen so many bills titled Working for Workers, and yet we've seen so few actual reasonable, demonstrative changes happening that are benefiting the workers in Ontario. This bill is really not about Ontario's workers. It's not really about economic resilience. This government really is concerned more about the seizure, the capture and the control of power.

When this government was first elected, we saw them meddling immediately in Toronto city council elections, cutting the number of councillors in half while the election was under way. We've also seen things like the destruction and the removal of ranked balloting, despite the fact that municipalities should have the opportunity to decide how they elect their municipal councillors. We also saw strong-mayor powers, which is entirely antithetical to democracy whatsoever. You see, it is all about power with this government.

We saw Bill 33, the removal of trustees and the placement of hand-picked Conservative insiders into the role of supervisor at school boards, giving them a ridiculous salary, while at the same time they've been strangling and starving school boards for funding, not paying their bills when it comes to the Canada Pension Plan and employment insurance benefits, which are legally mandated that the government has to pay.

With Bill 100, we see yet another attack on local democracy. So really, with this government, it is all about power and it's all about the exercise of power. It's about the locus of control and making sure that they are the people who are pulling all of the strings across the province, no matter what. And if they're not directly pulling them, they're ensuring that their hand-picked patsies are pulling the strings in the same way that they would.

This government has promoted this bill as one that is designed to protect workers, but unfortunately it falls short of delivering the important changes that workers across Ontario have been calling for. This bill gives with one hand, and with the other hand it taketh away.

The government claims this bill would improve conditions for workers, but when we examine the details, it becomes abundantly clear that this bill is a missed opportunity. It's being presented as a pro-worker piece of legislation, but when we dig deeper, it actually contains provisions that undermine workers' rights and weaken critical protections for many Ontarians—it includes all of the workers in my riding of London North Centre.

This government has had many opportunities to stand with the official opposition, who have brought forward worker-friendly legislation, including bills to stop the practice of deeming with WSIB, to stop the use of phantom jobs, to ensure benefits actually go to workers, and to re-establish the WSIB as enforcing the Meredith Act. And yet, this government, any time it has the opportunity to vote with workers, chooses not to.

This bill does include some beneficial changes, but it includes parts that take away protections, and that is ultimately a massive red flag. Today, I want to break down exactly why this bill is not the step forward that this government would claim.

One of the main parts of the bill is the expansion of WSIB coverage. Expanding WSIB is certainly a step in the right direction, but unfortunately, it really doesn't go far enough. It's like this government wants to be seen to be doing the right thing but doesn't actually want to do the right thing and actually do the important hard work. This bill might cover workers in residential care and group homes, but the reality is that 1.5 million workers across Ontario remain shut out from these protections. Why on earth would you actively choose to leave out 1.5 million workers? It makes no sense. But that is the choice this government has made. These are workers who don't have access to basic workers' compensation even though they're at risk of injury every single day.

On top of that, despite this government claiming that higher WSIB benefits are a good thing, the bill removes a massively important protection, and that protection is the six-year lock-in for injured workers. This rule used to make sure that workers' benefits wouldn't be reduced after six years, providing stability to those who need it the most. By removing this, the government is making it harder for injured workers to feel secure. Because this government has not fixed the problems with worker protections, it has made a situation whereby people who become injured at work end up becoming a strain on our system. WSIB was

set up to protect and promote workers' rights, and yet it has been one that is shoving people into poverty.

I recommend—and it's something that I've introduced in debate many times before—the publication Prescription Over-Ruled. It talks about how these hired-gun doctors would directly go against the injured worker's medical professional's diagnosis. There have even been psychologists who have come on the record and said that they were pressured by WSIB and these hired-gun doctors to change their diagnosis.

Unfortunately, in our world, people often define themselves by the profession that they're employed with. It's like Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* all over again, where people's surnames were instead replaced with the profession that they found themselves working in, whether it was Miller, Cook, Summoner, Pardoner, Merchant, Shipman. Unfortunately, when these workers become injured, it's like they've lost their purpose. But we see a government that has categorically refused to provide them with the supports that they've paid into, the supports that they deserve, the supports that are life-changing, and instead pushes them onto the Ontario Disability Support Program or, worse yet, Ontario Works. And we know that those rates are mercenarily low, incredibly low—below the poverty line.

In my region of London North Centre and across the province, we see that workers in part-time and contract positions still lack coverage, and with the proliferation of gig work in today's economy, this is something that the government must address. These workers are the backbone of many industries, yet they don't get the basic protections that people deserve. These workers need to be included in the WSIB system to ensure they're protected, because if they're injured on the job they're going to become a burden on our system. Unfortunately, this bill really offers really limited coverage and it leaves far too many behind.

1610

Another significant problem with this bill is how it impacts unions and workers' rights. Bill 105 makes it easier for employers to delay negotiations and even forces workers to leave their unions, which weakens union power. You can't on the one hand claim that you support unions or you're happy that unions endorse you and then try to erode workers' rights within a union. Those two things do not make sense with one another. You need to make them make sense.

We know that unions are crucial for fighting for better working conditions, better wages, health care, women's rights and so much more, but this bill makes it harder for unions to negotiate and represent workers effectively. They effectively close the bargaining window, and we know that that's utterly impossible. They've done this to undermine, to undercut unions.

Unions are also essential for ensuring that people have a voice. They fought for decades to secure wages, benefits and protections that workers now enjoy today. This bill is a direct attack on those rights. If it passes in its current form, it will make it harder for workers to organize, harder

for workers to negotiate for better pay and working conditions and harder to fight for their rights.

On that contract negotiation delay: This will make it harder for workers to achieve fair agreements in a timely manner. This isn't just a minor technical issue. This is a direct attack on workers' ability to negotiate better terms and fight for fair treatment. If we let this bill pass without addressing this issue, we risk setting back workers' rights for years and years to come.

As an example, the provision banning employers from charging workers for uniforms might sound like a positive step, but for many businesses, especially those with fewer than 25 employees, they could be exempt from this rule. This means that fast food chains, franchises, retail stores, could easily sidestep and avoid these protections. This bill doesn't do enough to ensure that all workers, no matter where they work, are treated fairly when it comes to uniform costs. The government's own announcement suggested that some businesses could be exempt from this rule, leaving too many workers unprotected. This is just one example of how the bill fails to address the real, pressing and legitimate problems that workers face. It doesn't go far enough to protect those who need it the most. Instead, it leaves gaps that employers can exploit, and it fails to provide the comprehensive protections that workers deserve.

Furthermore, this bill does not address the root causes of many worker struggles. Issues like affordable housing, job security and fair wages continue to be massive concerns for Ontarians. If the government truly cared about supporting workers, it would focus on policies that solve these problems directly rather than passing half measures that only address the symptoms and leave too many behind.

Speaker, we also need to address the significant changes to environmental protections included in this bill. These changes not only affect the environment, but also the health and safety of workers in our communities. While the government claims this is a pro-worker bill, it includes changes to the Environmental Assessment Act that severely limit the public's ability to participate in environmental reviews and challenge decisions that could harm communities.

This is particularly concerning when we consider cases like the Dresden landfill in my region of London, where local residents have expressed massive concerns about the environmental impact of the landfill, but the bill would remove their ability to challenge this decision or ask for an independent review. You see, in Dresden, where they have an amazing county fair, where they celebrate rural life, where they have a massive economic influx every year, they want to put a landfill—in an area which is incredibly rich, with our breadbasket, with so many foods that we require in our community. Yet this government wants to put a landfill, with a disastrous track record of environmental problems, and they want to put that right in the heart of prime farmland. How could you make this decision with a clear conscience and with open eyes? It makes absolutely no sense.

But, Speaker, it doesn't come down to the people in rural communities. It doesn't come down to the farmers. It doesn't come down to any of these things. What it comes down to are the people who are on the inside of these backrooms from this government: their donors, their friends, their lobbyists. Those are the people they listen to when they consider power in this province.

We've also seen an example in my community of London, where there's an area at Adelaide Street and Windermere where a McDonald's was hoping to set up a new location. It's right on a flood plain. The most recent massive flood in that area was 2018, I believe. Many residents in my community are worried that there would be a massive risk to this location. It's a site that, under the proposed changes in Bill 105, the residents in my community would no longer have an avenue, would no longer have the right to ask for an independent review of the development, even though it could pose a serious risk to the local environment and public safety. It's not just a setback for environmental protection; it's a direct attack on the ability of Ontarians to have a say in what happens in their own communities.

Under this bill, the Minister of the Environment would no longer be required to conduct comprehensive environmental assessments, and the public would lose the right to ask for a review of these assessments through the Ontario Land Tribunal. The minister and cabinet could override local experts and voices, thereby politicizing and harming our environment.

This is a huge step backward for anyone who cares about protecting the environment and it removes the ability of communities to have a voice in the decisions that affect their air, their water and their land. For workers and families living in those communities, this is a dangerous move.

Insurance companies have also spoken about the problematic way in which this government has allowed development. If that development were allowed to happen within a flood plain, we all know that insurance claims are going to go up. The insurance company is not going to bear the cost. Instead, that cost is going to be spread out over all ratepayers. So allowing a development in a problematic area is going to be a risk. That risk will result in a financial impact on everyone who is paying those rates.

This bill doesn't just harm workers. It weakens important environmental protections that are necessary for safeguarding our communities. By limiting public input, by silencing voices, by stopping independent reviews, this government is silencing Ontarians on decisions that affect them, their health, their families and their communities and it is completely unacceptable.

