

Legislative  
Assembly  
of Ontario



Assemblée  
législative  
de l'Ontario

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**Official Report  
of Debates  
(Hansard)**

No. 76

**Journal  
des débats  
(Hansard)**

N° 76

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

Monday  
25 May 2026

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

Lundi  
25 mai 2026

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Speaker: Honourable Donna Skelly  
Clerk: Trevor Day

Présidente : L'honorable Donna Skelly  
Greffier : Trevor Day

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

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

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
OF ONTARIO

Monday 25 May 2026

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE  
DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 25 mai 2026

*The House met at 0900.*

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

*Prayers.*

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MICHAEL MORRIS CASSIDY

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

**Hon. Steve Clark:** Madam Speaker, if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to allow members to make statements in remembrance of the late Mr. Michael Cassidy, with five minutes allotted to the third party, two minutes allotted to the independent members as a group, five minutes allotted to His Majesty's government, and five minutes allotted to His Majesty's loyal opposition.

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to allow members to make statements in remembrance of the late Mr. Michael Cassidy, with five minutes allotted to the third party, two minutes allotted to the independent members as a group, five minutes allotted to His Majesty's government, and five minutes allotted to His Majesty's loyal opposition. Agreed? Agreed.

Today we are honoured to remember and pay tribute to a former member of our provincial Legislature, the late Mr. Michael Cassidy, who was the MPP for Ottawa Centre during the 29th, 30th and 31st Parliaments.

Joining us in the galleries are members of Mr. Cassidy's family: his son Benedict Cassidy; his daughter-in-law, Kimberly Menard; and his grandson Joshua Cassidy McDowell. Mr. Cassidy's grandchildren and great-grandchildren, Grace, Tobias, Gabriel, Owen, Penny and Phoebe, are watching from home.

Also joining us in the galleries today are David Warner, Speaker during the 35th Parliament, and Robin Martin, MPP for Eglinton–Lawrence during the 42nd and 43rd Parliaments. Welcome.

I recognize the member for Nepean.

**MPP Tyler Watt:** Today I am honoured to pay tribute to Michael Morris Cassidy, the member for Ottawa Centre from 1971 to 1984 and former leader of the Ontario NDP. The lasting impact he had continues to be felt throughout this chamber and the city of Ottawa and across Ontario.

Michael will be remembered as someone who genuinely cared about people—not just his constituents or members of his party, but Ontarians as a whole.

When he was first elected leader, he travelled across the province to hear directly from people about their lives, their concerns and their hopes about the future. That commitment to listening and serving others defined both his political career and his personal life.

That commitment to listening and serving others showed clearly, as he was an early champion of LGBTQ+ rights, willing to speak out at a time when doing so was neither easy nor politically popular. He was also a strong advocate for women's rights and equal pay, believing deeply that women deserved equal compensation for equal work. Long before many of these conversations became mainstream, Michael understood that progress required courage, compassion and a willingness to stand up for what is right.

Before entering politics, Michael worked as a journalist, bringing the same thoughtfulness, curiosity and respect for dialogue that would later define his public service. His willingness to listen to others remained central to who he was throughout his life.

Public service truly ran through Michael's veins. His father, Harry Cassidy, was a leader in progressive social policy and helped shape important conversations around social welfare in Canada.

In 1969, Michael was elected to Ottawa city council, and just two years later, he successfully ran in the 1971 provincial election to represent Ottawa Centre here at Queen's Park, serving for more than a decade. He later continued his service to Canadians as the federal member of Parliament for Ottawa Centre.

Michael genuinely loved campaigning. He loved speaking with people, hearing their stories and understanding the challenges they faced. As the member for Ottawa Centre, he was particularly concerned with housing and affordability. In an interview with the Ottawa Citizen, when asked about the housing struggles facing people in his riding, he simply said, "I want to and ought to help these people." That quote says so much about who Michael was. For him, helping others was not simply a political obligation; it was a moral responsibility. It was a principle that guided him throughout his life, both inside and outside elected office.

After leaving politics, Michael continued contributing to public life. He served on the board of Ontario Hydro and opposed efforts to restructure and privatize the crown corporation. He also remained active in advocacy work, particularly on environmental issues and social justice causes that he cared deeply about.

His life reminds us all in this chamber that public service does not end when someone leaves elected office. It is not about titles or positions. It is about a lifelong

commitment to improving the lives of others and leaving your community better than you found it.

Beyond politics, Michael was a loving husband to his wife, Maureen, and a proud father, grandfather and great-grandfather to Benedict, Adam, Matthew, Joshua, Tobias, Grace, Gabriel, Owen, Penny and Phoebe.

Whether serving in public office, advocating for his community or spending time with his family, Michael approached life with deep care, conviction and humanity.

Today we remember not only Michael Cassidy's accomplishments, but also the values he represented: compassion, integrity, courage, and service to others. His legacy continues to live on, and Ontario is better because of it.

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

I recognize the member from Carleton.

**MPP George Darouze:** I rise today to pay tribute to the late Michael Cassidy, a compassionate public servant, a thoughtful civic leader, and a man whose contribution to Ottawa, Ontario and Canada deserves to be remembered with gratitude and respect.

Michael Cassidy dedicated much of his life to serving others. Whether as a journalist, city councillor, member of provincial Parliament, leader of the Ontario New Democratic Party or as a member of Parliament, he approached public life with seriousness, intelligence and a strong belief in civic engagement.

Born in Victoria, British Columbia, he came from a family already deeply connected to public service and social policy. He studied at Trinity College at the University of Toronto, and later at the London School of Economics, before beginning a career in journalism, including serving as Ottawa bureau chief for the Financial Times. That experience gave him a close understanding of politics and government, but also an appreciation for the people affected by public decisions.

It was not long before he chose to move from reporting on politics to participating directly in public life. His political career was deeply connected to Ottawa. Before entering provincial politics, he served as an alderman on Ottawa city council, representing Wellington ward during an important period in the city's growth. Ottawa was changing rapidly, and debates over urban planning, transportation and development were becoming increasingly important. As a former member of Ottawa city council post-amalgamation, I truly appreciate his service to the city in that capacity.

**0910**

Michael Cassidy became known as a strong advocate for communities and for thoughtful city-building. He believed Ottawa should not only function as the nation's capital, but thrive as a livable and inclusive city for the people who called it home.

In 1971, he was elected to the Ontario Legislature as the member for Ottawa Centre, a riding he would represent for more than a decade. For the residents of Ottawa Centre, he was a tireless advocate on issues that affect Ottawans and Ontarians daily.

In 1978, he became leader of the Ontario New Democratic Party. He brought intelligence, compassion and

integrity to that role, helping shape important debates in this House.

Even those who differed with him politically respected the seriousness with which he approached public office. He believed politics was simply about serving our communities.

Following his years at Queen's Park, Michael Cassidy continued his public service as the federal member for Ottawa Centre after being elected to the House of Commons in 1984.

One thing that stands out most about Michael Cassidy's life is his commitment to public engagement and community leadership. He believed deeply in democratic institutions. He believed citizens had a responsibility to contribute to public life. And he believed politics should ultimately serve communities.

For Ottawa, his legacy remains significant. He helped shape discussions about what kind of city our capital would become: more inclusive, more connected, and more focused on the well-being of its residents. Many of the conversations we continue to have today are conversations Michael Cassidy was helping to lead decades ago.

Speaker, whatever our political affiliations, we all benefit from the contributions of those who dedicate themselves to public service with integrity and purpose. Michael Cassidy was one of those individuals.

I would like to finish off by acknowledging family and friends of Michael joining us in the chamber today, including Michael's son Benedict; Michael's daughter-in-law, Kimberly; Michael's grandson Joshua; Robin Martin, the member for Eglinton-Lawrence during the 42nd and 43rd Parliaments; and David Warner, Speaker during the 35th Parliament. We also have some of Michael's grandchildren and great-grandchildren watching from home, including Grace Kathleen Mayhew, Tobias Cassidy McDowell, Gabriel Seale, Owen, Penny and Phoebe.

On behalf of the government side of the House, I extend my sincere condolences to Michael's entire family, his friends, and everyone who had the pleasure of knowing him. Thank you for sharing him with the Ontario Legislature.

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

I recognize the member for Ottawa Centre.

**MPP Catherine McKenney:** Today I am honoured to have the opportunity to pay tribute to Michael Cassidy, former leader of the Ontario NDP, former member of provincial Parliament and MP for Ottawa Centre.

I want to begin, as I have in the past, by talking about how I knew him, because I really do think it says something important about Michael. We actually were not close friends. We didn't have long dinners or deep conversations about politics. What I knew of Michael I knew through work. And what I can tell you is this: Every time there was work to do, whether it was knocking doors, raising money, turning out for a candidate, showing up at an event, Michael was there. He never needed to be asked twice. He never made it about himself. He just showed up. That might sound like a small thing, but anyone who has ever run for office, organized a campaign, knows how rare it is.

There are many people who were once important in a party, and then, when their time in the spotlight passed, quietly disappeared. Michael Cassidy was not one of those people. Long after his years as leader of the Ontario NDP, long after his time in the Legislature and in Parliament, he kept showing up for Ottawa Centre and for the party. And what a history he carried when he walked through those campaign doors.

Michael came from movement stock: His father was a founder of the CCF, the party that became the NDP, and a pioneer in Canadian social policy. Michael didn't just inherit those values; he lived them.

He was first elected to Ottawa city council in 1970 and then to the Ontario Legislature. He held Ottawa Centre for over a decade, through victories and difficult years, through being leader and stepping down from leadership, and through everything that comes with a life in public service.

He became leader of the Ontario NDP in 1978, following the legendary Stephen Lewis—and if that sounds daunting, I am certain that it was. He was the most left-wing of the leadership candidates in a party that was still finding its footing after a period of real promise. He often faced headwinds. He led through a difficult election. And then, when it was time, he stepped aside—and he kept showing up.

He went on to win Ottawa Centre federally in 1984, by just 54 votes. For those of us who have sweated through close elections, we know what that means: It means every door was knocked, every phone call was made, every hour of volunteering mattered. Michael knew that. He had lived it. So perhaps that's why in the years that followed he was so unfailingly willing to give those hours to others.

He was also, I want to note, ahead of his time in ways that matter. In the 1970s and 1980s, Michael was fighting to add sexual orientation to the Ontario Human Rights Code, to protect queer people from discrimination and eviction. That took courage then, in a way that is hard to fully appreciate now, but Michael did it anyway.

There's a certain kind of political figure who is defined by the heights they reach, by the titles, the offices, their moments of power. Michael Cassidy had those moments. But I think the truer measure of him is what he did after—the fact that decades later, he was still knocking on doors and still willing to do whatever was needed, without fanfare, without expectation.

I now have the honour of representing Ottawa Centre, the same constituency Michael fought for across so many years and so many elections. I feel the weight of that history. I feel the presence of everyone who over the decades gave their time and energy and commitment to making the riding a place that elects people who believe in fairness, in justice, and in the dignity of every person. Michael Cassidy was part of that long line of commitment, and I am grateful for it.

To his family who are here with us today: Thank you for sharing him with us and with Ottawa Centre for so many years. He showed up for us, and we commit to always remembering him.

*Applause.*

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos):** Thank you, members, for that very, very fitting tribute.

RONALD EDDY

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos):** I recognize the government House leader.

**Hon. Steve Clark:** Madam Speaker, if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to allow members to make statements in remembrance of the late Mr. Ronald Eddy, with two minutes allotted to the independent members as a group, five minutes allotted to His Majesty's government, five minutes allotted to His Majesty's loyal opposition, and five minutes allotted to the third party.

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos):** The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to allow members to make statements in remembrance of the late Mr. Ronald Eddy, with two minutes allotted to the independent members as a group, five minutes allotted to His Majesty's government, five minutes allowed to His Majesty's loyal opposition, and five minutes allotted to the third party. Agreed? Agreed.

Today, we are honoured to remember and pay tribute to a former member of our provincial Legislature, the late Mr. Ronald Eddy, who was the MPP for Brant–Haldimand during the 35th Parliament.

Joining us in the galleries are members of Mr. Eddy's family—his wife, Janice Eddy; his son Wesley Eddy; his son Mark Eddy; his daughter-in-law, Susan Eddy; his grandchildren Brendan, Ryan and Emily—and his friends Brian Coleman and John Wheat.

Also joining us in the galleries are David Warner, Speaker during the 35th Parliament; Robin Martin, MPP for Eglinton–Lawrence during the 42nd and 43rd Parliaments; and Ted Arnott, Speaker during the 42nd and 43rd Parliaments.

Welcome.

0920

I recognize the member from Brantford–Brant.

**Mr. Will Bouma:** Speaker, I rise today to celebrate and remember Mayor Ron Eddy—and I say “mayor” because my children all grew up thinking that “mayor” was Ron's first name.

We are joined in the gallery today by Mayor Eddy's family, friends, and members of the community. I would like to extend my own personal, special welcome to his family, including his sons, Mark and Wes; daughter-in-law, Susan; his wife, Janice; and his grandchildren Emily, Brendan and Ryan.

Speaker, we are also joined today by Mayor Kevin Davis of the city of Brantford—welcome—and Councillor Brian Coleman and former councillor John Wheat of the county of Brant. And if my messages all got through, I would also like to salute former members watching: the Honourable Bob Nixon, the honourable Dave Levac, the Honourable Brad Ward, the Honourable Phil Gillies, Ron Johnson and Dave Neumann.

Today we gather not only to mourn the passing of Mayor Ron Eddy, but to celebrate a life devoted to service, leadership and community.

The first time I met Ron was just after I had moved to the community. Ron took the time to chat with me to get to know me, and he asked me each one of my children's names. I couldn't believe it: Eight years later, when I ran for council, he remembered each of my children's names in order.

Whether he was serving as a farmer, whether he was serving as a municipal leader, whether he was serving as our mayor or member of provincial Parliament, Ron carried himself with humility, with selflessness and a deep sense of responsibility.

Ron loved his family, Ron loved his community, and Ron loved trees—not necessarily in that order.

Ron was the kind of person who believed public service was not about titles or about recognition. It was about people. It was about listening. It was about showing up at every event and working tirelessly to make life better for those around him.

Speaker, my staff remember to this day Mayor Eddy giving up his seat to them at a county event. Small gestures like this were commonplace for Mayor Eddy, and they left an impression.

For decades, Ron dedicated himself to the people of Brant county, to Haldimand and beyond. He understood the values that hold communities together: hard work, honesty, respect, and neighbour helping neighbour. Those values were not just words to him. They were the principles that he lived by every single day.

Many of us will remember Ron for his leadership. Others will remember his steady presence, his practical wisdom, or his willingness to sit down and have a conversation no matter who you were or what political party you represented.

He also had a mischievous sense of humour. I'll just share this from his funeral because Mark shared it there. Years ago, he lost his finger in an accident. When he had company over, he liked to pull out that finger at some point during the evening and show that to them. We were at Ron's funeral a couple of months ago, and Mark made mention of the fact that Ron had always wanted to be buried whole, with his finger. Wouldn't you know it, he passed away and Mark searched high and low, everywhere through the house, and he couldn't find the finger. He told us this story at the funeral. He said, "But I finally thought of one spot, and sure enough, there it was." He reached into his pocket, and he pulled it out. And then he said to the funeral director, "I meant to do this before we came in here, but can we still put the finger in with Ron so that he's buried whole?" That was Ron Eddy.

He had the incredible ability to make everyone he interacted with feel valued and respected. In public office, that quality matters deeply. It builds trust, and it builds community.

But beyond politics and public life, Ron was also a husband, a father, a friend, and a proud member of the Brant community. The love he gave to his family and those

closest to him was the foundation upon which everything else in his life stood. Public accomplishments may be recorded in the history books, but it is the kindness that we show to others that leaves its deepest mark. His legacy remains all around us in the communities that he helped shape, the people he mentored, and the countless lives he touched through years of service.

Speaker, Mayor Eddy remains a profound inspiration in my political career, and I try to model many of his qualities every day. For almost every difficult decision I have had to make in this role, I ask myself the question, "How would Ron have handled this one?"

To Ron's family, we extend our deepest condolences and our gratitude for sharing him with us for decades and decades and decades.

And to Ron: Thank you. You were a friend. You were a mentor. Thank you for your service. Thank you for your leadership, your friendship and your example. May we honour your memory not only with words today, but by carrying forward the values that you lived out so well.

Rest in peace, Ron.

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

**Mr. John Vanthof:** It's an honour today, on behalf of the official opposition, to pay tribute to a former member, Ron Eddy. I'd like to welcome his family here and give you a bit of background on how it works.

When we do tributes, staff go through and pick members who could express the feelings most accurately. I never had the opportunity, the honour to meet Ron, but he was a councillor, former president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, had a lot to do with the International Plowing Match, and that could have been my bio. Now I find out from the member for Branford—Brant that he was also missing a finger, and I'm missing a thumb. In a way, I feel very connected. One of the great things about doing tributes and reading histories of past members—so when I started reading and I mentioned those things, I thought, "Wow, that was an incredible career." That was the start of his career. So many of us finish in the Legislature. He was just warming up. He kept serving his constituents, his friends as mayor. I think one of his greatest, from my reading, is the unification—I think "unification" is the right word—of Brant county. I think that really showed through. But the part that connected with me a lot is that Ron was a farmer, and so am I.

In an interview with Michael-Allan Marion—he did it in the field.

"A few weeks later, the newly elected mayor was showing a reporter a slight variation of his on-the-go style. Introducing the main element of his cow-calf operation, the Kitchen School Road farmer stepped onto a field where a couple dozen cows are grazing just atop a rise.

"Come on, girls! Come on, girls!" he hollers as he raises his hands above head and claps vigorously.

"Moments later, a couple dozen pregnant bovines came sauntering down toward him."

You can try to fool people, but cows are good judges of character; they really are. They don't come sauntering

down the hill for just anybody. And I mean that. To understand animals and to work with animals and to gain their trust shows something of your own spirit. The fact that he had that ability, and I think from what I've read, he carried that ability through—he didn't really lead people; he worked with people to achieve common goals. I'm pretty well known in this place for using cow analogies because I'm a farmer. You don't get very far with cattle trying to chase them or trying to be a boss over cattle. It doesn't work. It doesn't work long-term with people either. To have such an illustrious career and such a long one, you have to be able to work with people and you have to love people. And I think being able to represent your friends and neighbours so long is an incredible testament to his love of people.

**0930**

I'd like to conclude by thanking his family for sharing him with their local friends, their neighbours, with the province, with everyone.

My final close: The International Plowing Match is an even more illustrious group than this, because there are far fewer of them. So I would like to thank him for that.

It's an incredible honour to be able to stand here today and pay tribute to him.

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

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** I'm rising today to pay tribute to Mr. Ronald Eddy, the former Liberal member of provincial Parliament for Brant-Haldimand, a long-time municipal leader, and a dedicated public servant, who passed away earlier this year at the age of 94.

I never had the pleasure of meeting Mayor Eddy or getting to know him like my friend across the way, but from what I've read, it's clear that he dedicated much of his life to serving others. And it's an absolute honour to recognize the lasting contributions he made to his local community, to rural Ontario and to the province.

Before arriving at Queen's Park, Mr. Eddy had already built a remarkable legacy in municipal government. He spent decades working in county administration, first as the administrator of Wentworth county and later as clerk and treasurer of Middlesex county. He understood local government deeply and recognized the important role that municipalities play in our daily lives.

Mr. Eddy also served as reeve of South Dumfries and later as warden of Brant, earning a reputation as a thoughtful, steady and deeply respected local leader. He was someone who understood the value of public service and never lost sight of the people and the communities he was elected to serve.

His leadership of the International Plowing Match in 1990 reflected his deep connection to agriculture, to farming, to rural Ontario, and his commitment to that lifestyle.

In 1992, Mr. Eddy was elected to the Legislature as the member for Brant-Haldimand. Here at Queen's Park, he became a strong voice for municipalities, for infrastructure, agriculture and rural communities. Colleagues from all political backgrounds respected Mr. Eddy for his pro-

fessionalism, humility and collaborative spirit. He approached public life with a deep sense of dignity, integrity and a genuine commitment to making life better for the people he served.

Following his time in provincial politics, he continued to answer the call to serve, becoming the first mayor of the newly amalgamated county of Brant, a role he held for nearly two decades. During a period of significant transition and growth, Mr. Eddy helped shape the future of the county and build a strong foundation for generations to come.

Madam Speaker, Mr. Eddy's leadership extended far beyond his own community. As president of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, he worked to strengthen local government and ensure that municipalities across the province always had a strong voice around the table.

But beyond titles and accomplishments, Mr. Eddy will be remembered most for the wonderful example he set: a life defined by service, humility and an unwavering commitment to his community and to our province.

Public service, as we know, asks a lot not only of those who serve but of the families who support us. And I want to sincerely thank Mr. Eddy's family for sharing him with us for so many years.

Mr. Eddy was the beloved husband of 53 years to Janice; a loving father to Allyson, Mark and Wesley; and a proud grandfather to Tanner, Brendan, Brooke, Ryan, Addy, Reghan and Emily. And so many other members of his family and friends are with us here today.

Thank you for being with us at Queen's Park and for sharing him not only with all of us, but everyone across the province. On behalf of the people of Orléans, the Ontario Liberal caucus, all of us here, I want to offer my sincere condolences to you. May he always be a fond and loving memory. And may he rest in peace.

*Applause.*

WILLIAM J. SAUNDERSON

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos):** I recognize the deputy House leader.

**Mr. Anthony Leardi:** Madam Speaker, if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to allow members to make statements in remembrance of the late Honourable William Saunderson, with five minutes allotted to His Majesty's loyal opposition, five minutes allotted to the third party, two minutes allotted to the independent members as a group, and five minutes allotted to His Majesty's government.

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos):** The government is seeking unanimous consent to allow members to make statements in remembrance of the late Honourable William Saunderson, with five minutes allotted to His Majesty's loyal opposition, five minutes allotted to the third party, two minutes allotted to the independent members as a group, and five minutes allotted to His Majesty's government. Agreed? Agreed.

Today, we are honoured to remember and pay tribute to a former member of our provincial Legislature, the late

Honourable William J. Saunderson, who was the MPP for Eglinton and Minister of Economic Development and Trade during the 36th Parliament.

Joining us in the galleries are the Honourable William J. Saunderson's family and friends: his spouse, Meredith Saunderson; his children and their spouses, Janet Saunderson, Pam Saunderson, Susie Saunderson, Ian Werker and Steve Kersten; his grandchildren Cole Saunderson, Madeleine Werker, Nathan Werker, Spencer Kersten, Hayley Kersten; and his friends Nancy McFadyen, John McFadyen, Sharon Romeo and Estelle Alexander.

Also joining us in the galleries are David Warner, Speaker during the 35th Parliament; Robin Martin, MPP for Eglinton–Lawrence during the 42nd and 43rd Parliaments; and Ted Arnott, Speaker during the 42nd and 43rd Parliaments.

The member from Simcoe–Grey is also watching the tribute for his father from his seat.

Welcome, all.

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

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** It is my honour today to pay tribute to the Honourable William John Saunderson, described by Steve Paikin as one of the truly good guys of Canadian and Ontario politics and a calm, mature presence at Queen's Park during his term as MPP for Eglinton and Minister of Economic Development and Trade and tourism from 1995 to 1999.

Bill passed away on February 24 at age 92, leaving behind his beloved wife of 68 years, Meredith. He was enormously proud of his three children, Janet, Brian and Pamela, and took great delight in his nine grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

I want to offer a warm welcome to his family and friends who are with us today.

Bill's passion for politics began at a young age—one might even say from birth. His namesake, his grandfather W.J. Saunderson, was a three-term member of Toronto city council, and his other grandfather was a school trustee. At age 16, Bill volunteered in his first political campaign, delivering pamphlets by bicycle for the local Conservative candidate. He became a consummate party insider, working the floor at party conventions, and involved in the backrooms of numerous federal, provincial and municipal campaigns. In the 1984 and 1988 federal elections, he was national comptroller for the federal PC Party.

When he ran as MPP for Eglinton in 1995, he used his political skills to secure almost 50% of the vote.

**0940**

After graduating from the University of Toronto with a degree in history, Bill launched his career as a chartered accountant, later co-founding Sceptre Investment Counsel, where he managed a \$10-billion portfolio and led the company as vice-president for 24 years. When he was appointed to cabinet following the 1995 election, the Toronto Star declared, "Big business will be represented by one of its own at the Ontario cabinet table."

But Bill had many passions in life in addition to business and politics. He had an encyclopedic knowledge of sports, especially hockey and baseball. He served on many boards over decades, including Trent University's board of governors and the Hnatyshyn Foundation, where he and Meredith established the Saunderson Prizes for Emerging Visual Artists. He was a patron of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra and the Shaw Festival, and he was awarded honorary doctorates from the University of Ottawa and Trinity College, U of T.

Bill only served one term as MPP and chose not to seek re-election. But the Hansard from his time provides insights into his commitment to public service and the importance he placed on family. The record leaves no doubt that Bill was a staunch fiscal conservative, but he also cared deeply about issues like environmental protection and education.

In one debate, he stated:

"It is not enough to enact legislation and strong protection laws such as we have in Ontario.... The bottom line is that we must ensure that these laws are enforced and that those who break those laws are punished...."

"I think everyone in this place is committed to the protection of our environment. I have seven grandchildren. I want them to be able to enjoy the best possible environment in Ontario."

Speaking to the throne speech in 1998, he said, "Research tells us that the early years are key to development in languages and in sciences. Dr. Fraser Mustard is a renowned expert in this field, and I have known Fraser Mustard since my university days. I admire him and I agree with him 100%...."

"As I watch my own grandchildren—and I'd like to name them: Madeleine, Jacob, Nathan, Nicole, Dylan, Max and Cole—I never cease to be amazed at their ability to absorb information...."

"I'm a great believer ... in early childhood education. It only takes having grandchildren to make you realize how important that is."

Online condolences also give us a fuller sense of Bill the person.

Former MPP John Parker wrote that Bill was "a valued friend and mentor during and after the time we served together at Queen's Park. Smart, steady, calm, courteous, loyal and dignified in every way. But also possessed of energy and determination."

A family friend wrote, "I will always remember his inquisitive spirit and the insightful way he approached every conversation.... I always walked away from our chats feeling inspired by his sharp mind and his interest in the world around him."

Another commented, "Bill was such a kind and wonderful person, and I will always be grateful for the time I spent with him. He taught me so much about hockey, baseball, and most importantly the value of family."

Bill's legacy lives on in his distinguished professional accomplishments, in the joy he took in sports and in his Georgian Bay cottage, and, most of all, in his family—in his son, Brian, who displays the same kind of decency,

courtesy and respect, as an MPP, that Bill was so admired for; in his cherished life partner, Meredith; and in the children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren he adored.

Thank you so much for sharing him with us. We are deeply sorry for your loss but better for having had Bill among us.

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

**Ms. Stephanie Bowman:** It's an honour to rise today to pay tribute to William John Saunderson, the MPP for Eglinton during the 36th Parliament, especially as I have the honour of serving with his son, Brian. And I know that we all send our condolences to Brian and all of his family who are here today.

As a fellow chartered accountant, I have deep respect for Mr. Saunderson. It was wonderful to read about him and learn about his wonderful career both in business and in politics. I am sorry I didn't have the pleasure to know him personally.

What I understand is that he was a steady presence in any room he walked into and an undeniable grounding force. Throughout his career, he was a strong advocate for taking a level-headed and balanced approach to things, whether it was finances, campaigning, and his personal relationships. In an era marked by political turbulence and charged with ideological clashes, William was the reasonable one, looking out for the rest of us, not just his team.

His dedication to Canada and Ontario started from a young age, when he served as an officer in the Royal Canadian Navy. Later on in his life, many would come to describe him as a "captain," fearlessly leading a steadfast crew into whatever waters they may tread. That disposition was invaluable when he, along with six other colleagues, founded Sceptre Investment Counsel, where he was vice-president for 24 years, helping guide the firm to success and improving the financial livelihood of many of their clients. This financial know-how is perhaps why he was such a strong advocate for balanced budgets, understanding on the deepest level that to best serve its people, Ontario must first have the financial capacity to do so.

His long career in politics, spanning from his time volunteering, working as the Progressive Conservative comptroller nationally, and representing the people of Eglinton from 1995 to 1999, was characterized not only by his hard work, dedication and solutions-oriented approach, but also by his vision and his innovation. As part of his portfolio, while working as Minister of Economic Development and Trade and tourism, he championed the use of emerging digital technologies to make government efforts go further and reach more people. One of his most notable projects was bringing the burgeoning Internet to rural and remote parts of Canada, from the Far North of Ontario to small communities on the east coast. He was such a visionary that he even advocated for trade diversification nearly 30 years before the rest of us had caught up.

As a husband, father, grandfather and great-grandfather, Bill was always a reliable and steady presence at home, making it a warm and inviting place. He was known as an adventurous soul, seeking out opportunities to im-

merse himself and his family in nature, whether it was skiing, hiking, spending time at the cottage, entertaining guests and maintaining lifelong friends.

Outside of his calm and steady presence and his penchant for adventure, he was a deeply generous man, supporting causes dear to him through contributions to sports, culture, education and health care. His donations to these fields have had immeasurable impacts on their recipients, launching countless careers and helping thousands to pursue their dreams.

We are all fortunate enough to see Bill's legacy live on in our colleague and his son, Brian, the member for Simcoe-Grey. It was really interesting to read the interview with Steve Paikin last year where Brian said, "Watching Dad's career and how he made a difference through his civic and political involvement and becoming an MPP was a shining example for me." Well said, Brian.

Bill Saunderson will be not only sorely missed as a political figure, but as a husband, father, grandfather, great-grandfather and, of course, a great Ontarian. He was a truly wonderful man, and I send my condolences, on behalf of our Ontario Liberal caucus, to his family: his wife, Meredith; his daughters, Janet and Pam; and of course to Brian, our legislative colleague.

Thank you to his family and his friends for joining us here today—including former Speaker David Warner and my neighbour and former MPP for Eglinton-Lawrence, Robin Martin.

Thank you, Bill, for your many years of service.

Thank you to his family for sharing him. He clearly had a life well-lived, and I know he will be deeply missed.

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** I recognize the member for Simcoe-Grey.

**Mr. Brian Saunderson:** I want to thank all members of the House for your sympathies, your condolences and your tributes. I'm particularly honoured to have the comparisons that have been drawn. I'm not sure they're deserved, but it's wonderful to hear. So thank you for that.

When I got into politics—I must say, this is a very bittersweet opportunity. Certainly, this is not something I ever anticipated, but in hindsight, to have the honour to stand today to speak about my father is a great, great privilege.

**0950**

I think you stole my lines. Everyone has spoken so well about my father and his contributions. I think I'll come at it from more of a personal end.

Speaker, 36 years ago, at my wedding, I joked that it's tough—because for young kids, by the time you get your parents, you can't train them; they're set in their ways. In hindsight, now that I have children, I know that's absolutely not the truth. Having children changes your life dramatically—probably no bigger change.

But in hindsight, having said that, if I did have an opportunity to change my dad, I wouldn't have changed a thing. He was an incredible person, a remarkable man. And for me, he was a mentor, a best friend and a shining example, as has been said. So to be here today to have this opportunity to speak to you about the importance of my

father to myself and to my family, who are here today, and to the importance of this place to him—being able to serve his riding of Eglinton was a huge privilege that he cherished. And while he was here for one term—he continued afterwards with the Ontario trade corporation for seven years. That was really something that tapped into his financial expertise and the experience that he gained while he was here serving as minister of trade and tourism.

Serving Ontario businesses across the globe was a huge honour for him. But representing Ontarians and representing the many, many communities that he lived and worked in was, for him, a huge honour, a huge motivator, and something he did right up until his death.

In February, he was still a member of the Shaw Festival and, I think, the Toronto Symphony Orchestra. So he still served on two boards and continued to contribute.

My dad was a great believer that life imitates sport, and he was a huge sports fan. He particularly loved baseball because it's very symmetrical. As an accountant, he loved three strikes for an out, three outs to an inning, nine innings.

When he went to ask for his father-in-law's permission to marry my mother, it happened to have fallen on the day that Don Larsen pitched a perfect game in the World Series in 1956, in October. He was watching the game with my soon-to-be-grandfather, and he didn't ask. He was so involved in the game; he couldn't disturb the flow of the game and the energy. So when he got home, my mother, my grandmother and his sister said, "Well, what happened?" He said, "Don Larsen pitched a perfect game. You can't compete with that." So he went back the next day, and they got married. They would have been celebrating their 69th wedding anniversary this coming January 2027.

Bill was a true humanist, and he had an unshakable faith in our ability to evolve, adapt and to confront all challenges. He was raised during the end of the Depression and the searing reality of World War II. Dad believed that we are responsible for improving our world, for standing up for our democratic institutions and promoting equal opportunity for all. He believed that to core, and I think it really informed all that he did in life. His civic and community involvement on boards and fundraising campaigns, as well as his philanthropy, are a testament to that humanism. He served many organizations from many sectors, from sports to the arts, from education to health care, and from community to professional. These commitments were significant and long-standing, dating back to the early 1970s and continuing up to his passing.

Throughout his professional career, his political career and into his retirement, he never stopped giving of his time, of his expertise and of his charity.

As we have heard, politics was a lifelong passion for my father. He came upon that honestly, with his great grandfather, and they say that what is bred in the bone is borne in the flesh, and I think that is proof of that.

