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26 novembre 2026

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CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Thursday 26 November 2026 / Jeudi 26 novembre 2026

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Plan to Protect Ontario Act (Budget Measures), 2026 (No. 2), Bill 143, Mr. Bethlenfalvy / Loi de 2026 sur le plan pour protéger l'Ontario (mesures budgétaires) (no 2), projet de loi 143, M. Bethlenfalvy

Hon. Nina Tangri 5907
MPP George Darouze 5910
Hon. Matthew Rae 5912
Mr. Jeff Burch 5915
MPP Billy Denault 5915
Ms. Peggy Sattler 5915
Mr. Logan Kanapathi 5916
Mr. Sol Mamakwa 5916
Third reading debate deemed adjourned 5916

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉES ET DÉPUTÉS

Holiday events in Hamilton East–Stoney Creek
Mr. Jeff Beattie 5916
Supportive housing
Ms. Peggy Sattler 5917
Riding of Nepean
MPP Tyler Watt 5917
Automotive industry
Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto 5917
Tragedy in Scarborough / Youth employment
MPP Fatima Shaban 5917
Holiday events in Carleton
MPP George Darouze 5918
Ethnic media
Mr. Tom Rakocevic 5918
Santa Claus parades in Newmarket–Aurora
Mme Dawn Gallagher Murphy 5918
Dementia care
Mr. Lorne Coe 5918

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEUSES ET VISITEURS

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly) 5919
Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho 5919
Trans Day of Remembrance
The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly) 5919

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEUSES ET VISITEURS

Hon. Kevin Holland 5919
Hon. Michelle Cooper 5919
Mr. Mike Schreiner 5919
M. Guy Bourgouin 5919
Hon. Michael A. Tibollo 5919
Hon. Graydon Smith 5919
MPP Stephanie Smyth 5919
Ms. Marit Stiles 5919
Hon. Michael Parsa 5919
Hon. Mike Harris 5919
Ms. Catherine Fife 5919
Mr. Steve Pinsonneault 5919
Hon. Rob Flack 5919
Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon 5920
MPP Robin Lennox 5920
Mr. Anthony Leardi 5920
MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam 5920
Mr. John Jordan 5920
Ms. Lee Fairclough 5920
Legislative pages
The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly) 5920

QUESTION PERIOD / PÉRIODE DE QUESTIONS

Health care funding
Ms. Marit Stiles 5920
Hon. Sylvia Jones 5920
Hon. Doug Ford 5921
Gaming control
Ms. Marit Stiles 5921
Hon. Zee Hamid 5921
MPP Wayne Gates 5921
Gaming control
Ms. Lee Fairclough 5922
Hon. Zee Hamid 5922
Gaming control
Mr. John Fraser 5923
Hon. Zee Hamid 5923
Government accountability
Ms. Peggy Sattler 5924
Hon. Nolan Quinn 5924
Government accountability
MPP Tyler Watt 5925
Hon. Nolan Quinn 5925

Indigenous economic development
Mr. John Jordan....5926
Hon. Greg Rickford....5926
Student assistance / Aide financière pour les étudiants
MPP Jamie West....5926
Hon. Nolan Quinn....5926
Mme France Gélinas....5927
Government accountability
Mr. Rob Cerjanec....5927
Hon. Nolan Quinn....5927
Accessibility for persons with disabilities
Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos....5928
Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho....5928
Employment
MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam....5928
Hon. Victor Fedeli....5928
Aide financière pour les étudiants / Student assistance
Mme Lucille Collard....5929
Hon. Nolan Quinn....5929
Hate crimes
Mme Dawn Gallagher Murphy....5929
Hon. Graham McGregor....5929
Avis d'insatisfaction
La Présidente (L'hon. Donna Skelly)....5930

DEFERRED VOTES / VOTES DIFFÉRÉS

Time allocation
Motion agreed to....5931
Patient-to-Nurse Ratios for Hospitals Act, 2026, Bill 19, Mme Gélinas; MPP West / Loi de 2026 sur les ratios patients-personnel infirmier dans les hôpitaux, projet de loi 19, Mme Gélinas; MPP West
Second reading negatived....5931

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEUSES ET VISITEURS

Mr. Logan Kanapathi....5931
Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon....5931
MPP George Darouze....5931
Notice of dissatisfaction
The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly)....5931

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES / RAPPORTS DE COMITÉS

Standing Committee on Government Agencies
The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly)....5931
Report deemed adopted....5932

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Land use planning
Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady....5932
Education funding
Ms. Sandy Shaw....5932
Taxation
Ms. Sandy Shaw....5932
Student assistance
MPP Lisa Gretzky....5932
Land use planning
Mr. Mike Schreiner....5932
Commissioner for democratic rights
Ms. Jessica Bell....5932
Commissioner for democratic rights
Ms. Catherine Fife....5933
Education funding
Mr. Terence Kernaghan....5933
Protection for workers
MPP Lisa Gretzky....5933
Social assistance
Mr. Mike Schreiner....5933
Consent education
Ms. Peggy Sattler....5933
Social assistance
MPP Lisa Gretzky....5933
Cost of living
Ms. Peggy Sattler....5934
Tenant protection
Ms. Catherine Fife....5934
Education funding
MPP Lisa Gretzky....5934

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Plan to Protect Ontario Act (Budget Measures), 2026 (No. 2), Bill 143, Mr. Bethlenfalvy / Loi de 2026 sur le plan pour protéger l'Ontario (mesures budgétaires) (no 2), projet de loi 143, M. Bethlenfalvy
Mr. Terence Kernaghan....5934
MPP Lisa Gretzky....5936
MPP Wayne Gates....5938
Ms. Jessica Bell....5940
Hon. Mike Harris....5943
Ms. Catherine Fife....5943
Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon....5943
Hon. Mike Harris....5943
Mr. Jeff Burch....5944
Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon....5944