While some parts of this bill might seem like improvements, such as higher WSIB benefits or expanding coverage to more workers, the reality is, despite the rosy way in which this government would like to portray it, workers are being asked to give up too much in exchange for this so-called benefit.

This bill doesn't protect workers. In fact, it works against their best interests.

I encourage the government to look toward NDP legislation that has promoted the rights of workers. We encourage this government—because the NDP is a party that has been formed by workers and is the party of workers—to stop the process of deeming and to stop the use of phantom jobs within the WSIB.

We need this government to legitimately stand up and stop the wage theft that is happening to millions of workers across this province. I'm so disappointed that this government voted against Bill 86, which would return the WSIB to its historic mandate under the Meredith Act, which was to listen to injured workers, to actually understand what was going on, to restore the principles and intentions of why the WSIB was founded. It would see compensation increases to 90% of earnings and also medical autonomy. As I discussed, in Prescription Over-Ruled, there is no reason why a doctor can make a decision, a determination on your health, without ever having seen you in person. The fact that somebody can pick up a chart, can pick up a piece of paper with some details and actually decide what is happening to your health, with your body: That makes absolutely no sense, Speaker.

They're also calling for 50% of the WSIB's board of governors to be populated with actual injured workers—people who have been through the system, people who understand what it's like, people who have seen the failures and the problems within the system, people who could advocate for change and make sure that it is returned to a system that actually supports people. And yet, Speaker, despite all of the times this government has used the words “working for workers,” titled bills Working for Workers, they still fail—abject failure—time and again to provide these basic improvements for workers.

1620

I wanted to point out, when it comes to the workers who are left out by this bill, there are 1.5 million Ontario workers who are shut out of WSIB. This includes child care workers. With my background in education, I often think of people who work with those young people. It's an incredibly physical job. It's a demanding job. It takes a great deal of energy, and it takes a great deal of strength. There are a number of ways in which a person could find themselves injured at the workplace, and yet this government has not provided to them the basic coverage of WSIB.

As we as we look towards this bill, we see that this government is content with portraying themselves in a certain way. They give with one hand, and they take away with the other. I want to encourage this government to actually think about workers. I want to think of some questions that this government has yet to answer: Why is this government not providing coverage for 1.5 million workers? Why have the child care workers been omitted?

I think it's important to note that the government rolled back the loss-of-earnings percentage from 90% to 85%—that was the Harris government. This government is operating in very much the same way. They want social assistance to be so incredibly unlivable that recipients will

leave their roles. The Harris government wanted to force injured workers back to work and that was their way to do it. This government is doing very much the same thing with social assistance, and they are not treating workers with the respect that they deserve.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Mr. Joseph Racinsky: Thanks to the member for his comments. One of the things he didn't talk about in his comments though was our Ontario's Strengthening Talent Agency Regulation, or STAR, Act.

I wanted to read for the member ACTRA Toronto's president Kate Ziegler—a quote of hers: “ACTRA Toronto applauds the government of Ontario's Strengthening Talent Agency Regulation (STAR) Act, which will have a significant and positive impact on how performers working in Ontario's screen-based industries are paid, protected and supported. ACTRA Toronto has long advocated for enforceable rules to protect all performers against wage theft, particularly for background performers, and to ensure that all performers receive fair and timely compensation for their work. We thank Minister Piccini for providing clear and enforceable standards that will do just that.”

My question to the member is, is he supportive of the Strengthening Talent Agency Regulation, or STAR, Act?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I would like to thank the member from Wellington–Halton Hills for the question. You know, a broken clock is also right twice a day. As I stated in my comments, this bill does have some things that are supportable. But I think it's important that the member realizes that his government does not, cannot and will not legitimately stand for workers. ACTRA commercial workers have been locked out for four years. This government has been purchasing commercials at that same time.

This government, if they stood up for workers, would pass anti-scab legislation, but this government loves scabs. They love when they can get things outside of a union. They love when they don't have to pay workers what they deserve. Otherwise, they would reform WSIB. They would actually make sure that injured workers are cared for, and they would ensure they supported union labour. But they don't.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I appreciated the comments from my colleague the member for London North Centre, and especially his focus on those 1.5 million Ontario workers who are still shut out of WSIB despite the changes that have been made in this bill to expand coverage. We are far from universal coverage.

I want to ask the member, what does he think it says about a government that's willing to give away \$21.5 billion in WSIB surpluses back to employers instead of expanding coverage for all Ontario workers?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I would like to thank my friend from London West for an excellent question. It is absolutely disastrous that this government would leave 1.5

million workers unprotected in this province, especially those people who are looking after young people.

They also are really not correcting the systemic problems that exist at WSIB. The fact that injured workers are being pushed off of assistance and onto ODSP and Ontario Works instead of actually addressing the legitimate injuries that they have, and then \$21.5 billion is also being shifted back to businesses—that makes no sense. If workers were being cared for according to the principals of the Meredith Act and according to the founding principals of WSIB itself, we would ensure that people were being looked after.

These people injured themselves on the job. They didn't want to become injured. They don't want to be a burden on the system. The Conservatives enjoy making people a burden on the system instead of caring for workers.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I just want to ask the member if he would like to comment on wage theft. We now have legislation so that you can only be seven days late on your rent and then you lose your housing, but I have workers from Dutchie's, a place where there has been about 80 complaints, maybe 23 convictions. They owe hundreds of thousands of dollars in stolen wages, and they just opened up a new store in Brantford.

What do you think about the government's capacity and ability to actually collect stolen wages, and what legislation would you like to see to make that have some teeth?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I would like to thank my friend from Kitchener Centre for an excellent question. Thank you for centring what workers are actually concerned about. That was something I introduced in my speech, the plight of workers who are encountering wage theft, because it is so incredibly unfair to make that worker fight for their fair pay. We know there are so many different workers across the province—the government is well aware of it—and yet the Solicitor General has not followed up with these folks to make sure that they are being fairly.

Ultimately, the people who pay the price the most are the lowest-paid workers. In fact, if I recall correctly, the ministry itself has less than a 50% success rate in actually recovering these stolen wages. There are no teeth. There is no enforcement. There is really no backbone from this government when it comes to supporting workers, because they could. They could make sure that those workers got the wages that they earned.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): I will remind the members to speak through the Chair.

I recognize the member for Essex.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I'm only asking easy questions today. The Ombudsman Act is mentioned in this bill, and it proposes to make the Ombudsman both proficient in English and French. I just invite the member to offer us his views on that proposition.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I would like to thank my friend from Essex for the question. I think it's important

we remember that it was this government that appointed the most recent Ombudsman who could not speak French. This government is really big on these showy changes. They like people to pay attention to certain things. That's why I say we have so many pieces of legislation that are—and I don't think they realize—ironically titled, because they talk about how many times they work for workers when in actual point of fact, they do not stand up for workers.

Although, I will say, with this bill, the POWER Act, it really shows what this government is all about, which is about the seizure, the control and maintaining power just for themselves, and to make sure that they can shift money into more Conservative pockets; to really take from the Ontario public purse and make sure it just goes to a few hand-picked, hand-selected Conservative insiders and donors.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Ms. Jessica Bell: I was listening to the member talk about WSIB and the changes that are in WSIB. Some of them are good; some of them we've been calling for for a long time.

Also, there's this recognition that the changes to WSIB don't go far enough. What changes to WSIB would you have liked to have seen in this piece of legislation?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I would like to thank my friend from University–Rosedale for an excellent question. Workers have long been calling for the end of deeming, the end of phantom jobs. WSIB is quite famous for deciding that people are able to do a certain job that they didn't actually do prior, and they will invent what is known as a phantom job.

1630

We've also called upon this government and given them multiple opportunities—I think around 17 or so—to vote to stop the use of scab workers, and yet this government has chosen not to do that.

What we're calling for on the side of the official opposition is to support NDP legislation to return WSIB to its foundational principles—which was the Meredith Act: to represent injured workers; to support injured workers; to make sure that injured workers have a voice, that there's some empathy, that there's some understanding; and to ensure that those workers, who through no fault of their own, became injured do not become burdens on their family or burdens on the system. They worked to support the WSIB system. The WSIB system ought to support them, as well, after their injury.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Ms. Laura Smith: Our government, through this bill, is reviewing more than 350 business-facing permits. Small businesses, businesses are the economic engine of our communities and our province, and these modifications will provide a clear commitment to eliminate and transform 35% of them by 2028.

Can the member opposite tell the House whether they support a faster, clearer approval system or whether they

would rather keep a more fragmented process that is held back, especially when it involves housing and infrastructure and economic development?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Thank you to my friend from Thornhill for the question.

I was really surprised, I will say, within this government's most recent budget, that they supported legislation—or that they are cutting the small business tax, because that's something that we have talked about, for much, much, much of my time here, at any rate. We've seen this government that is really fond of large corporations and insiders and all their sorts of friends, and yet our economic backbone, which is comprised of 80%—of which is small business, we've seen so much neglect for. During the pandemic, when there was the COVID shutdown, the official opposition brought forward a plan endorsed by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce to ensure that all of those business owners would have some relief, whether it was from insurance, whether it was from rent, whether it was from utilities, to ensure they were able to keep their doors open—because they had to close, through no fault of their own. Yet this government voted against that. I brought forward legislation myself that was endorsed by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce to have a succession plan—

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Further debate?

Mr. Adil Shamji: It's a pleasure to join you in the chamber today and to join all members in this House in discussing and evaluating the merits of this government's latest legislation that seeks to improve the conditions of Ontario's workers and strengthen our economic resilience. Of course, at face value, we all want to do that, and the premise of this legislation should be very easy for all of us to agree to.