From the early 1960s, in Eglinton riding, he was involved in every aspect of elections, municipal, provincial and federal. As a founding member of the Spades, an

influential group that supported Dalton Camp and worked hard to change and shape progressive conservatism in his time—his number was the seven of spades, after his favourite player, Max Bentley from the Leafs. "Max" was his nickname.

As has been mentioned, he was also the comptroller for the federal Conservative Party in 1984 and 1988, in which they won the historic majorities and brought Prime Minister Brian Mulroney to power.

When he ran successfully in 1995 to serve his beloved Eglinton riding, it was a highlight for him. The opportunity to serve as Minister of Economic Development and Trade and tourism was a huge, huge point of pride for him. He cherished that, and he honoured the legacy of this place and looked forward to work every day.

While he was a very busy and accomplished man, to me his most remarkable role was as my father. He taught me so many things: to skate on our backyard rink, to slide into second, to tackle, to water-ski, to sail, and the list goes on. He coached all my little league teams—hockey, baseball and football. He was there for me whenever I needed him.

From Dad, I learned that there is no shame in trying and failing, and that to know victory, you must also know defeat.

From Dad, I learned that success is not measured in money or titles; it is measured by the size of your heart, the determination of your spirit and the strength of your character.

He was also an officer of the Royal Canadian Navy. Bill was the captain of our family ship, leading us on many adventures, here and abroad. He taught us how to read the skies, navigate the waters, stay calm when leaks happened, and enjoy the voyage and the spray on your face.

So my family thanks you for today, but more importantly, we thank our Captain Max, and we salute you.

*Applause.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** Orders of the day? I recognize the member for Essex.

**Mr. Anthony Leardi:** No further business.

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** There being no further business, this House stands in recess until 10:15.

*The House recessed from 0957 to 1015.*

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### GEORGE LESLIE MACKAY

**Hon. Ernie Hardeman:** In celebration of Asian Heritage Month, I rise to speak about the legacy of Rev. Dr. George Leslie Mackay and the enduring connection between Ontario—especially Oxford—and Taiwan that his work helped create.

Mackay was born in 1844 near the town of Embro, in my riding, and was the first Presbyterian missionary to serve in northern Taiwan. After arriving in 1871, he established a mission and dedicated his life to the local people. During his time there, he built a hospital and

Taiwan's first girls' school, and founded Oxford College, named after his home county.

Though more than 150 years have passed since Mackay first arrived in Taiwan, his legacy can be seen in the deep and lasting relationship between that country and our province. At the start of the pandemic, in July 2020, this friendship was even tangible. Taipei's MacKay Memorial Hospital was planning to send a delegation to visit us in Oxford, but they had to cancel because of COVID. Instead, they donated 150,000 masks to hospitals across Ontario, including Oxford's Woodstock Hospital.

As our province is looking for more international trade partners, I'm grateful for the enduring friendship that Mackay helped forge, as this partnership continues to offer opportunities for both Ontario and Taiwan.

Join me today to celebrate his legacy and the lasting friendship between Ontario and Taiwan.

#### CRIS DERKSEN

**MPP Lise Vaugois:** The classical and Indigenous musical worlds lost a powerful creative voice on May 16. Cris Derksen, an acclaimed two-spirit Cree-Mennonite cellist, composer and advocate, passed away last week at the age of 45 in a car accident.

Cris was internationally respected for creating a powerful musical style that brought together Cree and Mennonite influences with orchestral and modern electronic music. In their uniquely humble and innovative way of being, they broke down so many barriers. They had commissions from major Canadian orchestras, performed internationally, and opened doors for future Indigenous, racialized and queer artists through the Indigenous Classical Gathering at the Banff Centre, as chairperson of the equity committee for Orchestras Canada, and as artistic adviser to the Calgary Philharmonic.

Many people are remembering Cris Derksen not only for their artistry, but for the way their music carried story, identity, resilience and cultural pride into spaces where Indigenous voices had historically been excluded.

More than anything, though, they are remembered for being a kind, generous and beautiful human being. They mattered in a way that was deeply personal for a lot of people, and their loss is being felt across Turtle Island.

Rest in power, Cris Derksen.

Kinanâskomitin. Meegwetch. Merci. Thank you.

#### THE 52: STORIES OF WOMEN WHO TRANSFORMED TORONTO

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** Good morning, everyone—especially Madam Speaker. It's always great to see a woman in that chair.

Did you know that 52% of Torontonians are women?

I'm always looking for ways to celebrate women, so getting my private member's bill to recognize Persons Day in Ontario passed unanimously at Queen's Park was a dream come true.

An equal privilege was to enjoy the The 52: Stories of Women Who Transformed Toronto exhibit at the Museum

of Toronto with my terrific team. Nestled in groovy and creative 401 Richmond, Davida, Ethelle and Alonso toured us around the extraordinary recounting of Toronto's history of women changing the world.

The 52 shines a spotlight on change-makers like Jean Lumb, rebels like Elsie MacGill, and revolutionaries like Jackie Shane. Some of these stories of incredible women with their inspiring accomplishments have been untold. We were blown away by every single tale.

#### 1020

To Museum of Toronto CEO Heidi Reitmaier and founder Diane Blake, in the chamber today: Thank you for bringing people together to uncover hidden stories, illuminate history, honour its diversity, and help shape a more helpful and inclusive future.

Don't miss the chance to participate in The 52: Live Theatrical Experience, June 24 to 27, 6:30 p.m. and 8:30 p.m., at the City of Toronto Archives. You will not be disappointed.

#### COMMUNITY OVER CANCER GALA

**Mr. Steve Pinsonneault:** I rise today to recognize the Community Over Cancer gala held this past April in Strathroy. This wonderful event was started by a local leader, Dr. Tyler Damen. After his own brave battle with cancer in 2007, Dr. Damen chose to turn his survival into a mission to help others. He founded a charity called Chiro Care, and this gala has become a highlight of the year for our community. The money raised from this event is a lifeline for many. A portion of the funds goes to Strathroy Hospice care to support their vital work. The rest goes directly to the hands of local families who are fighting cancer right now.

We often forget that fighting cancer is not just hard on the body; it is hard financially too. There are so many hidden costs, like gas to drive to appointments, child care, and even hotel stays for treatments far from home. This charity steps in to cover these bills so that families can focus on what matters most: getting healthy and being together.

It was truly moving to see the room in Strathroy filled with so many neighbours, business owners and volunteers. The energy in the room was a perfect example of what makes our riding so special. It reminded us all that no one in our community has to face dark times alone.

I want to thank Dr. Damen and his hard-working team, and every person who bought a ticket or donated. Your kindness is making a real difference in the lives of our neighbours.

#### MUSLIM INTERSCHOLASTIC TOURNAMENT

**Mr. Chris Glover:** It's my pleasure to welcome to the Legislature 40 winners, participants and organizers from the Muslim Interscholastic Tournament. MIST is a tournament that brings together high school students from across the GTA to compete in more than 30 categories

spanning sports, arts, business, science, and, most recently, a public health competition where students pitched research-based solutions to prevalent health challenges. I can tell you, we could use some of those solutions right here in Ontario.

Last week, MIST Toronto hosted its 19th annual tournament since its founding in 2008 at the University of Toronto. The event welcomed over 1,200 high school students representing more than 50 schools across the GTA, alongside 300 dedicated team members, professional judges and partners, making it the largest tournament in MIST Toronto's history and the largest event of its kind in the greater Toronto area.

Top-performing students from MIST Toronto go on to represent Canada at the international MIST tournament, competing against teams from across the United States.

Beyond competition, MIST Toronto aims to provide students with a platform to explore and develop their academic, artistic, athletic and leadership talents, while fostering the next generation of capable, driven leaders committed to positive change in Canada.

Congratulations to all of those who participated and to the winners of the 2026 MIST tournament.

#### PUBLIC SAFETY

**Mr. Sheref Sabawy:** Last week, I attended the swearing-in ceremony of 70 new police officers who will be joining Peel police and helping keep our streets safe. This is the successful continuation of Peel police's ambitious goal to hire 300 new officers.

Last week, we announced Project Filcher, which saw 65 people arrested for 545 charges of retail theft. This project is one of many successful projects announced this year. Project Toretto led to 190 charges for alleged break and enters at commercial stores. Project Stratis had six individuals arrested for alleged auto theft. Project Nomad arrested an individual for allegedly stealing jewellery from people's homes. Project Ghost cracked down on home invasions and jewellery store robberies, with 12 arrests. Project Pelican seized \$50 million of cocaine and arrested nine people. And Project Cluster by Toronto police led to arrests for illegal firearms manufacturing.

Speaker, Project Filcher and all of the above projects are proof that this provincial government is committed to fighting organized crime by funding and supporting men and women in uniform.

We must continue to disrupt organized crime and keep our streets safe.

#### LABOUR DISPUTE

**MPP Wayne Gates:** Speaker, the last thing Niagara needs heading into the tourist season is a labour dispute caused by the Premier and his government.

Niagara Parks workers help keep one of the world's great natural attractions running. They maintain the grounds and work in restaurants and retail. They guide visitors and look after buildings, the trades, horticulture, public safety and the services families rely on when they

come to Niagara Falls. In Niagara, they are more than workers; they're our family and our neighbours.

They're not looking for special treatment. They're asking for a fair deal that keeps up with the cost of living. For months, they've been saying the same thing: "Let us negotiate." But we're hearing that the Treasury Board is interfering at the bargaining table and blocking movement on wages. That shouldn't be happening, and with the last day of mediation just days away, it makes no sense.

Niagara Parks—listen to this—is self-funded. Both union and parks leadership are proud that not one cent of public tax dollars goes to funding the parks.

Niagara Parks workers and Niagara tourism both need a fair deal, and the government shouldn't be the reason bargaining fails.

Our peak tourism season is starting. FIFA is coming to Toronto, and we're promoting visiting Niagara Falls.

The Premier and the Treasury Board need to get out of the way. Let them bargain in good faith. Respect the workers. And protect the tourism season that's upon us.

#### FAIRFAX CENTRE FOR FREE ENTERPRISE

**Mr. Deepak Anand:** Ontario is home to many bright minds. But for some young entrepreneurs, turning an idea into a successful business can be challenging. Like planting a seed, developing an idea is only the beginning. With the right support, guidance and real-world experience, those ideas can grow into successes that create jobs and strengthen our economy.

According to a 2025 TD survey, nearly three in four Gen Z Canadians are interested in starting their own business, highlighting the importance of supporting entrepreneurship and innovation.

That is why the launch of Fairfax Centre for Free Enterprise at Huron University is so important. Thanks to leadership at Fairfax—Prem Watsa, a humble, visionary Canadian investor and philanthropist, whose leadership, generosity and commitment to giving back continue to inspire everyone. As Canada's first centre dedicated to free enterprise and entrepreneurship, it will help students develop ethical leadership skills, connect with mentors, and gain hands-on experience through innovation programs and business competitions.

I would also like to recognize Barry Craig, president of Huron University, and Victor Thomas for their leadership and dedication.

By continuing to invest in innovation, entrepreneurship and student leadership, we are helping build a stronger and more prosperous Ontario for generations to come.

Thanks, Prem Watsa, for making this significant contribution. May God keep blessing you with health and wisdom so that you—

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** Members' statements?

#### MALE BREAST CANCER

**Mr. Ric Bresee:** I rise today to speak about a painful reality: cancer. Cancer is scary. It affects so many people.

Almost everyone has a friend, a family member, a colleague, someone close to them who has received a diagnosis of cancer, or, worse, has been diagnosed themselves. But thankfully, there's good news. Over the last few decades, science has improved the survivability of cancer through research, through new treatments, and through better health education.

Today I want to highlight one particular type of cancer that has had very little research and even less public education. And I want to thank my friend the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London for bringing this to my attention.

Male breast cancer is rare, misunderstood, and often detected late. In 2026, a projected 300 men will hear the words, “You have breast cancer”—20% of them won't survive.

**1030**

In 2021, at the age of 62, Brian Lynch from Port Stanley was diagnosed with male breast cancer. Early detection and a successful surgery by the Dr. David Bottoni saved his life.

During treatment, Brian discovered a devastating truth: Canada has no education program, no awareness campaign, and no network for support for men like him. Most men don't know they can get breast cancer, and with such little awareness, symptoms are often ignored or undiagnosed.

In 2021, Brian and Dr. Bottoni founded the Bottoni Project for male breast cancer awareness. The message is simple: Men no longer need to face shame, stigma or—

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** I'm going to remind members that the length of time for members' statements is 90 seconds.

## HOUSE SITTINGS

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

**Hon. Steve Clark:** I'd just like to let members of the House know that the night sitting schedule for this evening is cancelled.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** I know.

## INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**MPP Lise Vaugeois:** I would like to welcome, virtually, McKenzie Public School grades 4, 5 and 6 students and thank Alexander Lod for helping to organize, and teachers Catherine Biniaris and Rachel Parker—also, the grade 10 students from St. Ignatius High School, and Laura Nigro for helping to organize.

Hey, everybody—

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** This is our virtual gallery, remember, folks, and all these young people are watching virtually right now, as we speak.

I recognize the Associate Minister of Forestry.

**Hon. Kevin Holland:** Joining us in the Speaker's virtual gallery today is Mr. Bortolussi's grade 4/5 class from St. Ann Elementary School in Thunder Bay.

It was great to visit with you last week, with the Speaker. Keep up the good work.

Welcome to the Legislature.

**Hon. Lisa M. Thompson:** I'd like to welcome to the House Frank Hurkmans. He is the president of the port of Goderich.

I'd also like to welcome Dave Shorey. He is on the leadership team at Georgian College and is proudly calling Port Elgin home.

Thirdly, I'd like to welcome the political science students from TMU. They're here with their exchange students from Penn State. They're led by Seif Roushdy.

**Hon. Rob Flack:** I would like to welcome the Ontario Home Builders' Association to Queen's Park today. They're going to be talking to many of us. They're doing a great job getting homes built faster in this province.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** I'm so pleased to welcome my parents, Allan and Sheila Wood, here from Peterborough. They are celebrating their 50th anniversary.

*Applause.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** Welcome to Queen's Park, and congratulations.

I recognize the member for St. Catharines.

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** I'd like to welcome Stephen Fryers from St. Catharines; Jonathan Estrabillo from St. Catharines; Ed Steel; Darryl Wilton, OPA president; Robert Kennedy, OPA secretary-treasurer; and Kyle Gemmill, OPA member from St. Catharines. I want to thank them for their meeting today—with the Ontario Paramedic Association.

Also in the House today, I'd like to welcome my cousin Katie Chapman from Little Current, Ontario regional director at CNSA, Canadian Nursing Students' Association.

I'm proud of you, Katie. Keep up the good work.

Welcome to your House.

**Hon. Sylvia Jones:** As we wrap up Paramedic Services Week, I would like to welcome the Ontario Paramedic Association to Queen's Park. Welcome.

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Today we are pleased to be joined by 40 representatives from MIST Toronto, the only Muslim interscholastic tournament in Canada.

Congratulations to all the organizers, participants and winners who took part in the tournament last week.

Welcome to your House.

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** Back in the House today, in the east gallery, with a record-breaking 13 consecutive open martial arts championships in Canada—and a 28-time world champion representing Canada, most recently winning gold at the world tae kwon do championships in Scotland and the world karate championships in Niagara Falls—is Guelph's own Nathan Skoufis, guided by—

*Applause.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** The member for Oxford.

**Hon. Ernie Hardeman:** Madam Speaker, I would like to recognize in the gallery Director General Yi-Peng Liang and staff from the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office, and members and friends of the Taiwanese community. They were here to cheer me on, on my statement on heritage month.

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** At the end of paramedic week, I would like to welcome their president Darryl Wilton, their vice-president Katherine Hambleton, as well as Toronto director Steve Annett. Welcome to your House.

**Hon. Nolan Quinn:** I would like to welcome the president of Georgian College, Kevin Weaver, to the Legislature today. Welcome.

**Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria:** I want to welcome the members of the Ontario Marine Council who are here today for their annual lobby day. Welcome to your House.

**Mr. Ric Bresee:** I would like to introduce Mr. Nicholas Held, interim science director of the Canadian Institute for Military and Veteran Health Research, and my friend Amy Doyle, author of the book *We Remember: Canada's Story*.

**Mr. Deepak Anand:** I would like to welcome Azaan Ahmed, Benjamin Webster and Neelay Bedi from Mississauga–Malton, representing debatify, a local start-up that focuses on coaching students on public speaking, debate and model UN skills. Welcome to Queen's Park.

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** I would like to welcome radiant Remy Schmiedchen, master thespian at Concordia and my neighbour; dynamite Diane Blake, founder of magnificent Museum of Toronto, and happy Heidi Reitmaier, the CEO. Welcome to your House.

**M<sup>me</sup> Dawn Gallagher Murphy:** From my local Newmarket Islamic Centre, I welcome Imam Saad Bhaiyat to the Legislature. Welcome.

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** That's all the time we have for introduction of visitors. To people who are visiting, we apologize—but members, you can come back at 1 o'clock if you would like to introduce your guests.

## QUESTION PERIOD

### FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Speaker, this question is for the Premier.

This morning, Global News reported that the Premier just lost in court, again, while he was trying to hide his personal cellphone records. The Information and Privacy Commissioner told the government on Friday to start preparing to release the records within 30 days.

So will the Premier comply with the courts?

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

**Hon. Stephen Crawford:** Speaker, the FOI requests are proceeding as normal through our process right now, as we're updating our privacy and access to information act, which was included in the budget just passed a few

short weeks ago. What that budget was focused on is what the people of Ontario are really focused on: economic growth, affordability and jobs. This budget that passed a few weeks ago is focused on ensuring that the people of Ontario have affordability at the top of their mindset.

A 13% HST reduction on new homes is a game changer to the housing industry and the real estate sector in the province of Ontario. We had so many calls—people calling in from industry, individuals looking at buying a house that they couldn't afford for years. They are excited about what we're doing in this budget. That's what they really care about.

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

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Do you know what would be a game changer? If this government actually listened to the questions they're asked.

Back to the subject of transparency, and back to the Premier: Not only did the Premier waste taxpayer dollars fighting in court to keep his phone records hidden, but we've also learned this morning from Canadian Press that they are in court fighting the release of more documents—this time, about the government's blue licence plates. Remember those? I do. The plates that you couldn't see in the light or the dark—remember?—and the plates that the government spent millions of tax dollars on.

Why is the Premier spending hard-earned tax dollars trying to hide his tracks once again?

**Hon. Stephen Crawford:** Again, I want to talk about what the people of Ontario really care about right now in this province. They are focused on jobs and affordability.

**1040**

In the month of April, Ontario created 42,000 new jobs. That is an incredible track record we can speak to. At the same time, Canada actually lost 18,000 jobs.

People care about their paycheques. They care about being able to have the money to take their families out to dinner, to take them to sport events. This is what they're focused on.

Not only that, 8,700 jobs in the manufacturing sector—was a record month for Ontario—a 680% increase per capita over what the entire US has created in manufacturing.

Speaker, the previous government gave up on manufacturing. They said, "Manufacturing doesn't matter. It's all going to be a service economy." Nothing could be further from the truth.

We're reinvesting and rebuilding our manufacturing sector in the province, and we're proud of that record.

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

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** I get it, Speaker. I get that the members opposite want to talk about literally anything else other than this. But I'm going to go back to the Premier again.

We know life is not getting any easier for the people of Ontario, but while they are focused on just getting by, this Premier is laser-focused on one thing and one thing only, and that is covering his own behind.

The people of Ontario deserve accountability, transparency and, actually, honesty from their government—at the very least.

Back to the Premier of this province: What is so bad in those records that the Premier is ready to put our province's future at risk to hide it?

**Hon. Stephen Crawford:** The only way I could think of our province being at risk is if that leader and that party were in charge of this province right now.

I can assure the people of Ontario that we are focused on job growth—42,000 jobs in the month of April, 8,700 manufacturing jobs, \$222 billion in new investments landed since 2018. That's what we're focused on—protecting Ontario. That's what we were elected on last February. We're doing exactly what we said we would do.

Here are examples of some of the investments that have been made. General Motors: \$691 million in investment to build the next generation of V8 engines in St. Catharines. Coca-Cola: a \$141-million investment in Brampton, 500 new jobs—Toyota, Marvell, Chapman's, and AstraZeneca.

Speaker, what we are doing is setting the right environment for companies to invest in this great province, and we're going to continue on that track.

#### COST OF LIVING

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Speaker, back to the Premier again: On this side of the House, what we are focused on is making life more affordable for the people of this province.

Last Friday, the MPP from Humber River–Black Creek and I were at Seafood City in Scarborough to announce a plan that will remove tax from all food at the grocery store.

The cost of groceries has skyrocketed under this Premier and under his government, and they have done nothing about it.

The NDP government in Manitoba, meanwhile, have removed the tax from groceries.

So my question to the Premier is: Will he join us in saying no tax on food?

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

**Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy:** Before I address that question, I just want to acknowledge the great work of our great colleague the President of the Treasury Board, Caroline Mulroney.

*Interjections.*

**Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy:** Thank you to all members of the House for recognizing the dedication of someone to public service, which we all share in common.

Thank you, again, to her.

Madam Speaker, to address the question: I wish the member opposite and her party had joined us in the budget, where we cut the small business tax to help all businesses right across the province—375,000 businesses, many of whom have one or two employees—so they could have more money in their pockets. I wish the member opposite and her party had voted for the \$12 billion of measures for affordability in this budget.

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

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** I'm going to go back to the Premier, and I'm going to go back to the question that we actually asked, which was about removing the tax on food and making life more affordable for Ontarians. Manitoba just did this. It is not a difficult concept for this government to understand, I would hope.

But keeping costs down really does not seem to be on the mind of the Premier today. Property taxes are soaring under this Premier. He even forgot to include the homebuyer HST cut in his budget.

Will he commit to the people of Ontario that by this time next week there will be no tax on food in grocery stores?

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

*Interjections.*

**Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy:** Thank you, colleagues.

Where was the member opposite and her party—including the independent party—when we cut the gas tax to make life more affordable for people taking the kids to school, getting to a job, shipping goods to market right across Ontario? They didn't vote for it.

Let me tell you something: We are very much focused on affordability, and part of that is making sure that we have the lowest borrowing costs in Canada of any province. I'm proud to announce that just last week the credit rating agency Moody's and the credit rating agency Fitch Ratings affirmed Ontario's AA rating to keep our borrowing costs the lowest in the country.

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

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Well, I'm going to go back to the Premier again.

The Premier always says that he is in it for the little guy, right? Well, this tax cut is for the mom who's working multiple jobs. She's getting home late. She's picking up a rotisserie chicken and a salad so she can try to get her kids to soccer on time. I remember those days. This is for the working guy in Etobicoke who goes by the grocery store in the morning to pick up something for lunch.

Will the Premier put his money where his mouth is, and on Wednesday will he vote to scrap the tax on groceries?

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

**Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy:** The Premier has put his money where his mouth is, because we cut the personal income tax for the lowest-income bracket in Ontario—the lowest-income bracket—putting more money in their pockets. And guess who voted against that measure? The lowest-income tax bracket—you didn't vote for a tax cut for the lowest-income workers in Ontario.

On top of that, when we indexed seniors' payments, for the lowest-income seniors in Ontario, and doubled the amount of who could be eligible, from \$100,000 to \$200,000—indexed it to inflation—did they vote for it—

*Interjections.*

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

**Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy:** They voted against it. That's not putting your money where your mouth is. That's voting against where your mouth is.

This Premier, this government, voted for those measures, and we will continue to support affordability for all Ontarians.

#### GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

**Mr. John Fraser:** My question is for the Premier.

The last week we were here, there was a lot of hot air going around. We were talking about airplanes, airports.

But I want to talk about air rights this morning. Let's talk about a guy who got a whole bunch of money for air that he never owned: Carmine Nigro. He's also the Premier's appointed chair of the LCBO.

So here's a really simple question for the Premier: How does a Premier's appointee sue the government for \$500 million and still have that appointment?

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

**Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria:** Our team is committed to the largest expansion of public transit in not only this province's and Canadian history, but North American history, with \$70 billion over the next 10 years. That includes getting shovels in the ground on the Ontario Line—the first time in 60 years that we have tunnelling under downtown Toronto, because this Premier, our government, has the vision to build for the future. We're moving at record pace, and we're building the transit that this city needs and was neglected for 15 years under the previous Liberal government. We've got shovels in the ground. These projects are creating thousands of good-paying jobs for people across this province.

We're going to continue to move forward on this historic expansion of public transit to ensure that we change the way people travel across this province.

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

1050

**Mr. John Fraser:** Let's look at who Mr. Nigro is: He is the appointed chair of the LCBO. He's on the board of Invest Ontario. He was appointed the chair of Ontario Place Corp. He was vice-president of the Ontario PC fund—which is also known as a “bagman,” as in “bag of money.” The Premier also gave him an MZO for his project in Kawartha Lakes. And he sat at the family table at the family wedding. That's pretty tight.

Now he's suing the government for \$500 million—\$500 million. Metrolinx has settled, and none of us know—not one of us, except for, maybe, the Premier and the Minister of Transportation.

So, Speaker, through you: Did the Premier instruct Metrolinx to settle with Mr. Nigro's company?

**Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria:** Madam Speaker, that member knows that neither the Premier nor myself, nor anybody in this government, have any knowledge of this. This is a private matter conducted by the independent agency of Metrolinx.

What we've been focused on is delivering public transit, which includes the launching of the Finch West LRT, the Eglinton Crosstown, and also making transit more affordable—like the One Fare program. Over \$200 million of savings for hard-working transit users across this province is something that we've executed and has made a significant difference in the lives of everyday transit users. Whether you're trying to get onto the GO train and then use the TTC, or if you're travelling within the participating regions of York region, Durham region, Peel region or the city of Toronto, we're putting \$1,600 back into the pockets of hard-working Ontarians, because that is what we are focused on—a transit plan that works for everyone.

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

**Mr. John Fraser:** People have to ask themselves how a close family friend of the Premier, the Premier's go-to appointee and number one bagman can sue the government for \$500 million and still be all of those things. You have got to ask yourself that. There's a word for what we see here, but I'm not allowed to use it in here, so I won't.

Speaker, will the Premier come clean and just tell us how much money Mr. Nigro got?

**Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria:** I'll continue to speak about our historic transit plan that the Liberals and NDP have voted against every single step of the way, whether it's getting shovels in the ground on the Scarborough subway extension—a part of the city that the members opposite ignored for 15 years, when they were in government. Rapid transit wasn't built there. It was this government that got shovels in the ground and is now moving at record pace to get that line open for the residents of Scarborough. Over 100,000 people will use it every single day.

The Ontario Line: 400,000 people will use that line every single year.

For 15 years, nothing was built in this province, when the Liberals were in charge. They were building upside-down bridges.

We've got shovels in the ground on transit projects, on the Highway 413.

We just launched the main line construction of the Bradford Bypass.

That is a record and historic pace that we're moving at to build Ontario.

#### GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

**Mr. John Fraser:** Back to the Premier—but I guess the cat has got somebody's tongue.

We know that in November 2018 Mr. Nigro's firm started trying to purchase the 35 acres of air rights. But he then deferred paying for it and closing the deal twice. It's like they were waiting for Metrolinx to expropriate those air rights. Why? So they could sue? How did Mr. Nigro know that Metrolinx was going to need those air rights? How did he know? In November 2018—or October—who the heck told him?

Speaker, through you: In 2018, did the Premier or anyone in his office tell Mr. Nigro about Metrolinx's plans?

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

**Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria:** What I can tell you is, that member from Ottawa has voted against every single one of our investments into public transit in the Ottawa region. When we struck the historic Ontario-Ottawa new deal—hundreds of millions of dollars of support for that member's riding—they voted against it.

When we talk about Highway 174, when we talk about—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** The member for Orléans will come to order.

**Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria:** Speaker, at the Barnsdale interchange—those are investments that their leader should support.

In fact, the members of the third party, the Liberal Party—that member—wanted to toll Highway 174. That's a shame. Shame on that member. That's why we introduced legislation to say “no more tolling.” We're uploading that highway because we need to continue expanding it and growing our province—not just in the GTA, all across the province.

That's why we're committed to over \$100 billion in expansion on highways and transit across this province.

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

**Mr. John Fraser:** The minister shouldn't be so cheery, because he's the guy who signed off on that settlement, right? He's in this too.

We'll never know if the Premier called Mr. Nigro, because the Premier is hiding all his cellphone records.

That's why we passed that legislation inside the budget, Minister of Finance.

Let's recap this thing: A family friend of the Premier negotiates a deal for air rights that he couldn't even build on, and he wanted them for some other reason. He entered into a deal to buy them because he knew that Metrolinx would need them. That's information that only somebody on the inside would know.

Speaker, back to the Premier: Did the Premier call or instruct anyone else to call Mr. Nigro to give him a heads-up on Metrolinx's plans?

This is a simple yes or no, Premier.

**Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria:** Speaker, that's an absolute no, and that member knows it. I've answered that many times in the House, in the Legislature.

What I want to talk about is our historic ridership that we are seeing across our GO lines. Speaker, 76 million people used GO Transit and the UP Express last year. That's up over 10% from the year before, and that's a record and historic number that we've never seen before. Why? Because we're putting the investments into public transit. We're increasing service across many of our lines. We're ensuring that we're getting these projects built.

But guess what? That member—whether it was the 15 years that he served in the previous Liberal government, or even today, with the NDP—continues to vote against every one of our projects.

Whether it's increasing services on the Lakeshore East or Lakeshore West lines, the Kitchener line, the Barrie line—they voted against every single one of those increased investments. Whether it's about putting shovels in the ground on key projects like the Ontario Line, the Scarborough subway—

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

**Mr. John Fraser:** The minister knows how much Mr. Nigro got, and he's not saying anything, and neither is the Premier.

Let's recap: The close family friend of the Premier—a multiple government appointee, PC Party insider and the Premier's number one bagman—gets insider information, engages in a deal that's never closed, and then, without ever paying, has legal standing to sue the government for \$500 million. Stay with me, at home—it doesn't make any sense. He's offered \$75 million to settle, he turns it down—\$75 million is a lot of money for something you don't own. In the Premier's math, that's like two luxury private jets that he doesn't actually own right now either.

Then there's the secret settlement that you've got to know is north of \$75 million, Premier, right? You're a businessman. You know, right? You don't settle for less than what you got offered.

People can't afford groceries and gas, and the Premier is giving multi-million dollar secret deals to his close personal friend. Just what planet is that okay on?

**Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria:** Madam Speaker, do you know what was not okay? When the Liberals were tolling hard-working Ontarians across this province—Highway 412, Highway 418. Those were policies put in by the previous Liberal government that were hurting the pockets of hard-working Ontarians, and something that we removed.

Let's talk about policies like One Fare. The implementation of One Fare is saving transit users over \$1,600 every single year. Whether you're trying to commute in from the GTHA into the city—you're going to save that \$3 per transfer every single day. If you're doing that five times a week, that is significant savings for you and your family.

We're going to continue to build this province. Whether it's getting projects like the Bradford Bypass started on main line construction, which we marked last week, on Thursday—historic projects like that are going to continue to change the way people move across this province. We're committed to getting more shovels in the ground and building Ontario.

#### GOVERNMENT JET

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** My question is for the Premier.

This morning, the Trillium reported that the Premier has gotten a little too used to the good life. Since 2023, the Premier has pretty much stopped taking commercial

flights. Don't take it from me; take it from his own calendars—OPP planes, chartered jets, cushy leather seats.

Speaker, to the Premier: Did the Premier decide to spend people's hard-earned money on a private jet because he got a little too used to the good life?

1100

**Hon. Doug Ford:** I want to thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question.

Let's just go back to since I've been elected and I sold the jets that you flew around—with your previous Premier. Anyway, there is no one in the history of Ontario who has saved millions and millions of dollars by not flying with their previous planes—because I sold the planes. I saved millions of dollars. I didn't go on junkets all over the world and spend millions and millions of dollars. Therefore, I've saved the taxpayers millions of dollars.

I will continue flying on commercial, like I did just on Friday—I guess you missed that one. I was on Air Canada. Do you know something, Madam Speaker? I will continue flying commercial with the OPP, and there will be times that we'll be flying charter.

That's the difference between myself and other Premiers. Look it up. I have saved millions of dollars on flying around.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** Order. Order. The Premier and the leader of the third party will come to order.

I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Wow. He has really been roughing it, eh—roughing it.

How did we get from "I'm the only Premier in history who refuses to use the Premier's plane" to "I only fly private"? I guess this is how the Premier fell so out of touch with Ontarians—that he felt it was okay to spend 30 million of taxpayer dollars on a private luxury jet.

Speaker, I want to let you know it was not always like this. It's true. Until 2023, the Premier was almost exclusively taking commercial flights. But I guess after he got away with the greenbelt and the pay-to-play scandals, the Premier forgot who he works for.

Back to the Premier: Can the Premier explain again why he felt the need to get a private jet instead of flying commercially like every other Premier in Canada?

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** I recognize the Minister of Economic Development

**Hon. Victor Fedeli:** The most important number to remember is 222, because our province has landed \$222 billion worth of business here in Ontario.

Last year, \$35 billion came to Ontario from 750 companies. Those companies also hired 64,000 people. That's because they love what they see in the province of Ontario. All around the world, with all the turmoil that's going on, they look across the ocean, and they see that bright light of Ontario. They know they can come here and find a government that's responsible, reliable, predictable. It's all because Premier Ford has created the environment for economic development and is still the best closer—

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** Question?

#### GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

**Mr. Adil Shamji:** This year I launched a survey in Don Valley East to better understand how my constituents are doing. And while it has helped me stay in touch with the people I serve, it has convinced me that the Premier couldn't be more out of touch.

Madam Speaker, 62% of my constituents are financially uncomfortable or struggling; nearly two thirds are cutting back on groceries; almost a third are delaying medical care; and a majority are burning through their savings. The difference between the Premier's priorities and theirs is as stark as night and day, because as Ontario's fortunes have fallen, his taste for flying private has taken off. Today we're learning that two thirds of every single flight he has taken since January 2025 has been by private jet.

Can the Premier please start focusing on what's best for Ontarians instead of what's best for himself?

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

**Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy:** Through you to the member opposite, the member who has a riding here in Toronto: May I remind the member opposite that this Minister of Transportation invested \$73 million in the Gardiner so we can open it up quicker, one year earlier, to get people moving?

This Minister of Transportation also has been, along with the acting Minister of Infrastructure, to keep the Ontario Line, get shovels in the ground—moving that project forward, which will be a game changer for Toronto.

Of course, the member opposite forgets to mention—wait for it—the 44,200 new jobs that we created right in this province last month. That's more food on the table for those people who have new jobs. That's what building Ontario is all about.

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

**Mr. Adil Shamji:** Madam Speaker, my constituents have no confidence in those claims, and clearly, neither does the President of the Treasury Board.

We all know that this government has lost more jobs than it has brought in.

The Premier has governed since 2018. That's eight long years, eight failed budgets, eight missed opportunities to deliver the things that Ontarians are asking for.

My constituents are just trying to buy food. The Premier is trying to buy a private jet. My constituents are focused on getting health care. He's focused on getting an airport. My constituents are trying to protect their finances. He's trying to protect himself.

Make note of this: In Don Valley East, our top priorities are health care, housing and cost of living. And his top concern is flying in style. Two thirds of all trips since January 2025 and 90% of his last 10 flights have been private.

When will Ontarians get the service and care that they deserve?

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

**Hon. Doug Ford:** Through you, Madam Speaker: You think they get low, and then they get even lower, going after the president of the treasury, who is a wonderful person.

She has more brains and more character in her baby toe than you have in your whole body.

Do you know something?

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** I'll ask the Premier to withdraw.

**Hon. Doug Ford:** I withdraw. Thank you.

Minister Mulrone served as our Attorney General and did an incredible job.

The Minister of Transportation kicked off the Bradford Bypass and the 413, created the largest transit system in North America. We're going to continue focusing.

Madam Speaker, it's not a coincidence that everywhere in the country was minus 18,000 jobs—Ontario, April alone, 44,200 jobs. That's 641% more than the Americans. All the 350 million people in the US—per capita, we kicked their butts by 641%.

#### ONTARIO ECONOMY

**Mr. Logan Kanapathi:** My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade.

As our government continues our efforts to land job-creating investments from companies at home and abroad, we are seeing strong progress across sectors in every corner of our province. From tech in Toronto and Ottawa, advanced manufacturing in southern Ontario, and mining in the north, Ontario is securing its place as the best jurisdiction in North America and Canada to do business and create jobs.

Speaker, can the minister share an update on some of the recent investment wins across our province?

**Hon. Victor Fedeli:** You heard half the answer from the Premier—42,400 jobs created last month alone, manufacturing up 8,700.

On Wednesday, we welcomed another \$100-million investment from Sunrise Farms in Woodstock. They're constructing a 140,000-square-foot poultry processing plant, creating 100 new jobs.

The next day, Ross Video—this is a company that makes the sets for large studios like CBS and others in over 100 countries around the world. They're investing \$122 million in Ottawa and in Iroquois, adding 125 new jobs.

One week, three companies, three sectors, 425 new jobs, \$530 million in investment—that is how we are going to continue to deliver on our mandate.

1110

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** I recognize the member from Markham–Thornhill.

**Mr. Logan Kanapathi:** Thank you, Minister, for the exciting update.

If you look across North America, few jurisdictions can match the scale and diversity of Ontario's economy.

Under our Premier's leadership, we are leading one of North America's most robust and diverse economies. It is this leadership that has reinforced the need to strengthen our resilience and create more jobs amid tariff uncertainty, and we are doing just that.

Speaker, can the minister explain more about how Ontario is building resilience and landing investments across the sectors?

**Hon. Victor Fedeli:** To finish up the answer from the last question as well, it's now—you heard from the Premier earlier; we were in Sault Ste. Marie—\$530 million invested over three days last week, 425 new jobs.

We were in Sault Ste. Marie to hear from Tenaris—a \$306-million investment in Sault Ste. Marie alone. As Canada builds out pipelines, Tenaris will be there to make the steel that's used in the drill pipe that is now made in Ontario. They are going to modernize and expand their plant and add 200 new jobs in Sault Ste. Marie. Ontario is the steel capital, and this investment reinforces our plan to keep it that way and be part of the pipeline that is being built across the country.

#### PHARMACARE

**MPP Robin Lennox:** People living with diabetes are leaving their prescriptions unfilled because we're in a cost-of-living crisis. Four other provinces and territories got a federal pharmacare deal signed for diabetes medication and contraception. BC will receive \$240 million to expand drug coverage this year; Manitoba will receive \$55 million. Ontario will get nothing.

To the Premier: Why did you leave hundreds of millions of dollars on the table instead of fighting to ensure that every single person in this province can get their essential medication?

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

**Hon. Sylvia Jones:** The member opposite would know that Ontario has some of the most robust and generous health services related to prescriptions. Of course, we have, for those 25 and under, OHIP premium—we have for seniors, we have for individuals on ODSP and OW, and of course, we have a Trillium health plan. Over 50% of the population actually qualifies for any one of these programs.

It's important for the member opposite, as part of their role as an MPP, to be advocating and sharing this information, so that those constituents who are struggling in making sure that they get the prescriptions they need are aware of all of these programs, and assisting them in applying for them.

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** Back to the member from Hamilton Centre.

**MPP Robin Lennox:** Thank you to the Minister of Health for that response.

As she said, 50% of people in Ontario are qualifying for drug coverage, but we cannot be satisfied when half the people in this province are being left behind.

The Minister of Health delayed signing a pharmacare deal because they were too concerned with wanting to protect the profits of private drug insurance companies.

Now the minister is blaming the federal government for stepping back on its commitment to national pharmacare.

Speaker, the Premier and Minister of Health could choose to stop pointing fingers at other people and take action as a provincial government to ensure that every single Ontarian gets the medication they need.

To the Premier: Will you take action today and expand drug coverage to all Ontarians, regardless of age or income, so that no one has to leave a prescription unfilled in this province?

**Hon. Sylvia Jones:** I hope it's not lost on the member opposite that when the federal NDP leader lost his seat and lost his role as the leader, the federal government has stepped away from any further expansion of the pharmacare program. The NDP lost their leverage, and we have therefore not had any ongoing conversations with the federal government because they have paused any expansion.

I am happy to have conversations with the federal government when it's about expanding—

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** Member for Windsor West will come to order.

**Hon. Sylvia Jones:** —transfer so that we can control where those monies go in the province of Ontario to make sure that the individuals who are most in need are getting the help that they need.

#### GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

**Ms. Stephanie Bowman:** Carmine Nigro, a close friend of the Premier, sued Metrolinx for half a billion dollars for air rights he never owned. Metrolinx settled out of court, so the government won't say and doesn't have to say how many millions in taxpayer money Mr. Nigro got. But Metrolinx offered Mr. Nigro the \$78 million he was going to pay to buy the air rights, so we can presume the settlement was more than that. Mr. Nigro wanted to buy air, but he hit pay dirt on his deal with the Premier.

The Trillium reported that three Toronto expropriation lawyers said this is one of the biggest and strangest expropriation disputes that they have ever seen.

Speaker, Metrolinx takes its direction from the government. Through you to the Premier: Why was Metrolinx directed to settle this strange dispute with your close friend?

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

**Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria:** No one from the government gets involved in those decision-making processes.

What we do is help to support the largest expansion of public transit in this province's and in this country's history; we're doing so by building the Scarborough subway extension and the Yonge North subway extension, historic projects that were never done for 15 years, under

the previous Liberal government. They built nothing in this province.

We're reaching record highs with respect to ridership. Over 76 million people used the GO Transit and UP Express system last year, which is up over 10% from the year prior, because we are making those investments to allow people to use more public transit—more reliable, more service.

And every single time we bring forward those investments, the members opposite vote against it—every single time. That's a shame.

For 15 years, they had a chance to build transit in this province. They did absolutely nothing.

We're moving forward with a bold—

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** Member for Don Valley West.

**Ms. Stephanie Bowman:** Speaker, this shady Ford Conservative government is really good at making their rich friends richer with schemes like the greenbelt. Now they've come up with a scheme like one even the lawyers say they've never seen before: a lawsuit over air rights without the land rights attached.

The rich settlement paid by Metrolinx to Mr. Nigro's company comes out of taxpayer wallets. There's no doubt about that. What is in doubt is this government's willingness to be transparent about it and tell taxpayers how much of their hard-earned money the government is paying to a friend of the Premier.

While people worry about making ends meet, this government is making the Premier's friends rich.

Through you to the Premier: How many millions of taxpayer dollars is your friend Mr. Nigro getting in this air rights settlement, and who from your government approved it?

**Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria:** Transparency? The members can't even hold a nomination meeting in Scarborough Southwest. They're covering up the results. They're trying to do everything they possibly can to shove it under the carpet. You've got allegations of ballot stuffing. You've got allegations of improper voting. They can't even run a nomination.

But do you know what? We're focused on building in this province.

We're focused on making sure we continue to deliver for the people of Scarborough. For 15 years, the people of Scarborough were neglected by that previous Liberal government. That's why, whether it's building hospitals, whether it's building community centres or whether it's building transit, we are getting it done for the people of Scarborough.

We're going to continue to move forward, whether it's building the 413, which that Liberal Party opposed for so long, to help move people and save 30 minutes every single day back into their trip—we're going to continue to deliver on that historic mandate.

## LONG-TERM CARE

**Mr. Sheref Sabawy:** My question is for the Minister of Long-Term Care.

Seniors deserve safe and modern environments that support dignity and quality of life, close to their loved ones and their communities.

1120

That's why our government has been steadfast in our plan to protect Ontario by building new and redeveloped long-term-care homes to support seniors and their families. And we are seeing the results of our leadership. From communities celebrating the opening of modern homes to others seeing shovels in the ground on new projects, these announcements reflect a strong commitment to improving access to high-quality long-term care.

Speaker, could the minister please update the House on the progress our government is making to build and redevelop long-term-care homes and how these investments are improving care for seniors across the province?

**Hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta:** Thank you so much for the question, and thank you to the member from Mississauga—Erin Mills for his work on behalf of our seniors and for his advocacy.

Speaker, we've had an extremely busy month at the Ministry of Long-Term Care. We celebrated the opening of the new Broadview Nursing Home in Smiths Falls, bringing 128 modern, redeveloped long-term-care homes to the community. We also marked important milestones in Ottawa, with the opening of Southbridge Ottawa and the groundbreaking of a second Southbridge home that will bring a total 384 beds to the city. But that's not all. Last week, we announced that construction is under way at Schlegel Riverbank in Ottawa, which will bring another 256 new long-term-care homes to the community. We also broke ground on a brand new home, Carveth care in Gananoque, for an additional 104 beds.

Speaker, this ministry is firing on all cylinders. Since we've announced the brand new capital-funding program, 40 projects have begun. That's almost one project per week.

Our motto is "Build, Baby, Build," and—

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** Back to the member from Mississauga—Erin Mills.

**Mr. Sheref Sabawy:** Thank you to the minister for her response.

These recent announcements are welcome news for seniors, families and caregivers in communities across our province, including my riding of Mississauga—Erin Mills, where we are looking forward to the soon-to-open Ivan Franko long-term care.

As Ontario's population continues to age, we know that long-term-care homes must not only increase capacity, but also provide safe, modern environments that support dignity, quality of life and high standards of care. We also know that these homes play an important role in supporting local communities by creating jobs and strengthening connections within the health care system.

Speaker, can the minister explain how new and redeveloped long-term-care homes in Ontario are helping ensure seniors receive high-quality care while also contributing positively to—

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** Back to the Minister of Long-Term Care.

**Hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta:** All the construction starts that I've mentioned will bring close to 900 new long-term-care homes for our beloved seniors, which is a lot more than the previous party who was in power and their record.

The member referenced the Ivan Franko Ukrainian long-term-care home, which is a cultural home.

I always say, as Minister of Long-Term Care, our cultural homes are like the jewel in my crown. We are so special here in the province of Ontario, that we are able to have close to 75 culturally specific long-term-care homes. And we have shovels in the ground on many more culturally appropriate long-term-care homes, including a Muslim long-term-care home, an Italian long-term-care home, hopefully a Polish long-term-care home, and many, many, many more. So that's what we will continue to do.

This Premier and this government understands that our seniors need these investments. We have put \$6.4 billion into the largest capital funding program ever. And I'm just so proud to continue travelling across our entire beautiful province, visiting members—even members across the aisle—and getting more long-term-care homes built.

## SOCIAL SERVICES

**MPP Jamie West:** Speaker, across the province, 4,500 front-line service workers are fighting for fair wages and proper investments into public services. These services are in jeopardy due to chronic underfunding by the Conservative government. This underfunding has led to unsafe staffing levels, soaring wait-lists, and service delays for the most vulnerable people in our communities. This means children with autism going without core clinical services, people with developmental disabilities not getting needed services, and thousands of Ontarians waiting for supportive living units.

My question is, why is the Conservative government allowing our most vulnerable children and adults to bear the consequences of their continued underfunding and cuts?

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

**Hon. Michael Parsa:** I appreciate the question from the honourable colleague.

We believe that everyone in this province deserves to live with dignity and respect and in settings that support their individual needs.

The member is referencing funding. I can't believe this is coming from the NDP, who has voted against record investments in the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services.

Madam Speaker, people in this province know that the ministry's budget increased by over a billion dollars. He

referenced children with autism. We are now investing nearly a billion dollars in the program that the NDP supported the Liberals. A total of 8,000 families were receiving supports under the previous government. Today, nearly 50,000 families are receiving supports, thanks to this Premier, thanks to this Minister of Finance and, of course, the great President of the Treasury Board. When we say—

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

**MPP Jamie West:** Speaker, these social service workers are the backbone of care in our communities. They are working at underfunded, understaffed agencies. The member knows this. And instead of having their work valued and invested in, they're still fighting to recover wages that were suppressed under the Conservative government's unconstitutional Bill 124—wages that were stolen by the Conservative government. Many of these workers are supporting vulnerable children, adults with complex needs, all while having to rely on multiple jobs and food banks to make ends meet.

My question is, will the Premier fix the harm they caused and pay the full 6.5% in retroactive wages that they owe these workers?

**Hon. Michael Parsa:** As I said many times, we value the great work of every single staff in every independent organization. These aren't just words. These are actions. This is why we're backing the work that we're doing with record investments.

This year alone, through the budget increase, we're investing nearly \$4 billion in the developmental services sector. That is \$1.6 billion more than when we formed government. How did we get here? By a \$407-million increase in social services right across the province. This is in addition to the \$310 million that we invested in budget 2024. This is in addition to the \$320 million of investments that we brought in through making the temporary wage enhancement permanent.

The only disappointing part of this is, while we stand with every service provider, with every staff, with every family, the opposition—

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** Question? I recognize the member for Toronto—St. Paul's.

#### FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** Speaker, the Premier continues to fight to keep his government-related cellphone records secret, spending taxpayer money dragging this through the courts instead of investing that money in hospitals, in schools, in seniors, or housing. And today, Ontario's highest court told him to hand over the records.

But every time accountability catches up to this government, they change the rules, avoiding anything that gives transparency. We're seeing that now with the blue licence plates just today.

What is the point of courts and independent oversight if this government just legislates itself out of accountability every time it doesn't like the ruling?

To the Premier: What are you so desperately trying to hide with taxpayers' hard-earned dollars?

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

**Hon. Stephen Crawford:** As I mentioned earlier this morning, privacy and FOI requests are proceeding as normal. That's why we made changes to the legislation—very little change; 95% of FOI requests will still go through as is.

But what I'm hearing, talking to my constituents this week, is they care about Ontario's place in this world economy. They care about protecting jobs. They care about affordability.

And I'm proud of the record that our team has put together in the province of Ontario, which the Minister of Economic Development mentioned earlier: 44,000 jobs created in the month of April alone in the province; 8,700 jobs in manufacturing.

That is what the people of Ontario care about—getting our economic footprint back in line to be the leader in Canada. We'll continue to do that.

1130

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

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** Speaker, I think that the people of Ontario also care about and are really clued into the fact that, just weeks ago, this government buried FOI legislation in a budget bill, and today we can see exactly why. When the rules no longer protect them, this government rewrites them.

To the Premier again: Why are you always willing to fight transparency instead of just telling Ontarians the truth?

**Hon. Stephen Crawford:** The member opposite should know, being a past member of the media, that what we've done with our legislation is bring what we are doing here in Ontario in line with the rest of the country, including, I might add, your federal cousins in Ottawa. So I encourage you to pick up the phone, call Prime Minister Carney and ask him about what they're doing in the privacy and FOI framework at the federal level.

Speaker, what the people of Ontario care about here is investments in getting our province back on track. We are now the manufacturing engine, the economic engine of Canada. That government threw away that title to another province. We're bringing jobs back. We're bringing manufacturing jobs back. We're bringing jobs back in the energy sector. We're investing in health care. We're investing in colleges and universities.

We are focused on protecting Ontario. That's what we were elected on last February, and that's what we're going to continue doing.

#### SMALL BUSINESS

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** It's good to be back.

My question is to the Associate Minister of Small Business. The past two years have been like no other when

it comes to doing business in Ontario. There are more digital tools and resources available to business owners than ever before, and things like artificial intelligence are no longer new concepts; they are everywhere in our daily lives.

Speaker, businesses in my riding of Sarnia–Lambton want to adopt these new technologies. They know there's benefit and return on investment, but things are changing too quickly for them to try to keep up.

Can the associate minister share what our government is doing to help businesses in my riding and across Ontario to adopt these new technologies and reach their full potential?

**Hon. Nina Tangri:** I want to thank the great member from Sarnia–Lambton for the question and the wonderful work he does for businesses in his community.

The member is absolutely right; technology is rapidly evolving, and businesses want to get on board.

That's why, with the support of our Premier and this Minister of Finance, I was proud to announce last week that we're renewing the Ontario Digital Competence Centre through a \$5-million investment. What this means is that small and medium-sized businesses can assess digital readiness, work with qualified consultants and adopt tools such as digital payments, customer relationship management software, inventory management systems, cyber security supports and AI-enabled technologies. So far, we've supported 800 projects from SMEs across Ontario, and through this new investment we'll support hundreds more.

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** Back to the member for Sarnia–Lambton.

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** I'd like to thank the associate minister for her response and for highlighting the important steps our government is taking to support businesses and communities across Ontario.

While businesses of all sizes and all sectors have had to overcome challenges and barriers these past few years, our local small retailers have also faced significant obstacles. Rising costs, trade uncertainty and changing consumer habits, from things like online shopping and home deliveries, have forced them to innovate and market like never before, while still doing the day-to-day job of running their own business.

Can the associate minister elaborate on what the Digital Competence Centre program means for small retailers and how our government is setting them up for success?

**Hon. Nina Tangri:** Thank you again to the member for another excellent question.

Speaker, in my role as Associate Minister of Small Business, I've heard exactly that from businesses in communities in every corner of the province—retailers need support. That's why our government took action last year by launching the retail modernization project grant, the RMPG. In just nine months, we supported more than 375,000 small retailers with 50 or fewer employees through a matched \$5,000 grant to adopt technologies that make their business operations faster and easier. Through the RMPG, participating businesses have seen both an

increase in productivity and a decrease in operating costs, of 20%, a game changer for these retailers.

We're proud to support programs like the DCC because we know they help our small businesses thrive, create good-paying jobs and serve their communities. And when small businesses thrive, our economy thrives and Ontario thrives.

## EDUCATION FUNDING

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** My question is to the Premier.

Laura, a parent in Toronto Centre, is literally at her wits' end. She has a message for the Premier:

"Classrooms are overcrowded, teachers are burning out.

"Students would receive more support and guidance, and teachers would be better positioned to do their jobs if the class sizes were smaller."

The Auditor General confirmed Laura's observations and has called on this government to fix the problem.

Speaker, will the Premier explain why he is forcing students and educators into unsafe and overcrowded classrooms?

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** Minister of Education.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** I can assure the member opposite I'm doing no such thing—in fact, just the opposite: One of the reasons why we assumed responsibility for the Toronto District School Board was because they weren't putting enough resources back into the classroom. There were a number of pet projects that these trustees were involved in. Previous Ministers of Education before me poured millions of dollars into extra resources for the school board. The people of the city of Toronto, the parents in the city of Toronto expressed their frustration by removing their kids from Toronto schools, because they did not like the direction that the Toronto District School Board was going in.

So we're going to continue to provide additional resources for our educators, because when the educators have the resources that they need, when the school is focused on doing what is right for parents, students and teachers, you will see more kids come back into the system. And that is what we're going to continue to build.

I can appreciate that the opposition likes a system that is fractured, that is divisive. It fits their narrative. It's driving them crazy that we're bringing stability back to our school system and that the results are showing educators, parents and students are buying and liking what it is that we're doing.

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

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** Speaker, I'll tell you what's driving these educators and parents crazy: It's this Minister of Education. Smaller class sizes are not a luxury. They have seen first-hand how crowded classrooms affect the quality of children's education. Teachers are managing too many students to give the children meaningful attention.

The Auditor General reports that students with special needs are being ignored and placed on a year-long wait-list for service.

The Premier's own constituents have written to him with the same concerns. They know that with the recent round of teacher layoffs, the schools are expected to be even more crowded and dangerous this fall session.

Speaker, why does the Premier continue to ignore Ontario families and their calls for smaller, safer classrooms?

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** To be clear, the failures that the member opposite talks about are failures that occurred when trustees were running the Toronto District School Board, full stop.

That is why we assumed responsibility for the Toronto District School Board; that is why we put in a supervisor—to ensure maximum resources are going back into the classroom to support our educators. That is what we're supposed to do. We're supposed to have a system that is less divisive—one that focuses on student achievement. And that's what we're doing. I know it drives the Liberals and the NDP crazy because, again, what they like is division, when people are angry at each other. They think people learn when they fight. We think people learn and a province prospers when you bring it together, when you bring people together and you unlock the potential that is in every single Ontarian, and it starts with our education system.

So, no, we're not going to continue to allow divisive trustees to ruin education for our students. We're going to support students, parents and teachers, and we're going to give them the best possible education that they can have.

#### NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** Pursuant to standing order 36(a), the member for Ottawa South has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to the question given by the Minister of Transportation regarding air rights. This matter will be debated tomorrow, following private members' public business.

#### MEMBER FOR YORK–SIMCOE

#### DÉPUTÉE DE YORK–SIMCOE

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** I recognize the President of the Treasury Board on a point of order.

**Hon. Caroline Mulroney:** Thank you, Speaker. I rise on a point of order, although I confess that it is not actually a point of order, but I hope that after eight years you will indulge me.

I rise today to say thank you and goodbye. Yesterday I informed the Premier, and then this morning I informed my constituents that I will be resigning my seat as the member for York–Simcoe, effective June 5. This was not an easy decision. It was one of the hardest decisions I've made in my life, but it is the right one, as it's time for me to begin a new chapter.

Serving in this House has been one of the greatest privileges of my life.

To the people of York–Simcoe: Thank you for your trust and for your support.

To Premier Ford: Thank you for your friendship, your leadership and the opportunity to serve with you. I am so proud of all the important work we have accomplished together on behalf of Ontarians. I will continue to support you and our government in this next chapter of my life.

To my caucus colleagues: It did not take me long to understand why my father loved his caucus so much. I will miss you. We are family. We will always stay in touch.

And to all members of this House: Thank you. We may disagree from time to time, but there is a shared sense of purpose in this place that Ontarians do not always get to see. I have learned from all of you, and I will miss all of you—well, most of you.

*Laughter.*

**Hon. Caroline Mulroney:** To you, Speaker, to the Clerk, to the table, to the pages, to the interpreters, and to the security officers: Thank you for the professionalism, for your patience and the commitment that you make to this institution every single day.

À la communauté francophone de l'Ontario, merci de m'avoir accordé le privilège de travailler à vos côtés. Les progrès que nous avons réalisés ensemble perdureront, et je continuerai de soutenir notre communauté dans les années à venir.

To my extraordinary teams at Treasury Board and the Ministry of Francophone Affairs: Thank you for your dedication, for your counsel, and for your friendship.

And finally, to my family—my daughter Thea is here today: Thank you for your enduring love and support.

Theodore Roosevelt said it best: “Far and away the best prize that life offers is the chance to work hard at work worth doing”—and serving the people of York–Simcoe and Ontario has been exactly that.

Merci, madame la Présidente. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

*Applause.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** We will miss you. I'm going to cry.

There being no further business, this House stands in recess until 1 p.m.

*The House recessed from 1144 to 1300.*

#### INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Hon. Kevin Holland:** I am pleased to welcome to Queen's Park this afternoon, from my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan, students of the Thunder Bay Christian School. I look forward to seeing you later today. Welcome to the Legislature.

**Mr. Logan Kanapathi:** I am so happy to welcome Kalaimathy Vageeasan, Vageeasan Yogarajah, Ughesh Vageeasan and Rughesh Vageeasan to Queen's Park. This is their first time in the gallery. Kalaimathy Vageeasan is a profoundly refined and proficient Bharatanatyam artist, instructor, choreographer and the artistic director of Kalai Natiyalaiya Fine Arts. Madam Speaker, her son Rughesh Vageeasan was selected for the prestigious Howard Bar by the Army Cadet League of Canada. Welcome to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** I am very pleased to rise and to introduce members of the Ontario Federation of Labour. As you know, Speaker, they are a group of unions that measure 54 unions strong—over a million workers. In the House today are PSAC; COPE; USW; CUPE; Unifor; SEIU; CEIU; the society—they are all here to have their petitions presented.

**Mr. Deepak Anand:** It's an honour to introduce Azaan Ahmed from Mississauga–Malton, who has started debatify, a local start-up. Welcome to Queen's Park.

## REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

### STANDING COMMITTEE ON HERITAGE, INFRASTRUCTURE AND CULTURAL POLICY

**Mr. Guy Bourgouin:** I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy and move its adoption.

**The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Julia Douglas):** Your committee begs to report the following bill, without amendments:

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

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

*Report adopted.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

### STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

**Mr. Rob Cerjanec:** I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs and move its adoption.

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

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

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

*Report adopted.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

## INTRODUCTION OF GOVERNMENT BILLS

### PROTECTING ONTARIO'S STREETS AND COMMUNITIES ACT, 2026

### LOI DE 2026 VISANT À PROTÉGER LES RUES ET LES COLLECTIVITÉS DE L'ONTARIO

Mr. Kerzner moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 119, An Act to enact two new Acts and to amend various other Acts / Projet de loi 119, Loi édictant deux nouvelles lois et modifiant diverses autres 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):** Does the minister wish to expand on the bill?

**Hon. Michael S. Kerzner:** With this legislation, the government is protecting Ontario communities and supporting an efficient and effective justice system. Our goal, Madam Speaker, is to provide tools for stronger enforcement to address illegal activity and to better protect Ontario. We are taking action to protect people, including vulnerable populations, and increase efforts to support victims of human trafficking.

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

### ETHNIC MEDIA AND COMMUNITY MEDIA APPRECIATION WEEK ACT, 2026

### LOI DE 2026 SUR LA SEMAINE DE RECONNAISSANCE DES MÉDIAS ETHNIQUES ET COMMUNAUTAIRES

Mr. Anand moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 120, An Act to proclaim Ethnic Media and Community Media Appreciation Week / Projet de loi 120, Loi proclamant la Semaine de reconnaissance des médias ethniques et communautaires.

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

*First reading agreed to.*

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

**Mr. Deepak Anand:** Absolutely. Madam, Speaker, as we all know, Ontario is a global leader, with people around the world choosing our province to raise their family and build their future. Ethnic media outlets play an important role in reflecting, preserving and supporting Ontario's rich diversity. Similarly, community media outlets play a vital role in Ontario's communities. That's why this bill proclaims the week beginning May 1 in each year as Ethnic Media and Community Media Appreciation Week.

## INDEPENDENT MEMBERS

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** I understand the member for Kitchener Centre is rising on a point of order.

**Ms. Aislinn Clancy:** Madam Speaker, I seek unanimous consent that, notwithstanding standing order 40(e), two minutes be allotted to the independent members as a group to respond to the ministerial statement today on nurses' week.

**The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly):** The member for Kitchener Centre is seeking unanimous consent that, not-

withstanding standing order 40(e), two minutes be allotted to the independent members as a group to respond to the ministerial statement today on nurses' week. Agreed? Agreed.

## STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

### POLISH HERITAGE MONTH

**Hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta:** May is a very busy month because not only are we celebrating Polish Heritage Month in the province of Ontario as well as in our country, we're also celebrating Nursing Week. So I'm going to be using my time today to talk about these two very important aspects of my life, my identity, who I am as a person. I'm just so proud to stand here on behalf of Premier Ford.

I'll start with talking about Polish Heritage Month, which happens every May in Ontario. I was proud to speak in the first debate for this when the Polish Heritage Month bill was tabled by the former members for Etobicoke–Lakeshore and for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. I want to commend those members for bringing that bill forward and pushing it through to become law back in 2021. It means so much to the Polish Canadian community, and myself, personally.

To start, I want to take you through a bit of Poland's history and give you that context as to why Polish people like me are so proud of our heritage that we share with our Canadian friends and neighbours.

Poland's origins date back over 1,000 years, with the founding of the Polish state in 966, when Duke Mieszko I adopted Christianity. Over time, Poland grew into one of Europe's largest and most influential kingdoms. By the 16th century, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was a major European power at the time.

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However, Poland would experience three partitions, gradually dividing its territory between Russia, Prussia and Germany. By 1795, Poland had disappeared entirely from the map of Europe. For 123 years, the Polish culture lived under foreign rule, preserving our identity through language, culture, tradition and, yes, religion.

Poland regained its independence in 1918 at the end of World War I, but this freedom was short-lived. In 1939, at the start of World War II, Poland was invaded from the west by Nazi Germany and from the east by the Soviet Union. The country was once again divided and occupied. During the German occupation, Poland suffered immensely. Millions of Polish civilians and soldiers were killed. The Holocaust, carried out largely on occupied Polish soil, remains one of the darkest chapters in human and Polish history.

After World War II ended in 1945, Poland did not regain full independence. Instead, it fell under the influence of the Soviet Union and became a communist state known as the Polish People's Republic. Political freedoms were severely restricted, and the government was tightly controlled by the Soviets.

Now, despite these hardships, resistance movements began to spring up. One of the most significant was the solidarity movement in the 1980s. And finally, in 1989—which was also the year I was born—after decades of pressure and reform, communism in Poland peacefully came to an end. Free elections were held, and Poland began its transition to democracy.

Today, Poland stands as a modern European nation shaped by a history of hardship and courage. Its past reminds us of the value of independence, resilience and the enduring strength of its national identity.

I was actually in Poland just a few weeks ago, visiting my grandmother. My grandmother is 95 years old, and she has taught me so much. I remember when I was a young girl visiting during summertime, and sometimes over Christmas holidays as well, and she would tell me about the years of occupation and what it felt like. She told me that at one point, as a seven-year-old girl, she had a Russian gun pointed to her face. She told me about Russian soldiers coming in and taking her father's harvest, all the apples, potatoes, the livestock—taking those away. She told me about the incredible story of survival of our people, the Polish people. So I've learned so much from her.

Today, grandma—she may not always recognize me. I spent about two weeks in Poland taking care of her and giving a bit of respite to my uncle who is the primary caregiver. She recognized me about half of the time. But she did recognize my son Matthew, and she would always light up whenever I brought Matthew into the room.

So it was just such a deeply meaningful moment for me to be able to be there to take care of my very own grandmother because, of course, I take care, or I do my very best to take care, of seniors here in the province of Ontario. So to be able to have that intergenerational moment, when Matthew—I just placed him in my grandma's bed and we shared some laughs, and we shared some stories. Even for those few moments when she was lucid and she knew exactly what was happening—those are moments that I will cherish for the rest of my life.

That's why I'm so proud to be a Polish Canadian and to be able to serve in the capacity of Minister of Long-Term Care as well, because, to me, my grandmother means the world. And I know for every single member in this chamber and for the families that we get to serve—I know that their parents and their grandparents, the ones that they entrust in our care each and every day, they also mean everything. And so it has been just an utmost privilege.

Speaker, as a proud Polish Canadian myself, I'd like to talk a little bit today about my heritage and what it means to be Polish Canadian. Growing up, I had the opportunity to embrace my Polish culture and heritage that is so vibrant in my riding of Mississauga Centre, the GTA and across all of Ontario. We have close to 600,000 Canadians of Polish heritage and almost 1 million people living in Canada who identify themselves as Polish. Polish Canadians have been in Ontario for over 100 years, and have contributed so much to our province and our country.

I've talked about this before, but I will say it again: When I first came to Canada, it was very scary for me. I was in a new country that I didn't know. I didn't speak the language, and I didn't know very many people. But in those few years early on, I was able to join the Polish Scouts of Canada. It allowed me to have a home away from home. It allowed me to meet people who spoke my language and build real life skills—a lot of leadership lessons there, for sure. Coupled with going to Polish school, I was able to meet friends that I formed lifelong friendships with, and these experiences were fundamental to developing my strong sense of identity today.