Ms. Stephanie Bowman 5944
Mr. Rob Cerjanec 5948
Mr. Lorne Coe 5952
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong 5953
Hon. Mike Harris 5953
Mr. Terence Kernaghan 5953
Mr. Jonathan Tsao 5954
Hon. Todd J. McCarthy 5954
MPP Alexa Gilmour 5957
Mr. Rob Cerjanec 5957
Mme Dawn Gallagher Murphy 5957
Mr. Chris Glover 5958
Mr. Rob Cerjanec 5958
MPP Robin Lennox 5958
Mr. Rob Cerjanec 5961
Ms. Aislinn Clancy 5961
Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto 5961
MPP Alexa Gilmour 5962
Mr. Rob Cerjanec 5962
Ms. Aislinn Clancy 5962
Ms. Lee Fairclough 5963
Ms. Aislinn Clancy 5964
Hon. Mike Harris 5965
Mr. Chris Glover 5965
Mr. Jonathan Tsao 5965
Ms. Aislinn Clancy 5965
Mr. Anthony Leardi 5966
Ms. Aislinn Clancy 5966
Mr. Ric Bresee 5967
Mr. Peter Tabuns 5968
Mr. Rob Cerjanec 5968
Mr. Dave Smith 5968
MPP Robin Lennox 5970
Mr. Rob Cerjanec 5971
Mr. Chris Glover 5971
Hon. Matthew Rae 5971
Ms. Jessica Bell 5972
Mr. Rob Cerjanec 5972
MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam 5972
Third reading debate deemed adjourned 5973

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 26 November 2026

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 26 novembre 2026

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers / Prières.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PLAN TO PROTECT ONTARIO ACT (BUDGET MEASURES), 2026 (NO. 2)

LOI DE 2026 SUR LE PLAN POUR PROTÉGER L'ONTARIO (MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES) (NO 2)

Mrs. Tangri, on behalf of Mr. Bethlenfalvy, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 143, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various statutes / Projet de loi 143, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre les mesures budgétaires et à édicter et à modifier diverses lois.

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

Hon. Nina Tangri: Good morning, everyone, colleagues. It is my honour to rise in the House today to speak in support of Bill 143, Plan to Protect Ontario Act. I'm pleased to share my time with the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services and the Associate Minister of Energy-Intensive Industries.

I would like to begin by acknowledging the Minister of Finance's tireless leadership in protecting Ontario's economy through this important piece of legislation. I also want to thank his parliamentary assistant and the dedicated staff at the ministry for their valuable contributions to the bill, which are rooted in engagement with businesses, industry representatives and communities across the province.

Together with my MPP colleagues, I look forward to hosting the minister in January for Mississauga's pre-budget consultation, which will help inform the next steps we take to protect Ontario.

Speaker, as the Associate Minister of Small Business, I'm proud to put my support behind our government's 2026 Ontario Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review, which outlines additional measures to help small businesses remain competitive, create jobs and strengthen communities. As we work to build the strongest economy within the G7, it's essential that Ontario's small business owners, entrepreneurs and our next generation of innovators can keep growing.

Speaker, over the last 19 months, small businesses across the province have faced a new reality. President Trump's unjustified trade attacks on Ontario's critical industries and sectors have forced many small business owners to make difficult decisions, halt investments and pivot to new markets. In fact, according to the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, over 53,000 small businesses shipping products to and from the United States have been directly impacted by US tariffs and counter-tariffs. At the same time, businesses face rising operational costs in a rapidly changing global economy. However, small businesses continue to demonstrate resilience, adapting to challenges and capitalizing on new opportunities, as Ontario's entrepreneurs have done time and time again.

Speaker, 500,000 small businesses power Ontario's economy, making up 98% of all businesses in the province, supporting close to 2.5 million jobs. When you include solo entrepreneurs, that number rises to 3.5 million people.

From a local restaurant or pub where families gather to celebrate life's special moments to local convenience stores providing everyday essentials to parts manufacturers helping drive Ontario's critical sectors forward, small businesses are the very backbone of this province. They provide critical goods and services, support local jobs and give back to their communities in countless ways.

Speaker, when small businesses succeed, Ontario succeeds. That's why the Premier and our government are continuing to deliver on our plan to protect small businesses and workers in the face of US tariffs and global economic uncertainty. We're making Ontario the most competitive place to do business and create jobs.

And Speaker, we acted early to provide businesses with the support they need to protect jobs and remain competitive. Last year, we put forward $30 billion in relief and support to protect Ontario workers and businesses through the Ontario Together Trade Fund and Protect Ontario Financing Program.

Our plan to protect businesses, reshore supply chains and diversify trade is working, with 90 SMEs investing nearly $1 billion and creating and protecting 10,000 jobs through our $150-million Ontario Together Trade Fund.

As highlighted in the 2026 fall economic statement, we're building on our previous actions by expanding eligibility for the Ontario Together Trade Fund and the Protect Ontario Financing Program, ensuring they cover businesses in sectors hit by new tariffs and import bans. These programs are helping local businesses manage financial pressures, diversify their markets and strengthen their supply chains. Speaker, our government will continue using every tool available to protect Ontario businesses, defend workers and build long-term economic resilience.

Through our 2026 fall economic statement, we are also taking further action to lower costs for businesses and encourage new capital investment. Our Ontario competitiveness tax cut would provide $8 billion in provincial tax relief to help businesses purchase equipment, expand operations and improve productivity. Part of Ontario's multi-year tax action plan, this new relief measure allows businesses of all sizes to immediately write off 100%—that's 100%—of the value of a wide measure of assets. Once necessary federal legislation is passed, and we are sure it will, this measure is estimated to create 30,000 additional jobs and attract at least $11 billion in new investment.

Speaker, this new measure is backed by our government's most recent cut to the Ontario small business corporate income tax rate by more than 30%. As of July this year, we reduced the rate all the way down to 2.2%, delivering $1.1 billion in tax relief to over 375,000 small businesses. That's up to $5,000 back into the pockets of hard-working business owners every year so they can manage costs, invest in their companies, hire and retain staff and plan for future growth.

Alongside other tax measures we've introduced, Ontario's marginal effective tax rate is now just 3.6%, well below the average rate in the United States, the OECD and the G7. Our government will stop at nothing to ensure Ontario's small businesses have the support to weather economic pressures and remain competitive in the long term.

I want to remind members in the House that these tax cuts are not a by-product of the trade war alone. As soon as our government came into office, we reduced the small business corporate income tax rate to 3.2% and expanded the eligibility to the rate, helping more small businesses compete and thrive by lowering their operational costs. We also permanently cut the gas and fuel tax last year, providing small businesses with much-needed relief at the pump.

0910

Under the leadership of this Premier, we're the only government in the history of this province to have never raised a single tax or fee on the backs of hard-working people and businesses of Ontario, and we never will. That's in direct contrast to the record of the parties opposite.