Let's begin by laying a little bit of the foundation because, of course, while we want to support Ontario's workers, I think it's important to take stock of the fact that there are many Ontarians who would like to be workers in our province but are unable to do so. We face above-average unemployment in our province, relative to our other provinces and territories across Confederation. Officially, in March 2026, our unemployment rate was 7.6%, which is distinctly and significantly above the national rate of 6.7%.

If that isn't already damning, it's not lost upon me that our unemployment rate affects certain segments of the population disproportionately. I'm drawn to think of the astronomical unemployment rate amongst our youth, which has now reached 17%—youth unemployment is one of the most sensitive indicators of the economic health of our province, and to me, this is a rather damning indictment of the economic performance of our province. Amongst certain youth unemployment subgroups, such as racialized and Black youth, that unemployment rate is even higher than 17%; it is 23%.

So while I applaud the stated intention of this government to improve the working conditions of Ontario's workers, my heart goes out to all those Ontarians who wish

they could be one of our workers in this province, but in light of a slowing economy and many of the failures that have compounded over the last eight years, they don't even have an opportunity to participate in our economy.

As I talk about certain subgroups of people who are unemployed—I've mentioned youth; in particular, racialized youth—I would be remiss if I didn't mention the fact that while millions of people in our province face a shortage in primary care and don't have a nurse practitioner or family doctor, there is actually significant unemployment amongst physicians. It's a joke that's really not very funny that the fastest way to find a doctor in Toronto is to call a cab. We need to be doing more to address this and, unfortunately, in this legislation, although there are some measures that seek to help certain classes of medical students get into residency programs, I don't see anything of any great seriousness that helps to get those unemployed physicians into our workforce.

I will always do my very best to be fair, and there are obvious things in this legislation that are supportable. I have a fondness and deep respect and admiration for social workers—one of our Green Party members is a social worker. I understand the vitally important work that they do. They are all too often forgotten when we think about health care workers. They do essential work, and I cannot fathom a reason why we wouldn't want a social worker to be empowered with the ability to mandatorily report if they suspect cases of abuse. I think that's a great thing.

Similarly, I think there's so much more that we can be doing in our province to embrace our francophone community to make sure that they have all of the supports that they require, and when they run into problems and need to appeal to our government and to the Ombudsman in particular, I cannot see a reason why we wouldn't want to get behind supporting an Ombudsman who is bilingual and speaks both English and French. Of course that's something we can support.

Without a shadow of a doubt, it has always struck me as unusual that many workers in Ontario, including health care workers, are covered under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board program, but if for some reason you work in a retirement home, you don't necessarily enjoy that highest standard of workplace protection.

So, being fair, as I always aspire to be, I must applaud these efforts to improve the plight of workers who are in retirement homes; the francophone community, if they need to reach out to the Ombudsman if they have an issue with government services; and, of course, I support social workers being entrusted with the mandatory obligation of reporting abuse, should they suspect it.

But I will then go and say I think there are measures here that support workers and, of course, I will vote for them, but there's so much more that we could be doing to support workers, and the track record of this government makes me skeptical that it is doing everything that it can. In fact, there are past actions that have made me think that they have, in fact, let down our workers.

I'm thinking of, for example, in our last parliamentary session, the unconstitutional legislation that imposed on

collective bargaining rights—that was Bill 28, which they were forced to walk back only after the threat of a general strike. That is not the kind of action that I consider to be protecting Ontario’s workers. They flip-flopped on that only when they were backed into a corner and when they had no other choice.

This is the same government that implemented Bill 124, which unfairly and, frankly, unconstitutionally targeted public sector workers, education workers and, of course, health care workers—health care workers, in the midst of a pandemic. Now, this government and our Premier are developing a reputation for flip-flops and apologizing. While credit should always be given when someone does the right thing and admits that they made a mistake, when it comes to the issue of Bill 124, the repercussions of that continue to reverberate across our entire province. In fact, as we speak, there are still public sector workers who are owed retroactive payments for Bill 124, who haven’t received them.

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And so, if we’re going to be serious and honest about protecting Ontario’s workers, we shouldn’t have a government that would even contemplate unconstitutional legislation such as Bill 28, such as Bill 124. If such legislation is reversed, even with an apology—and we appreciate that apology—it’s not just about saying sorry; it’s about moving swiftly to make amends. Not even following through on all of the retroactive payments that public sector workers are owed makes it feel as though that apology rings hollow. If that apology rings hollow, then it makes this title and this legislation, which purport to protect Ontario’s workers, also ring hollow.

It had been lost on me, actually, until it was mentioned by the member from London North Centre that this legislation’s title, Protecting Ontario’s Workers and Economic Resilience Act, spells out “POWER.” I don’t know if that was intentional or a Freudian slip, but it certainly seems to have revealed—perhaps, charitably—an unconscious desire of this government, if it isn’t meant to have been an explicit admission or confession.

Time and time again with this government, we have seen repeated efforts to concentrate and centralize power, whether it has been in regard to the centralization and collapse of public health units, so that they lose their local and contextual ability to respond to public health challenges and crises; whether it has been the centralization and consolidation of conservation authorities or the placement of school boards under supervision and, with the most recent legislation, if passed, placing them essentially under direct control from the Minister of Education; or whether it is the centralization of Ontario Health atHome, which almost immediately led to a series of crises that included the medical equipment and supply shortage, and then, subsequently, complete loss of control over vendors, which was the fundamental issue that resulted in a massive Ontario Health atHome data breach, which the government subsequently chose to hide.

Further examples of centralization of power include the recent—well, relatively recent—passage of Bill 5, which

enacted legislation that would allow for special economic zones, again placing significant power and control into the hands of the government to supposedly be able to accelerate certain kinds of projects.

Against that backdrop, we can then evaluate this legislation: one that is preoccupied with concentrating and centralizing power, and that does very little to fulfill the mandate that it says that it will, specifically around protecting Ontario’s workers in economic resilience. I’ll begin by looking at schedule 2, which relates to the changes to the Environmental Assessment Act. Again, I would be remiss if I didn’t discuss it within the context of a number of the changes that this government has made that have undermined the protection of our environment under this Premier.

Schedule 2, purports to do things—well, if passed, would do things—such as remove the requirement for the ministry to review comprehensive environmental assessments and would remove the requirements to provide public comment on review. It removes the ability of the public to refer a project approval to the Ontario Land Tribunal, and it essentially takes a series of shortcuts that do not permit a fulsome consideration of environmental impact on potential projects.

This is the latest in a series of legislative changes that consistently streamline and remove what I think is helpful scrutiny to ensure that we actually look after our environment. This is a government that, for example, attempted to purchase a \$29-million jet, and when the Premier was confronted about it, he said one of the reasons is that it would allow him to ferry firefighters and their equipment to active sites of forest fires. Well, one of the reasons we have forest fires is because climate change is amidst us and it is accelerating. If we are serious about protecting the environment, then removing these kinds of protections, minimizing the amount of oversight and scrutiny, coupled with measures such as creating special economic zones which waive certain kinds of environmental assessments, do not accomplish that goal.

Recently, the Ontario Place redevelopment was confronted by an injunction so that the Supreme Court could evaluate this government’s waiving of environmental and heritage assessments and protections so that they could run roughshod over redeveloping Ontario Place to the tune of something like \$3 billion and to the benefit of a foreign-owned spa company. Again, it was this government’s attempt to fast-track environmental protections that has literally led to the Supreme Court needing to step in and grant an injunction so that this can be reviewed and potentially an appropriate level of environmental scrutiny can be permitted.

This is the same government that has reduced the number of conservation authorities and weakened their powers. And far too often, when we have had this conversation about the government’s consistent efforts to reduce environmental scrutiny and processes that are intended to protect the environment, one of the most frequent refrains from the government has been that they are working hard to reduce red tape so that they can build more homes. Yet

over successive pieces of legislation and successive years where they have consistently and repeatedly weakened environmental protections in the name of building more homes, they have failed in building more homes. So not only have they chosen one of the worst possible approaches to build more homes, that approach has failed in the promise and mandate that it was stated to be fulfilling. So I'm deeply concerned about schedule 2 and what it proposes to do with environmental assessments.

Next, I want to turn to changes in how international medical graduates may or may not be assessed in applying for residency schools in Ontario. I'll begin first by congratulating everyone here that we had a relatively successful second iteration match in CaRMS. By my calculation—I was looking at the spreadsheets yesterday—there were only four positions that were left unfulfilled in Ontario, two of them in family medicine. The number should be zero, but only four is still pretty good. But before the government proceeds to pat themselves on the back, I would just warn that when so many spots get filled, particularly by a second iteration, that can either mean that they're doing a good job—and my thesis will be that they are not—or it could be because there are so many people who are applying for residency positions that it's impossible not to fill them. It's like going fishing in a stocked lake that is completely full of fish. Just because you catch a fish doesn't mean that you're good at fishing. I suspect that that is the reason that as many of the spots were filled in the second iteration of the match yesterday.

Now, the reality is that, despite what this government says, millions of Ontarians still do not have access to a family doctor or a nurse practitioner. This government did previously try to sneak through a policy that would have unfairly discriminated against international medical graduates. They saw some wisdom—rather, they saw that this was not a good policy—frankly, one that I think was racist—and I am happy that they did reverse that.