Now that I myself am a mother, I'm very excited to pass on these traditions and the language that I learned. For sure Matthew will be going to Polish school, no question. Of course, Polish Scouts and attending St. Maximilian Kolbe Polish church will definitely be part of our family's upbringing.

To close off this portion of my time, I wanted to wish everyone a very happy Polish Heritage Month. We are going to keep the celebrations going into June. We have the Mississauga Polish festival, and I invite everyone on June 5. I encourage all members here in the Legislature to come out to Celebration Square, enjoy our great culture, our cuisine—pierogi and paczki. Perhaps the Premier will be stopping by, because he calls me his pierogi gal, and he loves our Polish paczki and pierogies as well.

Happy Polish Heritage Month. Long live Poland. Niech żyje Polska.

## NURSES

### INFIRMIÈRES ET INFIRMIERS

**Hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta:** Now I would like to speak a little bit about National Nursing Week. Unfortunately, I was away for the majority of that week. I was in Iqaluit with the Minister of Seniors and Accessibility—our super senior himself—for a federal-provincial-territorial meeting. But of course, Nursing Week is something that is near and dear to my heart. I have celebrated it ever since becoming a nurse back in 2016, so I believe it's been 10 years this year that I have been proudly holding the title of registered nurse.

Nursing Week is a chance to recognize and celebrate the incredible work that our nurses do in long-term-care homes, in our hospitals and in other health care settings. I want to take a bit of time to talk about my own nursing journey. I always knew that I wanted to dedicate my life to the service of others, and when I finished my first diploma in human and molecular biology, I didn't really find a job within that field, and I really didn't want to work in front of a computer. I knew that I wanted to work with people, and I wanted to develop skills that cannot be automated, that I can't be replaced by a robot down the line. That is when I did a little bit of searching, and I decided to enrol in a fast-tracked bachelor of nursing because I already had a bachelor of science at the time.

Actually, that was a great transition into my political career because nurses are one of the most trusted members

by the general public, so it was really funny when I went from being a nurse, which is the most trusted profession, to being a politician, which is, of course, the least trusted profession. I think MPP Tyler can attest to that transition.

I've worked for over a decade, and I still make a point to take some shifts at my hospital, Etobicoke General Hospital, in the emergency room. I go in at least once a month to be able to maintain my licence with the CNO. I think it's very, very important that we have the ability to do that. I worked extremely hard to become a nurse, and so I want to maintain that skill.

Also, those shifts that I do take in the ER keep me very grounded to the realities of what Ontarians are experiencing. They give me the incredible camaraderie that exists between nurses and other health care professionals. So this super club of health care heroes, as we've been called by the public—being a nurse really allows me access into that.

Once a nurse, forever a nurse, and I will always hold that title very proudly. My only prouder title is the title of mom.

The nursing title allowed me to gain those practical skills and that interprofessional dimension to work directly with patients and have that very close human rapport between a nurse and a patient or a nurse and a resident. That is something that I truly cherish.

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I've developed many therapeutic relationships with many patients over the years, and I truly feel empowered and inspired by the stories that patients have shared with me and also by the very intimate and sometimes more difficult moments that we encounter as nurses. I feel honoured that I'm able to be that health care worker and to be able to help in a very real, practical way. That work is very meaningful and important to me.

This year's theme was "The Power of Nurses to Transform Health," which I think is extremely timely. We know that nurses are one of the most trusted professions among the public, so they truly have that power to effect change, and they have that front-line knowledge to make real change—I think I'm a bit biased when I say that.

Je tiens à souligner auprès des infirmières et infirmiers qu'il existe de nombreuses occasions pour eux et elles de devenir des leaders. Ce ne s'applique pas seulement à des postes au sein de leurs services et/ou de leurs organisations, mais également en tant que défenseurs et défenseuses de changements de politiques qui permettront d'améliorer les résultats pour les patients et les conditions de travail des infirmières et infirmiers. This doesn't just apply to positions within their departments or within their organization, but also as advocates for policy changes that will result in better outcomes for patients and better working conditions for nurses.

There are many, many organizations that I had the privilege of meeting over the years, not only as a nurse, of course, but also as Minister of Long-Term Care. WeRPN is an incredible organization that works as the voice for RPNs and regroups RPNs across the province of Ontario. I wanted to congratulate Dianne Martin, the CEO, who

will be leaving us soon for a well-deserved retirement. It's just incredible work that she's done to uplift the organization and to be a real partner for the government of Ontario.

I'm so proud that through work with WeRPN, we are investing into a program called BEGIN, which is funded by the Ministry of Long-term Care, through which PSWs can upskill to become RPNs or RPNs can upskill to become RNs. I'm just very, very proud of that. We as the government of Ontario, led by Premier Ford, continue to invest in our health care workers, and in our nurses specifically, to allow them to career-ladder and to allow them better professional development and training opportunities.

Of course, I'm also proud of RNAO and the incredible work that they have done over the years, speaking out for nursing, speaking out for health. I have had my humble start in that organization when I was the political action executive nursing officer—I believe that was my title for the chapter of Brampton and Mississauga. It really allowed me opportunities to come to Queen's Park before I was elected, to meet with politicians, to meet with Minister Hoskins at the time, and to really hone in those advocacy skills that became so pertinent to my future career as a politician.

We also have, of course, the NPAO, the Nurse Practitioners' Association of Ontario. They are doing incredible work advocating for nurse practitioners. We know that we have 6,000 amazing nurse practitioners in the province of Ontario, and they are leading in every corner of health care. I know I'm so proud that we have close to 300 of them working in long-term care. We're looking to expand that number in the future because we know when nurse practitioners get involved, the patient outcomes improve and resident outcomes improve. Everyone has a place at the table when it comes to expanding our health care services, whether it's in long-term care, in hospitals, home care or other community settings, so we'll certainly be looking forward to working with NPAO to ensure that nurse practitioners are utilized to the best possible scope of their practice.

I'll just spend the last few minutes talking about the different investments that we have made into nurses. I was really proud to stand alongside Minister Nolan Quinn, as well as Minister Sylvia Jones, last year when we announced a historical expansion of nursing seats in the province of Ontario. We have added an additional 2,200 seats; that includes RPNs, RNs and nurse practitioners. It was proudly funded by the Ministry of Long-Term Care. I think that was a very wise investment, and we'll be seeing some of these cohorts starting—they're about in the middle of their studies currently. But these investments will certainly pay off when we'll be looking to hire more nurses into long-term care and other health care settings.

Recently, we've also added \$5.5 million in funding to the Supporting Professional Growth Fund for a total of \$15.5 million this year to train and upskill staff currently working in long-term-care homes. Since 2022, this fund has helped more than 92,000 eligible staff advance their

careers and provide better resident care. That means more nurses in long-term-care homes can get trained in things like wound care or phlebotomy, which not only helps nurses to advance their careers and their practice, but also to deliver better care to our beloved residents.

We are also expanding the Living Classroom program to include practical nurses' living classrooms, allowing students to stay in their home communities as they study and apply what they learn as they work with the residents. The Living Classroom is absolutely one of my favourite programs. I believe we have about 20 across Ontario, and we have announced an expansion—don't quote me on the number, but I believe it will be close to 40. To be honest, we need every single one of them, because these living classrooms allow students—whether it's PSW students or RPN students—to be in the actual long-term-care home to learn their skills in this classroom that we have set up for them. Then, as soon as the theory part of the training is done, they can go up on the floor and practise these skills with the residents right there and then.

It gives that exposure to the learners, allows them to practise these skills in real time and to learn in real time in a very safe environment. Not only that—once they graduate, it basically guarantees them a job within that long-term-care home. So it's a win-win-win situation. We're always looking for partners through our college and university system to expand these living classrooms. I'm just really, really excited about these opportunities.

In closing, I'm very proud to be a registered nurse. It's a title that I will always cherish. It's a title that I will hold for the rest of my professional life. I think nurses do incredible work in our province, not only at the bedside, but also as advocates, as leaders, whether it's in politics or not. I do think that the more nurses we have in politics, the healthier society we will have. I do believe we should be considering health impacts in every single policy that we put forward.

So I encourage each and every one of you—I know many of you had the opportunity to meet with nurses over Nursing Week—to continue that dialogue, to continue learning from our amazing nurses and to keep on celebrating nurses across Ontario.

**Hon. Stephen Lecce:** Point of order, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos):** I recognize the Minister of Energy on a point of order.

**Hon. Stephen Lecce:** I'm so sorry to interrupt this important debate. I did want to just give a quick recognition to the mayor of King, Steve Pellegrini, who has joined us today, as well as Bianca Cirella. Thank you so much for joining us and for your work for the people of King. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos):** And of course, the Minister of Energy recognizes this is not a point of order.

**Hon. Stephen Lecce:** I'm aware. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos):** We welcome the guests who are here with us.

Further debate?

### POLISH HERITAGE MONTH

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** It is a genuine honour to rise on behalf of the residents of Parkdale–High Park in honour of both Polish Heritage Month and Nursing Week. As a member of provincial Parliament representing the riding of Roncesvalles, which is also known as Little Poland, I can say without hesitation both that this community has shaped who I am as a public servant and that Polish Heritage Month itself reminds me of exactly why I chose to serve.

See, this year we mark the 235th anniversary of the constitution from May 3, 1791. This is a document of extraordinary courage. If you can imagine, at a time when kings ruled across Europe, Polish reformers dared to imagine a government that shared power, that protected rights and that put the dignity of its citizens at its very foundation. It was one of the very first modern constitutions in Europe, and though it was threatened and suppressed when Poland was all but erased from the map for about 123 years, its spirit could not be extinguished, and it lived on.

Speaker, I want to tell you that same spirit found its way into the streets of Roncesvalles where I call home. After the Second World War, waves of Polish families arrived in Toronto, many of them fleeing the very kind of oppression that the 1791 constitution was written to prevent. And though they came with little, they brought their love of community. They brought an unbreakable work ethic, a resilient culture that thrived in the new land.

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Here in Toronto, they raised St. Casimir's Parish, a place of faith that became the cornerstone of an entire neighbourhood. They established Copernicus Lodge so that elders would be cared for with dignity. They created what became the largest Polish festival in North America on Roncesvalles Avenue, drawing over 300,000 people each year. Walking down Roncesvalles, you can still feel the warmth of that founding generation.

When I stand in this chamber, I carry with me the stories of Polish Canadians who built their lives here, who gave their children and grandchildren a brighter future. Their determination is part of our riding's identity. It inspires me, Speaker, every single day.

Before I close, I want to take a moment, because I think it's this community, the Polish community, that knows most what it means to be cared for in your darkest moments. Polish Canadians built Copernicus Lodge because they understood that dignity in illness and in aging matters.

### NURSES

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** It feels right to also recognize another group of people who show up every single day in order to care for us: the nurses of Ontario.

*Interjection.*

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** Yes. During this Nursing Week, we celebrate the more than 180,000 registered nurses, registered practical nurses, nurse practitioners who hold our health system together.

I want to start with a story from my own community. During the pandemic, when the systems that people relied on all but closed up, Anne-Marie Mohler, a local United Church parish nurse, stepped forward. She did 30 to 50 hours of volunteering—unpaid services—to start and run a food bank, provide health care navigation, support women fleeing intimate partner violence and bring dignity to those who were struggling with both mental and physical health. While others were isolated at home, she provided front-line care because that is what nurses do. She is who we are talking about when we talk about the nursing profession in Ontario.

Over the past year, as I have become an MPP, nurses from across the province have come to Queen's Park to talk to me. They have invited me to visit their workplace, and to a person, they centre the patients in their care. To each and every one of them this week, along with all the Legislature, I want to say happy Nursing Week.

But I know—I do know—that our words ring hollow, Speaker, if they're not backed up with tangible support. The truth is, Ontario has not kept up with its promises to nurses. Our health care spending per person is the lowest in Canada. Nurses are suffering, they tell me, from overwork, from burnout. Nearly one in two has considered leaving the profession, this noble profession that my colleague was speaking about—nearly one in two is considering leaving.

The associations of nurses have told us exactly what they need: safe nurse-to-patient ratios; competitive, harmonized wages; and thousands of new seats in the educative programs. I am committed, Speaker, to carrying these demands into the Legislature. Happy—

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

### POLISH HERITAGE MONTH

**MPP Tyler Watt:** I want to begin by recognizing the Minister of Long-Term Care. I thank her for sharing her really inspiring story. Her words, I very much relate to. I can't tell you how proud I was to see a registered nurse become the long-term-care minister here in Ontario. It is just really wonderful to see you stand up, share your story and continue to advocate for nurses. I always see that nurse lens in everything you talk about, so thank you.

Now I'll talk about Polish Heritage Month before I get on to nursing. We're here to recognize Polish Heritage Month and celebrate the incredible contributions of Polish Canadians here in Ontario and across our country. Ontario is home to a vibrant and proud Polish community, a community that has contributed enormously to the social, cultural and economic fabric of this province for generations. From health care workers and educators to entrepreneurs, tradespeople, artists and community leaders, Polish Canadians have helped build the Ontario that we know today.

Polish Heritage Month is also an opportunity to recognize the resilience and strength of a community that has preserved its language, traditions, faith and culture across

generations. Through festivals, cultural organizations, churches and community events, Polish Canadians continue to share a rich heritage that strengthens the diversity of our province.

It is also a time to reflect on the values that have long been associated with the Polish community: perseverance, solidarity, democracy and a deep commitment to family and community. Those values continue to inspire people not only within the Polish community but across Ontario as a whole.

In Nepean and across Ottawa, I have had the opportunity to meet with many members of the Polish community who continue to make a meaningful difference every single day through volunteerism, advocacy and community leadership.

Today I want to thank the Polish community for all that they contribute to our province and wish everyone celebrating a meaningful and joyful Polish Heritage Month.

#### NURSES

**MPP Tyler Watt:** Now to move on to nurses' week. I actually appreciate that the minister has extended it into this week. We should always be celebrating nurses, not just one week where we recognize their hard work. It's been wonderful to see the minister and my colleague stand up and talk about the importance of nurses among many other health care allies like PSWs, logistics workers, physicians, physiotherapists and occupational health workers. We are the backbone of a system who are there to focus on our patients and deliver them the best quality of care that we can.

We all know—it's no secret—that our system is struggling. Yet nurses still show up. They still show up no matter how burnt out, no matter how exhausted they are feeling, often not even knowing what you are walking into.

I am very lucky, like the minister, that I still get to practise as a registered nurse. I love being able to practise as a registered nurse. That is my first love as a profession and career, and to still be able to do it and have those therapeutic relationships with my patients is really incredible. But I don't know what I'm walking into a lot of the time. I specialize in geriatric rehab, but I'm often floated to emerg, where they need a lot of extra support. That uncertainty contributes to the moral issue and exhaustion and burnout that nurses are facing today.

We need to have MPPs in this chamber that are listening to nurses, that are listening to front-line workers, that are listening to organizations like ONA, RNAO, WeRPN and NPAO, who are working the front lines, who are providing the government with the solutions that they need to improve their lives.

I always say, no matter who I'm talking to, I don't understand why all governments, no matter what level, don't sit down with front-line workers and say, "What can we do with our power to improve your lives?"

I'm proud to stand here today as a registered nurse. I am here to advocate for my fellow nurses, to advocate for safe work environments and safe patient ratios, everything

that we need to ensure that nurses are able to practise safely in an environment that is supportive to them so that it's the best care that they can deliver to their patients.

To everyone who is listening and watching, happy nurses' appreciation week. Happy nurses' appreciation week to my colleague, and thank you so much for your attention.

#### NURSES

**Ms. Aislinn Clancy:** I'm proud to represent the constituency of Kitchener Centre and Ontario Greens and share my gratitude for all of the nurses in this province this nurses' week.

My mom was a nurse and I'm pretty sure she missed almost every lunch break, let alone Christmases and birthdays and New Year's and other events, because she was putting the needs of her patients and her team first.

Our health care system is held together by compassionate and hard-working RNs, RPNs, NPs—and MPPs. They hold us and our loved ones during some of the most vulnerable times in our life. They fill in the gaps for folks with disabilities, the elderly, folks who are unhoused and those with chronic mental health and addiction issues, and they have to do more and more all the time as we face an aging population, people with complex needs. Sometimes they are burnt out because they face the moral injury sometimes of not having what they need to do the job in the way that they want to.

To all the nurses out there who care for the ones that we love, please take care of yourself, and thank you so much for all that you do.

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#### NURSES

**Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady:** Nurses are the backbone of Ontario's health care system, and it doesn't matter the designation; a nurse's role is both clinically complex and emotionally demanding.

I am the proud mother of a registered nurse, so I've had a front-row seat to the realities of this profession. Our nurses show up in emergency rooms; they show up in long-term care and family practices, operating rooms, schools, clinics and communities. They come for families in their darkest and saddest moments and celebrate births and recoveries in the brightest. They are clinicians, advocates, counsellors and leaders.

Despite the critical role they play, many nurses feel their professional respect continues to erode through government policy, chronic staffing shortages, burnout, administrative burden and a system that too often asks them to do more with less.

We as policy makers cannot continue to praise nurses publicly while creating environments that leave them feeling undervalued, overworked and unheard. To all the nurses, I extend a heartfelt thanks for your resilience and dedication. It does not go unnoticed.

## PETITIONS

### ACCESS TO MENSTRUAL PRODUCTS

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** I have in my hands a petition called “End Period Poverty.” I was alarmed recently to learn that the cost of menstrual hygiene products like pads and tampons have gone up almost 20% over the past five years. This is at the same time that rents have skyrocketed and groceries have skyrocketed. In fact, one in six people who menstruate in Canada now cannot afford period products.

So this is a serious health and social issue, Speaker. It has led to people missing work. It has led to people using products longer than they should have, which is very dangerous. I mean, we wouldn't see a public washroom without toilet paper in it, would we? So I don't understand why half the population, who experiences menstruation, is not seeing products in the washroom.

So this petition calls on the Legislative Assembly to require employers to provide free menstrual hygiene products in all workplace washrooms and to declare May 28 each year Menstrual Health Day to highlight the challenges of period poverty.

I'm bringing a motion and a bill on Thursday to do just this, and I'm very proud to support this petition, affix my signature to it and bring it down with page Ian.

### COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

**Mr. Ted Hsu:** I have a petition. It's entitled, “End the Use of the ‘Notwithstanding’ Clause in Labour Disputes.” It's a long petition, so I'll just summarize it.

They're asking the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to call on the government to not use the “notwithstanding” clause when it comes to labour negotiations and to allow collective bargaining to occur.

### FIREARMS CONTROL

**Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady:** I have a petition here that is entitled “Time Ontario Protects Law-Abiding Gun Owners like Saskatchewan and Alberta.” As we know, the federal government has enacted a compulsory gun initiative program for prohibited firearms, and gun owners in the province would like to see Ontario introduce legislation similar to Alberta and Saskatchewan. They're also concerned Ontario's Chief Firearms Office refuses to provide an answer as to whether or not licences will be revoked here in Ontario.

I have hundreds of signatures on this petition, and they continue to come in. They are petitioning the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the Ontario Chief Firearms Office to answer the very simple question that has been posed to them with respect to revoking licences and for government to enact policy that will protect law-abiding gun owners, just like Saskatchewan and Alberta are doing.

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

## 2SLGBTQIA+ COMMUNITY SUPPORTS

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** I'm very proud to rise in the House today to present this petition on behalf of the Ontario Federation of Labour. They represent over 54 unions and a million workers in our province.

They have been steadfast and very busy working for the past year to collect these petitions, and the petitions that they have submitted to us to present to this House have over 2,250 signatures and growing.

The petition is entitled to “Protect and Expand Access for 2SLGBTQIA+ Communities,” because these community members face critical issues including affordable housing, access to inclusive and affirming care, bodily autonomy, safe and inclusive workplaces, safe and inclusive schools and access to mental health care.

Because bigotry, homophobia, transphobia, xenophobia, hate and the vitriol of the alt-right against many equity-deserving groups is now on the rise, they are calling on this Legislative Assembly of Ontario to invest and improve access to all levels of health care for trans and queer youth, for adults and seniors, including racialized and Indigenous people.

They are calling on this House to increase funding for 2SLGBTQI+ inclusive, transitional and supportive housing, especially for racialized and Indigenous youth and seniors and people facing violence and housing insecurity.

They are calling on this government to mandate the inclusion of queer and trans content in all publicly funded schools, including but not limited to curriculum, and to ban the censorship of Pride symbols as well as books and celebrations.

They are calling on this House to fund anti-hate and anti-racism public education campaigns developed and led by the community.

They want this government to invest in grassroots community organizations, Pride events, business development and job opportunities, especially for those who are focused on racialized and Indigenous, queer and trans youth and entrepreneurs.

They are calling on our government to provide additional and sustained funding for organizations supporting refugee claimants who are awaiting their hearings.

Speaker, these petitions are signed by residents from Barrie, Newmarket, Kanata, Thorold, Parry Sound, Toronto, Richmond Hill, Hamilton, Orangeville, Mississauga, Caledon, Kingston, Ottawa, Oshawa, Guelph, Oakville, Angus, Cambridge, Pickering, King City, Stoney Creek, Beamsville, Brant, Niagara Falls, Burlington, London, Napanee, Brampton, St. Catharines, Georgetown, Ajax, Kitchener, Whitby, York and Welland. Thank you very much.

### STUDENT ASSISTANCE

**MPP Tyler Watt:** I rise today—this is day I-don't-even-know of the Ontario Liberals putting forward a petition to fix OSAP ASAP.

We all know what happened with this government with OSAP. The Premier recently admitted—he said, “I make

mistakes, and I listened to the public when it came to the \$29-million private jet.” Well, you made a huge mistake with what you’ve done to OSAP: getting rid of grants, putting more debt onto students and the \$500-million cut in this year’s upcoming budget.

This petition has been signed by students across Ontario who are calling on the Ford government to reverse their changes to OSAP, to make the loan 0% interest permanently, bring back free tuition and make sure that we are getting OSAP access, so all people can get the education and training that they need.

I proudly will affix my name to this petition and give it to Finn to bring forward.

#### 2SLGBTQIA+ COMMUNITY SUPPORTS

**Mr. Terence Kernaghan:** It’s my honour to present the following petition on behalf of all of the amazing people with the Ontario Federation of Labour. This petition is entitled “Petition to Protect and Expand Access for 2SLGBTQIA+ Communities.”

Speaker, when we look at what is going on in the United States and all of the anti-trans legislation, all of the attacks on the queer community, a petition like this could not be more timely than ever. If this government indeed wants to distance themselves from the Trump regime, then they will look towards this petition and enact some of these recommendations.

Yet I think it’s important that we recognize that this Conservative government—one of their first acts when they first took power was to repeal the health and physical education curriculum, thus targeting the 2SLGBTQIA+ community and youth, banning its use within the classroom and also setting up a snitch line to rat on teachers who dared mention that word.

This petition calls upon the government to address critical issues such as affordable housing, access to inclusive and affirming health care, bodily autonomy, safe and inclusive workplaces, safe and inclusive schools and access to mental health care.

This government cannot show up and pretend that they claim to support the 2SLGBTQIA+ community without doing it with actions.

This petition is calling upon the province to act. I fully support this petition, will affix my signature and will deliver it with page Ian to the Clerks.

#### CANCER SCREENING

**Mr. Ted Hsu:** I have a petition here where the petitioners are asking the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to expand the Ontario Breast Screening Program to allow women over the age of 74 to self-refer for mammogram screening, thereby improving early detection, health outcomes and reducing long-term health care costs.

1350

#### LAND USE PLANNING

**Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady:** I have a petition here entitled, “Say No to the MZO.”

I’m well aware that soon, on the Environmental Registry, the application for a ministerial zoning order will be posted to accelerate the development of a proposed city of 40,000 on industrial-zone land in the Nanticoke industrial park. This development would have significant impacts on both Haldimand and Norfolk counties.

The people of my riding are not willing hosts. Thousands of Haldimand–Norfolk residents have signed this petition and are asking the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to not grant the request for an MZO.

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

#### 2SLGBTQIA+ COMMUNITY SUPPORTS

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** I want to thank the Ontario Federation of Labour—many of whom who are in the gallery today—for collecting more than 2,200 signatures on a petition that calls on the Legislature to take very specific actions to protect and expand access for 2SLGBTQIA+ communities.

I am pleased to see that the petitioners come from across the province but also include my community of London, where the organizers of Wortley Pride have been subjected to the kind of anti-queer hate that is on the rise—worldwide, in fact.

So this petition calls on the Legislative Assembly to improve access to health care at all levels for 2SLGBTQIA+ youth, adults and seniors, including racialized and Indigenous peoples.

It calls on us to increase funding for inclusive, transitional and supportive housing; to mandate the inclusion of 2SLGBTQIA+ content in all Ontario public schools; and to prevent the banning, the censorship, of Pride symbols, books and celebrations.

It calls for funding for anti-hate and anti-racism public education campaigns that are developed and led by 2SLGBTQIA+ communities; for investments in grassroots community organizations, Pride events and others; and, finally, for sustained funding for organizations that are supporting refugee claimants who are awaiting their hearings.

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

#### 2SLGBTQIA+ COMMUNITY SUPPORTS

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** I, too, want to thank all of the individuals that are here in the House today from the Ontario Federation of Labour.

I’m very proud to be able to present and honoured to be able to present this petition in this House for the individuals that have signed—well over 2,200 names, representing 54 unions. Thank you for all your hard work.

This petition is to protect and expand access for 2SLGBTQIA+ communities, and it is asking, for individuals facing critical issues, including affordable housing, access to inclusive and affirming health care, bodily autonomy, safe and inclusive workplaces, safe and in-

clusive schools and access to mental health care, which is very important.

The names affixed to this petition, including Mira Megmany, from Thorold, Ontario—invest and improve access to all levels of health care for 2SLGBTQIA+ youth, adults, seniors, including racialized and Indigenous individuals; increase funding for 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusive transitional and supportive housing.

It's also asking for housing for youth and seniors facing violence, and housing and security, which is really important.

It's also asking this government to fund anti-hate and anti-racism public education campaigns developed and led by the 2SLGBTQIA+ communities.

I fully support this petition. I will be affixing my name to this and sending it down to the Clerks' table with Vedha.

## SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** On Wednesday, this House will be debating my private member's bill Lydia's Law, Bill 112. For those of you who don't know, Lydia came to me five years ago after being sexually assaulted. She went through a horrendous two-year court experience. She and her mom came to me and they said, "Listen, no other family should have to go through this after having enough courage to disclose sexual assault."

And so I want the House to know that in Ontario, it takes 374 days before a sexual assault case will get to a court date. This is completely unacceptable. In 2023, 1,639 sexual assault cases were dispensed before having their day in court. Women in Ontario expect more from us, as they should.

I want to thank my co-sponsors, the members from Timiskaming–Cochrane, London North Centre and Kiiwetinoong. Violence against women is not a women's issue. This is a societal issue. I'm so proud to have male allies stand beside me as we debate this legislation.

On the heels of the Sloka case, where 48 women were not believed when they had the courage to come forward, two more sexual assault cases are now coming forward. You cannot be tough on crime in the province of Ontario if you don't have a strong justice system. And that's what Lydia's Law will do. It builds on the recommendations from the Auditor General, who is essentially asking the Attorney General, "Please do your job."

Let's get this system back on track.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### MUNICIPAL ACCOUNTABILITY ACT, 2026

#### LOI DE 2026 SUR LA RESPONSABILITÉ AU NIVEAU MUNICIPAL

Mr. Flack moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 9, An Act to amend the City of Toronto Act, 2006 and the Municipal Act, 2001 in relation to codes of conduct / Projet de loi 9, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2006 sur la cité de Toronto et la Loi de 2001 sur les municipalités en ce qui concerne les codes de déontologie.

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos):** The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

**Hon. Rob Flack:** I will be sharing my time with the Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the member for Simcoe–Grey.

Speaker, I am happy to rise today to speak in support of Bill 9, the Municipal Accountability Act, 2026. Before I begin, I want to acknowledge the many individuals and organizations who helped deliver this legislation for third reading. Municipal leaders, integrity commissioners, clerks, legal experts, advocacy organizations, committee witnesses and members of this House all contributed to this discussion and debate in meaningful ways. Thank you to all who offered their time and insights in developing Bill 9.

The debate surrounding municipal accountability encompasses many passionate opinions. At times, it has been emotional. At times, it has reflected deeply different views on governance, representation, fairness and public trust. This is precisely why this legislative work matters. Municipal government is the level of government closest to the people. It is where residents experience government most directly in their everyday lives. That is why accountability, conduct and getting this legislation right is so very important.

This legislation has not appeared overnight. It is the product of years of discussion, consultation and debate. Many members of this chamber have put forward their ideas to drive this conversation forward. Most importantly, Speaker, municipalities have asked for this legislation.

Witnesses before the committee brought forward their experiences candidly and thoroughly. We listened carefully. And while this bill represents meaningful progress, I want to be very clear: This work is not finished. Strengthening Ontario's accountability frameworks is not a single moment in time. It will be an ongoing responsibility. Public confidence must continually be earned.

Bill 9 is not the final word on municipal accountability in Ontario, nor should it be viewed that way. It is a meaningful first step towards improving municipal conduct frameworks across this province while preserving the principles that underpin local government.

**1400**

Speaker, one of the most important components of this legislation is the establishment of a unified municipal code-of-conduct framework. For too long, municipalities across Ontario have operated under different standards, differing language, differing interpretations and differing enforcement approaches. While municipalities are unique and diverse in character, ethical expectations should not vary dramatically from one jurisdiction to another. Elected officials deserve clarity, municipal staff deserve predictability and residents deserve accountability. A unified framework helps achieve those objectives.

Consistency matters because fairness matters. Without consistency, similar conduct can produce vastly different outcomes depending on geography. That undermines confidence in the system itself. Residents should not feel that accountability depends on your postal code. A unified code-of-conduct framework helps address those concerns while maintaining the integrity of local governance. Importantly, this legislation also recognizes that accountability systems work best when expectations are clearly understood right from the outset. Good governance depends not only on enforcement, but also on shared understanding.

Ethical public service must be the standard we serve by. The overwhelming majority of municipal elected officials across our great province work extraordinarily hard on behalf of their communities. They serve with high ethical standards. They dedicate countless hours to serving residents, often under immense pressure and scrutiny. They deserve a framework that is fair, that is understandable and that is credible. Residents deserve confidence that concerns will be handled appropriately and consistently. Bill 9 helps move us towards that goal; it definitely moves the needle.

Speaker, now I want to address what has understandably become one of the most debated aspects of this legislation: the removal-from-office provision. Throughout committee hearings and debate in this House, we heard strong opinions from all sides. Some witnesses argued passionately that stronger penalties are necessary to preserve public trust. Others warned of the dangers of politicizing accountability systems. Some shared deeply personal experiences. Others expressed concern about unintended consequences.

This is not an easy choice, but finding a path forward, even when it is hard, is what leadership is all about. I also want to sincerely thank everyone who appeared before the committee and contributed to this debate. It was very necessary and very much appreciated. Whether we agreed or disagreed on specific measures, their participation strengthened this process. Their testimony reflected the seriousness of the issue before us today.

But let's be clear, Speaker: Removal from office is not a minor administrative penalty. It is among the most serious actions that can occur within a democratic system because it overturns the expressed preference of the choice of voters. That reality must guide every discussion surrounding these powers, and, because of that, any mechanism capable of removing someone from office must carry the highest possible threshold, the strongest procedural safeguards and the clearest standards, period. That principle must be paramount in all of our deliberations.

For example, the idea that a judge should hold this power, I just cannot support. Judicializing the system is a bridge too far. We already have systems in place to judge criminal behaviour. We do not need judges overturning the will of voters. Only voters' representatives can do that. This legislation reflects our belief that severe penalties should be reserved only for those most serious of circumstances. The threshold must be exceptionally high

because the consequences are exceptionally serious. Yes, public trust requires accountability, but democratic legitimacy also requires restraint, fairness, due process and caution.

Speaker, throughout these debates, there have been passionate disagreements. I would also add that these have been healthy disagreements. I carry absolutely no malice to those who disagree with me or with us. This is what this debate is all about. Bill 9, the Municipal Accountability Act, 2025, is legislation of deep importance to all who serve in our 444 municipalities. That is healthy. That is what it should be about. That is the system working exactly as it should.

But our government's position remains clear, Speaker: If you wish to see change, employ the method I have outlined above. Convince the voters. Elections remain the central mechanism through which public officials are judged and held accountable. While accountability systems play an important role in maintaining standards of conduct, they must never lose sight of the democratic foundations upon which our institutions are built.

As we conclude debate on Bill 9, I want to acknowledge that witnesses before this committee identified additional challenges within the existing integrity commissioner framework that extend beyond the specific scope of this legislation. We heard thoughtful testimony regarding the need for greater standardization of qualifications for integrity commissioners. This is something I personally agree with. We heard concerns about consistency in investigative approaches. We heard discussions surrounding procedural fairness, transparency, timelines and the handling of complaints that may not relate directly to the legitimate duties of public office. These are important conversations that need to be continued.

While not every proposal fits within the immediate scope of Bill 9, those contributions were valuable and deserve continued consideration moving forward. The work integrity commissioners do is important—vitaly important. They are vital to civic debate, and we will continue to explore ways to strengthen the system and how we can bring better consistency to the role they play day in and day out.