Under the previous Liberal government, supported by the NDP, Ontario's entrepreneurs and small business owners were burdened by high taxes, skyrocketing hydro rates and wasteful spending that made it harder to grow, invest and create jobs. Fast-forward to today: The third party has chosen a new leader in Navdeep Bains, who was a key supporter of Justin Trudeau's carbon tax that caused harm to so many small businesses in this province. Small businesses across our province remember the policies that came from the third party, and they are thankful that they have a government that will listen and do everything it can to support them not just through President Trump's unjustified and harmful tariffs but for generations to come. And Speaker, that's what Bill 143 is about—it's about creating the economic conditions so businesses in Ontario can invest with confidence, grow and create the jobs of tomorrow.

Speaker, a core theme of the 2026 fall economic statement is building Ontario's growth. Central to that endeavour is ensuring small businesses can continue to succeed and make important contributions to Ontario's economy. That's why our government recently announced $49 million in funding for Ontario's small business advisory centres, or OSBACs, our province's largest ever investment in the network. Through this historic investment, we're helping small business advisers and experts on the ground meet growing program demand, expand advisory services and support new initiatives. Our government is also ensuring entrepreneurs in every corner of the province can access this support when and where they need it, because the last thing a small business owner needs is a complex government program and more red tape.

Formerly known as small business enterprise centres, the new OSBAC brand creates a stronger, more consistent identity for the existing province-wide network, helping entrepreneurs easily find and access services such as one-on-one consultations, information on government programs and services and funding resources. They deliver programs like Summer Company, which provide foundational training, mentorship and a grant to Ontario's next generation of entrepreneurs—entrepreneurs like Riley Mathieson from Stratford, who started his company, Big Bear Property Care, through the program in 2023. Riley started out servicing 10 properties, which turned into 20 and then 40 per week. With the support of the program, he was able to turn his bright idea and unwavering determination into a successful business.

Speaker, I'm proud to share with the House that since 2019 the program has helped over 2,800 participants, including Riley, start businesses and helped over 2,400 students, or 80% of participants, pursue entrepreneurship as a long-term career path.

And our government is not stopping there. We're helping young entrepreneurs build global companies by breaking down barriers such as access to capital and networks. Through an additional $6-million investment in Futurpreneur, we're helping founders aged 18 to 39 access up to $75,000 in collateral-free financing, one-on-one mentorship and networking opportunities. To date, our partnership with Futurpreneur has helped more than 1,700 entrepreneurs start or grow a business and created over 7,300 jobs across Ontario.

Speaker, this kind of support has made a huge difference for Ontario's young entrepreneurs like Jannine Rane, founder of Zing Pantry Shortcuts, whom I had the pleasure of meeting on multiple occasions over the past few years.

I want to share some powerful words from Jannine, who said, "Futurpreneur funding and mentorship were game-changing for our small business, giving us the resources we needed to fuel our growth from a pandemic side-hustle to a nationally distributed, Toronto-based brand that manufactures globally inspired condiments and seasonings in partnership with Canadian chefs and creators. On-

tario's continued support of organizations like Futurpreneur means more young entrepreneurs like me will have the tools, funding and expertise to build the next generation of Canadian brands."

Together, Futurpreneur and Ontario's Summer Company program are helping build the next generation of Canadian businesses, creating good-paying jobs and strong communities across Ontario.

Amidst trade uncertainty and a rapidly changing global economy, we can't afford to idly sit by. That's why we launched Ontario's first-ever succession planning hub, in partnership with the Kingston Economic Development Corp., through a nearly $2-million investment. Succession Ontario offers training across the OSBAC network, including free online tools, consultations and resources to help entrepreneurs sell their businesses, find buyers, or explore employee ownership opportunities. By supporting smoother ownership transitions, we're helping protect local jobs and keep successful businesses operating in communities across the province.

That includes family-owned businesses like Kingston Frameworks, which successfully transitioned to new ownership thanks to the support and guidance provided by its local small business advisory centre. Colin Morris was able to carry forward his father's legacy in art restoration and expand the business into two locations, helping support jobs and preserve Canadian heritage and art.

Speaker, in conversation with many business owners, we heard that children don't always want to take over the family business. That's why our government's succession planning hub is so important. It helps connect entrepreneurs with the right buyer so they can protect their life's work while supporting jobs and the communities in which they operate.

Last fiscal year alone, Ontario small business advisory centres helped launch and expand over 10,700 businesses and create over 16,600 jobs. We want to see that impact grow even further and help more Ontario entrepreneurs start, scale and succeed. And that's essentially what our government sets out to do with the Plan to Protect Ontario Act.

Speaker, we're making targeted investments that help small business owners grow and succeed in today's economy, while making sure they have access to the tools they need to compete in the global marketplace, because when small businesses grow, Ontario grows.

Through Ontario's Digital Competence Centre, DCC, our government is ensuring small and medium-sized businesses right across Ontario can adopt the latest digital tools and technologies to modernize operations, boost productivity, increase revenue and create new jobs. This year, we're investing an additional $5 million to expand DCC and help nearly 450 new businesses grow and stay competitive through programs like the digital modernization and adoption plan and the technology demonstration program.

Speaker, the numbers speak for themselves. Since our government launched the Digital Competence Centre in 2022, in partnership with the Ontario Centre of Innovation, our total $24-million investment has created and supported over 3,000 jobs and increased sales revenues by $600 million. That's a great news story—an investment of $24 million; an output of $600 million. Participating companies also saw average cost savings of 23% and an average of 192 hours of labour saved per month, helping improve productivity and operational efficiency.

Last year, we launched the retail modernization project grant, as part of the DCC, to help micro businesses and main street shops in Ontario's vital downtowns remain competitive, better serve their customers and support local economies. The grant provides up to $5,000 in matched funding to small business owners to help them purchase digital tools such as security cameras, modern point-of-sale systems, inventory management software and customer relationship management tools. In just over a year since its launch, the program has helped support 700 retailers in reducing operating costs by 20%.

0920

That includes Paramount Skis Bikes Boards in Guelph, who were able to modernize in-store hardware, including their POS system, e-commerce payment processing and inventory management platforms, as well as upgrade to a digital security camera system. As a result, they saw an increase of 50% in transaction speed, helping them meet peak seasonal demand, spend more time with their customers and grow their business.

Speaker, the Digital Competence Centre has been a game-changer for Ontario's main street businesses. It also reaffirms what we know to be true: Investing in Ontario's small businesses creates jobs, strengthens communities and builds a stronger Ontario for everyone. And as the Premier has shown time and time again, our government will always support Ontario's small businesses.