The latest changes do in some ways help many of the Canadian students who have been trained abroad—I refer to them as CSAs—amazing Ontarians who maybe didn't get into a medical school here in Ontario and trained somewhere abroad. It does give them a fast-tracked way in order to get back into our country and to get into a residency program here in Ontario.

I actually know many Canadian students who have trained abroad who are struggling. In fact, I've got some messaging me even after last night's iteration match, and they really wish that they could get a residency position. So there is something here that will help them.

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But the reality is that there is unemployment amongst physicians, at the same time we have millions of people without a family doctor. They are international medical graduates with years of experience who have completed their medical training that need to be able to practise in this province and in this country. If it can't be through CaRMS, then the other answer needs to be—clearly, this government is choosing that they will not be fast-tracked through CaRMS. If it's not going to be fast-tracked through the

matching service, then the Practice Ready Assessment Program should be a solution. But this government has moved at a snail's pace to implement the Practice Ready Assessment Program.

Let's remember that in 2018, this program that was introduced by the Ontario Liberals was almost immediately cancelled. And when the Minister of Health reluctantly brought it back several years later, at the encouragement not of her caucus or of the cabinet, but the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario, it started with the most unambitious goal. In the first year, I believe it was to graduate 30 people. It didn't. I believe that it graduated 22. And then the subsequent year was rolled out with the goal of graduating 100, and I've actually never heard how they tracked against that.

What I do know is that other provinces, that are a fraction of our population, consistently deliver more physicians through the Practice Ready Assessment Program than Ontario does through its extremely modest and unambitious 100 physicians in its second year, which I believe included some of the first cohort of 30 that hadn't graduated yet. So what I see here is a government that chooses not to prioritize international medical graduates at a time that we need them more than ever.

Finally, I will just touch very briefly on some of the changes in the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, schedule 9, and just congratulate the government for choosing to take the wisdom of my colleague the member from Ottawa South who for years now had been asking that workers in retirement homes be recognized with the same level of workplace protection through WSIB as those workers who work in other areas, such as in hospitals and places like that. I think it sends an important signal to the people who work in retirement homes that their efforts are valued, and I am deeply grateful to my colleague the member from Ottawa South for his sustained advocacy and for the members of the government for listening to that.

I thank all members in the House for considering my remarks and look forward to all of your questions.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): The member from Sudbury is making a point of order.

MPP Jamie West: I just want to correct my record from this morning. I had mentioned that the previous Ombudsman was not able to speak French—Paul Dubé. The member from Nickel Belt has let me know that he was able to speak French. I had read an article that a previous one had not. When I did a Google search, I used the wrong name, so I would like to correct my record on that.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): The member from London North Centre will make a point of order.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Similarly, I mistakenly indicated that Ontario's soon-to-be-retiring Ombudsman was not bilingual, when, in actual point of fact, he is—apologies for my mistake.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Questions?

MPP George Darouze: The question is to the member from Don Valley East. I want to thank him for his comments today.

I have a question about proposed changes in schedule 6 in that bill. As a member from Ottawa, and eastern Ontario in general, I know that there is a large francophone population in our region. A former member from the region, Bernard Grandmaître, introduced the French Language Services Act to guarantee the right to receive government services in French—and I know our Minister of Francophone Affairs always advocates for that.

Does the member support our proposal that would require the Ombudsman to be proficient in both English and French?

Mr. Adil Shamji: That's an easy answer: Of course, I do.

I'm proud that we're a bilingual province and as I look at some of the challenges we face across Ontario, specifically in relation to government services, I know people are struggling with access to health care, for example, and those challenges are only amplified if you are francophone. Access to family medicine is harder. It's harder to find specialists and to get francophone care if you're admitted in a hospital, so I could imagine there may well be a higher rate of complaints from the francophone community that need to be elevated to the level of the Ombudsman. It makes sense to me that such an Ombudsman should be able to speak both English and French, and so I'm proud to support our francophone community.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

M^{me} France Gélinas: We saw in the bill that there are changes about the WSIB. Some people who were in care facilities will finally be covered by WSIB, but still, a lot of workers are not. Would you agree that we should make it easier for every worker—if we think about early childhood educators, people who work in daycare—right now, support workers are in the bill, but the rest of the people who work in those facilities, whether they work for cleaning or the kitchen, are not included. Do you think that every worker should have the protection of WSIB if they get hurt or get sick at work?

Mr. Adil Shamji: Thank you to the member from Nickel Belt. While of course it is nice to see that we have more members who will now be covered in retirement homes under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board plan, it is heartbreaking to know that not everyone enjoys the same level of protection.

I will say that in some of my clinical work, I've had many opportunities to engage with WSIB and people who have been injured under WSIB, but it's even more heartbreaking when people can't get the adequate coverage they need and deserve if they've suffered an injury in the line of duty or in the line of their work. So it should absolutely be easier for people to be able to access specifically WSIB coverage, and considering how much time and effort people put into their jobs, we shouldn't allow employers to be skimping on protections for those workers.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I want to thank the member from Don Valley East for his comments. My question relates to the francophone provisions of the bill with respect to ensuring that the Ombudsman can credibly and effectively oversee all the inquiries in both official languages. It builds on expanding the six designated areas under the French Language Services Act. I was hoping to find out if the member opposite supports mandatory bilingualism of the Ombudsman's office.

Mr. Adil Shamji: I thank the member across. I'd been hoping we could talk a little bit about the environment stuff, because I know that's one of your areas of expertise, and maybe we will in the future. But certainly, I will always stand up and support our francophone community.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

MPP Jamie West: I had a question actually about the medical qualifications from the member from Don Valley East because of his background in health care. But if he would prefer, I'd love to hear more thoughts about the environmental portion of this that the Conservative government doesn't want to talk about.

Mr. Adil Shamji: Certainly. Thank you very much for that question. We can argue back and forth about certain provisions in environmental changes and planning that may be in this legislation. What is the clear pattern to me is that, in successive pieces of legislation, we have seen environmental protections eroded under the promise that such erosions would with allow more homes to be built. Unfortunately, both of those statements have proven to be failures.

We have seen the erosion of environmental protections, which only puts us at greater risk of the growing threat of climate change, of more forest fires and, according to the Premier, therefore, a greater need to purchase a \$29-million jet, but at the same time, we're also seeing a failure in delivering the homes that those environmental erosions were promised to deliver.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

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Mr. Joseph Racinsky: Speaker, our government is reviewing more than 350 business-facing permits with a clear commitment to eliminate or transform at least 35% of them by the end of 2028. I want to ask the member whether he supports faster, clearer approval systems or whether he'd rather keep a fragmented process that has held back housing and infrastructure, economic development etc.?

Mr. Adil Shamji: Of course, I support cutting red tape. But there's a difference between cutting red tape with a scalpel versus cutting red tape with a machete. Unfortunately, the way that this government has shown it operates with successive pieces of legislation—it just slashes willy-nilly.

The greatest example of that has been with ministerial zoning orders, in which the Auditor General literally said

that the implementation of MZO's and the bypassing of appropriate assessments actually slowed down housing as opposed to increasing the rate at which new homes were built, which was the stated purpose of ministerial zoning orders in the first place.

So, while I support cutting red tape, it needs to be done appropriately. It needs to be done thoughtfully. And this government has not proven itself capable of doing that.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Questions?

MPP Jamie West: There's time for me to ask my medical question. As we all know, the member is a doctor. There's a portion of this bill that talks about doctors. I know that people in Sudbury are desperate for primary medical care. Is it important, in the member's opinion, where that person went to high school? Because people in my riding of Sudbury, what they want is someone who's just qualified and good at their job to provide primary medical care—doctor, nurse practitioner, whatever.

Mr. Adil Shamji: In the hierarchy of needs, I think first what people want is a doctor, full stop. They want a doctor and they want it as soon as possible. In fact, every Ontarian is paying for a doctor, but over two million of them just aren't getting one.

This is a government that has always supported efforts that ensure meritocracy. We should be recruiting and supporting our most qualified candidates. That means, obviously, supporting the CaRMS match, using the practice ready assessment program, maximizing it so that we can accelerate credentialing for these international medical graduates as quickly and swiftly as possible.

For some reason, this seems to be a government that prefers to drag its feet, which is unfortunate for the millions of people who are left without a family doctor in the process.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Questions?

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: Knowing what you do about health, how does it make you feel when we're going to move forward with regulations that remove environmental assessments and public consultations when landfills change and are expanded? What impact could that have on people's health?

Mr. Adil Shamji: Well, for example, if you're like me, before you throw something out, you consider, where is the right place for it to go? Should it go into recycling? Should it go into waste? Does it count as hazardous waste? Not everybody does that. So oftentimes, what ends up happening is you get batteries, for example, thrown into regular garbage cans, and around waste sites, you can have leakage of hazardous chemicals. So it's important to be very thoughtful in how we choose our waste sites and how we monitor and regulate those waste sites. If we don't, it can ultimately become a hazard—

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Further debate?

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I'm proud to rise today and represent the lovely people of Kitchener Centre. I have to say, there is a lot of good in this bill. I always want to

recognize when the government takes actions that actually protect Ontario, like talent agencies reforms, expansion of WSIB, employees getting paid first.

Of course, I think there's room for improvement. I hope this goes to committee so we can actually address what needs to improve.

One area I want to just point out is that I haven't seen a bill put forward in a year that didn't have the words "ministerial approvals," "ministerial directives." Don't get me wrong, ministers are great people, but they don't always know everything about everything. I wouldn't want that kind of responsibility without the checks and balances and having guardrails put in place so that I don't cause harm by accident. So that's just one caution. I worry, with Bill 5, removal of rules for any company, having ministerial directives kind of peppered throughout our legislation, it puts people in a very tricky position as they gain more power.