Speaker, that balance is critically important. We must protect accountability while also protecting the democratic discourse itself. Political disagreement is not misconduct. Vigorous debate is not misconduct. Democracy is often noisy, it is often imperfect, but civic debate remains free, open and protected.

At the same time, legitimate misconduct must continue to be treated seriously. Public confidence depends on it. That is why this work requires balance, maturity and a willingness to continue improving, and improving together.

There will continue to be further debates about municipal accountability in our great province. There will continue to be disagreements. There will continue to be differing views about where lines should be drawn and how systems should evolve. We need to embrace this debate. In fact, that is the point of our democracy. Democracy does not require unanimous consent; it requires participation. It requires good-faith debate.

Bill 9 represents a meaningful step forward in that process. It is not the end of the conversation; it is the beginning of continued work to strengthen public confidence, strengthen local governance and strengthen the institutions that serve Ontario communities every single day.

Today I ask all members of this House, regardless of party affiliation, to continue our work together. Let us continue improving these frameworks thoughtfully and carefully. Let us measure and monitor the outcomes of Bill 9, should this 44th Legislative Assembly pass it. Let us continue remembering that our system of government works best not when we avoid disagreement, but when we confront disagreement through principled debate, civic responsibility and respect for the people we are elected to serve.

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

**Hon. Graydon Smith:** I want to thank Minister Flack for his remarks and his leadership in bringing this legislation forward. We heard him speak about, I think, those things that we all care so much about: accountability, democracy, fairness, conduct, personal conduct and public trust.

I think one of the biggest take-aways from this debate is, of course, that municipal governments matter. They matter deeply. Municipal government is where government becomes local for a lot of people, where it becomes personal, where it becomes real. It's often that level of government. It's often that level of government that people see first and judge first, and where many of the people decide whether government is working at all, sometimes, because it is so close to the people.

1410

But because it is close to the people, public trust, of course, matters immensely. It is foundational to good governance. It is foundational to civic participation and to confidence in democratic institutions. That's why this bill matters. At its core, it's about strengthening trust in local government through consistent standards, stronger accountability tools and meaningful consequences for misconduct.

Speaker, before I get into the specifics of the legislation, I want to reflect briefly on the environment municipalities are operating in today. Expectations on local government have continued to grow, responsibilities continue to expand and the complexity of the issues that get addressed around council tables has increased over time. So our municipal leaders are being asked to navigate a lot of things at once. They're being asked to talk about growth pressures, affordability challenges and increasingly complex community dynamics, often under significant scrutiny and often with limited time to act. That context matters.

Strong accountability systems are not only about responding when things go wrong; they're about supporting good governance every day. That is the space that this legislation is meant to strengthen. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today in support of the bill, because I believe it truly represents an important and thoughtful step forward.

We know that the overwhelming majority of municipal elected officials in Ontario serve with integrity. They work hard. They made sacrifices to get there. They make difficult decisions. They do it because they care deeply about the communities they serve. I know it because I lived it. Many of us in this chamber lived it before we got here.

I never expected to be a mayor, Speaker. I worked in radio when I was younger. I had a couple of different small businesses. I cared deeply about my community and did a lot of community service work, and then one day—which I think I've said to the chamber before—I got tapped on the shoulder by the mayor of the day and he said, "We're looking for somebody a little younger on council," maybe than the councillors they had in the day—no insult to anybody.

I don't qualify as a younger guy anymore, so I think I can now say that, looking back, my older self looking back to my younger self. But he asked me to run because I had been doing community service work and I had really, really enjoyed that. And I decided, you know what? It's a great opportunity to extend the work that I'm doing in the community already.

I ran. I took that step. I got lucky; I won. I was third on a ballot that was taking the top three. I think there were eight of us. I became a councillor. I became a district councillor and a town councillor, kind of simultaneously. And then a few years later, I had the opportunity to become mayor and deputy district chair. And eventually that took me to be able to be the president of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario—of course we all know them as AMO around here.

Speaker, I started exactly where thousands of municipal elected officials start: just someone in the community that kind of wanted to step forward. That's really the heart of municipal government across Ontario: People that are already contributing in their community, volunteering in their community, obviously have demonstrated that they care deeply about their community, and one day they decide to do a little bit more and put their name on a ballot. So out they go, they knock on the doors. They earn that trust, and, ultimately, some of them get to earn that place around the council table.

Every person has their origin story, like I just talked about. Every person made sacrifices to get there. Every person around that table deserves respect.

As the minister talked about, debate should be vigorous. Ideas should be challenged. Disagreements should happen. If it's not happening, something is wrong. That's democracy, beautiful in its messiness. And Speaker, from my experience, that kind of democracy works really well at the municipal level, as long as there is trust among the participants—that trust between members of council, that trust between council and their communities, and the trust that even in disagreement, decisions are being made in good faith. When that trust is there, councils function really, really well. When that trust breaks down, very quickly it becomes much harder to do the work that communities expect.

Speaker, through all my years in municipal government, I always believed one thing: Business is business. It should never be personal. Again, debate hard, hold your ground, vote the way you think you need to vote, and when the meeting ends, you might have won, you might have lost, you pack it up, you work together, you carry on. That's what people want out of their councils. They function best when people respect one another even when they disagree.

I was blessed with councils that got along, both when I was a councillor and later as mayor, but that didn't happen by accident. It takes some management. It took work. It took the understanding, as I said earlier, that business is business. It took the understanding that no matter how strongly somebody felt about an issue, no one issue was ever so important that it trumped treating one another with respect.

Sometimes things got hot. Sometimes things got emotional. Some meetings ended with people frustrated. Those were good nights to have a conversation afterwards, maybe talk it out a little bit more. Don't let it fester. My God, don't let it fester. Don't let it be something that would impair the good work of council.

One of the tools that helped us do that, the framework that existed, was a code of conduct in the day that everybody understood was important and meant to be respected. But as we know, existing legislation, the existing code, is not perfect. Everything has limitations. Limitations didn't always present themselves in obvious ways. Sometimes the limitation showed up in the length of time it took to resolve an issue, sometimes in uncertainty about where responsibility rested, sometimes the difficulty of applying expectations the same from one situation to the next. Over time these challenges create frustration for members of council, uncertainty for the public in those councils that maybe don't get along so well and make it harder to resolve issues quickly, and it stands out to the public as a council that maybe isn't running so effectively and isn't worrying about community first but worrying about disagreements and bad behaviour around the table first. It gets in the way of getting business done. Business is business. It makes it harder to maintain that confidence in councils and keep clarity of process and meet those expectations of the community.

Again, not every council is as fortunate as the ones I served on. Not every council works in the same way. Not every situation resolves itself. And when difficult situations happen, the road map must be clear, expectations must be understood, accountability must be respected. That is part of what this bill seeks to strengthen.

Speaker, public trust, we know, is not unconditional. It can be built over years; it can be lost in a heartbeat. As I opened my comments, most municipal officials serve honourably—overwhelmingly so—but when conduct crosses the line, when actions become unacceptable, when trust is broken in ways that may be sometimes unconscionable, there must be consequences. But the consequences must be structured carefully. The consequences must be clear. They should respect the seriousness of whatever

misconduct is being discussed and the democratic role of elected officials in striking that balance. It's not simple, but it is essential to try. Accountability protects residents, but it also protects every other person around that table who earned the right to be there and who serves with integrity. It protects staff who are there to do a job and should be respected for doing so. So this bill is proposed to protect the institution when people fall short of the trust placed in them, the shared trust that we have to treat one another with respect and fairness.

**1420**

Through committee and debate, we've heard a lot of thoughtful perspectives. Some wanted this legislation to go to a different place, maybe go a little further; others talked about caution. I think that reflects, again, the seriousness of the issue before us that we're debating, because these discussions involve accountability, involve fairness, democratic legitimacy, public trust. Also, the conversations didn't begin yesterday. These conversations have been going on for a long time, regardless of existing legislation. They were going on when I was in municipal government. They happened around AMO meetings and among mayors and councillors across Ontario—conversations amongst each other and between municipalities and the province. In fact, I led a number of those conversations when I was the AMO president. Municipal leaders repeatedly asked, "How do we build systems that are fair, consistent and credible for our workplaces?" And it's a unique workplace, to say the least.

The proposed legislation is part of answering that question. Speaker, one of the most important parts of this bill is that, if passed, it moves Ontario toward a more standardized and consistent code of conduct framework. Today, municipalities establish their own codes. Again, this bill, if passed, would create the ability for a provincially prescribed code of conduct to apply across municipalities and would phase out the existing framework.

That matters because accountability systems can vary, which means expectations can vary, interpretations can vary. The proposed legislation recognizes that while municipalities are different, expectations around conduct and accountability at least should remain consistent. Residents should be able to expect the same standard of conduct regardless of where they live. Elected officials should understand that the expectations they're being held to are the same from one municipality to the next. Integrity commissioners should also have a clearer and more consistent framework to work within.

Municipalities themselves will always be different. A northern municipality is different from a larger urban centre. We know that. I understand that first-hand. But expectations around conduct, professionalism and accountability should remain strong everywhere, and that's one of the most important things this bill seeks to strengthen.

It's important to recognize, too, that this bill reflects the reality that municipal governance has evolved and accountability systems need to evolve alongside it. The goal is to bring greater clarity, greater consistency and to ensure that when an issue arises, it gets addressed in a way that is

fair, transparent and understood. That's what strengthens institutions over time.

Speaker, this bill, if it's passed, will also strengthen the integrity commissioner framework itself. Too often, integrity commissioners are discussed only when complaints happen, but their role is broader than that. They provide advice. They provide guidance. They help members understand expectations, and, ideally, they're helping to avoid problems before they ever happen. So this legislation creates a stronger role for the Integrity Commissioner of Ontario through training, education, advice regarding integrity commissioner independence in conflicts, and greater consistency across the system.

Strong accountability systems depend on trusted people operating within clear standards, and the proposed bill will strengthen both, if passed.

Importantly, the proposed legislation also recognizes that accountability is also about helping institutions succeed before problems arise. It creates the ability for standards around complaints and inquiries and recognizes that complaints that are frivolous or vexatious or not brought in good faith should not consume the resources of these systems. Accountability frameworks should strengthen governance, not become tools to be weaponized for conflict.

Speaker, municipal government can be deeply personal in that when problems happen, residents don't always think, "Oh, what level of government is responsible for this? I have to make sure I make the right call to the right place." They just pick up the phone and call: They call their councillor; they call their mayor. We know that really well.

So you get these kinds of personal dynamics going on, and I certainly lived that, again, during my time in Bracebridge and in Muskoka. Decisions get made under pressure. There's a lot of pressure for councils to act quickly, especially when maybe things aren't going as smoothly as you'd like on any particular issue. But that doesn't mean we lose the basis of respect and accountability that this framework helps to outline.

Municipal leadership often happens in moments where there is no manual and there is very little time, but again, that is not an excuse to be anything but respectful to all around the table, to the staff and to the public.

Local government has changed, and, as I said, accountability systems must evolve with it.

Not surprisingly, one of the most discussed parts of this legislation has been around removal from office, and I understand why. I think we all understand why: Because removing someone elected by the people is serious business. This bill reflects that seriousness.

The threshold here is intentionally high. This is not about ordinary disagreement. This is not about difficult votes. This is not about politics. Again, business is business; it should never become personal.

The legislation is about including safeguards. Recommendations can't be made willy-nilly. The legislation meets multiple tests for removal from office. There must be a contravention. A contravention must be serious in nature. There must have been harm, and existing penalties

are insufficient. Then that process moves through multiple stages: municipal integrity commissioner, Ontario Integrity Commissioner and, ultimately, council.

That reflects the seriousness of removing someone elected by the people because, again, accountability matters. Democracy obviously matters too, and we've got to protect both.

Municipal councils already deal with difficult issues, and, as we've talked about, emotions can run high. But we must ensure accountability and systems that strengthen governance and not create incentives for conflict or become political tools or replace democratic disagreement with procedural warfare.

Accountability systems should strengthen councils, not weaken them; protect democracy and not encourage unacceptable conduct. So let's find a way to strike that balance, and this bill does that.

Councils must remain places where debate can happen openly and respectfully, but they must also operate within clear expectations around conduct. That balance will, again, allow councils to function effectively and will allow the public to have confidence in the decisions being made around that table.

Speaker, you know trust matters. Respect matters. Accountability matters. And when conduct becomes unconscionable, there must be consequences.

Local government—I hear it a lot—is where democracy lives closest to the people. It's where people step forward because they care, because they want to help, because they want to make their communities stronger. And because they earn their place around that table, because they earn the trust of their communities, they deserve systems that are fair, clear and respected. Bill 9, if passed, will help strengthen those systems, and it will do so while respecting both accountability and democracy.

We know municipal government matters, and the people who serve matter. They matter greatly. I have an incredible amount of respect for them and an incredible amount of respect for the public and the trust they place within those that govern.

I support the legislation that we're considering today. I support everyone respecting each other. Again, business is business; it's not personal. Let's keep it that way.

Thank you very much. I'll pass it over to the member from Simcoe–Grey.

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos):** I recognize the member for Simcoe–Grey.

**1430**

**Mr. Brian Saunderson:** I want to thank the minister and associate minister for their comments and their hard work in advancing this very important piece of municipal legislation. This is something that is very important to me, given my experience in the municipal sector. I have shared the role, the chain of office, which is some days light and some days very heavy. In the municipal world, we always say there's the swearing in followed by the swearing at. It's very much the most immediate level of politics. It is the most granular. You live amongst your constituents,

and you see them on a daily basis. That is both a blessing and a curse on many days.

But this government, as I've said many times, is one about working collaboratively with our municipal partners. On this side of the House and on our rump side of the House, our members have area codes on their phones that represent every aspect and every part of Ontario. There are 444 municipalities across this great province, and they are our partners. In bringing forward this legislation, we heard their calls for assistance. During the standing committee hearings, we had 10 days of hearings. We travelled across the province, from Niagara region to London, Ontario; to Whitby, to Kenora, Timmins, Thunder Bay, Pembroke, Ottawa. We made a great effort to make sure that the committee travelled across the province to hear front-line testimony from the many, many people who were very interested in this legislation.

Having sat around the council table, Madam Speaker, I know the important role that government plays in people's daily lives and how much our municipal representatives are relied on to advance the causes of their communities. Municipal councils deal with issues that are immediate. They are practical, and they are deeply connected to their communities they serve. As I said, they're the most granular level of government. They make decisions about roads, water, waste water, planning, parks, local services, housing, infrastructure and community growth that impact their communities very closely. They work closely with their residents and municipal staff and local businesses and community organizations and other levels of government, such as the provincial government, to make sure that they get the work done.

That work has direct and daily impacts for Ontarians across this province. Because that work matters, the public must have confidence in the people and the institutions carrying it out. Like my colleagues who have spoken before me, I share my admiration and confidence in the many, many—the vast majority of municipal representatives who work hard on a daily basis for their communities.

Speaker, Bill 9, as I said, is a response to a call from the municipal sector to bring in additional accountability. It's about strengthening accountability. It's about strengthening transparency. And it's about creating consistency and reliability so that the municipal elected officials, the staff and administration and the public know what is expected at town hall, and they can have a clear way to voice their concerns if those are not being followed.

In short, it's really about building confidence in our municipal sector, and that confidence must be built and supported by clear standards of conduct. It's about creating more consistency and accountability in the framework and transparency for the residents as well as the elected officials. That framework must ensure that members of council and certain local boards understand their responsibilities and their roles. It's about ensuring that municipalities have a fair, serious and workable process when the most serious conduct arises.

Madam Speaker, I'd like to spend some time just talking about the experience I had as a council member in

Collingwood. In 2019, Collingwood had to ask the Chief Justice of the Superior Court of Ontario to strike a judicial inquiry to look into two transactions that took place between 2012 and 2015. The Associate Chief Justice at the time, Frank Marrocco, was assigned to lead that inquiry, and in 2020 he tendered a four-volume report. It was over 900 pages, with 306 recommendations about how we can improve transparency not just in Collingwood but across the province at the municipal level, working with the provincial government.

The basis for this inquiry, Madam Speaker, looked at two transactions that took place in my community before I got involved in municipal politics and led very directly to me getting involved in municipal politics. The first was the sale of a 50% interest in our local distribution company, Collus, and that share was sold to, at the day, PowerStream, which is now part of Alectra. In the course of the hearings, it was found out that the mayor's brother, a former MP, was doing consulting work for PowerStream, which was successful in its bid, and that there were aspects of the bidding process that were not done properly. It appeared that confidential information from council was shared with PowerStream, ultimately leading to their successful bid, and otherwise compromised the competitiveness and the outcome for the residents of Collingwood.

The second transaction was the use of those funds to develop two separate standing facilities that were effectively membrane buildings for the public pool and the public arena, a second ice pad, which again compromised the outcome for the residents of Collingwood. They are now again embarking on a multi-use-facility process which, at this time, after the pandemic, we know will probably cost two to three times what it might have cost if it was done properly back in 2014.

I want to quote from Justice Marrocco's report, because I think it goes to the heart of some of the issues that we're looking at with Bill 9. In his executive summary, when examining the two transactions and the information about what transpired—and, again, it was found in the second transaction with the purchase of the Sprung buildings that the mayor's brother was again involved as a consultant for Sprung and was receiving a success fee. In fact, when all the dust settled, Mr. Bonwick received probably \$1.3 million out of these two transactions that were clearly to the detriment of the people of Collingwood.

This is what Justice Marrocco said in his executive summary after going through some of the events that led to the judicial inquiry and the two transactions at issue: "Roles and responsibilities of council members and staff were also misunderstood, leading to certain fundamental decisions being made away from the council table or behind closed doors. Undisclosed conflicts of interest marred many of decisions made in respect to these two transactions, as did a series of unfair and precarious procurement practices. Combined, these factors left the transactions vulnerable to improper influence and cast doubt on both the legitimacy and the town's reputation."

Interestingly, Speaker, Justice Marrocco's four-volume report was entitled Transparency and the Public Trust. Public trust is critical in the democratic process, as both my colleagues have highlighted in their comments. It's critical to ensuring that the linkage between our residents and their elected representatives is open and transparent and there is accountability at every part.

I've talked in this House a number of times about the sharing of revenues between the federal government, the provincial government and our municipalities. If you took all the tax dollars that are paid—in terms of income tax to the province and to the federal government and then property taxes to municipalities—and turned it into one dollar, the federal government gets 48 cents, the provincial government gets 44 cents and the municipalities get eight cents. With that amount of money, Madam Speaker, they are making decisions that impact critical aspects of their residents' daily lives, from roads, water, waste water—and we've had many discussions about the future of waste water service delivery—recreation, community centres, town halls, plowing the roads, delivering services like garbage. The list goes on for the municipalities, and their bandwidth for providing all of those services is extremely tight.

So in a municipal procurement process, when it can be so clouded by municipal process that the decisions are questionable and probably made improperly, then we need to get involved. This bill is designed to strengthen that accountability, to directly look at that confidence, to ensure that the confidence is built and supported by clear standards of conduct. It is about creating a more consistent accountability framework across Ontario, a framework that ensures members of council and certain local boards understand their responsibilities. It's about ensuring municipalities have fair, serious and workable processes.

**1440**

Madam Speaker, as a deputy mayor and mayor in the wake of the Collingwood judicial inquiry, I can tell you that town hall came under a great deal of scrutiny, and it still is. It still is working to get back to trust that it lost in those two very significant procurement processes. And so we saw a great deal of use locally in our integrity commissioner and in complaints.

As I travelled the province talking with colleagues from the municipal sector about this process, a constant theme I heard and a constant theme I witnessed in Collingwood was the cost of these complaints to make sure that they were properly, openly and transparently addressed by the integrity commissioner. But each municipality in Ontario has set up its own integrity code.

When I got in as mayor, we spent 18 months going through our code of conduct with the integrity commissioner at great expense to the community. While we were very proud of the result, we had a very different code of conduct from the other 15 members in Simcoe county. That means that each time there was a code-of-conduct complaint, an integrity commissioner complaint, in Simcoe county, the integrity commissioners not only had

to determine the facts, but they had to apply one of 16 different codes of conduct.

Wording from “may” to “shall” to “undue influence” or “conflict of interest”—all those provisions that are so critical to the landscape for both the municipal representative and the public, who are asking for this accountability, are different in each municipality. That's not just true of Simcoe county; it's true across all of Ontario's 444 different municipalities.

So every time there's a complaint, the integrity commissioner has to look at the specific code of conduct. There's no uniformity. There's no consistency. And they have to apply that at considerable expense to the municipality. Not only do the municipalities expend limited money in getting their own codes of conduct done, but they then have to spend more money when the integrity commissioner comes to do a report because each provision of each local code of conduct has to be considered in isolation.

I heard again and again as we travelled across the province that a standardized code of conduct would be so welcomed for our municipal partners because 444 municipalities would have the same code of conduct. It would be consistent, it would be uniform and the wording would be the same.

That is not to say that the application is the same in a smaller community versus a larger community. The facts of the case will always be very different, but the reality is it makes it much more consistent for the integrity commissioner. They can do their findings and write their decisions more efficiently and quickly.

Then they can also develop a bank of case law, of decisions. So if there is a case in a community—I'm going to pick Collingwood—and then a neighbour or someone farther north or someone farther down towards the GTA has a very similar fact situation and is looking at the same provision, the integrity commissioner can look at that decision to see if it provides a useful context or a guiding-star principle for the new case. What we're going to get, Madam Speaker, is consistent decision-making across the province.

It also provides a very useful avenue for the council members because integrity commissioners aren't just there to discipline; they're also there to be advisers and consultants. Just as we in this House can write to our Integrity Commissioner to see if it's okay for us to go to an event or to work with a certain interest group, they also have that ability, and that's a very important aspect of the integrity commissioner's role. When an integrity commissioner is advising a council member about a situation, a consistent code of conduct across the province that's being applied across all 444 municipalities, again, makes it much more transparent and accountable for the individuals both in office but also in the public to understand why it is that a decision is being made to allow a member to participate versus to have them declare a conflict of interest.

There's no shame in declaring a conflict of interest, Madam Speaker. What is important is that you declare it.

Having a connection in a municipality, especially a municipality the size of Collingwood—I had to declare conflicts many times, and it was the right thing to do. I often did it with input from the integrity commissioner to make sure that what I was doing was the appropriate thing in the circumstances.

Having a conflict of interest is not an issue, Madam Speaker. It's making sure that you stand up, you do your homework and you declare that conflict of interest when it is going to influence your decision or be perceived as influencing your decision.

This cost-effectiveness, in terms of generating the code of conduct and then implementing the code of conduct—whether it be to advise a council member or to investigate a complaint—when you do that consistently across the entire province, the benefits for municipalities in terms of cost, in terms of certainty, in terms of accountability and transparency cannot be overstated. And as I said, in the 10 days of hearings we held across the province, this was a very common theme that we heard at the table.

They might have questions about other aspects of the legislation, but they started off by saying, “We applaud the standardization of the code of conduct. It will make life easier for us, it will make life easier for people in our situations across the province, and it will help us to reduce costs.” Because what I was hearing was that an average integrity commissioner complaint was costing at least \$10,000 per complaint, and that is money that distracts from the municipality's core agenda of addressing the needs of their residents.

We've talked at this table and in this debate in this House today about the importance of ensuring that we're not limiting or thwarting the democratic process, and that debates at council tables are being done in a fulsome and respectful way to make sure that the decisions made by the council are in the best interest of their community and are being aired in an open and transparent way.

This is a critical piece, as well, of the puzzle. This legislation is not designed to restrict or detract from public debate. It's really designed to augment that debate and ensure that it is done in a respectful way, with rules of conduct that are consistent across the province, consistent in every municipality, consistent across all councils so that the council members know the parameters, the fences, that will govern their debate and they'll understand what their roles and responsibilities are. As Justice Marrocco found in the case of Collingwood back in 2012, there was misunderstanding, and that led to decisions being made that compromised the best interest of the community.

I want to pick up as well on the comments from the minister and the associate minister in terms of what the standing committee heard as it travelled the province. The genesis and rationale for this legislation was really to look at three important things, and that was standardizing the code of conduct, looking at the role of the integrity commissioner and provincial oversight of the integrity commissioner, as well as standards for building a framework as to what would lead to an accredited integrity commissioner. And then, very importantly, what would happen in circumstances where council members' conduct

is so egregious that it requires removal of that council member.

We've seen circumstances across the province, particularly in Ottawa, where this became a very critical issue, Madam Speaker, that could not be addressed. This legislation will make Ontario a leader in Canada in terms of this issue: the ultimate accountability of a council member. As has been said in this House, there is a fine balance between respecting democratic rights—the will of the electorate—but also egregious conduct that crosses a line that cannot be repaired and requires action.

This legislation is looking at a recall mechanism that would remove a council member for egregious conduct, and to do that, it's a two-part test. There would be a decision made by the local integrity commissioner, and if that integrity commissioner finds the conduct to be so egregious that removal is an option or a recommendation, then it would go up to the provincial Integrity Commissioner for review. And if the provincial Integrity Commissioner deems that that is an appropriate recommendation, then it goes back to the council to make a decision, and that decision must be unanimous.

#### 1450

As indicated by the minister in his comments this afternoon, the rationale for that is because when we brought in the integrity commissioner and individual codes of conduct, those were always to be arbitrated and decided by council members, by a jury of their peers. That was to respect the electoral process. These members were elected by the residents of that municipality. When decisions were being implemented on the recommendations of the integrity commissioner, it was being done by the council. That is a primary concern in this regime, so that the decision is being made at the council table by a jury of the peers of that council member, but it's only being made on the recommendation of the local integrity commissioner, which has then gone up to the provincial Integrity Commissioner and has been brought back to council as an appropriate recommendation in the circumstances of that particular case.

As both my colleagues indicated during their comments, this is to ensure that this is not weaponized, that this removal process is only used in the most extreme situations that require this type of consideration. The bar must be set very, very high because we are, as the leading province in Canada, providing a way that egregious conduct by a council member can lead to their removal. This does not exist anywhere in Canada. And so, as we weigh into this—this accountability process that has been requested by stakeholders at the municipal level and by interest groups and across the province—we have to dip our toe into this, understanding that this is a new development and that to do it, it must be in the most extreme circumstances. When there have been decisions by two integrity commissioners, it comes back to council, and then it is up to the council to decide the future of that member.

That council member would not only be removed from the current term, but it's a four-year ban, so it would

prohibit them from running in the next election. It's effectively a two-term ban. We want to make sure, when we start to do that in the democratic process, that it would only be done in the most egregious circumstances, where there is unanimous approval by the two integrity commissioners and then the council.

Another critical piece of this legislation, Madam Speaker, is looking at introducing requirements for the integrity commissioner, having the provincial Integrity Commissioner have a role in publicizing the qualifications of each integrity commissioner that is active in the province, so that we start to get an understanding of what the basic requirements are to ensure that the integrity commissioners who are working in this area have the right credentials to do the job that they are being asked to do. As I said, this is a very important aspect for our municipalities, who are spending the money to have these investigations done.

We know that politics can become messy at times, and so, on occasion, these types of complaints can be weaponized. We often see that around election time, when many councils will have a two-month ban. Prior to the election, there can be no new integrity commissioner complaints in proximity to the election, to prevent that.

But we want to make sure that our integrity commissioner roster are qualified people who have the skills and the expertise to be in this role, as it is so critical for the transparency and accountability at the municipal level for both the council, in terms of giving advice and ruling on complaints, but also for the public, to know that their council is being supervised or monitored by a competent individual who is making the best decisions and the most efficient decisions.

And again, we go back to the cost consequences, as I outlined before, by having a standardized code of conduct, standardized training, mandatory training and then making sure that we have the Integrity Commissioner of Ontario monitoring the integrity commissioners, to ensure that they have the proper skills to carry out their roles. It is all critical gears in the machinery of the integrity commissioner and code of conduct system to make sure that local democracy and the operation of local councils is being carried out in a way that is transparent and that there is accountability so that the public knows the decisions are being made in a way that is appropriate and in the best interests of the community.

I can tell you that in the town of Collingwood, in the wake of Justice Marrocco's report that was tendered in 2020, the town has worked extremely hard at implementing the recommendations that were directed at the municipality, which were about 290 such recommendations, because, as Justice Marrocco noted in the title, transparency and trust and accountability are critical to the democratic process in our municipal government and our municipalities. So to ensure that there is appropriate accountability, we need to make sure, as we are in Bill 9, as we heard from so many stakeholders and municipal councillors across the province, that this is a critical first step in ensuring that we have a standardized code of

conduct that enhances accountability and transparency and reliability and consistency; and that we have monitoring of our integrity commissioners so that we know those that are tasked with the job of ensuring that complaints are investigated appropriately or providing appropriate advice for a council member—understanding, again, that the integrity commissioner is a critical partner to municipal government to ensure that the decisions of the council members on issues like conflicts of interest are done in an informed way; and then ultimately ensuring, in situations that are so egregious that we need to look at the removal of the council member, that that decision is being made in the appropriate context, with the appropriate safeguards, with the appropriate checks and balances, that it would first be decided by the local integrity commissioner and, where necessary, then referred up to the provincial Integrity Commissioner, and where that recommendation is approved by the provincial Integrity Commissioner, it goes back to council, a jury of their peers, to decide the fate of that individual.

We've heard that again and again from our residents across the province: They want accountability, they want transparency and they want a mechanism to remove those that commit things that are so egregious that they've lost the trust of the public and they should no longer hold office. Bill 9, Madam Speaker, hits all of those points.

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

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** First, before I start on Bill 9, I just want to commend the member from Simcoe–Grey this morning. I think it's a rare opportunity to honour your father in this House. You did a beautiful job.

I also want to commend the member from London West, who almost made me cry.

But this is to the minister: Okay, listen, it's taken five years for us to get to this place around this issue. AMO, back in 2021, said, "We maintain that ICs and/or municipalities should be able to apply to a judge to remove a sitting member in the most egregious cases and not have this subject to a vote at council as this risks politicizing the issue and re-traumatizing the victim(s)."

The minister said, in your opening comments, that you were dead set against building in this other layer. Really, it's a get-out-of-jail card, because we all know some councils are conflict-averse, some are risk-averse and some are best friends sitting around that horseshoe. So why would we not give these councils the opportunity to reach outside that circle—that horseshoe—for a sober second thought, perhaps, and have somebody who's not connected to the council weigh in on this egregious behaviour?

**Hon. Rob Flack:** I appreciate the question. Again, for the last number of years, I think we would agree, this has been a polarizing, healthy debate.

Where I would disagree is that the reason we have integrity commissioners and we will now use the provincial Integrity Commissioner to help with these understandings, these rulings—that that is outside the political sphere for judgment to take place, and if he or she rules that there has been a code of conduct breach or something

egregiously done, it could come back to council to vote. We need to have standards in this province that at the very least we protect the electorate in terms of what they've done.

We've said it before, and I know; it's a healthy debate. We just are of the opinion that using a better and stronger form of integrity commissioners' approach to reviewing this is the way to go.

**1500**

And again, as I said in my talk as well, I think it's important that we strengthen that system, and I think there are ways, going forward, that we can indeed strengthen how we use our integrity commissioners, how we appoint integrity commissioners and how they play a more consistent role throughout the province, day in and day out.

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

**MPP Tyler Watt:** It's good to see this bill finally brought back. I was on that tour with committee, where we went around, and I agree that we definitely need standards. That was something that I heard from the public.

But what I also heard from the public was that they don't want their peers deciding whether or not they get kicked out of their job, because it is innately political, no matter what. I certainly wouldn't want—if a patient lodges a complaint against a nurse, it goes to the college, an independent body, not your fellow nurses to decide whether or not you keep your job.

My question to the minister is—we heard time and time again from people that they want this process to be independent, not to your peers: How come we haven't changed that?

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos):** I recognize the Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

**Hon. Graydon Smith:** I appreciate the question, and I appreciate the input that many people provided at the committee level.

Yes, this has been a conversation that has gone on for a period of time. But I think, as has been expressed by the minister and the member for Simcoe–Grey, we need to have a very high bar when we're considering removal from office. It is the last step in a multi-point step that will very clearly document and review any transgression that has taken place and validate the seriousness of that transgression.

So by the time it arrives at a council table for a decision to be made by that person's peers, it has been deemed to be a breach of the code. It has gone through the first integrity commissioner at the local level. It has gone through the Ontario Integrity Commissioner. Again, the last step is for council to make a decision of their peer. And I would suggest that, if they made a decision that seemed incongruous with what had been presented thus far by those steps, they would do so as their own peril, come election time.

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

**Hon. Sam Oosterhoff:** My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. I want to thank him and the associate minister and the parliamentary assistant for their really strong work on this and multiple other pieces of legislation that have come through.

I'm going to build on the point that the earlier member raised around weaponization and how we can avoid that. I know I have seen a lot of integrity commissioner complaints seem to cross over—shots fired across the bow, if you will—in local municipalities, and it almost seems like it can be used frivolously. How do we really ensure that just the very act of launching an IC complaint doesn't create that burden of guilt that seems to say, almost, you're guilty until proven innocent?

I know that's not the intent of this legislation. I know it's about those really bad actors. So how in this legislation can we ensure that the bad actors are cracked down upon, but we're not allowing for any frivolity when it comes to the integrity commissioner process? We know that that as well can undermine the legitimacy of these kinds of concerns if they're not properly addressed. I'd love to hear how they developed this and how they're avoiding that in the very comprehensive way in which they consulted on this legislation.

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos):** I recognize the member for Simcoe–Grey.