Through the 2026 Ontario Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review, our government is making sure businesses have the supports they need to navigate the road ahead, because Ontario's competitiveness rests on our small businesses being able to keep their doors open, plan for growth and build a stronger economy for the future.

Through key actions our government has taken since 2018, such as cutting taxes, removing burdensome red tape and making targeted investments, we're providing businesses with $12 billion in savings every year. Measures delivered under this bill further solidify that our government will always keep costs down for Ontario's hard-working small business owners, families and communities.

I want to close by thanking small businesses all across this province for their many contributions to Ontario.

I also want to mention it's Small Business Saturday this weekend, and there's no better time to get out into our communities and support the hard-working entrepreneurs who make our communities what they are. Throughout the challenges posed by US tariffs and the significant uncertainty facing our small businesses, we have seen neighbours step up in remarkable ways to support local businesses and homegrown entrepreneurs. That's something worth celebrating.

As we approach the holiday season, I encourage everyone to continue shopping local, purchasing Ontario-made goods and supporting the businesses, workers and communities that help make our province strong and resilient.

I want to thank all of you for listening today.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I recognize the member for Carleton.

MPP George Darouze: I want to thank the Associate Minister of Small Business for her great advocacy and her amazing job in Ontario to protect small businesses under the leadership of the Premier and her hard work. You do an amazing job protecting our small businesses in our communities because they are, at the end of the day, the engine and the power behind our communities from an economic perspective.

I am pleased to rise today on behalf of the residents of Carleton to speak in support of Bill 143, the fall economic statement implementation act, 2026, and the government's 2026 Ontario Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review.

This fall economic statement comes at an important time for our province. We are facing continued economic uncertainty, international trade disruption and the ongoing impact of unjustified tariffs from the United States. These challenges are being felt by workers, families, farmers, manufacturers and small businesses in communities right across Ontario.

Here in Ontario, we cannot control every external challenge that comes our way, but we can control how we respond to these challenges. That is exactly what this government is doing. Our government's approach is straightforward: strengthen our economy, support workers and families, and make the investments necessary to ensure our province remains competitive, resilient and self-reliant.

Madame la Présidente, cette déclaration économique d'automne démontre que nous ne renonçons pas à ces priorités. Nous continuons à réaliser des investissements stratégiques, à apporter un soutien financier important et à prendre des mesures visant à créer les conditions propices à une croissance économique à long terme.

Je voudrais commencer par évoquer la situation économique à laquelle notre province est confrontée. L'économie de l'Ontario est étroitement liée au commerce international, en particulier avec nos voisins du sud. Nos industriels, nos producteurs agricoles, notre secteur automobile et d'innombrables petites entreprises dépendent de relations commerciales fiables et de l'accès aux marchés.

Lorsque ces relations sont perturbées, les conséquences se font sentir pour les travailleurs et les familles dans toutes les collectivités de la province. C'est pourquoi notre gouvernement a adopté une approche aussi proactive pour protéger l'économie de l'Ontario.

Since April 2025, we have provided nearly $30 billion in tariff relief and support for workers and businesses. We have expanded programs to help businesses navigate trade disruption, protect jobs and find new opportunities in domestic and international markets.

Some of these efforts are highlighted in the FES, including programs such as the Ontario Together Trade Fund, the Trade-Impacted Communities Program and the Protect Ontario Financing Program.

We are also strengthening our commitment to buying Ontario-made products and supporting Ontario workers through our buy Ontario policy. This is particularly important because protecting our economy means protecting the people who work in it. It means ensuring that our manufacturers can continue operating, that our agricultural sector has the support it needs and that businesses have the confidence to invest and expand.

These priorities are especially important in Carleton and across eastern Ontario. Our region has a diverse economy with agriculture, producers, manufacturers, technology companies, construction businesses and countless small businesses that contribute so much to our economy.

Earlier this year, I had the opportunity to tour two facilities in Ottawa receiving funding through the Eastern Ontario Development Fund. Cellusys received over $3.6 million and MDS Aero Support Corp. received over $5.2 million to create a combined total of 16 jobs and protect 207 more. I would like to thank the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade for supporting these local businesses.

Speaker, when we support businesses in eastern Ontario, we are doing more than helping individual companies. We are supporting families, strengthening local communities and ensuring that future generations have opportunities to build their careers close to home. That is what protecting Ontario looks like.

Speaker, protecting Ontario also means looking beyond the immediate economic challenges and preparing for the opportunities that lie ahead. Our province has enormous potential in sectors that will shape the economy of tomorrow, including artificial intelligence, advanced manufacturing, defence, critical minerals, energy and agriculture.

We have the talent, the resources and the skilled workforce necessary to compete on a global scale. Our responsibility is to create the conditions that allow those industries to grow here in Ontario. That's why our government is continuing to make investments in infrastructure, workforce development, research and innovation.

Ontario's $210-billion, 10-year capital plan is the largest provincial building plan in Canadian history. It is helping build the roads, hospitals, schools and other critical infrastructure that our communities need while creating jobs for Ontario workers.

We are also taking steps to make Ontario a more competitive place to do business. An important piece of this phase is our multi-year tax action plan, which will lower the cost of capital investments for businesses by providing more than $8 billion in additional relief over the next five years combined with measures announced earlier this year. That brings total Ontario tax relief for capital investments to more than $12 billion over the next five years.

We are also continuing to reduce unnecessary red tape. More than 50% of business-facing permits have been reviewed, eliminating nearly 220,000 permitting days.

Speaker, these are meaningful steps towards making Ontario more competitive and ensuring that businesses can

spend less time navigating unnecessary bureaucracy and more time growing their operations. This has important implications for Carleton and eastern Ontario, where local businesses are essential to the economic strengths of our communities.

0930

Another example of support provided in the past year to a business in eastern Ontario is Ross Video. With locations in Ottawa and Iroquois, they design and manufacture equipment for live events and video production right in our community, right here in Ontario. To support their expanded manufacturing and R&D operations, I joined Minister Fedeli and Minister Quinn to announce our government is providing $6 million to support their $122-million investment, creating 125 new jobs and supporting 300 existing positions in eastern Ontario.

While large-scale investments and economic development are important, we must also recognize the contribution that small businesses make to our communities. That's what our associate minister spoke about earlier, but I want to reinforce that.

Small businesses are the backbone of Carleton's economy and Ontario's economy. They employ our neighbours, support local families, sponsor community events and contribute to the character of the towns and villages we are proud to call home.