I want to focus on wage theft. I really hope we can find a way to add more teeth to wage theft. I've had so many people come to my office to talk about how they've been robbed of their wages. Oftentimes these are vulnerable people, racialized folks, newcomers. Just to name Dutchie's—this is a company that's had around 80 complaints, 23 charges, owes hundreds of thousands of dollars in stolen wages, and they are just opening up a new grocery store in the Brantford area. And I think, what are we doing to be tough on crime when it comes to employers who are stealing wages? We change legislation so that people can evict someone if they're seven days late on their rent, but we have so many people in my riding who have been owed wages—thousands and thousands of dollars—for so long and there seems to be no consequences. In fact, \$80 million of unpaid wages are owed to the people of Ontario, and we know that this \$80 million is for, often, low-income people who are struggling to pay for a roof and food.

I want to focus on environmental assessments. Actually, most of the environmentalists come to me and they're like, "Wow. I didn't realize there was more that could be cut, but they found more ways to weaken environmental protections."

This is confusing. There's lots of legislation in here that mucks around with EAs that I think makes it easier for them to not put up meaningful guardrails to protect citizens and make sure that our water stays clean and our air stays clean. For example, mines—raise your hand if you will at least once look into how mines could pollute if we aren't careful. Mines can be done in positive ways—

Interjections.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: Thank you, thank you, thank you.

We can do mining in a clean and sustainable way and not cause harm to citizens. But we need these guardrails and my worry is that by weakening environmental protections, we run the risk of polluting water. We know it's multiplied—the amount of money that we have to spend to clean up water after the fact. We see the spill that just happened in Alberta. We see pollution that happens in Sarnia, in Grassy Narrows, and those communities' health

has been devastated. There are priceless consequences when we don't ensure that environmental assessments are done properly.

I do have to focus on landfills. I'm wondering if this government is getting a lot of donations from people who own landfills. In Dresden, there is definitely some connection with the owners of these landfills—but regulations to remove environmental assessments and public consultation when it comes to landfill expansions. If this is in my neighbourhood, I want a voice. I'm shocked at the removal of people's voices when there are expansions of landfills in their backyards.

This can cause very big issues if we don't do environmental assessments because we know we shouldn't have landfills, maybe, on top of our groundwater. I have come from a community where 80% of our water comes from the ground, and if we put landfills in the wrong spaces, we run the risk of polluting our aquifers and then we have no water and we can build no homes.

I talk about how this government is trashing Ontario. That's because since this government came into power, our rates of recycling have taken a nosedive. In fact, we're around 50% of recycling rates, whereas the rest of Canada is around 80%.

I think we've incentivized incineration, giving tax credits for renewable energy, and we seem to be wanting to expand landfills at the same rate. I know we have a garbage issue, but we're doing nothing to prevent garbage from ending up in landfills in the first place. We know deposit return works. It creates benefits for low-income people. It prevents—I don't know, raise your hand if you've been doing a park cleanup in the last week or two. I know I have.

Interjections.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: Exactly. Every Earth Day, communities around this province go out to their local parks and clean up containers. I see cans; I see plastic bottles there. I know that if we had a deposit return system, those cans and bottles would not be there. When I went to BC and toured their facilities, they said, "The trash in our communities is not there anymore because we've incentivized people to clean up and repurpose those materials into something new."

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I hope that this government will stop trashing Ontario and be real about recycling. I don't want to see another Beer Store close on this government's watch.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

MPP George Darouze: I want to thank the member from Kitchener Centre.

When a process adds time, cost, duplication and uncertainty without improving environmental, health or safety outcomes, that is red tape. That's exactly why our government is removing duplicative environmental assessment steps, including the Ontario Land Tribunal request mechanism—the ministry review, an automatic cabinet sign-off—while still keeping strong environmental oversight in place.

Can the member explain why members opposite think Ontario should preserve every duplicative step, even when it slows down critical infrastructure and changes nothing?

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: My father told me if you measure twice and cut once—if you do things right the first time. If we weaken environmental assessments, we end up with a situation like Walkerton where people die and people are asleep at the wheel. We have to learn from our mistakes of the past, and if we don't erode quality environmental protections, we will do better.

This government has done more to wreck our environment than any other government. We actually have as dirty a grid as we did when the coal went out. So we are making our grid dirtier, causing more emissions, more pollution, more asthma in children because of poor air quality from fossil gas burning that is at record levels. These are peaker plants that are meant to be used for peaker points.

We need to protect our soil and our water because it's cheaper and it's better for our planet and people when we protect it in the first place.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Thank you to my friend from Kitchener Centre for her presentation on Bill 105.

Since this Ford government took power, the number of employers fined for wage theft has dropped by 85% and inspections are down 77%. In fact, in the last 10 years, \$200 million has been stolen from employees, while \$80 million remains unrecovered.

This is even worse for non-unionized workers. They're at much greater risk.

To the member, when it comes to standing up for workers, and when you evaluate this Conservative government, on a scale of deliberately vacuous to completely misleading, where would they fall?

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I hope that the government starts to meaningfully invest in helping people recover their wages. It's totally unfair that we're only creating real accountability for wealthy insiders.

We know that the people whose wages are stolen are often folks with precarious immigration status, precarious work, low-income people. They're on the verge of homelessness; they're trying to feed their families. If we want to save more people from ending up in a food bank line, let's help them get paid and hold bad actors accountable.

Most employers pay their wages and are great and they help our economy. We need to root out these bad actors because they're a blight and they make vulnerable people more vulnerable.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Ms. Catherine Fife: The member from Kitchener Centre was talking with credibility on environmental oversight and the lack thereof. I guess my question for her is, if you look at the chaos that this government has created for municipalities—on the planning side, on the funding of critical infrastructure—and the fact that in Waterloo region, which she talked about, we're facing a huge water

shortage and not creating any housing because of it, do you think the government should continue to fast-track larger commercial water-taking permits, which puts our development, our economy and our environmental health at risk?

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I think the way things are happening in our region is totally irresponsible. We can't build housing, but we're going to allow a gravel pit to take 10 million litres of water a day. When I talk to the Minister of the Environment about approving planning, they're like, "Oh, well they check the aquifer for how the water is now."

Some 70% of Canada was in drought conditions last year because of climate change. We have a growing population, and we have climate disasters that are happening at this moment in history. We need to think ahead when we're giving permits, and I think we need to put a pause in our region on those permits so that we can build housing before we give all of our water to golf courses and aggregate pits that don't help our community.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Further debate?

Mr. Joseph Racinsky: It is a privilege to rise in the House today to speak about the Protecting Ontario's Workers and Economic Resilience Act, 2026.

Before I begin, I want to note that I'll be sharing my time with my colleague the fantastic member for Markham-Thornhill.

Speaker, this legislation, the POWER Act, is the latest step in our government's plan to move Ontario forward and to make it more resilient, more self-reliant and less dependent on the whims of our neighbours to the south.

From the beginning, our government has made red tape reduction a priority because we understand that unnecessary regulatory burden slows productivity, discourages investment, and holds back economic growth. But this work has never been about change for its own sake. It is about leading with purpose—making tough, consequential decisions when they matter most. As a government, we have taken a gradual, deliberate approach to deliver these efficiencies, while still maintaining the standards, services, and protections Ontario residents rely on, because in today's economy, leadership matters now more than ever.

Protecting Ontario means dealing with global uncertainty, disrupted supply chains, and unfair trade actions head-on. When our closest trading partner imposes tariffs, there are real and immediate consequences for Ontario families, workers and businesses.

Just a few months after the last election, I visited Brooks Heating and Air in Georgetown. They're a heating company, an HVAC company. The owner showed me, on the bill for a recent HVAC unit they had just purchased, a tariff surcharge. That surcharge is passed on to the consumer in Georgetown.

Today, our businesses face higher costs, tax and payroll pressures, complex rules, red tape and ongoing labour challenges. That's why our government is focused on protecting jobs, supporting investment, and ensuring Ontario

remains a competitive and reliable place to live, work and do business.

The POWER Act removes barriers, modernizes systems, and gives Ontario the tools it needs to respond decisively to global economic headwinds.

Since 2018, nearly 700 red tape reduction actions have generated approximately \$1.3 billion in cost savings for people, businesses, municipalities, hospitals, universities, colleges and not-for-profit organizations. I like to tell people, when I host red tape reduction round tables in my community or around the province, that no item is too small; they all add up—all of these 700 items that we've looked at.

Our last red tape package, last fall, had 52 items in it, and none of them are amazing and flashy, but they get results. They make a difference in people's lives when taken together. That's why it's important to keep this project moving forward.

But it's not just about money that we're saving. Since 2023 alone, our efforts have also saved 1.8 million hours of administrative burden. Time is money.

Taken together, that's time and money that businesses can use to expand into new markets, grow their organizations and hire more people.

Ontario has been recognized for this work, earning its first A grade from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. We're proud of that recognition, but leadership is not defined by a single report card; it is defined by sustained progress.

The POWER Act is built on two complementary pillars, the first of which is streamlining permits and approvals. Ontario's current approvals system is often slow, complex and unpredictable. Long timelines, overlapping requirements across ministries, a lack of digital tools, and unclear accountability all create uncertainty. And uncertainty delays investment, which in turn impacts our prosperity as a province. Businesses need clarity. Certainty attracts capital. Predictable timelines create confidence. That's why this pillar is focused on building a regulatory system that is faster, clearer and more accountable, while maintaining strong protections for health, safety, the environment, and Indigenous communities.