**Mr. Brian Saunderson:** I want to thank the associate minister for his question.

It's been an important part of this legislation. It's been a real driver. I think there are multi facets in the legislation that address your concerns about the weaponization of it.

First of all, I think, is the standardization of the codes. When each municipality has its own separate code, there's a way that you can angle things to your advantage. I think by having a standardized code, we're going to cut back on that. And when you get education on the code, what's required in there, and when the council members know what's required of them and the public knows that it's a standardized code and what's required of that and there's training both for the integrity commissioners and for the municipal council members, there will be a much better context in which council members can weigh various complaints.

Then, to go back to the situation when we're looking at the most egregious type of complaint, it's got to go through two integrity commissioners and then come back to council and have a unanimous consent on that. So the chances of a weaponized complaint leading to that outcome are slim to nil.

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

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** I can only compare this to, when I was chair of the Waterloo Region District School Board and we had to do an investigation into another trustee. It is uncomfortable. It is messy. Local politics are—you're very connected to these folks, and the issues matter.

In order to remove a councillor found guilty of serious misconduct, this bill would require a unanimous council vote, following two inquiries by two integrity commissioners. Does this not seem like you are setting the bar

too high for removal for egregious behaviour and conduct of a council member?

**Hon. Rob Flack:** I would agree absolutely that it sets an extremely high bar. There's no question about it. And that's why we support it; it should be a high bar.

But, again, I want to come back to the role of the integrity commissioners. It's a third-party review. It's an independent review. One of the things that I think we can do collectively as a Legislature, as a government and as a team across all aisles, is take a look at how we can continue to improve how the integrity commissioner works, the system works, throughout all 444 municipalities.

It's inconsistent. It's abused. It's used to weaponize people at times. I think we can do a better job of how we appoint integrity commissioners, who becomes qualified to become integrity commissioners and how the Ontario Integrity Commissioner can help the process.

And, again, to speak on behalf of the associate minister—or to repeat what he said—if it comes back to council and it has been deemed that it has not been working or they've performed egregiously, God bless that council who votes to keep them in.

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

**Mr. Deepak Anand:** Madam Speaker, as we know, the municipal elections are going on, and we're talking about governance through this bill.

So my question is very simple. To the members: When will the proposed changes come into effect, and how is the government supporting municipalities with implementation so there is no ambiguity?

**Mr. Brian Saunderson:** I want to thank the member from Mississauga–Malton for the question. He's quite right. With the upcoming municipal elections, this legislation, if passed, will come into force after the election is over so that the candidates that are running for municipal council will know the changes in the landscape, will know what's expected of them.

By passing legislation now, we give them time to get educated so that every elected official starts their term with full knowledge of their responsibilities under the standardized code. They will be required to take mandatory training and—

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

**Mr. Jeff Burch:** It's a pleasure to rise and finally debate third reading of Bill 9. It's been going on for half a decade now. I guess we better pass it really quick before someone changes their mind over there.

First of all, I'll mention that I will be sharing my time with the member from Ottawa Centre and the member from Toronto Centre.

Also, just to follow up on the last question that was asked, right now, candidates are signing up for municipal elections. And listen, it has not been an easy time for municipalities over the last number of years. There has certainly been some confusion lately with governance changes, and so we want to make sure that people feel as comfortable as possible putting their names forward.

We should remember the purpose of this legislation, especially women and young women—that they feel that they could put their names forward and that we are creating a safer work environment and workplace in the municipal sector for elected officials and for people who work in it. And that's really what we should keep our eyes on with this legislation.

Having said that, I want to just thank everyone who has put their name in so far and encourage everyone who's thinking of putting their name in. It's a very rewarding experience. Of course, we want to make this sector as comfortable as possible so that people feel comfortable—our fellow members of the community—in coming forward and volunteering for what is an incredibly rewarding experience that many of us in this Legislature have had the experience of working for their constituents municipally.

I also want to mention that I think I'm the only member who has been following this right from the beginning. I'm on my third municipal affairs minister. I've been the municipal affairs critic since 2018, and I can remember 2020 and the issues that happened in Ottawa—which I'll reference. I can remember the current House leader, who was then the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, coming forward with what was actually a really good consultation and some really good discussions that resulted in a bill, which I'll talk about a little bit as well.

**1510**

What I've really been following and what I've really enjoyed doing with this issue is working with Emily McIntosh and Women of Ontario Say No, which is a grassroots organization of councillors, some survivors and folks who are just really giving their volunteer time and have done a heck of a lot of work over the last five years trying to get legislation in place that protects women who have really gone through some serious incidents, egregious incidents of sexual harassment and, in some cases, even violence. I want to thank them. Having talked to Emily this morning, I have some people that the Women of Ontario Say No would like to thank for their support. I don't have permission to say all of the names—some of them are survivors—but I will mention the cities that they're from, and they will know who they are: individual councillors from multiple municipalities of Kenora, Stratford, Ottawa, Whitby, Aurora, Brampton, Woodstock, Barrie, London, Guelph, Cambridge, Cornwall, Russell-Prescott, Beckwith, Springwater-Collingwood-Blue Mountains and some folks from Niagara as well that I've worked with. Thank you to all of those women who have come forward, formed a grassroots movement and have not given up, for five years now, working to realize legislation that accomplishes their goals.

As the minister mentioned, this legislation doesn't make everyone happy. It took far too long, but it is a step in the right direction, which is why we've all come together and decided that we're going to make sure this passes prior to the municipal election so that it's in place and people know that it's in place.

The Women of Ontario Say No also wanted to thank support from the Association of Municipalities of Ontario;

the Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario; Ontario's Big City Mayors, who supported them; the Association of Ontario Road Supervisors; the Ontario Municipal Administrators Association; 23 individual motions from upper-tier municipalities in Ontario supporting the Women of Ontario Say No; the city of Toronto; 184 lower-tier municipalities. That was a lot of work that these ladies did, getting those councils to endorse motions asking for action on this issue. We've also received many letters from municipalities, like the town of Moosonee, the city of Sarnia and many, many others in support.

Also, I want to thank both my colleagues from all parties and all of the folks who showed up at the 10 days of hearings. It's great that the government had those hearings, and we got to hear many diverse opinions, but some came through loud and clear.

Before I talk about the actual bill, I want to give a bit of background just to understand where we've come from. I wanted to talk about a little bit of my own experience. I've heard this government talk about, "Well, we need to have a high bar. We need to have a high bar to remove a councillor." And I agree with that.

I did a couple of terms as a city councillor in St. Catharines with my colleague the member from St. Catharines, and I've seen a number of integrity commissioner complaints. At the end of the two terms I did, I ran for mayor of St. Catharines, and I came in second. After the election, I was actually taken to task for my expenses and it's a very, very expansive kind of process that allows citizens to take candidates, after the election, to court to examine their expenses. A lot of people don't understand how expansive it really is.

I was questioned for days. I had to hire a lawyer. There are still jokes about actually being asked to produce receipts for balloons from the dollar store and I actually had them and I produced them, so I had some impeccable expenses, thank goodness. Those complaints were vexatious, but you know what? It was a judicial process at the end of the day, and someone who is elected can be removed through that process for expenses. Think about that.

But a female politician, municipal politician, who suffers an egregious form of sexual misconduct—cannot be removed through a judicial process. Where are our priorities? Many people have raised that throughout our discussions. So it's really, really important to understand that we need a process that—yes, the bar has to be high, but it has to be at a level where we are making sure that we are protecting people in the municipal sector from these egregious forms of sexual harassment and sexual violence. That's where we should be headed.

I don't think this bill gets there. I think we've discussed going back to councils for removal and the politicization of that. The vast majority of experts agree that it really should be a judicial process at the end of the day. The government knows that because they've had the hearings and they've heard from everyone, but for whatever reason, we're not there yet.

There are some good things in this bill, especially around integrity commissioners. It has been described as the Wild West, and I would agree with that. There is no real process, no real formalized process of education and selection, and while this bill doesn't specifically spell those things out, it does provide the opportunity, through regulation, for us to get there. There are some very good things in this bill. The most important thing is that these stakeholders and groups that have worked so hard to get something to where we are now want us to pass it, so that's very positive.

I just want to review the background because I think it's important, all the work that has been done. We know that in 2020, Ottawa's integrity commissioner found that councillor Rick Chiarelli committed serious misconduct involving sexual harassment against three women—and they have been here in the chamber as survivors—recommending the maximum penalty of a 90-day suspension for each instance—which I think we all agree is pathetic—which was unanimously approved by their council. Despite the seriousness of those findings, Chiarelli refused to resign and there was no provision in the law allowing for him to be removed.

In late 2020, the first person that brought something to the Legislature was our former Ottawa Centre MPP Joel Harden, who tabled a motion calling on the government to change the law to allow municipalities to remove members of council who have been found guilty of serious acts of misconduct, including sexual misconduct. In March 2021, amid growing pressure stemming from the Chiarelli case, the government launched a consultation into strengthening municipal codes of conduct.

In late 2021, the government briefed myself and other opposition parties on an upcoming bill that would address the lack of consequences for serious misconduct by municipal councillors. That bill would have allowed a municipal integrity commissioner to apply to a judge to remove a councillor that had been found guilty of serious misconduct harming the safety of others. But the bill was never tabled. A year later, Global News reported that the promised legislation had been quietly scrapped, according to FOI documents that it had obtained. So the direction of judicial review is definitely where we ended up after the consultations, where the government ended up, but whatever happened in the upper echelons of the government caused them to abandon that.

In March 2022, my colleague from Orléans debated his Bill 10, which would allow councillors to direct their integrity commissioners to apply to a judge for determination whether a member of council has breached the code of conduct or workplace policies with respect to workplace violence or harassment, and if so, a declaration that the member's seat is vacant. The bill passed second reading, Speaker, but it died when the election was called.

#### 1520

In August 2022, the member from Orléans tabled Bill 5, which was similar to Bill 10. This time it was voted down by government members when it was debated in May 2023. At that time, very interestingly, the Associate

Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity falsely claimed that the bill would give integrity commissioners the power to remove a council member—that was the substance of their argument—taking power from councils and making ICs more powerful than a judge. But in fact, that bill would have required the IC to apply to a judge for removal, so it appeared the government didn't really understand that bill.

Pressure for change continued to build, and, in 2024, with more than 200 local councils endorsing the resolution that I mentioned earlier, championed by the Women of Ontario Say No, which were frustrated by the lack of action, I then tabled Bill 207 in June 2024 to hold municipal councillors accountable for workplace harassment and serious misconduct. Now we're on the fifth piece of legislation that was being bounced around.

So the government tabled Bill 242 on the last day of the 2024 legislative session when the government knew they were calling an election. The bill appears to be very different from the bill that was presented in 2021, and it died on the order paper, of course, when the election was called.

That's the general history of this issue. The reason I bring it up, and the Women of Ontario Say No asked me to go through this long history, is because, Speaker, what has happened since then? Their point is something could have happened five years ago and women could have been made to feel more safe in the municipal environment. We don't know of instances of sexual harassment that may have happened because there wasn't legislation in place. That's why it's timely that this legislation is passed. It should have been passed a long time ago. Even in its current form, it's something that we need to pass, that we need to get working on and correct the deficiencies in the legislation.

I mentioned earlier the provincially mandated system of local integrity commissioners has been described as the Wild West. There's no oversight, and inconsistent standards across municipalities. Most municipal integrity commissioners are private contractors that work for several municipalities at once.

In September 2024, the then Integrity Commissioner David Wake submitted recommendations to the government about how to improve things. I met with the Integrity Commissioner, and I know the current Minister of Education, who was the Minister of Municipal Affairs at the time, met with him and saw those recommendations. He really summed up what we needed to put in this legislation. He said to:

“—create a single, standardized code of conduct for all municipalities;

“—training should be required for integrity commissioners, councillors and municipal staff”—these are things that we're going to have to do by regulation now because they're not all specifically spelled out in the bill.

He said we should:

“—require each municipality to provide accessible information that identifies its integrity commissioner, the scope of jurisdiction and contact information;

“—maintain a registry of all municipal integrity commissioners”—something that I had in my private member's bill that was not added by the government in committee;

“—integrity commissioners should have access to a central database of all completed inquiries”—hard to believe there's not a central database of inquiries;

“—establish a standard process for ... investigations;

“—consider a centralized or regional system to assist smaller municipalities manage costs;

“—require integrity commissioners to submit a public annual report.”

These are some of the things we're going to have to work on in future to make sure that this bill, when it's enacted, has the regulations to give it the teeth that are necessary to make this sector safer.

As I mentioned, the bill is identical to Bill 241, which was tabled before the last day of the 2024 session and died when the election was called. It repeals the authority of municipalities to develop their own codes of conduct and set their own terms of reference for their integrity commissioner, complaint investigation protocols and reporting procedures. Instead, the Lieutenant Governor in Council can prescribe a standard code of conduct and standardized integrity commissioner investigation processes.

There are some really good improvements in this bill that will enable the government, in future, by regulation, to protect folks better in the municipal sector and also to bring about a more standardized system for integrity commissioners to be educated and selected, which is good. It does provide, as has been mentioned, a mechanism for removing council members who have committed serious misconduct, such as sexual harassment. Advocates like the Women of Ontario Say No have long sought such a mechanism, but currently, even a criminal conviction has no impact on a councillor's eligibility to sit on council, and the maximum available penalty for violating a municipal code of conduct is a reprimand or a suspension of pay for up to 90 days per incident.

For too long, we've seen councillors get away with the most egregious behaviour, repeatedly, and still be able to hold their positions of power. We've seen this in Ottawa and Pickering, both of which made headlines after the mayor and council wrote to the province begging for help with a colleague who had been found guilty of misconduct by the local integrity commissioner more than once.

I'm glad to see this bill adopts many of the proposals put forward in my previous Bill 207 and my colleagues' bills which were tabled in past Parliaments. But the current language in this bill may set the bar for removal so high that it becomes nearly impossible to remove a councillor.

Municipalities need real tools to deal with misconduct and create safer, healthier workplaces, so more women and diverse candidates feel empowered to serve. I don't feel that this bill quite gets us there, but it's a good start. I'm glad the government finally brought it forward. I'm glad we're passing it quickly before the municipal election in the fall. And again, I just want to thank the incredible women who came together and worked so hard over the last five years to push for this legislation.

With that, I'll hand things over to my colleague from Ottawa Centre.

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos):** I recognize the member from Ottawa Centre.

**MPP Catherine McKenney:** I rise today to speak to third reading of Bill 9, the Municipal Accountability Act. I supported this bill at second reading, and I do support it now. This bill was written, in no small part, because of what happened in the city of Ottawa, in a building where I worked.

However, standing here today at third reading, I can't pretend that the bill we're passing today is the bill we should be passing. It does fall short in a way that could have a very real human cost, so before the vote and before I vote yes, I just want us to understand exactly what we're doing and exactly what we might be leaving undone in this bill.

I want to begin where I began at second reading, Speaker, because I believe this story belongs in this record at every stage of this debate: In 2019, women, mostly young women, began to come forward with accounts of what they had been subjected to in the office of then-Ottawa city councillor Rick Chiarelli. These were not rumours or misunderstandings; they were formal complaints investigated thoroughly and professionally by the city of Ottawa's integrity commissioner, and what those investigations found was damning.

Young women reported being asked during job interviews whether they would be willing to go braless at public events. They were questioned about their sexual histories. They were instructed to wear clothing such as low-cut tops and short skirts in order to attract male attention at fundraisers. They were taken to bars where the harassment became unspeakable. They were warned about creeps online and told not to complain. And some were told directly that their future political careers could be destroyed if they didn't comply.

1530

Speaker, these women were barely in their twenties. Some of them wanted to work in politics. Some of them wanted to run for office themselves.

The integrity commissioner found that Councillor Chiarelli had repeatedly violated the code of conduct. They found that he had created a workplace culture of fear, exploitation and sexual harassment. They found that he had demeaned women, abused his position of trust and undermined the integrity of public office.

Then, Ottawa city council was told what the maximum available penalty was: 90 days' pay suspension. That was it. That was all that the law permitted—not removal, not disqualification, but just a pay suspension. As a council, we applied it, and then we applied it again for a second finding and a third, but the councillor stayed on. He kept his title. He kept his seat. He was able to vote. He walked into that council chamber and he sat down and he voted on matters affecting the people of Ottawa while survivors were watching from their homes.

Speaker, I served on that council. I knew this city councillor. I had known him for almost 20 years. I knew

the women who came forward, at least two of them personally. What I have to sit with and what I have carried since then is the knowledge that every time we voted to suspend his pay and watched him come back, we were sending those women a message: "We believe you. We condemn what he did. And we cannot do anything that truly matters."

I have asked myself many times what more I could have done, what I should have known earlier and how I failed these young women, and I continue to carry that. My colleagues on council and I stood through entire council meetings when Councillor Chiarelli sat down so that we were not taking a seat at the same table. It was the most meaningful gesture of solidarity within our power. But it wasn't enough. We were not able to remove him, and the women knew it.

Eventually this councillor left office, not because of what he did, not because of the harm he caused, not because any institution in this province had the power or the will to remove him; he left because he chose not to run again. He made that choice on his own timeline, in his own time, for his own reasons. The survivors did not get that choice.

So, Speaker, I want to be clear about what Bill 9 does, because it does real things that matter. For the first time in Ontario's history, there is a legal pathway to remove a municipal councillor who commits serious misconduct. That is not a small thing. For decades, advocates, survivors, legal experts, municipal officials and opposition members in this Legislature have been calling for exactly this. The previous maximum penalty—a 90-day suspension—was, in practice, no deterrent at all for the determined abuser. This bill changes the ceiling.

This bill also standardizes municipal codes of conduct across Ontario. Right now, the system has been described accurately, as my colleague put it, as a Wild West. Municipal integrity commissioners work as private contractors, often serving several municipalities simultaneously with inconsistent standards, no central oversight and no common database of their own completed decisions.

This bill also creates training requirements. It empowers the Integrity Commissioner of Ontario with a new oversight role. It brings some order to a system that has operated largely in darkness. For the many municipalities in this province with weak or dysfunctional accountability systems—and there are many—this bill raises the floor. So yes, we support this bill and are voting for it, but I'm standing here today because the bill we are passing has a flaw that is so significant that it may, in the worst cases, produce the exact outcome it was designed to prevent.

Speaker, let me walk through what happens under Bill 9 when a councillor commits serious sexual harassment. First, there is an investigation by the municipal integrity commissioner. That investigation must find a breach of the code of conduct on a matter of a serious nature resulting in harm to the health, safety or well-being of a person, and must find that the existing penalties are insufficient to address it. That, Speaker, is a meaningful threshold.

If those findings are made, the file goes to the Integrity Commissioner of Ontario, a second integrity commissioner, who conducts a second inquiry. That inquiry must independently confirm those same findings. Two separate processes, two separate commissioners—I would suggest that's a pretty high bar.

If after all of that, the Integrity Commissioner of Ontario agrees that the misconduct was serious and that removal is warranted, they issue a recommendation to council. And then council votes—every member of council, unanimously. One “no” vote and the recommendation fails; one councillor steps away to get a cup of coffee and the recommendation fails.

Here is the part that should deeply concern us: If council fails to vote unanimously for removal, the councillor receives no penalty at all—not a reprimand, not a suspension, nothing. Two integrity commissioners can have found serious harm, harm of a sexual nature, harm to real people, and if a single councillor votes “no,” the person walks away without so much as a formal sanction.

Speaker, this is not a high enough bar. This is more of a wall that does not prioritize accountability. Toronto's integrity commissioner wrote in his submission on this legislation—and I'm paraphrasing—that it may be practically impossible to remove a council member under this bill. He also identified the perverse incentive built into the all-or-nothing structure: If integrity commissioners know that a unanimous council vote is the only path forward and that a failed vote means zero consequences, they may choose not to recommend removal at all, even in serious cases, to avoid the outcome where the survivor ends up with less than they started with. That is not from me, Speaker; that is from Toronto's integrity commissioner.

I just want to stop to say that I will be sharing my time with the MPP for Ottawa West—Nepean—

**MPP Wayne Gates:** And me.

**MPP Catherine McKenney:** —and Niagara Falls. Thank you.

An integrity commissioner might look at a case of documented sexual harassment, look at evidence that two investigators could confirm, and decide not to make a recommendation because they can't trust one council member not to vote “no,” so the survivor gets nothing, not even the process that they deserve. The Ontario Municipal Administrators Association put it plainly: Municipalities should be able to apply to a judge, and this should not be subject to a vote at council, because it risks politicizing the issue and retraumatizing the victim.

The government's own briefing to the NDP in 2021, when this bill was first being designed, showed a very different model, and that model included judicial oversight. A judge would make the removal determination; council would not. But somewhere between 2021 and today, the judiciary was removed from this process. We don't know the reason for that, but unfortunately, we could be living with the consequences of that choice.

**1540**

The fix is not complicated; it is not even controversial. Simply replace the unanimous council vote with judicial

oversight. It is my hope that this is done when the regulations are set out from this bill. If two integrity commissioners independently find serious misconduct, such as misconduct involving harm to the health and safety of a person, then the matter should go to a judge, not back to the colleagues of the person who caused the harm. A judge applies an independent legal standard, a judge cannot be lobbied in the hallway, a judge does not have to face the person at next month's council meeting and a judge does not owe anyone a campaign favour.

Council is not an appropriate venue for this decision. This is not about distrust of any particular councillor; it is a structural problem. When colleagues decide the fate of a colleague, politics enters the room whether anyone wants to admit it or not. Relationships, past votes, upcoming elections: All of it stays in that room, and the survivor is not protected from any of that.

I also will note what this bill is missing that Commissioner Wake specifically recommended. That, again, is that central database of completed integrity commissioner inquiries, a registry of all municipal integrity commissioners and provisions to help smaller municipalities manage the cost of these processes. Smaller municipalities, as we know, are not an abstract; they are communities across this province where the cost of a lengthy integrity commissioner process is genuinely prohibitive.

Speaker, I want to close by speaking directly about cost. The women who came forward in the Chiarelli case were retraumatized every time the process could not produce anything. We saw it every time council voted for suspension and the councillor came back into the council chambers. It happened time and time again. I heard it from the survivors that every time they would see a photograph of him appearing at a ribbon cutting, they felt retraumatized. I heard from residents who, when they called his office, got his voice mail with his voice because he was still a councillor after everything that had been proven that he did wrong.

Many of the victims were accused of lying. They were harassed online. Some of them stepped back from political life entirely—the very life some of them had hoped to build. The message sent by the system to every woman watching in Ontario was clear: Come forward, do it all—be brave, be public, endure all of it—and we still cannot promise it will matter.

If Bill 9 is not fixed through the regulations, and another case like Councillor Chiarelli's arises—a well-documented case, a thorough investigation, two integrity commissioner findings—but one councillor votes no or leaves the room for a coffee, we will have passed a law that could very well produce the same results.

Speaker, Bill 9 matters. It is overdue. It represents years of effort by advocates, survivors, my colleagues here in this House. I am grateful that it is here today, and we will be voting for it.

But we must have the government hear this, and I want it on the record: The decision not to include judicial oversight, the decision to require a unanimous council vote and the decision to strip all penalties—all penalties—if

that vote fails, these are choices. And if this bill is tested and the test fails, those choices will be what we look back on.

The women who came forward in Ottawa were not asking for revenge; they were simply asking to be believed, to be protected, for a system that would look at what happened and say to their abuser, “You cannot stay. You are not welcome.” And we owe them that. They are watching us today, as they have been watching us since 2019, when this story first broke on former councillor Rick Chiarelli.

We owe every city staff member across this province, every young person who thinks about running for council—which is, I might add, probably the most difficult job I ever held, as a city councillor. I was honoured to hold it. It may go down as my best political job. But it was the most difficult job, and it is made all the more difficult if someone is a victim or a point of abuse.

And these are the very people that we want in public life. We want these young women who aspire to make their communities better, who may sit anywhere in this chamber one day. We want them here. We cannot discourage them. We owe them, and we owe every resident who walks into a city hall anywhere across this province and trusts that the people there are held to a standard—a high standard—a system that actually works.

I’ll just end by saying that it is well overdue. I was worried that we would let this bill disappear over the summer break, that it wouldn’t come back before we recessed. It is back. We had committee meetings. We went across the province. We heard from people who felt very strongly about what was in this bill. They were some of the best discussions I have had as a member of provincial Parliament and some of the best recommendations I had heard from people who came forward and just wanted the bill to be a good bill. They supported it, as we do, but they wanted to make sure that it was going to work.

Again, we support this bill. We’ll be voting for it and trust that we will listen to the people who came before us and make the bill work through the regulatory process.

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

I recognize the member from Ottawa West–Nepean.

**Ms. Chandra Pasma:** I’m pleased to rise on behalf of the residents of Ottawa West–Nepean to speak to Bill 9, which provides a mechanism for removing council members who have committed serious misconduct, including sexual harassment.

This is something that has long been an ask of advocates across the province, including The Women of Ontario Say No, and it has been something that the Ontario NDP has long supported as well. I know my colleague from Niagara Centre had a bill that would have accomplished this goal, and my former colleague Joel Harden, the MPP for Ottawa Centre, brought forward a motion in 2020 that called for exactly this kind of mechanism after Ottawa dealt with an incredibly serious situation with the harassment allegations against city councillor Rick Chiarelli.

I have a number of reasons for being invested in having this kind of accountability mechanism, one of which is that I was a constituent of Rick Chiarelli, who represented a ward that covers a large part of Ottawa West–Nepean. So we do absolutely need to think about the impact on victims of this behaviour, and I’ll be speaking more about that, but there’s also an impact on constituents who aren’t receiving the representation that they deserve when this kind of behaviour happens.

For months, people in College Ward in Ottawa had no real representation. Our city councillor did not have a voice at the table because he was suspended, but most of us also did not feel comfortable reaching out to somebody who had engaged in such egregious behaviour. Effectively, we were voiceless and we were without support.

I think it’s really important that when we see conduct that does not meet the standard we should expect from a public office holder in Ontario, that that position be vacated and we have the opportunity to elect a new representative who will be able to bring forward the voices of their constituents and whom their constituents are not concerned about coming to—that we know we’re going to receive respect when we do reach out to raise concerns or to ask questions.

I also have an investment in this issue as somebody who was a former staffer at the House of Commons from 2011 to 2016, where there was also some significant sexual harassment and violence allegations that the House of Commons was dealing with. There was a lot of conversation at the time about how we protect MPs, but, of course, staff were also dealing with a challenging workplace. Thankfully the NDP staff were unionized, which gave us some level of protection, but not every staffer is, and I know, having experienced it, what a pressure-cooker environment that can be—but also, the hopes and dreams that people bring to that role, that they are hoping that this is a path forward for them. Whether it’s in politics or public policy, they feel deeply engaged in creating change for people in public service, and when they experience harassment or bullying or some form of violence, then it drives women out of that.

**1550**

We already have a much harder time being in politics, so it’s especially a shame when we see young women pushed away, receiving the message that there’s no place for you here, that you will not be protected when you receive unwanted behaviours. We don’t know how many young women have left entirely who are no longer engaged in politics because of these kinds of behaviours, which, of course, don’t just happen at one level of government.

Just to give an example of what this can look like: There was a local campaign in Ottawa recently where a young woman who I know was the target of some pretty incredible bullying. Thankfully, there wasn’t any sexual harassment, but it was deeply targeted; it was very clearly sexist. And in making some phone calls to try to see what I could do to make sure that this didn’t happen to another young woman in a local campaign, I spoke to a long-time

political organizer. When I told her the story, she said, “Oh, I wonder if I could find that young woman who worked with this person on a campaign in 2017. I wonder if I could find her and have her come and tell her story.”

And my heart just absolutely sank, Speaker, both because that meant that this had happened before: that this person had a track record, and yet they were able to continue acting in local campaigns and to continue bullying young women; but also that that organizer said she wasn't sure if she could find her, because that means that that young woman had left politics, that she's no longer in our circles, that we were not sure we could even find her to ask her to share her story.

So there needs to be some accountability, which will hopefully prevent these behaviours from taking place, but that will certainly put a stop to them when they do occur and tell women, and particularly young women, that there will be justice and there will be accountability when you come forward. You will be believed, there will be action to protect you and you do have a future career in politics. Your voice is valued here as much as everyone else's.

So I think we definitely need a mechanism like this, but I do have some concerns about Bill 9 which have been raised by some of my colleagues, beginning with the fact that Bill 9 requires the unanimous consent of council to remove a councillor for misconduct, and that is an incredibly high bar to meet. Even in the case of Rick Chiarelli, where the pattern was repeated and egregious, I am not entirely confident that Ottawa city council would have achieved the unanimous votes required to remove him from office. And it's not even necessarily that somebody might have voted against that; it's that somebody might have felt uncomfortable enough based on their personal relationship to just not show up for the vote. That shouldn't stand in the way of somebody achieving justice and accountability for what they've experienced. There should absolutely be a much easier threshold for removing someone from office for misconduct.

But then it raises the question: What is that threshold? We certainly don't want to have a scenario where it is falling along partisan or ideological lines, where people line up with their friends and allies versus the people that they're opposed to, which is why my colleague proposed that we actually have an independent, non-partisan judge make that decision. The government chose not to move in that direction, so now we have this mechanism that I'm worried might not be used, because the bar is set so high.

This is something that municipalities have reached out to this government to share concerns about as well. This is from the city of Sarnia. They say in a letter to the Premier, “The introduction of a standardized code of conduct and the proposed integrity commissioner reforms are positive and necessary steps forward. However, based on more than four decades of experience in municipal politics, I believe the bill's greatest flaw lies in its mechanism for removing councillors in serious cases of misconduct. Requiring local councils to participate in the removal of a peer, particularly through unanimous agreement, places councils in an inappropriate and untenable position. On

matters of serious contention, unanimity is rarely achievable, rendering the mechanism effectively futile. This approach undermines both fairness and public confidence and fails to provide municipalities with a meaningful ability to act in extreme cases.

“In circumstances of this magnitude, decisions should not rest with a council. Instead, such matters should be heard and ruled upon by an independent, non-partisan authority, removed from local political dynamics and capable of making impartial determinations in the public's interest.

“If the provincial government intends to maintain municipal councils' responsibility for adjudicating such decisions, the threshold for action must be revised. A two-thirds majority, or a simple majority of council excluding the subject member, would provide a more reasonable, fair, and workable standard.”

This is a concern that was echoed by other communities, including the town of Moosonee, Speaker.

It's a shame that the government did not listen to this recommendation, but it's perhaps not a surprise, because, although this was one of the few bills that we've seen allowed to go to committee within this Parliament, the government did not listen to a lot of the feedback that was provided at those hearings, including the issue of a unanimous decision but also addressing costs for smaller municipalities who have less financial capacity to conduct an investigation, as well as how to deal with parallel complaint processes if somebody has also filed a complaint that is covered by a municipal workplace harassment policy and how integrity commissioner investigations will be reported. This was an opportunity for the government to listen to the public, to work with the public and to make sure that they were getting it right. Unfortunately, they did not take that opportunity.

I think, on balance, it's still better to have something in place than nothing at all, but I do think that we should ensure, as the bill is put into force, as regulations are being developed, that we are listening carefully to municipal councillors, to the women of Ontario, to political staffers, to hear about what measures they believe would truly provide them with the protections and the accountability that they need and that we should consider future changes that can be made as we see this legislation roll out and assess whether or not it's having the desired impact.

I just want to end, Speaker, by talking about how widespread this concern can be in political workplaces, where sometimes, unfortunately, politicians can think that the standard of behaviour that is required of them is different than what might exist in other workplaces. Unfortunately, I think one of the things that happens in politics is, when we have people voting for us and selecting us, that can give us a bit of an ego or can go to our heads. We can start behaving in ways that that suggest that we are entitled, that we deserve what we want when we want it, that we can expect what we want the second that we need it and that we shouldn't have to take responsibility when errors are made. That can result in scenarios where what is being demanded of staff and how staff are

being treated when an elected official doesn't feel that they are getting what they deserve—that that can create an incredibly toxic workplace.

So I think it's really incumbent upon elected officials that we, who can't do the jobs that we do without staff, always demonstrate respect for the teams that make the work that we do possible. But we know that's not going to happen in every situation, which is why it's incredibly important that we have measures to address workplace safety, to hold people accountable for their actions, which is why political staff at Toronto city hall are currently conducting a union drive: because, unfortunately, some of these behaviours are so widespread that staff are en masse demanding that they have some form of protection.

I think it's incredibly important that we listen to staff about what their working conditions are, reflect on the fact that they are in this job for public service and that just because you are serving the public doesn't mean you deserve to take whatever kind of treatment people decide to mete out to you, and that we take action to protect political staff and anyone who engages with an elected official, whether it's a city councillor, an MPP or an MP.

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos):** I recognize the member from Niagara Falls.

1600

**MPP Wayne Gates:** It's always a pleasure to rise on Bill 9. I was a city councillor from 2010 to 2014. I can tell you that our council got along. We had a lot of fun, even though we had to make some tough decisions. We didn't face any of the harassment. We had a guy named Bart Maves—not the guy that I ran against twice and beat, but another Bart Maves—who was one of the funniest guys I've ever known. We used to go to Antica after our meetings. So it was a very enjoyable four years before I came up here, but that's not always the case.

I like to talk about Niagara more than most people here, so I want to bring it home to Niagara. Niagara municipalities are close to the people, and we all know that. In Niagara Falls, Fort Erie, Niagara-on the-Lake—my riding—people know their local councillors. It doesn't matter who it is. Why do they know them? They see them at the grocery store. They see them at the arena. They see them at the Legion. They see them at community events. They see them at fundraisers. They see them at ribbon cuttings.