In rural communities throughout Carleton, small businesses are often the heart of the local economy. Whether it is a family-owned restaurant like the Mill Tavern in Manotick, a local retailer like Foodland in Greely or a farm operation like Stanley's Olde Maple Lane Farm in Edwards, these entrepreneurs work hard to create jobs and provide valuable services.

That is why our government's decision to cut Ontario's small business corporate income tax rate by more than 30% is very important. It's so important to our small businesses. This measure is providing more than 375,000 small businesses with a $1.1-billion tax cut over the next three years, saving eligible businesses up to $5,000 annually. That is money that businesses can reinvest in their operations, use to hire additional employees or put towards expanding their services.

We are also taking action to help families manage the cost of living. We have permanently reduced gas and fuel taxes, eliminated licence plate renewal fees and stickers and taken other steps to help people keep more of their hard-earned money.

For residents in rural communities like those throughout Carleton, transportation costs are particularly important. Many people rely on their vehicles to get to work, take their children to school, attend appointments and access essential services. Unlike in some larger urban centres, public transit is not always a practical option.

This is why our government permanently cut the gas and fuel tax, which not only helps residents but helps businesses like Crepin Cartage or Greely Sand and Gravel keep their costs down, which means they don't get passed on to the consumer.

Our government understands that affordability is not just about one measure or one announcement. It is a combination of steps taken to support our residents and businesses, and this FES highlights so many of these steps.

Another important priority in this fall economic statement is housing affordability. For too many young people, families and first-time homebuyers, the dream of owning a home has become increasingly difficult to achieve.

We know that housing affordability requires action on multiple fronts. We need to increase supply, reduce unnecessary costs and red tape and make it easier for builders to get homes constructed, and that's what our Minister of Red Tape Reduction has been doing.

That is why our government has taken action to provide meaningful relief to homebuyers. Through Ontario's temporary HST relief on eligible new homes, combined with the Ontario new home affordability payment and our Development Charge Reduction Program, we are helping reduce the upfront costs associated with purchasing a new home.

We are already seeing the benefits of the HST rebate. The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing highlighted last week that there were over 8,000 housing starts in Ontario in October, which is great news and shows our plan is working. These measures are important, not only for potential homeowners but also for the construction industry and the thousands of workers whose livelihoods depend on home building.

In Carleton, where communities continue to grow and families are looking for opportunities to put down roots, housing affordability is an especially important issue. We need to ensure that young families can establish themselves in our communities, that workers can live closer to where they work and that growing communities have the infrastructure necessary to support new housing.

I'm hoping to have some exciting information to share with my constituents soon about the Ottawa DCRP application and the benefits it will have for our city, so my residents can stay tuned for that announcement.

Speaker, one of the most important themes throughout this fall economic statement is the continued commitment to building Ontario. Our $210-billion capital plan represents a historic investment in the infrastructure that our province needs to grow. For rural communities, reliable infrastructure is very important and something I always advocate for. Our roads and highways connect residents to employment, education and essential services. They also provide the transportation routes that agricultural producers and businesses depend on to move their products to market.

In Carleton, we understand first-hand the importance of investing in transportation infrastructure that keeps our community connected. This is why our government is investing in important transportation infrastructure, including the Barnsdale interchange, helping to connect residents in communities like Manotick, Richmond and Barrhaven.

Importantly, infrastructure also means investing in the places where people come together. Through the Com-

munity Sport and Recreation Infrastructure Fund, we have committed to a total of $500 million to help municipalities, non-profit organizations and more build and update recreational facilities. These spaces provide opportunities for children to participate in sports and for seniors to remain active, which is very important. They are an important part of what makes a community a great place to live.

On behalf of the Minister of Sport, I recently joined Mayor Sutcliffe and city representatives for a groundbreaking at Alexander Community Centre, supported by over $8 million through the CSRIF, which will deliver a new 6,200-square-foot gymnasium and triple the size of the current space.

Speaker, while economic growth and affordability are essential, we must also ensure that Ontarians have access to the public services they depend on. A strong economy provides the foundation for a strong public service, and our government remains committed to investing in our health care system.

I'm extremely encouraged by the progress of Ontario's Primary Care Action Plan. Since its launch, more than 511,000 people have been connected to primary care across the province. As of October 2026, 99.7% of the Health Care Connect wait-list that existed on January 1, 2025 has been cleared.

Our government is working towards ensuring that everyone in Ontario has access to a family doctor or primary care provider by 2029. That is an important commitment for residents throughout Carleton and eastern Ontario, where access to primary care close to home remains a priority. We are also supporting the expansion of primary care teams, strengthening our health care workforce and investing in training opportunities for future health care professionals.

À Ottawa, l'équipe de santé familiale universitaire de Montfort a déjà orienté plus de 1 500 patients vers des soins de première ligne, en s'attachant tout particulièrement à répondre aux besoins de la communauté francophone, qui revêt une importance capitale dans l'est de l'Ontario.

This is made possible through continued investments. In April, I was pleased to announce an additional $17 million to seven primary care teams in Ottawa, which will connect up to 35,590 more people to primary care.

As the Minister of Health has said, connecting people to primary care benefits our entire health care system.

0940

Speaker, education is equally important to our province's long-term success. This is why Ontario is investing an additional $6.4 billion over four years in post-secondary education, bringing annual operating funding for publicly assisted colleges and universities to $7 billion. We are also investing $1.7 billion to support 70,000 additional seats in high-demand fields, including science, technology, engineering, mathematics, health care and the skilled trades. These investments will help ensure that students have the skills needed for the jobs of today and tomorrow, while helping Ontario businesses find the skilled workers they need to grow. In October, my colleague the Minister of Colleges and Universities announced that University of Ottawa, Carleton University and Collège La Cité are receiving a combined $205 million to create more than 7,500 new seats in these in-demand sectors, which is a critical investment in the future skilled workers in our region and our province.

Madame la Présidente, en réfléchissant à cette déclaration économique d'automne, je me rappelle que protéger l'Ontario ne se résume pas à relever les défis d'aujourd'hui. Il s'agit de veiller à ce que notre province soit prête pour demain. Il s'agit de protéger les travailleurs et les entreprises contre l'inquiétude économique, d'aider les familles à faire face au coût de la vie, de construire les infrastructures dont nos collectivités ont besoin et de garantir que nos systèmes de santé et d'éducation soient là pour les personnes qui en dépendent. Il s'agit de veiller à ce que des collectivités telles que celles de Carleton, d'Ottawa et de l'est de l'Ontario aient la possibilité de se développer entre elles-mêmes.