Through permanent modernization work launched in fall 2025, more than 150 permits have already been reviewed or are under review, delivering tangible improvements for proponents across sectors. Ontario is reviewing permits in coordinated bundles, moving permits online and working toward eliminating or streamlining at least 35% of high-impact permits by the end of 2028.

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Early successes by our government include our One Project, One Process, the special economic zones, dramatically reduced species-at-risk timelines and a new duty to consult coordination division. This is how Ontario grows, by clearing obstacles, modernizing systems and building confidence.

Faced with aggressive international competition to attract and maintain job-creating investments and federal efforts to unlock our economic potential through large-

scale nation-building projects, we must continue to take action to remain an attractive, modern and competitive jurisdiction for businesses to do business with and invest in. A failure to act risks Ontario being left behind, and so we're taking bold action.

Under this pillar, the POWER Act proposes targeted modernization of environmental assessments. Environmental protection remains strong, but some procedural steps add delay without improving outcomes. Proposed changes would remove unnecessary duplication, shorten timelines by up to four and a half months and maintain robust oversight consultation and enforcement. The focus is clear: Eliminate delay, not protection.

The act also streamlines approvals for waste disposal site modifications, permissions to take water, and agricultural worker housing and related septic systems. These changes support farmers in my community, strengthen food security, reduce unnecessary approval delays and protect public health and the environment. They ensure products move faster while safeguards remain firmly in place. I'll say it again because it bears repeating, Speaker: We're focused on limiting delay, not protection.

The bill also modernizes service standards under the At Your Service Act, clarifying accountability, avoiding conflicts with consultation obligations and improving transparency through more meaningful biannual reporting. Technology updates make the system easier to understand without reducing public visibility or oversight.

Finally, the Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism is advocating the Heritage Framework Transformation, modernizing archaeology and heritage approvals to support housing and infrastructure delivery, while preserving our cultural heritage. This is another piece that's really important for me, Speaker. I was a former member when I was on Halton Hills council of our heritage committee at the time of Halton Hills. It is very important and we had a very modern approach to preserving that heritage while moving forward with growth and change as a community and as a province. So I'm really looking forward to that work by the Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism.

Madam Speaker, taken together, these changes protect Ontario by making this province more competitive, resilient and self-reliant. They reflect our red tape reduction principles, our commitment to responsible growth and our determination to ensure Ontario remains the best place in the G7 to invest, build and succeed. I want to be a part of a government that is focused on the future, when it leaves our province in a better position for future generations to thrive and to succeed.

I would like to thank at this time Minister Khanjin, the Minister of Red Tape Reduction, for leading an all-of-government response to build a more stable, certain economy for our businesses and workers. So many ministries contributed to this package under Minister Khanjin's leadership, and so I want to thank all of those ministers and ministries that contributed to this important work.

Together, we are working to build a stronger, more self-sufficient and resilient economy that can weather global

shocks while protecting our workers and businesses. By reducing unnecessary delays and regulatory burden, Ontario is building a predictable, investment-ready environment that supports job creation, boosts economic competitiveness and secures long-term growth.

I urge all members of this House to support this bill.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): I recognize the member for Markham–Thornhill.

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: I am happy to rise today and talk about the Protecting Ontario's Workers and Economic Resilience Act, 2026. It's called the POWER Act.

I'd like to thank the minister for the wonderful work, the Minister of Red Tape Reduction, Andrea Khanjin. Also, I'd like to thank PA Racinsky, the PA from Wellington–Halton Hills, for your hard work on this plan.

This bill is truly an all-of-government approach to strengthened protection for workers across this province. From day one, our government has been clear: Ontario's prosperity depends on the people who show up every day to do work that keeps this province moving. Protecting Ontario means protecting the workers who are the engine of our economy. Madam Speaker, Ontario is the economic engine of Canada, the workers of Ontario are the engine of this province. It means ensuring workplaces are safe, fair and modern—and that our labour laws keep pace with how work is performed today. That is why pillar 2 of the POWER Act is focused squarely on workers—supporting safety, fairness, mobility and dignity across Ontario's changing economy.

Speaker, several proposals under this pillar are led by the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development, and they deliver practical, meaningful improvements for the workers.

The act proposes amendment to the Employment Standards Act that strengthen enforcement while ensuring workers are treated fairly and paid what they're owed. These measures would:

- authorize inspections, rather than lengthy investigations, for certain non-monetary complaints;
- allow the ministry to refuse vexatious complaints or those lacking sufficient information; and
- ensure employees and digital platform workers are prioritized during the collections process, directing more recovered wages directly to workers.

These changes improve fairness, reduce delay and ensure enforcement resources are focused where they are needed most.

Madam Speaker, the POWER Act would also strengthen protections under the talent agency regulation act, ensuring the performers in Ontario's creative sector are treated fairly and transparently. Proposed changes would require talent agencies to operate under clear, enforceable standards including capped commissions, limits on fees, timely payment to performers, segregation of client funds and robust record-keeping requirements. This provides certainty and protection for workers in a unique and growing sector of our economy.

Speaker, worker safety is a cornerstone of this legislation. This POWER Act proposes amendments to the

Occupational Health and Safety Act to establish an occupational exposure registry. This would give the Chief Prevention Officer authority to collect and share exposure information with workers—supporting early diagnosis and prevention of occupational illness. The bill also modernizes and harmonizes health and safety training standards across the province, mandating and recognizing consistent requirements for: mobile elevating work platforms; entry-level and supervisor construction training; slips, trips and falls; trenching and shoring; hoisting and rigging; alongside working-at-heights training.

A new minister's authority would streamline interjurisdictional recognition of training, supporting labour mobility, strengthening safety culture and reducing duplicative costs. These changes give workers the ability to move safely and confidently between jobs.

Madam Speaker, the POWER Act also delivers concrete safety improvements by recognizing CSA-approved respirators in regulation, recognizing type 2 hard hats to enhance protection, prohibiting employers from charging workers for mandatory or branded uniforms. And following stakeholder consultation, amendments to the Labour Relations Act would shorten open periods in the construction sector, reducing prolonged uncertainty while respecting collective bargaining rights.

Speaker, another great change: The act introduces significant and long-overdue workers' compensation reforms: allowing loss-of-earnings benefits to continue beyond age 65 upon request; increasing the benefit rate from 85% to 90%; setting a 100% replacement cap when collateral benefits apply; removing the 72-month lock-in for certain cohorts and mandating WSIB coverage for all residential care facilities and group homes, public and private. These reforms protect injured workers while strengthening the sustainability of the compensation system.

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The POWER Act also includes key measures led by the Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility, supporting workers in the Ontario retirement home sector. The proposed amendment would extend legal protections to as-of-right health professionals and Ontario-registered physician assistants when fulfilling mandatory reporting obligations. These changes promote fairness, support labour mobility, protect workers who come forward and enhance resident safety without adding administrative burden.

Finally, Madam Speaker, the Ministry of Health is proposing an important workforce measure to strengthen Ontario's health care system. By prioritizing Ontario-based international medical graduates in the first round of the residency matching process, the province is supporting retention, continuity and long-term workforce stability, particularly in underserved communities. This ensures doctors trained here are more likely to stay here, serving the communities that need them most.

Pillar 1 takes further action on key initiatives that the government has been leading to help build a more resilient and self-reliant economy. This includes breaking down barriers for in-demand professions to build a unified workforce that can stand up to US tariffs and economic uncer-

tainty. By cutting red tape and eliminating costly delays and duplicative processes, our government is unlocking new opportunities for workers and businesses while strengthening our domestic economy and ensuring Ontarians have access to in-demand services and supports.

Madam Speaker, these worker-focused measures reflect a clear belief: Strong economies are built on strong protection. When workers are safe, treated fairly and supported throughout their careers, Ontario is stronger, more resilient and better positioned for the future. That's how the POWER Act protects Ontario: by protecting its people.

I would like to thank Minister Khanjin once again for her work on advancing this file, and to Minister Piccini, Minister Jones and Minister Cho for taking decisive steps to reduce red tape while ensuring quality services and supports are in place for workers across the province. Thank to their efforts, our government continues to build on our strong track record of taking close to 700 actions across government to cut red tape that have generated approximately \$1.3 billion in cost savings for Ontario taxpayers. This is how we protect Ontario: by making Ontario the most competitive place in the G7 nation to invest, create jobs and do business.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): I recognize the member for Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thanks to my friend from Markham-Thornhill for his comments on this piece of legislation, Working for Workers. He talked about the self-sufficient economy that we need to create. He talked about the secure long-term economic growth.

My genuine and sincere question to him is: How does the Premier buying a personal private jet further those goals? Now we've also learned that, of course, the Premier said this morning that we never took possession of the jet, that it's not part of the budget—\$30 million—and yet two days ago, he said we took possession of it last week.

So how do you think workers in the province of Ontario feel when the Premier prioritizes his own personal comfort as he negotiates the latest scandal that he's part of? How does that secure the economy in the province of Ontario, when this Premier puts himself consistently first, above the people that we are elected to serve?

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: Thank you to the member for that question. Our priorities are seen in a different way. We have to protect Ontarians.

One of the important things in this bill is the CaRMS revision and overview. The proposal would prioritize medical graduates with proven connections to Ontario for Ontario post-graduate medical residency positions.