I know we get a lot of that side saying, "Well, they show up for the ribbon cutting." Well, we show up because it's our riding, and we represent those particular workplaces. They make fun of it, but the reality is, we're the MPP. We're the ones that they couldn't win, whether it's in Windsor, whether it's in Sudbury or whatever. So we deserve to be there when you're cutting the ribbon, just for the record.

I can say my good friend over there Sam Oosterhoff always calls me and asks me to come out and makes sure I say a few words. I appreciate it, but that's not always the case in all our ridings. That's wrong.

We see them at ribbon cutting, parades, festivals, public meetings. The closeness is a strength of municipal government. It means people talk directly to their elected

officials. It means local issues get raised by local voices, which is important. It means decisions are made by the people who know their community.

But that closeness also means accountability. It has to be independent when it matters and when it's serious, because in smaller and mid-sized communities, relationships matter, local pressure matters, local politics matters. People know each other. People have histories with each other. We play on hockey teams together and slo-pitch.

That's why Niagara fought so hard against forced amalgamation, one of the biggest mistakes that ever happened in Niagara if that happened. We know the value of having a local say, and it is also why we fought so hard against government uploading local decisions onto municipalities—that means with our school boards, with our conservation authorities, with our elected chairs at regional council.

I'm going to come out and say very clearly there's no way in heck—I didn't say the other word—that the regional chair should be appointed and then given strong-mayor powers, strong-chair powers. An unelected person in Niagara will have the most power in all of Niagara region. Think about that—not even elected. It makes absolutely no sense, so we fought against that. Rightfully so, because everybody around this table here, everybody that's here tonight, got elected. They got elected in their own community. You know what they had to do? They had to go out and knock on doors. There's a lot of first-time guys getting elected, and they knocked on the doors. They put their proposal together. Whether I agree with the Conservative proposal or not—obviously, somebody did—they were elected, so I respect them for that.

But how do you respect somebody that's going to have the most power in the entire region and he's appointed by the Premier? No accountability—and he only answers to who? Who does he answer to? To the Premier, not to the local people, not to people that should be saying, "Hey, you know what you're doing is wrong." He doesn't even have to answer to them.

Then it gets even worse in Niagara. He has so much power, he can overrule the mayors of Niagara, overrule their decision and say, "No, we're not doing that." It makes no sense.

We need a process that municipal staff can trust. We need a process that complainants can trust, and we need a process that elected officials themselves can trust. That means an independent final step; that means a judge. It should not be local councillors under political pressure deciding whether two integrity commissioners' findings should actually matter. Municipal staff deserve protection.

Speaker, we also have to remember who is often affected when elected officials misuse their power. It's not another politician; it's often staff. It's often people who work for the municipality. It's often people who are not in a position of equal power. It may be a young staff person. It may be somebody trying to build a career. It may be somebody applying for a job. It may be somebody who fears that if he speaks out, then they'll label him difficult, political or not a team player.

That is why this has to be understood as a workplace issue. When serious misconduct is allowed to continue, it does not affect one person; it affects the whole workplace. It affects morale, recruitment, retention. It affects whether people feel safe doing their jobs. Sometimes I don't feel safe doing my job here.

Staff do not elect their boss. Staff do not control council. Staff do not control the political environment. Staff need to know that if something serious happens, the system works. They need to know that the law will not say, "We believe misconduct happens, we believe it has caused harm and we believe the strongest current penalties are not enough, but because one councillor voted no, nothing happens." One councillor—that's not good enough. Workers deserve better than that. Municipal staff deserve better than that. Survivors deserve better than that.

Speaker, the current system has a major limitation. In most code-of-conduct cases, the strongest penalty available is reprimand or suspension of pay for 90 days. For some cases, that may be appropriate. For lesser breaches, reprimands may be enough. For some misconduct, pay suspension may be enough. But in the most serious cases, it's certainly not enough. If an elected official has committed serious conduct that harms the health, safety or well-being of another person, the law needs to be stronger too.

That's why advocates have pushed for change. That is why Women of Ontario Say No have pushed for change. That's why municipal organizations have raised concerns. That's why members of this House have brought forward motions and bills before. This is not about punishing mistakes. This is not about partisan fights. This is not about the worst cases. This is about cases where current penalties simply do not match the seriousness of the crime.

And if we're finally going to create a removal process, then we have to have responsibility to make sure that the process actually works. We should not create a process that looks strong on paper but collapses in practice—it's that word, "practice." We should not create a process where the final step is so difficult, removal may never happen. We should not create a process where the outcome is all or nothing. Removal or no consequences at all: That's a bad design; that's a dangerous design. And it's something the Legislature can fix.

We should have learned our lesson from Ottawa, quite frankly. The lesson there? The law failed. Council could condemn the conduct, council could impose maximum available penalties and council could suspend pay, but council could not remove the person from office. The person remained in office. And the person harmed by the conduct had to watch a system that could identify misconduct but not fully respond to it.

That's exactly why this bill matters, but it's also why this bill is not strong enough. Because if we create a process where removal can be blocked by one councillor, then we risk repeating the same failures in a new form. We risk telling survivors, "We believe in you, but our hands are tied," or worse, "We believe you, but one politician voted no, so nothing happens." That cannot be the standard in Ontario—

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

Thank you.

**MPP Wayne Gates:** I'm done?

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

Questions?

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** My question is for any of my colleagues who would like to take it. Many of them served on municipal councils in various parts of the province. They've seen what happens when there is a difficult decision that needs to be made, either difficult because of the issue or difficult because of the personalities involved in, maybe, the decision.

I'm wondering if they have ever come across a municipal politician who perhaps does not have the fortitude necessary to make a tough decision and might just get up from the table, go to the backroom and grab a coffee or use the washroom in order to avoid a difficult decision. How might that impact a situation as serious as a decision on removing someone from council?

**Mr. Jeff Burch:** Thank you to the member for the question.

Yes, it's a great point, because in the current bill, it not only requires unanimous vote of council to remove a councillor, but all of them have to actually be there. If one person gets up or somebody is sick, the motion would fail. It's a serious defect in this bill and something that we really need to fix in the future. Those of us who have sat on council, we all know that there have been testy votes that happen, whether it's on property or legal matters or other issues that are controversial—people just happen to get up and go for a coffee at just that time or go to the washroom. We have seen it in our municipality recently with governance votes at regional council. It happens all the time and it's a serious defect with this bill.

1610

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

**Hon. Sam Oosterhoff:** My question is to the member for Niagara Falls or perhaps for Niagara Centre as well. Of course, I understand the importance of cracking down on bad actors and I think this legislation does that. But I'm wondering if they could speak a little bit about concerns that they might have about weaponization of frivolous complaints.

Look, we have seen it before, where people throw IC complaints at people just so they can run around then and say, "Oh, there are all these IC complaints," even though all of them ended up unfounded. Do you think that the fact that this creates now a provincial standard, instead of this patchwork that we currently have—do you think that that will create more consistency and a better application of those standards, and how, from your perspective, would you address that concern if you think this is too restrictive around when someone could be expelled from a council?

**Mr. Jeff Burch:** Thank you for the question. It's a really good question.

Actually, the parts of this bill that are adequate are the ones around integrity commissioners and developing a

standardization. We've all heard and we all agreed, actually, when the original bill was discussed in 2021—that's really something that everyone agreed on: that we needed to fix the system of integrity commissioners being selected and being educated.

The Integrity Commissioner of Ontario had a number of suggestions around that, some of which are in the bill and some of which we can accomplish through regulation, but frivolous complaints have always been a huge issue; it's been an issue in Niagara, as I'm sure you know. I think that having integrity commissioners that are well trained and some standardization across the province will really help with that, so the bill does accomplish that.

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

**Mr. Terence Kernaghan:** I would like to thank my friend from Niagara Centre for his discussion and entering into debate on Bill 9 today.

It seems as though this bill, which has such an early number, has come to us almost as an afterthought. It's quite like the HST rebate that didn't seem to make it within the budget. We're here for the next two weeks until the House rises for the summer, and this bill has finally, as the member had indicated in his speech, returned to the floor of the chamber.

I wanted to ask, what are some of the consequences of the delay that this government has made? Are there any impacts on local elections from this government really leaving this issue by the wayside?

**Mr. Jeff Burch:** It's a really good question and something I talked about in my speech. Something the Women of Ontario Say No—I spoke to their spokespeople this morning—raised is that they wanted me to raise that very point: What has happened since 2021 till now?

My friend from Ottawa West–Nepean talked about it as well. How many people have left politics, how many of these complaints have not been addressed because it has taken five years? The frustrating thing is that the bill that was actually about to be proposed back in 2021 had a judicial review at the end of it to remove councillors. It had really, really good wording around integrity commissioners and developing a central database, for example, across the province. We've gone backwards, and it has taken five years, so it is a bit frustrating, but hopefully, we can fix the deficiencies in the bill. Certainly, that's one of them.

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

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** To my friend from Niagara: I remember that briefing at the end of 2021 with the minister's office; we were both on the call. I think it was a very good briefing and, ultimately, a very good bill. That was when the government was still coming back from Christmas break in February, which is normal. We thought that there was lots of time to pass that legislation before that spring election. I recall I wrote a letter to the minister saying that we would support that bill and we would agree to accelerate its timing before the election. I believe your caucus did as well.

Given that the government had a good bill and they had support from the two opposition parties, why do you think they chose not to pass legislation before that 2022 election?

**Mr. Jeff Burch:** Thank you very much for the question. I actually mentioned in my speech—and I didn't fully realize that this had happened, but apparently Global News made an FOI request and found out that the bill had been killed behind the scenes. I think that the minister, who gave a very good consultation with us—and we were pretty satisfied that it was a good piece of legislation, and I know a lot of the government members were in favour of it. So it was pretty clear from that FOI that Global News obtained that it had been killed probably at the cabinet table behind the scenes, with the higher-ups in the party doing that.

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

**Ms. Aislinn Clancy:** My experience on committees is that we get a lot of awesome people with a lot of great ideas and then we don't advance amendments. It's like we're not measuring twice and cutting once. What would you say to the government about, hopefully, going forward, doing a credible job of making sure that committee work is valued and it's not just token, and that we implement adjustments to make sure that legislation comes in ready and makes a good impact?

**Mr. Jeff Burch:** Thank you for the question. I was at most of the 10 days of committee hearings, which is quite a few for any bill. We had some really good suggestions from people, and the first comment I would make is that the overwhelming concern was the one around removal of councillors and the opinion of almost every expert and the vast majority of folks in the municipal sector who said it should go to judicial review. There were a number of other things that came forward as well.

I believe in the committee process, in the way it's supposed to work. Unfortunately, it doesn't always work that way, and we've seen it this session with a number of bills where we go through the process, a number of clear improvements to the bill are raised, but they're not taken seriously or passed. It undermines the committee process, and there were certainly many people who came forward with suggestions to improve the bill that were not, obviously, listened to. That's disappointing.

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos):** We've got time for a very quick question and response. Questions?

**MPP Jamie West:** Thank you to everyone who spoke to this.

I want to talk to our colleague who mentioned the behaviour of Councillor Chiarelli, where she said, "We believe you. We condemn what he did, but we can't do anything more." I'm wondering if she feels that this bill is doing enough to address those concerns of those people who were harassed.

**MPP Catherine McKenney:** Thank you to my colleague from Sudbury for that question. You know, the bill has got a lot of strengths in terms of allowing for a

process where a councillor can be removed. Going through two integrity commissioners certainly is a good, high bar. I think it addresses the concerns that were raised earlier by another member. But again, I do believe that we could have had the same result in Ottawa, as we will with this bill.

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

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** I rise today in support of Bill 9, Municipal Accountability Act, 2026, and I'll be sharing my time with my colleagues from Ottawa–Vanier and from Nepean.

I want to say very clearly at the outset, because there are people across Ontario who have waited years for this Legislature to finally act: Municipal staff who endured harassment, residents who lost faith in local government, councillors who watched colleagues behave disgracefully and discovered there was almost no meaningful mechanism to stop it and victims who came forward at enormous personal cost—all of these people, Madam Speaker, deserve action.

And so, I do want to thank Minister Flack for bringing this bill to this point and hopefully getting it across the finish line later today or tomorrow, where two former municipal affairs ministers couldn't quite get it here. But, Madam Speaker, support for this bill does not mean silence about its flaws, and it does not erase the frustrating reality that Ontario could have dealt with many of these issues years ago.

**1620**

I first began speaking about this issue in the Legislature in November 2020. I raised the concerns around Mr. Chiarelli and what was happening in Ottawa during statements for Woman Abuse Prevention Month. Later that year, there was a motion brought forward, as previous colleagues have alluded to, and this was at a time where the city of Ottawa was confronting a series of integrity commissioner reports involving then-Councillor Rick Chiarelli. Those reports described behaviour that was shocking, degrading, manipulative and deeply abusive towards women working in and around municipal politics. And what struck many of us was not only the severity of the allegations but the inability of the system to meaningfully respond.

Now, the city did what it could. It imposed the harshest penalty it was legally allowed to—a temporary suspension of pay—and those penalties were actually upheld by a judge, Madam Speaker. But the councillor still remained in office. His title remained, his authority remained, his pension continued to accumulate and the possibility of re-election remained. The public looked at that situation and asked an entirely reasonable question: How can this possibly be the maximum consequence? Because in any other workplace in Ontario, behaviour like that would certainly have ended someone's employment. That was the moment when many people realized that Ontario's municipal accountability laws were badly outdated.

In March 2021, I introduced the Stopping Harassment and Abuse by Local Leaders Act—it was Bill 260 at the

time—which died on the order paper when the government prorogued the Legislature. I reintroduced that again in October of 2021 as Bill 10 when the House came back. The government voted for it the following March and then allowed it to die on the order paper when they called the election.

Following the election, Madam Speaker, I reintroduced the bill again as Bill 5 in August 2022. This time, having just voted for it a few months earlier, the government chose to vote against it. As we've heard, my friend from Niagara introduced legislation shortly after that, and again, the government voted no. Then eventually, as time has gone by, the government has brought forward Bill 9.

So, while I support this legislation as a small movement forward, I also think it's fair to ask, why did it take so long? Why did victims have to wait this many years for this legislation to finally admit that the system was broken? Why, after all of that time, did the government still refuse to fix some of the bill's most obvious weaknesses?

Because this debate matters beyond Queen's Park, beyond this place. There is a municipal election later this year. Thousands of candidates across Ontario are preparing to put their names on a ballot. Many are first-time candidates; many are community volunteers who simply want to serve. They need guidance, they need clarity and they deserve a system where the rules are understood before they run for office, not discovered in the middle of a scandal.

At the same time, Madam Speaker, victims need justice—not symbolic justice, not procedural justice, not endless reports and closed-door meetings and political calculations. They need real justice. One of the things that has stayed with me throughout these years and years of debate were the words of the women who came forward in Ottawa. These were not abstract policy discussions for them. These were real people whose lives and careers were permanently affected by what happened.

One of the victims wrote, "Seeing the lack of response from our governance structures makes me lose faith in our institutions." Think about that for a moment: not losing faith in a single politician, not losing faith in an office but losing faith in the institution itself. Another woman wrote that she only found the courage to come forward after hearing others speak publicly because she feared her career would be destroyed. That's why this legislation matters. Because accountability systems are not only about punishing misconduct after the fact; they are about restoring trust before it disappears entirely.

Now, Madam Speaker, one of the things that we don't talk about enough in these debates is the enormous power imbalance that can exist inside political offices. Municipal staff are not equals in these situations. A councillor controls hiring, influence, references, political access, future opportunities. Young staffers, often women early in their careers, are expected to navigate environments where powerful elected officials can have enormous influence over their futures. That imbalance matters a lot.

People sometimes ask, "Well, why didn't you report it sooner? Why didn't you let someone know?" Speaker,

anyone who asks that question has probably never experienced what it feels like to fear that speaking up could destroy your career.

One of the women in Ottawa spoke about exactly this fear, the fear that her future opportunities would disappear if she came forward. Sadly, that fear was not irrational. Politics is a small world. References matter, relationships matter and reputations spread quickly. That is why accountability systems can't depend entirely on victims carrying the burden themselves. Because when institutions fail to act, the message to victims becomes very clear: "Stay quiet, endure it and protect yourself, because the system probably won't protect you." That is the culture we have been trying to change for the last six years. That is the culture that I hope Bill 9 will change. That culture desperately needs to be changed. That's why this bill matters.

Before Bill 9, Ontario had a municipal accountability system that too often looked powerless in the face of serious misconduct. A councillor could—and in the past has bullied their staff, harassed colleagues, created toxic workplaces, breached codes of conduct repeatedly. And what was often the maximum penalty? Well, it was a temporary suspension, a temporary pay-docking. That was it.

In some cases, the public looked at municipal councils and asked a very reasonable question: How is this person still in office? The answer was simple: because the system was never designed to deal with sustained misconduct by elected officials who refused to change.

Our laws were built in a different era, an era where shame still restrained behaviour, an era where public office carried an expectation of dignity and constraint, an era where crossing the line politically often meant stepping aside voluntarily. I think we have seen, and we can agree, that that era is gone. Norms have been changed drastically over the last number of years and our laws have not kept up.

Bill 9 is an acknowledgement, finally, that Ontario's municipal accountability system needs modernization. That's a good thing. But modernization delayed is justice delayed, and it's been delayed for years.

I'd like to speak about the committee process for this legislation a little bit. Last summer, committee travelled across Ontario for this bill: London, Niagara Falls, Barrie, Ottawa, Thunder Bay—travelled at great taxpayer expense, I might add. The committee heard from integrity commissioners. They heard from municipal leaders. They heard from clerks of councils. They heard from advocates. They heard from victims. They heard from integrity commissioners and lawyers and just regular people. People travelled to testify. People took time off work. Some people relived deeply painful experiences because they believed this government was listening. And to be fair, Madam Speaker, some important testimony was heard.

But at the same time, there was also growing frustration during those hearings because many witnesses started to realize something. They started to realize that, while the government might have been hearing them, it was not intending to listen to them. Again and again, witnesses

raised the same concerns. Again and again, experts proposed reasonable amendments. Again and again, concerns were dismissed. That created a real sense that much of the process was performative—not consultation, but performance.

**1630**

Madam Speaker, consultations only mean something if the government is actually open and willing to make changes. Otherwise, what are they doing? We know that they can buy advertising to tell Ontarians what they're going to do. They don't need to pretend and travel the province, pretending that they're asking their opinion.

Dragging survivors around Ontario to tell traumatic stories for a decision that was already made—that's ultimately what ended up happening. Spending taxpayer money on hearings where the outcome was predetermined—that's not how public consultation is supposed to work. And frankly, it damages public faith in the committee process itself.

Now, I'd like to spend some time talking about what I think is the biggest flaw in this bill, and that is the unanimous vote provision, where not only must it be unanimous but everyone has to be present.

Under Bill 9, even where serious misconduct is found—like in Ottawa, where there were, I don't know, a half-dozen integrity commissioner reports, reports that were upheld by a judge—even where that whole process has occurred and removal is recommended, council still has to vote. And that vote has to be unanimous, and every member of council has to be present. So it effectively means that an accused councillor's colleagues—not only do they hold the final power, but accountability might actually depend and end up relying on, or being subject to, friendships and networks at city hall. You can't call it accountability when the accused gets to pick the jury, Madam Speaker.

And let me be careful here, because I truly believe that most municipal councillors in Ontario are very good people. They work hard. They care deeply about their communities. Many sacrifice family time, privacy and career opportunities to serve the public. This is not about painting every councillor with the same brush.

But systems should not be designed around the assumption that personal relationships will never interfere with accountability, because they do. We are all human. We all make friends. We all dislike people. We all owe people favours. It is the reality of life. It is certainly the reality of politics.

Municipal politics, because of its nature, can become deeply personal. Long-standing alliances form. Voting blocks form. Political loyalties are formed. And Bill 9 leaves too much room for insiders protecting insiders.

If one political ally can block accountability, then accountability is still, ultimately, optional. That is the concern that many, many witnesses raised at committee—not because councils are inherently corrupt, but because no accountability system should rely on personal relationships to function properly. The Chiarelli situation demonstrated that exactly in Ottawa.

When misconduct becomes political, systems start to protect themselves. People hesitate. Colleagues look away. Institutions move cautiously. Everyone waits for someone else to act first. Meanwhile, victims continue carrying the burden. That's why independence matters: Because justice cannot depend on whether somebody still has friends around the council table; accountability should not depend on political friendships.

Real accountability systems are independent, and that is why judges do not let defendants select their jury. That is why workplace investigations—the successful ones—are conducted externally. That is why integrity systems are supposed to create distance between misconduct and political self-interest. And yet, Bill 9 leaves the final decision as something that is deeply political.

My bill, Bill 5, Stopping Harassment and Abuse by Local Leaders Act, attempted to address this issue directly. Under that legislation, where serious misconduct occurred, the matter would ultimately be referred to a Superior Court judge: a judge who was independent, a judge who was transparent, a judge who was outside of the political bubble, because victims deserve to know that justice doesn't depend on someone who the accused golfs with, or campaigns with, or sits beside at council, or goes to dinner with their family with. That's the difference, Madam Speaker.

This government eventually acknowledged that the municipal harassment and integrity problem existed, but they never fully embraced the idea of independent accountability. That is very important, because the public is increasingly losing faith in institutions that appear to protect insiders. People are tired of seeing one set of rules for powerful people and another for everyone else. They want fairness, they want consequences, and, above all, they want accountability systems that people can trust.

We have a municipal election this year. And this debate isn't only about punishment; it has to be about prevention. There are thousands of people considering running for office right now: young candidates, women candidates, community activists, new Canadians, people who have never participated in politics before. They need clarity, they need proper training, they need clear expectations and consistent rules, and they need confidence that municipal politics is not a toxic free-for-all.

One of the things we heard repeatedly was that municipal codes of conduct vary dramatically across the province. Some are strong. Some are weak. Some are vague. Many, if not most, are outdated. That inconsistency creates confusion both for councillors and for the public, so the move towards more standardized expectations is important.

There's also a larger issue at play here. This debate is ultimately about political culture and what kind of politics we are willing to tolerate. There has been a coarsening in public life, a growing belief among some that intimidation is strength, that humiliation is somehow a demonstration of leadership, that cruelty is the same as authenticity. When that culture enters the workplace, including municipal government, people get hurt. Staff leave public service, young people decide that politics is not worth entering and

good people burn out. Victims stay silent, because they assume nothing will happen anyway.

Madam Speaker, that's the real cost: not just the scandals, but it's the institutional decay. We are seeing it in Ontario. We are seeing it in Canada. We are seeing it with our neighbours to the south and internationally.

Something that is at stake that we are all dealing with, and this legislation is part of it, is public trust in democracy itself. People sometimes underestimate how corrosive these scandals become, because when residents see misconduct go unpunished, when they see insiders protecting insiders, when they see obvious wrongdoing produce no meaningful consequences, they stop believing that the rules apply equally. Once people stop believing that rules apply equally, cynicism takes over, and that cynicism is a poison to democracy.

Ultimately, democracy relies on trust: trust that institutions are fair; trust that misconduct has consequences; trust that public office is a service, not an entitlement. When people lose that trust, sometimes dangerous things happen: Good people stop running for office. Good staff stop entering politics. And citizens begin viewing public institutions not with pride, but with suspicion. That is how democratic cultures slowly weaken.

I'm conscious of the time, so I'm going to skip ahead to my closing here.

The women in Ottawa who came forward have changed this province. I want to thank, specifically, the three who I know for sure have allowed their names to be in the public domain: Nancy, Stephanie and Victoria. They didn't change the province because they held power, not because they had influence, but because they had courage. They had courage to speak publicly, courage to relive their painful experiences, courage to challenge systems that too often protect insiders. And they did it knowing that there might not be consequences for their abuser, and there certainly would be consequences for them personally.

#### 1640

One woman described years of harassment as a net negative on her life. Another spoke about manipulation, deteriorating mental health and fear for her future career. Those aren't lines from a political debate or a movie; those are human consequences, and they're the reason this Legislature can no longer ignore the issue.

Bill 9 is not perfect—far from it. I still believe Ontario needs a stronger and more independent accountability system. I still believe that the committee process should have resulted in meaningful amendments. I believe that the Legislature could have acted years ago.

But despite those shortcomings, the bill does represent something important: It represents an acknowledgement that the old system failed. It failed victims, it failed municipal staff and it failed the public. Today, finally, Ontario takes a step forward towards fixing it, not because the government suddenly discovered the issue, but because brave people forced this Legislature to confront it.

To those women in Ottawa and to every victim across Ontario who came forward despite fear, intimidation and self-doubt, this Legislature owes you a debt and a thanks,

because without your courage, this debate would not have been happening today.

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos):** I recognize the member for Ottawa–Vanier.

**M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard:** I'm rising as well today to speak on Bill 9, the Municipal Accountability Act, 2025, a piece of legislation that seeks to strengthen accountability standards for elected municipal officials across Ontario.

At its core, this bill would establish a more standardized code-of-conduct framework for municipalities and create stronger enforcement mechanisms when elected officials engage in serious misconduct, harassment or abuse. It would also allow, in certain circumstances, for the suspension or removal of municipal officials who violate those standards.

This legislation is fundamentally about workplace safety, accountability and public trust. It recognizes that holding elected office is a privilege and that those entrusted with public power must also be held to the highest standards of conduct.

I want to begin by acknowledging something very important: This legislation and every similar attempt that has come before it would not exist if it were not for the bravery of people who came forward about the abuse, harassment, intimidation and misconduct they experienced in political workplaces—people who took enormous personal and professional risks, people who knew they might not be believed or that they might face retaliation, people who understood that speaking up in politics often comes at a cost.

We owe those people—mostly women—a debt of gratitude because they forced institutions that were comfortable looking the other way to finally confront a problem that has existed for far too long.

As a woman in politics, I have to say that this conversation is deeply personal for many of us. Women in public life are still too often subjected to intimidation, harassment, personal attacks and behaviour that would simply never be tolerated in most professional workplaces. Many women enter politics wanting to serve their communities, only to discover environments where they are expected to tolerate disrespect, hostility or abuse, simply because “That’s politics.”

The reality is that many women, particularly young women, racialized women, LGBTQ+ women, and women entering politics for the first time, still assess their personal safety before accepting positions in public life. That should concern all of us, because democracy suffers when talented people decide the personal cost of participation is simply too high.

And let us be honest in this chamber today: Abuse in politics is real. It is present, and it exists across the partisan spectrum. This issue exists at every level of government, in every political tradition and in institutions of every size.

Just yesterday, actually, a Toronto Star article detailed how toxic the culture at Toronto city hall has become, to the point where political staff have organized a union drive in response to harassment, abuse, instability and mistreatment. That should concern every single one of us in

this House because this is not a new problem, and it is not a problem that simply disappears if we ignore it long enough.

When elected officials—our leaders—engage in abusive behaviour, it sends a message. It gives permission for bad behaviour all the way down an organization, because it normalizes intimidation. It creates cultures of fear, and those cultures become infectious. Staff stop speaking up. Victims stop reporting. Witnesses stop intervening. Good people leave public service altogether, and the public loses trust in democracy and in our institutions. That is why this legislation matters.

Abuse at the hands of elected officials should concern every person in this chamber, first and foremost because it is a moral issue. Every person deserves a workplace free from harassment and abuse. But it is also an issue of democracy, because when elected officials are not held accountable for their behaviour, it casts doubt on all of us—at all levels of government. People begin to wonder whether politicians operate by a different set of rules, whether power shields people from consequences, whether institutions are more interested in protecting themselves than protecting victims. And when the public loses faith in accountability, democracy itself is weakened.

Comme élus, nous devrions être tenus à des normes de conduite plus élevées, et non l'inverse.

Les élections à elles seules ne suffisent pas comme mécanisme d'imputabilité. Oui, les citoyens peuvent juger leurs représentants au moment du vote, mais entre deux élections, les abus peuvent continuer pendant des années si aucun mécanisme crédible n'existe pour intervenir.

Et c'est particulièrement préoccupant pour les personnes les plus vulnérables dans nos milieux de travail politiques.

Un sondage réalisé auprès des membres de l'Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario révélait que 66 %—quand même, c'est un chiffre élevé, 66 %—des répondants avaient subi du harcèlement de la part d'un membre d'un conseil municipal et que, parmi eux, 78 % vivaient cette situation de façon fréquente.

Le harcèlement ne devrait jamais être considéré comme faisant partie du travail.

Si nous voulons que nos institutions politiques reflètent véritablement nos communautés, nous devons créer un environnement où les femmes, les jeunes, les personnes racialisées, les membres de la communauté LGBTQ+ et les nouveaux arrivants ne sentent pas qu'ils mettent leur santé mentale, leur sécurité ou leur carrière en péril, simplement en choisissant de participer à la vie publique.

Pendant trop longtemps des personnes marginalisées ont dû compter sur des réseaux informels pour se protéger. On a vu des avertissements qui sont murmurés dans les corridors du genre : « Bien, ne reste pas toute seule avec cette personne-là, » ou « Tu devrais faire attention. » « Évite certaines situations. » « Ne reste pas travailler plus tard. »

Alors, pensons-y un instant : Que dit cela de notre culture politique, lorsque des gens doivent développer des

mécanismes de survie parce que les systèmes officiels d'imputabilité ne fonctionnent pas?

Cela ne peut plus continuer, et c'est pourquoi j'appuie l'intention de ce projet de loi.

**1650**

There are several aspects of this bill that I believe members from all parties in this House can and do support.

I want to commend my colleague the member for Orléans for first putting forward an earlier version in 2021 as a private member's bill in response to the uncovering of a long history of abuse from an Ottawa city councillor. We need men to be our allies in this fight, and I appreciate his dedication to seeing this through. It is, however, unfortunate that the government decided not to support this initiative at the time.

We've had other attempts before with similar legislation brought forward from both government and opposition benches. While I do not want to relitigate every previous attempt, I do think it is important to recognize that there has long been a broad understanding in this Legislature that something needed to change, even if political will has not always allowed it to push forward, because whether misconduct happens inside the workplace or outside of it, whether it targets staff, colleagues, members of the public or community stakeholders, elected officials must face meaningful accountability.

Un autre élément important de ce débat est la nécessité d'avoir des codes de conduite standardisés dans l'ensemble des municipalités partout en Ontario.

À l'heure actuelle, les mécanismes d'imputabilité varient énormément d'une municipalité à l'autre. Les attentes, les processus d'enquête et les sanctions possibles ne sont pas uniformes. Pourtant, le harcèlement demeure du harcèlement, peu importe le code postal.

Les employés municipaux et les élus devraient bénéficier des mêmes protections partout en Ontario, que ce soit dans une grande ville ou dans une petite municipalité rurale. Une approche plus uniforme permettrait d'établir une base commune de professionnalisme, de respect et de sécurité dans l'exercice des fonctions publiques. Cela est important, non seulement pour les victimes, mais aussi pour les élus eux-mêmes, parce que des règles claires réduisent l'ambiguïté et rendent les mécanismes d'application plus prévisibles et plus crédibles.

However, Madam Speaker, while I support this legislation, I do have serious concerns about both its implementation and some of its limitations.

The first issue is the implementation timeline. The second reading debate for this bill happened a year ago this week. The bill went to committee. Hearings occurred over the summer, and it was reported back to the Legislature on October 20, 2025, the first day of the fall sitting. Since then, more than 50 sitting days have passed while this legislation remained stalled. Meanwhile, the minister publicly committed that this framework would be in force before the municipal nomination period opened. Obviously, that did not happen.

Delays matter, because every delay in legislation dealing with harassment and abuse has a human cost. Across Ontario's 444 municipalities, there are undoubtedly people who experienced intimidation, harassment or abuse during the months this bill sat waiting. Some may have left public service entirely; others may never come forward at all.

I also have concerns regarding the requirement for unanimity in certain removal decisions. I understand the intention. Removing an elected official is serious and should never be done lightly, but unanimity creates particular problems. What happens if allies of the accused simply fail to attend? What happens if political loyalties interfere with accountability? Municipal councils are political bodies made up of human relationships and alliances, and any framework that depends on unanimity risks becoming unworkable in practice.

Madam Speaker, we do not even need to speculate about the risks associated with unanimity requirements. History has shown us repeatedly that requiring unanimous consent in political or institutional decision-making can paralyze accountability and prevent action, even when the public interest clearly demands it. We've seen situations in municipal councils where strong personal alliances or political loyalties prevented meaningful consequences despite troubling findings of behaviour that clearly undermine public confidence.

We have also seen the dynamic internationally in institutions that rely heavily on consensus and unanimity. The United Nations Security Council, for example, has often struggled to act decisively in moments of crisis, because a single veto or political alliance can block action, even in the face of overwhelming concern from the international community.

Closer to home, anyone who has worked in governance—whether on councils, boards or committees—understands how easily unanimity requirements can become tools for obstruction rather than accountability. Sometimes people avoid difficult votes, sometimes political relationships take precedence over principles, sometimes fear of retaliation silences decision-makers, and sometimes a single strategically absent member can derail an entire process. That is why many institutions rely instead on qualified majorities or super-majority thresholds. Those models still recognize the seriousness of major decisions while ensuring accountability mechanisms remain functional in practice—because an accountability system that cannot realistically be used risks becoming symbolic rather than effective.

And I also worry about the lack of meaningful secondary sanctions if removal fails. Why is there not clearer authority for reprimands, for salary reductions, for stronger graduated disciplinary measures? Accountability cannot be all or nothing.