Speaker, there will surely be challenges ahead. But with a clear plan and continued investments in the people and communities that make our province strong, I am confident that Ontario is well positioned to meet those challenges.

For these reasons, I'm pleased to support Bill 143, the fall economic statement implementation act, 2026, and I encourage this entire House to do the same.

I'll pass it now to my colleague the Associate Minister of Energy-Intensive Industries.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I recognize the Associate Minister of Energy-Intensive Industries.

Hon. Matthew Rae: It's wonderful to rise this morning to speak on Bill 143, Plan to Protect Ontario Act (Budget Measures), 2026 (No. 2).

I was listening to my colleagues the Associate Minister of Small Business and our great member from Carleton speak this morning about some of the investments, obviously, on the small business side of things, but also in the greater Ottawa area and in Carleton.

I know the member from Carleton is a great advocate for his riding, but especially for the city of Ottawa as well, here at Queen's Park, ensuring their concerns are heard at the highest levels.

Speaker, this plan reflects the commitment of our government to protect Ontario and protect our workers, our families and communities. As many of our colleagues will know, we didn't start the current economic tensions with our US partners and their unwarranted US trade and tariff tensions, and the ongoing geopolitical conflicts. But we are looking at how these are disrupting global supply chains and how it has created higher economic uncertainty in the province of Ontario. We're paying close attention to these challenges, and we are ready. Under the leadership of Premier Ford and Minister Bethlenfalvy, the Minister of Finance, Ontario has presented a prudent fiscal plan, prudent fiscal management, that has equipped us with the flexibility needed to respond to these challenging economic conditions.

We're strengthening domestic economic opportunities, we're diversifying our export markets, we're reducing internal trade barriers and, especially important, we're protecting our businesses and local, good-paying jobs while investing in building long-term prosperity for our great province.

Despite ongoing economic challenges, Ontario's fiscal plan continues to enable the government to respond to changing conditions. We continue to invest in priorities that matter most to families in Perth–Wellington and communities across my beautiful riding, and it's our commitment to build the most competitive, resilient and self-reliant economy in the G7.

Speaker, I can confidently say that our plan is working. It is delivering real results on the ground. From northern Ontario mines and road networks that are now under construction to factories and businesses that are reshoring supply chains across the province to building new trading partnerships both within Canada and overseas and competing on a global stage to attract and create the jobs of the future, we are laser-focused on getting that job done, Speaker.

Our government understands that affordability remains a top priority for families, seniors and businesses across our beautiful province. That's why we're taking action in the Ministry of Energy and Mines and my role as Associate Minister of Energy-Intensive Industries to ensure that we're keeping electricity costs down while ensuring Ontario has the power it needs to support economic growth, new housing and job creation.

In 2025, our government launched the largest energy efficiency framework in Canadian history, colleagues. This $10.9-billion investment, 12-year program, will help families and businesses reduce energy consumption, lower monthly costs and ease pressure on the electricity system.

This historic commitment recognizes a simple reality: the most affordable unit of electricity is one that never has to be generated because it has already been saved through conservation and efficiency. And as part of this framework, Ontario launched the Peak Performance Program, which is already delivering results as well. This program is expected to reduce peak electricity demand by 100 megawatts in 2026 and scale up to 230 megawatts in 2027. Reducing peak demand helps avoid costly system upgrades, improves reliability and helps keep electricity bills affordable for households and businesses across our province.

Our government is also taking responsible steps to ensure support programs remain sustainable for the long term. To maintain affordability while preserving the fiscal capacity our government needs to invest in health care, education, infrastructure and energy expansion, the Ontario Electricity Rebate will be capped at 1,200 kilowatt hours per month next year, May 1. It's important to note that the average Ontario household uses approximately 700 kilowatt hours of electricity each month, meaning the vast majority of residential consumers will continue to benefit fully from the Ontario Electricity Rebate.

At the same time, Speaker, our government recognizes the unique circumstances facing northern and rural communities. That's why we will continue to provide additional electricity bill credits and supports targeted specifically to northern and rural residents, where energy needs can be higher due to geography and climate.

We're also ensuring that support reaches those who need it most. Through programs such as the Ontario Electricity Support Program, eligible low-income households and on-reserve First Nations consumers can receive monthly, ranging from $35 to $113—a relief in that amount. These supports provide meaningful assistance to vulnerable households while helping ensure electricity remains affordable and accessible for all Ontarians.

The approach that we are taking is a balanced and responsible one. We're investing in conservation and efficiency, protecting ratepayers, supporting vulnerable consumers and ensuring Ontario's electricity system remains reliable and affordable for decades to come.

That's how we're helping families manage their costs today while building the stronger, more affordable and sustainable energy system Ontario will need for tomorrow.

Our plan also includes supporting workers and businesses facing the effects of these unjustified US tariffs. Since April 2025, we've announced nearly $30 billion in tariff relief and support for workers and businesses. The Ontario Together Trade Fund and the Protect Ontario Financing Program are helping protect jobs, support investment and maintain economic stability. They're part of our plan to fortify our industrial base to help build and protect the economy from uncertainty. This plan is not just protecting workers in tariff-impacted sectors, it is transforming these sectors to be the foundation of Ontario's future growth.

0950

The province has a world-class automotive and steel industry and a vast deposit of critical minerals. We have the workers, expertise and resources to drive Canada's economic transformation, and our government has the vision.

Just last month, Ontario and Canada jointly announced an investment of $8.7 billion in new measures to make our province's industries more competitive, diversified and resilient. This builds on recent investments we've been able to attract to Ontario.

In May 2026, we welcomed an investment of over $300 million from Tenaris which is a global manufacturer—Speaker, if you're not aware—of steel pipe products for the industrial industry. This investment will help the company modernize and expand its operations in beautiful Sault Ste. Marie. In support of this investment, we as a government, through the Invest Ontario Fund, are providing $72 million to support this investment, helping Tenaris create over 200 new jobs in northern Ontario while generating broader economic benefits across Ontario's steel sector in the face of Donald Trump's US tariffs.