My wife is a medical doctor, and she has been training IMGs, international medical graduates, for decades. There are thousands and thousands of our children going out of the country and coming back with a medical degree, and they want to get a fair shot. They want to live in their community. They want to give back to the community. They want to work on improving the quality of life of Ontarians. This bill is giving a fair shot for Ontario medical graduates in the system.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Questions?

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: My question is to either one of my colleagues from across the way and beside me. Schedule 6 in the bill: It seems through that that French proficiency is very important to this government. Given that the requirement for the next Ombudsman is that they now be bilingual, I'm just wondering, if French is so important to this government, why not, in addition to the proposal in schedule 6, also add that you will now reverse the 2019 decision and make the French-language commissioner independent again? Why not go the full way that way?

Mr. Joseph Racinsky: Like the member said, supporting our francophone communities in the province of Ontario is very, very important, and the action in this bill is a part of that.

As the member for Don Valley East said in his remarks just a little while ago, the Ombudsman, in particular, a part of his role that's very important—

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Or her role.

Mr. Joseph Racinsky: Or her role, absolutely—takes certain concerns, and there may be a higher portion of francophone concerns that that individual has to deal with. So we believe it's very, very important that that individual be bilingual.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Thank you very much to my colleague. You have been giving us a good overview of the bill. My question would be in regard to ensuring our employees—digital platform workers—get priority in payments and collection processes.

While our government has already made strides in reducing red tape and making life easier, saving time and money for individuals, it is imperative that we recognize the backbone of our province: the people who are out every day working hard to provide for their families. They are Ontario's labour force.

How is the government proposing to change the Employment Standards Act collection process, and how much of an increase can employees expect to receive under the new collection approach?

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: Thank you to my colleague from Mississauga—Erin Mills for that important question.

This modification to the Employment Standards Act would change how payments are distributed during the collection process, meaning that when money is collected, employees would get priority and be paid first before any collection fees go to the government. By prioritizing the employee over the collection fee, approximately \$100,000 to \$200,000 more in recovered wages would go back to the employees each year. The change will help clarify that hard-working Ontarians receive more wages they are owed.

Our province needs to continue supporting Ontario workers, not with words, but with action. That is what this bill does.

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The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

M^{me} France Gélinas: In schedule 9, we see that WSIB benefits are extended to workers in residential care facilities and group homes—the language is not specific enough to know if it's all of the workers, including the people who clean the place, the people who work in the kitchen, or just the people who provide supportive care. So it's a step in the right direction, but how many more steps will it take so that all 105 million Ontario workers who are not covered by WSIB finally get the coverage that they deserve?

When you talk about child care workers—there are many, many risks of getting hurt—why aren't they covered by WSIB?

Mr. Joseph Racinsky: Thanks to the member for her question.

We have put forward many Working for Workers pieces of legislation over the last eight years, and we continue to move forward in consultation with the sector, with folks all around—even members of the opposition. I know the third-time interim leader of the Liberal Party has been very interested in this topic as well.

We're going to continue to stand up and defend workers, be on the side of workers, and protect workers.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Question?

MPP Bill Rosenberg: My question is to the member from Markham—Thornhill.

Speaker, before we took office in 2018, Ontario was known as Canada's red tape capital, with the Canadian Federation of Independent Business giving the previous Liberal-NDP government a C. Their failed policies drove investments and jobs out of the province, leaving the people of Ontario to pay the price.

Can the member please share some of our results of our efforts to reduce red tape and ensure Ontario remains the best place in the G7 to invest, grow a business and create good-paying jobs?

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: Thank you to my wonderful colleague from Algoma for that great question.

Madam Speaker, when we took office, Ontario was known as the high-tech capital of red tape.

We have reduced Ontario's regulatory burden by nearly 6%, saving people and businesses nearly \$1.3 billion and 1.8 million hours annually, while continuing to protect the health and safety of the province. At a time when every dollar counts, every minute matters, we are looking for opportunities for growth, investment and job creation across Ontario.

This bill would help to keep us building a smarter, more effective regulatory system that will work better for people, work smarter for businesses, keep workers safe, and keep Ontario a stronger and very competitive province among the G7 nations.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It's my pleasure to say a few words about Bill 105. I'm going to start with schedule 6.

In schedule 6, the government has decided to make the position of Ombudsman of Ontario a bilingual position. Let me put that into perspective. Every Franco-Ontarian will remember November 15, 2018, when the Minister of Finance announced in his budget that they would not go forward with a French university in Ontario and that the office of the French-language commissioner would be abolished and a position would be created in the Office of the Ombudsman. This is what is known in Ontario as Black Thursday. You can go through any Franco-Ontarian—we all know what Black Thursday stands for. This is the day that the government took away the French-language commissioner and the day the government took away the French university.

I'll do a little parenthesis about the French university, because the federal government offered to pay 100% of the French university, l'Université de l'Ontario français. The government took a year and a half after all the pressures that was put on them—on December 1, 2018, over 14,000 Ontarians pushed back. We had demonstrations throughout Ontario, from Sudbury to Ottawa to Toronto—everywhere. Even after all of this, when the francophones spoke loudly and clearly that they wanted a French university, it took the government of Mr. Ford one and a half years to say yes to the federal government paying for 100% of the l'Université de l'Ontario français, the French university in Ontario. Let that sink in.

Coming back to the Ombudsman: So we lose our French-language commissioner. The French-language commissioner had the power to do investigations as he saw fit. He is the one who did an investigation that showed that we needed a French university. He did an investigation about French kids in children's aid that were not getting the support. Now, we are getting the same title. They kept the name "French-language commissioner," but it isn't a commissioner; it is an employee of the Ombudsman. So the employee of the Ombudsman does not have the power of a commissioner and certainly does not have the right to start investigations on their own.

An Ombudsman has a really important job, and it is to answer to complaints. It's a very important job, but it is very different from a commissioner, which is independent of the Legislative Assembly, that decides on their own what they are going to do. So we get a French-language commissioner who is not a commissioner, who is an employee of the Ombudsman.

The ombudsman at the time was Paul Dubé. Paul Dubé is bilingual. I can tell you that it was really tough for the staff who worked in the French-language commissioner to transition to the Ombudsman's office. The Ombudsman's office at the time, let's just say, had never really worked in French, had never had any section of the Ombudsman's office that worked in French. It was tough to welcome them in. "Welcome" is not the word that anybody use, but anyway, they went into the Ombudsman's office. The Ombudsman at the time, Paul Dubé, is bilingual, spoke French.

Paul Dubé did a fantastic job as an Ombudsman. His last day at work is tomorrow. I hope everybody will join after—I think it's about 4 o'clock tomorrow afternoon. We have a chance to say goodbye to a man who did a lot of good for Ontario.

So the government posted a job post for a new Ombudsman. The job posting was done, I think, before Christmas, sometime. And all it said was "bilingualism is an asset." So the job posting is done. The deadline to apply for the job has passed. The recruitment has started. People have done interviews to see who would be the best person to fill up the position of Ombudsman and then the government comes and says the Ombudsman should be bilingual, English and French. Yes, but the recruitment process is already in place.

So what you're telling us is that, 10 years from now, when a new position of Ombudsman will be up, then we will get a bilingual Ombudsman. Just let that sink in a bit. The government did not think that forward, did not plan for that. Obviously, the ad is there. Anybody can go online and see: "Bilingualism is an asset." The process is in place. A new Ombudsman—Ombudsperson, whatever—will be selected, and 10 years from now, when we will need a new Ombudsman, then that position will have to be filled by a bilingual person.

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You know how this makes me feel? It makes me feel like we don't count, that they only did that because I did a media interview where I said the Ombudsman is responsible for the French-language commissioner and the Ombudsman should be bilingual. The media picked it up, and they felt the pressure. They put that in a bill after the job posting and everything is already done. Nobody in the ministry, in the government, thought, "Hey, we moved the French-language commissioner to the Ombudsman's office. Maybe we should advertise for a bilingual Ombudsman?"

Ms. Catherine Fife: What a concept.

M^{me} France Gélinas: What a concept; you got it. No, nobody thought about that at all. And after the media started to push the story—because I made stories and said this makes no sense—they come with schedule 6 in a bill that has absolutely nothing to do with the Ombudsman.

Say, 10 years from now, when we advertise for an Ombudsman, the advertising will say we need a bilingual Ombudsman. Really? Not proud of you at all. It's just one more way that you prove to francophones that we don't matter, that we don't count; that you don't see us as an asset, as something to value. You will tolerate us because we're there, but if we were not, nobody would shed a tear. This is not right.

Am I happy that, 10 years from now, the bilingualism will be in the ad? Sure. Could they have done better? Yes, absolutely, but they didn't.

All right. I'll move on to schedule 8. Schedule 8 is the Strengthening Talent Agency Regulation Act. Nothing wrong with what's in there.

You know that the NDP, myself, my colleague from Sudbury and from the time that Peter Kormos was here—

every session, we table anti-scab legislation. Anti-scab legislations protect workers. It protects community. It protects vulnerable people who will cross the line and will carry that load on their shoulders for the rest of their lives—so will their family, so will their kids, so will their neighbourhood.

But for the last 17 times, the Conservatives have voted no. The Liberals were no better; they voted no to anti-scab legislation also.

I am mentioning that because you will remember that ACTRA has been on strike for four and a half years, and the millions of dollars that the Conservative government spent in advertising. They hire scabs. They don't have to. They could choose to work with non-unionized. They could choose to work with other people, but no, they choose to hire scab labour—replacement workers to do their millions of dollars of advertising. This is a shame. I thought I would mention that.