Madam Speaker, I also cannot ignore the broader context in which this bill has been delayed. At the same time this government delayed legislation designed to improve accountability and workplace safety in municipal politics, it somehow found plenty of legislative time for

bills centralizing control in the provincial government. That contrast is difficult to ignore.

I want to reiterate clearly before I conclude: I do support the legislation. I believe stronger accountability mechanisms are necessary. I believe political workplaces should be safer for everyone. And I believe no elected official, regardless of party or position, should be above consequences for abusive behaviour. But supporting legislation does not mean ignoring its flaws, and it certainly does not mean pretending that passing one bill alone will solve a culture problem that has existed in politics for generations—because culture matters too. Leadership matters, political parties matter and institutions matter as well.

We all share responsibility for creating environments where people feel safe speaking up, where misconduct is addressed early and where power is never treated as a shield against accountability.

Politics should not require people to sacrifice their dignity or their safety in order to participate. And as a woman in politics, I sincerely hope that future generations of women entering public life will encounter healthier, safer and more respectful political environments than too many have experienced in the past—because public service should be about serving communities, not surviving toxic workplaces.

I hope this legislation helps move Ontario closer to that standard.

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

I recognize the member from Nepean.

**MPP Tyler Watt:** It's good to be here debating Bill 9 again—having a bit of *déjà vu* a year later. But nonetheless, this is an important piece of legislation. I'm glad that it's here.

Now, before I actually get into the legislation, I want to talk about how this government operates, because it is frustrating. These bills are put forward, rarely do they go to committee, and when they do, it's a nice treat. This one went to committee, and I was a part of that committee that actually did the tour around Ontario where we spoke with members from the public specifically about this bill.

A lot of great feedback, and pretty unanimous feedback, was very evident to me during that tour. It's really unfortunate that even when it came back to committee, the only amendments that were passed were ones from the government and none of which actually addressed a lot of what we were hearing from the public during this.

**1700**

I am happy to be speaking today to Bill 9, the Municipal Accountability Act, 2025. This is a reform that has been demanded by the public, by the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. It has been demanded by Ontario's Ombudsman. It has been demanded by the Integrity Commissioner of Ontario. It has been championed by an extraordinary grassroots organization, the Women of Ontario Say No, led by Emily McIntosh out of Simcoe county, with over 200 municipalities endorsing their call. It has been called for by survivors of harassment in municipal workplaces across this province, women who

have come forward at tremendous personal cost to tell their stories.

But before we get into how we got here, let us be clear about what we are actually fixing. Under current Ontario law, the most severe penalty a municipal integrity commissioner can impose on a councillor, no matter how serious that violation—and we have seen some extremely egregious behaviour which has really inspired a lot of this bill—is a reprimand or a 90-day suspension of pay. That's it. That is the ceiling, the top punishment for something that serious.

A councillor in this province can be the subject of multiple substantiated integrity commissioner reports for sexual harassment, can be found to have abused their power in office, can be the subject of community-wide outrage, and, at the end of all that, the system docks their pay for a few months and sends them back to the council table. That is not a hypothetical; we watched it play out in this province. Two integrity commissioner reports found that former staff members and job applicants were harassed for years, yet the only repercussion faced was a dock in pay for 15 months. That is the gap that this bill is meant to close. That is the gap that should have been closed by this Legislature long before today.

Speaker, the government would have us believe that this bill represents bold and decisive action, that with Bill 9, this government is finally stepping up to protect Ontarians. I want to take a moment to walk this House through the actual record because the record tells a different story. In March 2022, my colleague the member from Orléans introduced Bill 10, the Stopping Harassment and Abuse by Local Leaders Act. It passed second reading. It had support from all corners of this chamber. It was on the path to becoming law. And then this government called an election, and it died on the order paper. That was loss number one.

In May 2023, my colleague from Orléans brought it back. Same bill, same principle, same goal: Give Ontario the ability to remove a councillor who commits egregious workplace violence or harassment. And on May 31, 2023, this government, the same government that today claims to be the champion of municipal accountability, stood in this chamber and voted it down, 72 to 34. That was loss number two.

In June 2024, my colleague brought it back yet again: Bill 207, the Municipal Accountability and Integrity Act. This government would not call it to a vote. That was loss number three.

In December 2024—after years of advocacy and pressure from 150, then 200 municipalities; after tireless work from grassroots organizations; after the minister himself admitted publicly that something needed to be done—this government finally introduced its own version, Bill 241. And then they called an election and they let it die. That was loss number four.

In May 2025, a whole year ago, this government reintroduced it as Bill 9. Here we are, May 2026, 12 full months later. It's amazing which bills and legislation move at lightspeed sometimes with this government, and

sometimes others just sit collecting dust. That is not decisive action. That is not bold leadership. That is four years of lost opportunity. That is one Liberal private member's bill killed by the calendar, one voted down on the floor by this chamber, one ignored completely and one government bill killed by the calendar a second time. Four chances, four failures and now, on the fifth attempt, against a deadline they set for themselves, the government is trying to act now.

Speaker, I will vote yes for this bill, but let's not pretend that this is anything other than what it is: It's the bare minimum. And unfortunately, if we want to get anything done, we've got to vote for this.

But I will tell you about my time touring with committee, about speaking with key stakeholders, about speaking with victims about what they actually want to see in this bill. And unfortunately, with the way that this bill is constructed, it is coming down to a unanimous vote among city council members in order to oust the councillor. I appreciate and agree that the threshold for this should be high; it should be very high. But these accusations should be taken very seriously, and I don't see a world where that gets unanimous consent from politicians, who are innately political, that have their own set agendas, priorities, people they have to represent. In what world is 100% of the council members going to be there all at once and all vote the same? I'd be shocked to see that happen, but that is the threshold that this bill sets for this.

So, you think about these victims that are coming forward, who are sharing their vulnerable stories and the shame that can come with it, how people won't believe in them and the—I'm blanking on what word I'm wanting here—just what craziness it can cause that these victims have to be revictimized and relive it over and over and over again. They now know that this is the impossible threshold that has to be hit in order for any justice to be brought to them after something so tragic happens.

I personally think that this actually discourages people from coming forward because they know there is no way that this is going to pass. There's no way that these politically elected people are going to do that. All it would take is one person just to not show up to a vote. Who's to say it's not that person's friend?

I asked every single person that came to these public hearings, would you trust a table of politicians to make the right decision in this case? If you were the accused, would you trust a table full of politicians to make the right decision about your future? The answer was an overwhelming no. I counted it; it was almost 100% of people. The only ones that argued were clearly supportive of the PC government.

When we had the chance to actually take this to committee, to actually listen to the public, to actually put forward amendments that showed we are listening to the public and that make something actually effective that is going to take care of victims and is going to hold politicians with this egregious behaviour accountable, this government failed to do that. The answer is crystal clear: An independent judge should be taking care of this case,

not a table full of politicians, who are innately partisan, no matter what level of government they're at. They should not be the ones deciding the fate of their peer.

Let's say a patient lobbies a complaint against a nurse. That complaint goes to the College of Nurses of Ontario, an independent board that is there to protect the public. It doesn't go to a vote with my colleagues to decide whether or not I get to stay after some egregious behaviour; it goes to an independent board. And I would much rather trust that independent board to look at the facts, to be independent, to be non-partisan and come to the right decision on a very serious case. The victims expect that, and the accused expect that. But here we are in this bill. It almost does the right thing; it's so close. That's what frustrates me about this.

I'm surprised that we're debating this a year later. I don't know what happened, if the government just forgot about it or they had other priorities, with all the centralizing of power to the ministers, or making sure that the Premier got his luxury private jet, or taking over Toronto waterfront. I don't know. But this bill has been ready for a year. I don't think this debate is going to change anything. We've already gone through all the amendments, unless it's going back to committee. I know we rise next week. I don't know if we'll be back for months—certainly not before the municipal election. This bill is failing, and it's unfortunate that we just have to accept the bare minimum.

#### 1710

Now, Speaker, having said all that, there are some things in this bill that they get done right. Bill 9 does several things that should have been done years ago. It standardizes codes of conduct across all 444 Ontario municipalities, and with this point, I want to say I support it. However, I did notice, when I was in committee, that was the only thing the government side talked about. Any time I brought up the vote itself—the threshold; the fact that their fellow councillors would be responsible for deciding whether or not to oust the accused councillor—the government always brought it back to the standardization: "Isn't that a great thing?" Yes, it's a great thing. But that was the only thing they wanted to talk about. That's just an observation.

This bill creates, for the first time in Ontario law, a real pathway, a technical pathway to remove a councillor or local board member who commits a serious code-of-conduct violation. It mandates training. It expands the role of the Integrity Commissioner of Ontario, a respected independent voice, to oversee serious inquiries and to recommend their removal in the worst cases. But again, it is a recommendation that is going to then fall onto the elected people of that municipality, whether that municipality has just a couple of people or whether it has 20-plus city councillors. It falls back on them to make that life-changing decision for a colleague and a victim. It applies these changes both to the city of Toronto and every other municipality in this province.

Those are the right principles. They are the principles my colleague from Orléans put before this House four years ago. They are the principles the Women of Ontario

Say No have been asking for since October 2022. They are the principles that AMO, the Ombudsman and the Integrity Commissioner have all endorsed. So on those principles, we will vote yes.

But, Speaker, the principles being right does not mean the drafting is right, and on this government's watch, the drafting is not yet what it needs to be. We put forward amendments that would make that one simple but critical change to this bill. You would get unanimous support, overwhelming support, if we made it an independent judicial process that everyone was calling for. But for some reason, this government didn't want to talk about it, and they voted down all of those amendments.

In the rest of my time, I want to talk about some serious gaps. I've already talked about the unanimous vote at length. But after an integrity commissioner has investigated, after the provincial Integrity Commissioner has reviewed, after a recommendation for removal has been made, the final decision still rests with a vote of the councillor's own colleagues. We all know, being here in the chamber, things can be rather partisan. People want to support their team. I don't know what relationships councillors have with each other. I imagine it would be really hard to see someone who's been accused that you've known for a while. How can you have blind, non-biased judgment in that case? It's not possible.

That is why, at that stage, after the Integrity Commissioner has made this recommendation, it should go to an independent judicial process, not within the hands of politicians who are not capable of making a non-biased decision.

Speaker, think about what this means in practice. The Association of Municipalities of Ontario have formally recommended that this be changed to at least a two-thirds majority. When I was talking with folks who came to the public hearings, and I said to them, "Are you okay with the unanimous vote?" They said no. I said, "Would you rather it go to an independent judge?" They said, "Yes. However, we will take a two-thirds super majority." So they wanted this, they asked for this and they got this. I don't know what that is telling victims—past victims, future victims. That's why I said I think this actually discourages people to come forward; it possibly encourages the behaviour to continue.

If we truly want to hold our elected officials accountable, then we should be putting forward a piece of legislation that will actually do that, not putting forward a piece of legislation that makes it impossible—the threshold so high, I would be shocked if I ever saw it actually go through. But that is the choice that this government is making. They could have put the standards in the bill, but they chose to put them among a bill that just isn't where it should be.

Thirdly, the question of who decides: Legal experts in this province have argued in the public record that decisions of this gravity—the removal of an elected official—belong before a judge. And again, this is something I asked every single person that came to the public hearings. That was the first question I asked every

single one of them. I kept track of how many said "yes" and how many said "no," and it was overwhelming. You don't see anything that overwhelming ever in politics. So I'm a bit dismayed as to why that change wasn't made. If we truly want to hold people accountable, as this bill claims to, then let's make it an actual pathway to hold people accountable, while still keeping that high threshold of seriousness. But this government has rejected that model, and the government chose a council vote instead.

I will close on this: Ontario Liberals and myself will vote in favour of Bill 9, because it is the right thing to do. We will vote yes for the municipal staff in every one of those 444 municipalities of this province who deserve to go to work in safety. We will vote yes for the residents who walk into council chambers expecting to be heard, not silenced, and certainly not arrested. We will vote yes for the women and men who have come forward over the years. We owe them a "yes" vote. They have earned it many times over.

Ontarians deserve a government that treats their safety with the urgency it demands. They deserved that government in 2021, they deserved it in 2023, and they deserve it now.

I don't know if there's still time to fix this bill and to actually listen to what people were asking for—I certainly would support that—but this is the final reading debate of this bill, a whole year later. It's just unfortunate that that one critical piece that was crystal clear and put forward by opposition members and called on by advocates—just unfortunate that that didn't make its way into this bill. So I will close on that. Thank you.

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

**MPP Paul Vickers:** I'd just like to ask my member from Orléans, considering these changes directly reflect the advice of the Ontario Integrity Commissioner and input from the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, wouldn't most people agree that this bill is a step in the right direction? And, after that, could you expand on your thoughts on how to strengthen Ontario's integrity system?

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** As we've discussed, this is something I've been working on for six years. Many of you know, and many people watching on TV know, that I'm a football guy, so this is moving the ball forward. I would say this is a first down, but it is not a touchdown, it is not a field goal and it's not getting points on the board. But it is moving the ball forward.

In terms of how we would improve it, I do believe a judicial process for the final decision on removal is most appropriate. If, for whatever reason, that couldn't happen, as we proposed at committee, a super-majority of two thirds or three quarters instead of a unanimous vote—unanimity that also requires 100% participation, I think, is an extraordinarily high bar. I'm not sure this Legislature would ever meet that bar of 100% participation and full unanimity. In the six years I've been here, I don't think I've seen a vote that has 124 yeses to it, Madam Speaker, so I think there are a number of ways that this legislation could be improved, perhaps in the fall, perhaps in the next

session of this Parliament, or perhaps when Ontario Liberals form the next government.

1720

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

**MPP Wayne Gates:** This legislation has had solutions on the table from more than one opposition party. Advocates had a solution. Municipality organizations had a solution. The New Democrats had a solution. The government knew the answer and still brought forward a bill that leaves one councillor with a veto.

My question: Why do you think this Conservative government watered down a solution to prevent harassment on municipal councils?

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** There has been a lot of speculation about that over the years. Why did they vote for one bill and then kill it a few months later? Why did they present a bill to critics on the belief that they would introduce it and pass it before the election and then not do so?

Having one person only being required as the stopgap, if you have a brother or sister on municipal council with you, if you are in a romantic relationship with another member of council—these are not unheard of situations in Ontario, and either of those situations and perhaps others would put you in a very difficult position to try to get a unanimous vote.

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

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** I want to thank, Madam Speaker, my colleague from Orléans for the six years he worked on this bill—or a bill that somewhat, I guess you can say, almost reflects the vision that he had to address this situation.

Ultimately, in his Bill 5, to try to fix the situation of having that unanimous vote provision, his suggestion was to have the matter be referred to a Superior Court judge— independent and transparent. What I want to ask the member is, can you tell us more about the dangers of not having an independent judge make this decision?

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** Earlier in my debate, I mentioned that a judge upheld the consequences in Ottawa, and that was actually technically incorrect. The judge actually threw out the decision of the city of Ottawa councillors because the judge said they were biased, that they had made statements before the decision, that they had done protests of the decision. The member from Ottawa Centre and I participated in one of those protests. The judge actually threw out the city council's decision to suspend pay.

Fortunately, because the judge had heard all of the evidence and heard all of the testimony, the judges chose to reinstate those same harsh consequences themselves, showing that independence is important. So when a judge says that politicians can't be unbiased, and they were proven not to be unbiased—and I agree; I was not unbiased, and I think the member from Ottawa Centre would agree they were not unbiased. That is why you should have an unbiased, neutral third party like a judge make a decision as important as undoing the results of a democratic election.

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

**Ms. Aislinn Clancy:** I'll ask the member for Orléans: Knowing that this is just a first down, not a touchdown, what do you think your next steps are in terms of pushing forward with this work?

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** As I alluded to, Ontario Liberals are going to win the next election and form the next government. That will be the first step.

Following that, we will bring forward legislation to clean up the challenges with Bill 9 to ensure that there is a more transparent and neutral process beyond a unanimous vote of city council; hopefully listen to the victims and advocates across the province; listen to integrity commissioners, lawyers and municipal officials from across the province; and refine the work that is being done today into something that is more reflective of a fully transparent and accountable system.

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

**MPP Catherine McKenney:** A question to the MPP from Orléans—I'll just throw it back on you. You asked us a question; I was hoping to answer it. But I wonder if you could expound on your question around strength of character. Were you ever on a council where there were—at least one, maybe more—people who you did not think had the strength of character to actually fulfill that judiciary role that is being placed on elected officials, who are not judges?

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** I don't want to speak about any individual former colleague specifically, but certainly—and I am publicly on the record about this, so you can do a Google search of it—there were colleagues in the past who would step out of the room or step away from the table before a tough decision needed to be made. I was certainly very critical of them in those days. I think we could arguably see this happening with this kind of difficult situation.

As I mentioned in a previous answer, there are municipal councillors who have siblings on council with them. There are municipal councillors in Ottawa today who are in a romantic relationship with each other. I think it would be very difficult for them to make that kind of decision about their sibling or about their romantic partner, let alone instances where you have sat on council right beside the same person for 15, 20 years, gone to lunches and breakfasts, had dinners with their spouses and their kids. That is why if someone goes to court, the jury isn't supposed to know the accused; they are supposed to be completely independent.

I think if we take the politics, we take the personalities out of it, we will end up with a better situation.

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

**Ms. Aislinn Clancy:** I am proud to rise today, representing the people of Kitchener Centre—the best riding—and I do support this bill.

There is a lot of good that can be said about this piece of legislation. It does create a process where there can be some accountability on municipal council. It creates

possibility, where folks who have caused egregious harm to colleagues can be removed from council. It's something that we're going to finally get across the finish line. When I talked to Emily McIntosh of The Women of Ontario Say No, she said we need to move this across the finish line.

Don't get me wrong: I think there is some disappointment that we didn't include a lot of amendments that were recommended by the people who participated in those many long weeks of consultation. I think there were a lot of good ideas; it would have made this bill really serve the purpose that it's intended to.

I'm proud that as a city councillor in Kitchener, I collaborated with Mayor Berry Vrbanovic and Councillor Debbie Chapman to put forward a Women of Ontario Say No bill and motion as well.

I do want to give a shout-out to Emily McIntosh and her team. I just feel like she is a case study on how people can use people power to accomplish great things and to address issues that people care about very much. I echo her calls that nobody—nobody—in Ontario should be immune from the consequences of perpetuating workplace violence and harassment. Everybody deserves a safe place to work.

We see that this policy is needed now more than ever. We see an under-representation of women in politics. We know that women and gender-diverse people are more often victims of harassment. This creates unsafe workplaces, and nobody deserves to go to work and feel unsafe. The thing that we are addressing is that people are being held accountable, sometimes for very serious and egregious harms that they caused, and they still get to keep their job. This doesn't exist anywhere in the province of Ontario except for school boards, and even here, politicians shouldn't be above the law.

We live in divisive times. We know that global actors work to fill our social media feeds with things that polarize us more and more. We see that playing out in toxic councils—toxic. We know that this is perpetuated by foreign actors who believe in weakening democracy. A lot of what happens in social media is actually being used to manipulate our democracy and weaken it.

I do have to say a few pros about the bill: We are going to create consistency. We are going to have robust action where the minister can put forward standards for integrity commissioners. We will see some regulations and spelling out of what a code of conduct can be and can look like all across the province to erase some of those inconsistencies. We will see some training so that people have an understanding of what the expectations are.

I think there are some shortcomings on this legislation. First, the bar is too high. A 100% vote is not helpful; it doesn't create fairness and justice. Even strong-mayor powers: You can get something through with 30%, and even that, I feel, isn't really a good measure of democracy. I think we stand to cause harm, where people won't come forward because they'll say, "What's the point if it's not going to achieve some measure of consequences, like somebody being removed from office for very serious harms?" And so, we'll see what we see in the justice

system, where if justice isn't served, people don't come forward with their complaints.

**1730**

And it will waste our money. It wastes money when people go through such efforts to create accountability and fairness. We waste all this time and energy to end up in the result where we need 100% support. And like my colleague from Orléans said, siblings, relationships—so many ways in which we become biased—can undermine fairness. And do you know what that does? It's going to cause us harm when we go door-knocking in four years, because already, I see a lack of trust in government and a weakening of democracy.

So because we aren't setting good standards for our colleagues in the municipal sector or in school boards—this is happening in school boards as well. We need to be doing this in school boards as much as we are in municipalities.

I have an example right now where a councillor that was harmed by a vexatious code of conduct accusation is suing the school board for \$1.7 million. This is causing harm to the services we want to provide, the trust in government, and this means that people's lives are impacted.

So I echo The Women of Ontario Say No's recommendations, and I hope this isn't the end, that we'll continue this work to make sure that we make policy that works well, that's well thought out and inclusive of a lot of expertise.

We need whistle-blower protection. We need a duty to report, like we have when it comes to child abuse etc. We need to include discrimination in the code of conduct as a violation and part of the harassment. We need to prioritize egregious acts so that people aren't subject to these things for months and months. We know we have an affordability crisis. People might stay in their job just like they might stay in a violent relationship, because they can't afford to leave. We need to expand the terms where people are barred to two terms to make it impactful. The punishment has to fit the crime. We need a variety of penalties; it shouldn't just be one or the other. We need to look at robust ways in which we can effect change at the municipal councils. We need to be allowing for dismissals of vexatious and frivolous accusations, etc.

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

**MPP Jamie West:** I know that my colleague was trying to rush through a list of things. I wonder if you'd like to continue what you were trying to say near the end.

**Ms. Aislinn Clancy:** Okay. Thank you to the member for Sudbury.

We need to make sure that integrity commissioners have the proper qualifications, right? If this is a job like any other, we need to look at the résumé, make sure that we have a standard that we accept for qualifications. We need to move away from this 100% vote. It's going to undermine everything. It's problematic. It will keep toxic workplaces alive and well. It could do more harm than good and will undermine people's access to justice. And we need to take away fees so that everybody who has a complaint can go

forward and make those complaints and not have to worry about affordability when it comes to that.

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

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** Thank you for your debate this evening. Because you were on city council in Kitchener for a time before being elected to this Legislature—I apologize; my microphone is this way and you're over here, so I'm sorry to show my back. I'm wondering if in your time at city council you ever came across this phenomenon of difficult decisions being made or unmade by stepping back from the table or visiting the washroom strategically, or going to get a muffin so that one didn't have to go on the record, because—for those who don't know the rules, an absence in municipalities from voting doesn't get recorded one way or the other most the time, and so that is often an easy way to avoid making a difficult decision.

**Ms. Aislinn Clancy:** I think any group struggles. There are people who struggle to stick their neck out.

I would like to see us address this issue at the school board level as well, because I think that's an area where I see people causing a great deal of harm and not being faced with any consequences for ruining people's lives, costing them money in court, wrecking their workplace health and safety. I do see that mucking around a bit in one of my school boards. But definitely, there's that worry that people won't stick their neck out and stand up for what's right because of a bias or a lack of courage.

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

**Ms. Chandra Pasma:** Thank you to the member for Kitchener Centre for your remarks on this bill. We know that women are already incredibly reluctant to report when they are experiencing violence and harassment because they fear not being believed. We see all too often, particularly in the case of police investigations and court cases, that at the end of the process, there is no justice, no charges pressed, no verdict delivered anyway, which makes them feel it's not worth coming forward.

Do you fear that this threshold of requiring unanimous consent of all the members on council is going to seem so out of reach that women are still not going to bother reporting?

**Ms. Aislinn Clancy:** I think that's my greatest fear out of this bill: that people who are traumatized, harassed, discriminated against for whatever reason feel like they don't have a voice and that there's no access to justice, and so they just opt out. That's going to affect the health of our democracy and trust in government—people with lived experience and good things to say and contribute opting out. We see it happening already across the country that people—all of us in this chamber experience enough garbage online and beyond. I know I just fired my first constituent because my staff couldn't function with the type of harassment we were experiencing.

So I can't imagine what this will do to democracy when we're not letting people get justice and feel safe at work.

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos):** We have time for a very quick question and answer. Questions? Okay. Further debate? Further debate? Further debate?

Mr. Flack has moved third reading of Bill 9, An Act to amend the City of Toronto Act, 2006 and the Municipal Act, 2001 in relation to codes of conduct. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

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

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

In my opinion, the nays have it.

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

*Third reading vote deferred.*

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos):** Orders of the day?

**Hon. Steve Clark:** No further business, Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos):** There being no further business, this House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

*The House adjourned at 1738.*



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

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenante-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Edith Dumont, OOnt  
Speaker / Présidente de l'Assemblée législative: Hon. / L'hon. Donna Skelly  
Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day  
Deputy Clerk / Sous-Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim  
Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Julia Douglas, Meghan Stenson,  
Christopher Tyrell, Wai Lam (William) Wong  
Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Tim McGough

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Allsopp, Tyler (PC)	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	
Anand, Deepak (PC)	Mississauga—Malton	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London—Fanshawe	
Babikian, Aris (PC)	Scarborough—Agincourt	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia—Lambton	
Bell, Jessica (NDP)	University—Rosedale	
<b>Bethlenfalvy, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (PC)</b>	Pickering—Uxbridge	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Blais, Stephen (LIB)	Orléans	
Bouma, Will (PC)	Brantford—Brant	
Bourgouin, Guy (NDP)	Mushkegowuk—James Bay / Mushkegowuk—Baie James	
Bowman, Stephanie (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu
Brady, Bobbi Ann (IND)	Haldimand—Norfolk	
<b>Bresee, Ric (PC)</b>	Hastings—Lennox and Addington	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Burch, Jeff (NDP)	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	
<b>Calandra, Hon. / L'hon. Paul (PC)</b>	Markham—Stouffville	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Cerjanec, Rob (LIB)	Ajax	
<b>Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Raymond Sung Joon (PC)</b>	Scarborough North / Scarborough-Nord	Minister for Seniors and Accessibility / Ministre des Services aux aînés et de l'Accessibilité
<b>Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Stan (PC)</b>	Willowdale	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Gaming / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et des Jeux
Ciriello, Monica (PC)	Hamilton Mountain / Hamilton-Mountain	
Clancy, Aislinn (GRN)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Clark, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (PC)	Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes / Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands et Rideau Lakes	Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Coe, Lorne (PC)	Whitby	
Collard, Lucille (LIB)	Ottawa—Vanier	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Cooper, Michelle (PC)	Eglinton—Lawrence	
<b>Crawford, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)</b>	Oakville	Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery and Procurement / Ministre des Services au public et aux entreprises et de l'Approvisionnement
Cuzzetto, Rudy (PC)	Mississauga—Lakeshore	
Darouze, George (PC)	Carleton	
Denault, Billy (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	
Dixon, Jess (PC)	Kitchener South—Hespeler / Kitchener-Sud—Hespeler	
Dowie, Andrew (PC)	Windsor—Tecumseh	
<b>Downey, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)</b>	Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte	Attorney General / Procureur général
<b>Dunlop, Hon. / L'hon. Jill (PC)</b>	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Minister of Emergency Preparedness and Response / Ministre de la Protection civile et de l'Intervention en cas d'urgence
Fairclough, Lee (LIB)	Etobicoke—Lakeshore	
<b>Fedeli, Hon. / L'hon. Victor (PC)</b>	Nipissing	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique, de la Création d'emplois et du Commerce

<b>Member and Party / Député(e) et parti</b>	<b>Constituency / Circonscription</b>	<b>Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités</b>
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Waterloo	
Firin, Mohamed (PC)	York South—Weston / York-Sud— Weston	
<b>Flack, Hon. / L'hon. Rob (PC)</b>	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
<b>Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)</b>	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Premier / Premier ministre Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Leader, Third Party / Chef du troisième parti
<b>French, Jennifer K. (NDP)</b>	Oshawa	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Première Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn (PC)	Newmarket—Aurora	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gilmour, Alexa (NDP)	Parkdale—High Park	
Glover, Chris (NDP)	Spadina—Fort York	
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Grewal, Hardeep Singh (PC)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	
Gualtieri, Silvia (PC)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	
<b>Hamid, Hon. / L'hon. Zee (PC)</b>	Milton	Associate Solicitor General for Auto Theft and Bail Reform / Solliciteur général associé responsable de la Lutte contre le vol d'automobiles et de la Réforme relative aux mises en liberté sous caution
Hardeman, Hon. / L'hon. Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
<b>Harris, Hon. / L'hon. Mike (PC)</b>	Kitchener—Conestoga	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
<b>Hazell, Andrea (LIB)</b>	Scarborough—Guildwood	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
<b>Holland, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin (PC)</b>	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	Associate Minister of Forestry and Forest Products / Ministre associé des Forêts et des Produits forestiers
Hsu, Ted (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
<b>Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC)</b>	Dufferin—Caledon	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health / Ministre de la Santé
<b>Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Trevor (PC)</b>	Chatham-Kent—Leamington	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et de l'Agroentreprise
Jordan, John (PC)	Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston	
Kanapathi, Logan (PC)	Markham—Thornhill	
Kernaghan, Terence (NDP)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	
<b>Kerzner, Hon. / L'hon. Michael S. (PC)</b>	York Centre / York-Centre	Solicitor General / Solliciteur général
<b>Khanjin, Hon. / L'hon. Andrea (PC)</b>	Barrie—Innisfil	Minister of Red Tape Reduction / Ministre de la Réduction des formalités administratives
<b>Kusendova-Bashta, Hon. / L'hon. Natalia (PC)</b>	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga- Centre	Minister of Long-Term Care / Ministre des Soins de longue durée
Leardi, Anthony (PC)	Essex	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
<b>Lecce, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)</b>	King—Vaughan	Minister of Energy and Mines / Ministre de l'Énergie et des Mines
Lennox, Robin (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	
<b>Lumsden, Hon. / L'hon. Neil (PC)</b>	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	Minister of Sport / Ministre du Sport
Mamakwa, Sol (NDP)	Kiiwetinoong	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
<b>McCarthy, Hon. / L'hon. Todd J. (PC)</b>	Durham	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs
McCrimmon, Karen (LIB)	Kanata—Carleton	
<b>McGregor, Hon. / L'hon. Graham (PC)</b>	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism / Ministre des Affaires civiques et du Multiculturalisme
McKenney, Catherine (NDP)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
McMahon, Mary-Margaret (LIB)	Beaches—East York	

<b>Member and Party / Député(e) et parti</b>	<b>Constituency / Circonscription</b>	<b>Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités</b>
<b>Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)</b>	York—Simcoe	President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones
<b>Oosterhoff, Hon. / L'hon. Sam (PC)</b>	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	Associate Minister of Energy-Intensive Industries / Ministre associé des Industries à forte consommation d'énergie
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	
<b>Parsa, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (PC)</b>	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires
Pasma, Chandra (NDP)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	Deputy House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
<b>Piccini, Hon. / L'hon. David (PC)</b>	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de l'Immigration, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences
Pierre, Natalie (PC)	Burlington	
Pinsonneault, Steve (PC)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	
<b>Pirie, Hon. / L'hon. George (PC)</b>	Timmins	Minister of Northern Economic Development and Growth / Ministre du Développement et de la croissance économique du Nord
<b>Quinn, Hon. / L'hon. Nolan (PC)</b>	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	Minister of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security / Ministre des Collèges et Universités, de l'Excellence en recherche et de la Sécurité
Racinsky, Joseph (PC)	Wellington—Halton Hills	
Rae, Matthew (PC)	Perth—Wellington	
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
<b>Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)</b>	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Indigenous Affairs and First Nations Economic Reconciliation / Ministre des Affaires autochtones et de la Réconciliation économique avec les Premières Nations Minister Responsible for Ring of Fire Economic and Community Partnerships / Ministre responsable des Partenariats économiques et communautaires pour le développement du Cercle de feu
Riddell, Brian (PC)	Cambridge	
Rosenberg, Bill (PC)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
<b>Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)</b>	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Sarrazin, Stéphane (PC)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Saunderson, Brian (PC)	Simcoe—Grey	
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Chris (IND)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Scott, Hon. / L'hon. Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	
Shamji, Adil (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
<b>Skelly, Hon. / L'hon. Donna (PC)</b>	Flamborough—Glanbrook	Speaker / Présidente de l'Assemblée législative
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, David (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	
<b>Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Graydon (PC)</b>	Parry Sound—Muskoka	Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre associé des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Smith, Laura (PC)	Thornhill	
Smyth, Stephanie (LIB)	Toronto—St. Paul's	
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique de l'Ontario
<b>Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)</b>	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
<b>Tangri, Hon. / L'hon. Nina (PC)</b>	Mississauga—Streetsville	Associate Minister of Small Business / Ministre associée des Petites Entreprises
<b>Thanigasalam, Hon. / L'hon. Vijay (PC)</b>	Scarborough—Rouge Park	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associé délégué à la Santé mentale et à la Lutte contre les dépendances
<b>Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)</b>	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Rural Affairs / Ministre des Affaires rurales

<b>Member and Party / Député(e) et parti</b>	<b>Constituency / Circonscription</b>	<b>Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités</b>
<b>Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)</b>	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Associate Attorney General / Procureur général associé
<b>Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)</b>	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	Deputy Speaker / Vice-Présidente Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Tsao, Jonathan (LIB)	Don Valley North / Don Valley-Nord	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Vaugeois, Lise (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
Vickers, Paul (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	
Watt, Tyler (LIB)	Nepean	
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
<b>Williams, Hon. / L'hon. Charmaine A. (PC)</b>	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity / Ministre associée des Perspectives sociales et économiques pour les femmes
Wong-Tam, Kristyn (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Vacant	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough- Sud-Ouest	