The effects of tariffs are also felt across the communities where businesses operate. Our Trade-Impacted Communities Program includes a $40-million investment to

support good, local projects. The program offers support to municipal governments, economic development organizations, business accelerators and incubators, as well as sector and industry associations. And the results are visible. This program, for example, is investing $1.5 million in the Boreal Springboard program, delivered through the Northwestern Ontario Innovation Centre. This will help accelerate the commercialization and attraction of new companies and investments to Thunder Bay and northwestern Ontario. This means more better-paying jobs in communities affected by these economic challenges.

Speaker, our government is also working to unleash Ontario's vast potential in nuclear energy. Our government is building a sovereign, reliable and affordable electricity system to power Ontario's future, and nuclear energy is at the centre of that plan. While others are talking about energy security, our government is delivering results. We have an established track record already, colleagues, of completing major nuclear refurbishment projects on time and under budget, creating jobs, growing our economy and securing clean, reliable power for families and businesses.

A clear example of this success is at Bruce Power. Since launching the refurbishment program in 2020, units 6 and 3 have been completed ahead of schedule, with unit 4 currently under way. Unit 3 alone was completed a record-setting seven months early and $150 million under budget.

Interjections.

Hon. Matthew Rae: That definitely deserves applause, colleagues.

Large infrastructure investments from our government have enabled us to ensure we are getting the best results possible on time and under budget for Ontario taxpayers, while building out our nuclear fleet.

The Bruce refurbishment, Speaker, will also deliver 6,550 megawatts of reliable energy, supporting over 27,000 jobs every year and generating $4 billion in annual economic benefits, while—I always like this statistic when it comes to our nuclear sector and our investments in it—96% of the spending our government is doing in the nuclear build-out—the largest in North America currently, Speaker—will remain in Canada, and most of it in the province of Ontario.

At a time of economic uncertainty, nuclear power is our strategic advantage. Every major nuclear investment strengthens Ontario's economy while protecting our energy independence. This is why our government is also moving forward with an ambitious program for nuclear expansion—not just refurbishment. These projects are expected to create, in total, together, approximately 150,000 jobs and generate as much as $800 billion in GDP across their lifetimes and lifespans.

At Pickering—unlike the previous Liberal government that would have shut down the Pickering plant—we are securing more than 2,200 megawatts of reliable, emissions-free electricity. And this work will also create 30,000 construction jobs and sustain 7,500 jobs during the refurbishment and operation, adding up to over $41 billion to Canada's GDP. And at Bruce C, the province is exploring the potential for up to 4,800 megawatts of new, clean nuclear generation, enough to power approximately 4.8 million new homes in this province.

And we're not done there. At Wesleyville, we're proposing a project that could deliver 10,000 megawatts of clean electricity and add $235 billion to our GDP, supporting more than 10,500 jobs and creating 1,700 new local jobs. It is also helping prepare local communities for growth, with OPG providing $5.5 million in early growth readiness funding to Port Hope for the proposed Wesleyville project and engaging with the Williams Treaties First Nations as potential equity partners.

Our government is investing in reliable, affordable, emissions-free electricity that powers our future economic growth, supports workers and strengthens domestic supply chains and keeps Ontario competitive. Through nuclear refurbishment and expansion, we're securing the energy Ontario needs today and building the foundation for future prosperity, and our government is taking decisive action to strengthen Ontario's mining sector to secure our place as a global leader in the critical minerals economy.

Our approach is straightforward: If minerals are mined in Ontario, we want them processed, refined and transformed into value-added products in Ontario. That means more jobs, more investment, stronger supply chains and greater economic benefits for Ontario workers and communities.

And we're backing that commitment with investments. The Critical Minerals Processing Fund is a $500-million program delivered by Invest Ontario. This fund provides strategic financial support to accelerate the province's critical minerals processing capacity. This plan is already working. Generation Mining is the first recipient of this fund and, in September 2026, Minister Lecce was able to announce with Premier Ford an investment of $11 million to support the construction of Generation Mining's new $410-million copper and palladium processing complex in beautiful Marathon, Ontario. Once fully operational, the complex will create more than 450 new jobs and play a critical role in advancing the company's broader $992-million Marathon project, helping unlock northern Ontario's vast resource potential. And through this investment—

Interjections.

Hon. Matthew Rae: And my northern colleagues are clapping; it's a great investment not just for northern Ontario, but for southern Ontario as well. I know in my riding of Perth–Wellington, some of the tertiary suppliers to our auto sector are now making the switch to our mining sector, helping build some of the equipment needed for these expanded mines and operations throughout the entire supply chain. It's great to see them able to take advantage of those potential projects and investments in northern Ontario, benefiting southern Ontario as well, obviously.

The reason we're seeing more investment in our critical minerals sector—after years of neglect by the previous Liberal government, supported by the NDP—is because we have brought forward successive pieces of legislation

to transform how mining projects move through the approvals process. Our "one project, one process" framework is reducing duplication, cutting red tape and providing greater certainty for investors, while maintaining strong environmental standards and consultation requirements.

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Speaker, we're already seeing results. Four major projects, colleagues, have been designated under the "one project, one process" framework. These projects are Frontier Lithium, near Red Lake; Kinross Gold's Great Bear project; Canada Nickel's Crawford Nickel project; and now, just recently, Mayfair Gold's Fenn-Gib project. Together, these projects have the potential to create approximately 8,000 jobs and generate $75 billion in economic impact. These are exactly the types of strategic investments that will strengthen Ontario's economy and establish a secure domestic supply chain for the industries of the future.

The importance of Ontario's mining sector cannot be overstated. Today, mining contributes almost $14 billion to Ontario's GDP every year and supports roughly 46,000 jobs through mineral processing and supply services. Beyond the mine sites themselves, the sector supports an additional 100,000 jobs across Ontario, downstream in the supply chain, including processing, manufacturing and fabrication. And, as I mentioned, some of these good-paying jobs are in my riding of Perth–Wellington, supporting families, strengthening local economies and creating opportunities across northern and rural Ontario.

Coming into this role a few short months ago as the Associate Minister of Energy-Intensive Industries and really digging in to both the energy side and the critical minerals side, seeing the great, great potential Ontario—and Canada, by extension—has, our government's continued investment in both those sectors are historic investments, generational investments, but they are required, because Canada and Ontario need to stand on their own two feet.

Our government will continue to make those investments to ensure we are able to stand up to Donald Trump, to the Chinese Communist Party and anything else this uncertain world will throw at us.

I encourage all my colleagues in this place, especially the Liberals and NDP, to join us in protecting Ontario and standing with the families of Ontario.