Then I go to schedule 7. Schedule 7 has to do with the Retirement Homes Act, where the minister now has the authority to appoint directors to the board of the Retirement Homes Regulatory Authority, replacing the authority of the Lieutenant Governor in Council.

Let's put that in perspective, Speaker: There are 70,000 elderly people who live in retirement homes in Ontario. This number is growing all the time. For many of them, this is the right fit. They don't feel like grocery shopping and doing dishes and vacuuming and laundry and all of this anymore, but they still want to live as a couple. They want to live together. They want to socialize. A retirement home fits the bill.

Almost all—the great, great majority—of retirement homes in Ontario are held by big, mainly American, corporations who want to make as much money as they can. And they do.

My mother-in-law, when she was 94 years old, her husband passed. She stayed in the retirement home and paid \$4,500 a month for her 350-square-foot apartment, so that she could have half of a sandwich and a little bowl of soup at lunch and have somebody do a load of laundry once every two weeks.

The costs in retirement homes keep increasing. I'm sharing that with you, Speaker, because—did you know that if a retirement home tenant makes a complaint to the regulatory authority, it is an industry-governed complaint system that is in place? It is governed by the industry. It doesn't matter if all 70,000 of them phone and make a complaint that it doesn't make sense to pay 100 bucks for a load of laundry. Do you really think that they're going to go and tell their shareholders: "Oh, we cannot charge that much money anymore." It is industry-driven.

When the Liberal government brought this bill forward, I voted against; all of my colleagues from the NDP voted

against. There are too many vulnerable people who live in our retirement homes to leave it to the industry to handle complaints.

We have a role to play as legislators. We have a role to play as MPPs to make sure that those people have the protection they deserve. When you know that you have 70,000 vulnerable people, you don't put an industry in charge of taking in complaints—most of the complaints having to do with money—because the industry knows that they can make a pile of money off elderly people living in retirement homes.

We've put legislation forward to just limit the cost increases to the cost of living. Their rent is under rent control, but none of the other services have any regulations to limit how much they charge.

They can increase the cost of doing the laundry, of the meals, of cleaning—of everything—every 90 days. Every three months, they are allowed to increase the cost, and most of them do. They have no limit as to how much they can increase the cost of every service provided in a retirement home. Every 90 days, it will increase by whatever amount they want. And when you're 94 years old and your husband just died, you don't want to move. You don't want things. You just want to be able to grieve and move on and you will pay whatever they ask.

This is wrong, Speaker. This is wrong. This is abusing people that are in a position of vulnerability, and we should do better. This schedule 7 missed the mark. We had an opportunity with schedule 7 to protect people and we missed it completely. This is really sad.

Then we move on to WSIB benefits in schedule 9. I'm really happy that WSIB benefit coverage will be extended to about 29,000 workers in residential care facilities and group homes. They have waited a long time. But how much longer will the 1.5 million workers who want to be covered by WSIB have to wait before they get covered by WSIB? I don't know. I'm happy with those 29,000 workers, but there's still 1.5 million workers, most of them women, most of them in positions where the risk to their health is high, who are not covered by WSIB. That includes everybody who works with children, the elderly, ECEs, the child care workers—none of them have coverage.

If you look at health care, at most of the interdisciplinary primary health care teams that are out there, most of the workers are not covered. Why? We make a little step in the right direction—yay. But why don't we go to the end goal? The end goal will be that, for every worker, they will have an opportunity to have coverage under WSIB. We still have a long way to go, but there was a small step in the right direction.

*Second reading debate deemed adjourned.
Report continues in volume B.*

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Cuzzetto, Rudy (PC)	Mississauga—Lakeshore	
Darouze, George (PC)	Carleton	
Denault, Billy (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	
Dixon, Jess (PC)	Kitchener South—Hespeler / Kitchener-Sud—Hespeler	
Dowie, Andrew (PC)	Windsor—Tecumseh	
Downey, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte	Attorney General / Procureur général
Dunlop, Hon. / L'hon. Jill (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Minister of Emergency Preparedness and Response / Ministre de la Protection civile et de l'Intervention en cas d'urgence
Fairclough, Lee (LIB)	Etobicoke—Lakeshore	
Fedeli, Hon. / L'hon. Victor (PC)	Nipissing	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique, de la Création d'emplois et du Commerce

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Waterloo	
Firin, Mohamed (PC)	York South—Weston / York-Sud— Weston	
Flack, Hon. / L'hon. Rob (PC)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Premier / Premier ministre Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Leader, Third Party / Chef du troisième parti
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Première Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn (PC)	Newmarket—Aurora	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gilmour, Alexa (NDP)	Parkdale—High Park	
Glover, Chris (NDP)	Spadina—Fort York	
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Grewal, Hardeep Singh (PC)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	
Gualtieri, Silvia (PC)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	
Hamid, Hon. / L'hon. Zee (PC)	Milton	Associate Solicitor General for Auto Theft and Bail Reform / Solliciteur général associé responsable de la Lutte contre le vol d'automobiles et de la Réforme relative aux mises en liberté sous caution
Hardeman, Hon. / L'hon. Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Hon. / L'hon. Mike (PC)	Kitchener—Conestoga	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Hazell, Andrea (LIB)	Scarborough—Guildwood	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Holland, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin (PC)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	Associate Minister of Forestry and Forest Products / Ministre associé des Forêts et des Produits forestiers
Hsu, Ted (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin—Caledon	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health / Ministre de la Santé
Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Trevor (PC)	Chatham-Kent—Leamington	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et de l'Agroentreprise
Jordan, John (PC)	Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston	
Kanapathi, Logan (PC)	Markham—Thornhill	
Kernaghan, Terence (NDP)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	
Kerzner, Hon. / L'hon. Michael S. (PC)	York Centre / York-Centre	Solicitor General / Solliciteur général
Khanjin, Hon. / L'hon. Andrea (PC)	Barrie—Innisfil	Minister of Red Tape Reduction / Ministre de la Réduction des formalités administratives
Kusendova-Bashta, Hon. / L'hon. Natalia (PC)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga- Centre	Minister of Long-Term Care / Ministre des Soins de longue durée
Leardi, Anthony (PC)	Essex	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Lecce, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)	King—Vaughan	Minister of Energy and Mines / Ministre de l'Énergie et des Mines
Lennox, Robin (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	
Lumsden, Hon. / L'hon. Neil (PC)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	Minister of Sport / Ministre du Sport
Mamakwa, Sol (NDP)	Kiiwetinoong	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
McCarthy, Hon. / L'hon. Todd J. (PC)	Durham	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs
McCrimmon, Karen (LIB)	Kanata—Carleton	
McGregor, Hon. / L'hon. Graham (PC)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism / Ministre des Affaires civiques et du Multiculturalisme
McKenney, Catherine (NDP)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
McMahon, Mary-Margaret (LIB)	Beaches—East York	

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Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)	York—Simcoe	President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones
Oosterhoff, Hon. / L'hon. Sam (PC)	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	Associate Minister of Energy-Intensive Industries / Ministre associé des Industries à forte consommation d'énergie
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	
Parsa, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (PC)	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires
Pasma, Chandra (NDP)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	Deputy House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Piccini, Hon. / L'hon. David (PC)	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de l'Immigration, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences
Pierre, Natalie (PC)	Burlington	
Pinsonneault, Steve (PC)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	
Pirie, Hon. / L'hon. George (PC)	Timmins	Minister of Northern Economic Development and Growth / Ministre du Développement et de la croissance économique du Nord
Quinn, Hon. / L'hon. Nolan (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	Minister of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security / Ministre des Collèges et Universités, de l'Excellence en recherche et de la Sécurité
Racinsky, Joseph (PC)	Wellington—Halton Hills	
Rae, Matthew (PC)	Perth—Wellington	
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Indigenous Affairs and First Nations Economic Reconciliation / Ministre des Affaires autochtones et de la Réconciliation économique avec les Premières Nations Minister Responsible for Ring of Fire Economic and Community Partnerships / Ministre responsable des Partenariats économiques et communautaires pour le développement du Cercle de feu
Riddell, Brian (PC)	Cambridge	
Rosenberg, Bill (PC)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Sarrazin, Stéphane (PC)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Saunderson, Brian (PC)	Simcoe—Grey	
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Chris (IND)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Scott, Hon. / L'hon. Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	
Shamji, Adil (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Skelly, Hon. / L'hon. Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	Speaker / Présidente de l'Assemblée législative
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, David (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Graydon (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre associé des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Smith, Laura (PC)	Thornhill	
Smyth, Stephanie (LIB)	Toronto—St. Paul's	
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Tangri, Hon. / L'hon. Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	Associate Minister of Small Business / Ministre associée des Petites Entreprises
Thanigasalam, Hon. / L'hon. Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associé délégué à la Santé mentale et à la Lutte contre les dépendances
Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Rural Affairs / Ministre des Affaires rurales

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Associate Attorney General / Procureur général associé
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	Deputy Speaker / Vice-Présidente Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Tsao, Jonathan (LIB)	Don Valley North / Don Valley-Nord	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Vaugeois, Lise (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
Vickers, Paul (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	
Watt, Tyler (LIB)	Nepean	
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
Williams, Hon. / L'hon. Charmaine A. (PC)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity / Ministre associée des Perspectives sociales et économiques pour les femmes
Wong-Tam, Kristyn (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Vacant	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough- Sud-Ouest	