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

Mr. Jeff Burch: I'll ask the member from Perth–Wellington, the associate minister: The fall economic statement shows the government continuing its practice of running hospitals at large deficits. You talk a lot about making investments. Just in Niagara, the hospital system is in a $26-million deficit. What that does is it puts stress on the hospital budget, so that they've been laying off front-line staff and they've been raising hospital parking fees and other things to try and raise money to address their deficits.

Why is the government not investing in health care so that hospitals can run stable multi-year budgets?

Hon. Matthew Rae: To my colleague across the way—whom I get along with, colleagues—I'm not sure where he's getting his facts this morning. I know in my own riding of Perth–Wellington, just this summer, I was able to announce on behalf of Minister Jones, the Minister of Health, $1.4 million in extra operating funding for my hospitals and $1.6 million in infrastructure support, which is important. Obviously, you need modern HVAC systems with that.

This, colleagues, is part of a larger investment in the provincial budget tabled this year and continuing in this fall economic statement: over $64 billion now in investments in our health care system on the capital side; over $100 billion total spending in health care—we've never spent more on health care—to ensure we're there to support our front-line health care workers and those delivering care to Ontarians across Ontario.

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

MPP Billy Denault: I really appreciate the opportunity to ask my question to the member from Perth–Wellington. I listened to his remarks intensely.

Obviously, this budget is titled A Plan to Protect Ontario. I want to ask the member to just speak about some of those investments that are occurring in his own riding and talk about how we're making the critical investments in protecting services for his constituents and the people across the province of Ontario.

Hon. Matthew Rae: Thank you to my colleague from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke—a great member, obviously one of the youngest members in this place, a great improvement from the former member.

Interjections.

Hon. Matthew Rae: Yak's going to—the former member is going to call me after that, or he's going to appear in the gallery right now. I'm going to get heckled by my own colleagues now.

But I really do want to take this opportunity to highlight some important investments through the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund. I know the member from Carleton mentioned the Eastern Ontario Development Fund in his remarks—a great program that supports additional investments in our local areas, in our regions.

I know Hammond Manufacturing—which I didn't know until we were able to help them in their additional $26-million total investment, $3.4 million from the provincial government—makes every electrical box in the province, so a very important piece as we see further electrification. Our government is there supporting them, retaining those jobs and helping them expand and hire more people.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question to the minister is about the removal of the municipal tax exemption for affordable housing projects, which is included in this bill.

Yesterday, there was a story about the 24 London nonprofits that have come together to jointly sign a letter calling on the government to reverse the pause on this exemption. They describe it as a "punch in the gut" to

London's plans to increase our supply of affordable housing. One of the housing providers, the St. Vincent de Paul society, said that this is going to create a $150,000 hole in that project's annual operating budget.

My question to the minister is, will the government lift that pause so that we can build more affordable housing in Ontario?

Hon. Matthew Rae: Thank you to my colleague for that very important question.

My thought when my colleague was asking that was, why did that member not stand in their place and vote for the 40% increase in the Homelessness Prevention Program funding? I think it's almost 60% for the city of London—I'd have to check my numbers on that, Speaker—but additional millions of dollars in the case of the city of London, across the entire province. I know the former Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing led that charge, and I had the honour to be his parliamentary assistant for that period of time when we brought that in in a provincial budget.

But unfortunately, Speaker, the members of the opposition, the Liberals and NDP, chose not to stand in their place to support our affordable housing sector, our co-op sector and our great service managers in that endeavour.

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

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: Thank you to my colleague the associate minister for that presentation. Small businesses are the backbone of our economy, and I have over 1,800 small businesses in my riding alone, Markham–Thornhill. I have to thank each of the small businesses for their resilience and for their hard work during this challenging time.

My question is to the Associate Minister of Small Business. Thank you for coming to my riding a couple of times and empowering and giving hope to the small businesses. The tax is an important part of it, and you did a good job on that.

Can the Associate Minister of Small Business explain how the Ontario competitiveness tax cut will help businesses invest, expand and create good-paying jobs across the province?

Hon. Nina Tangri: I want to begin with thanking the member not just for the question, but when he hosts me and other members in his riding and allows us to visit some of his amazing businesses, large and small, and see the work that he's doing on the ground to make sure that they are heard here at Queen's Park—I want to commend him for that.

When we think about the competitiveness of our businesses, small businesses and large businesses, companies have a choice. They have a choice in where to invest. They have a choice in where to start their business and where to grow their business. And we must, in Ontario, make sure that we are competitive so that we can attract that investment, keep our companies here and help them grow.

Now, with the Ontario competitiveness tax credit, it's going to allow them to write off capital investments for many, many different parts of equipment, for example—100% in year 1. We listened to industry before we were elected. We took measures as soon as we were elected. Now we're just waiting on the federal government. We hope that they will join us, as we expect them to, and allow our businesses to really grow and compete by helping them keep a little bit more money in their pockets.

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

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: *Remarks in Anishininiimowin. This report will be republished to add the transcribed remarks once available.*

It is always good for me to stand up and speak my language. It's not every day that I get to speak my language, because of the translation issues that we still face in here.

I listened intently to the presentation. I know the government is patting themselves on the back for some of the investments that they're doing.

There's a lot of stuff that's happening in Kiiwetinoong—needless deaths, unnecessary suffering.

The Associate Minister of Energy-Intensive Industries talked about some of the work they're doing. That type of talk, where they pat themselves on the back, and that type of messaging that they're providing is one of the colonial ways that governments have been doing for hundreds of years. It is important to understand that, yes, you have agreements with First Nations, but not all First Nations. You divide and conquer people.

How will you deal with the situation when other First Nations, not just in Ontario but across Canada, start dealing with the colonial approach to this development?

Hon. Matthew Rae: Thank you to my colleague across the way for his question this morning.

The provincial level is all I can speak to. I know the Minister of Indigenous Affairs continues to work with Indigenous partners to ensure that they are there with our government.

I had the opportunity yesterday, actually, to attend the IESO First Nations symposium. It's the 10th year that that has been going on—a great partnership. Minister Rickford was there as well, and Minister Lecce, I believe, is going later today. I was able to share a statistic there: 72% of our energy procurement projects to date had 50% or more Indigenous participation in the last year alone.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Seeing the time on the clock, it is now time for members' statements.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HOLIDAY EVENTS IN HAMILTON EAST–STONEY CREEK

Mr. Jeff Beattie: Well, it's the most wonderful time of the year in Hamilton East–Stoney Creek as we begin to

celebrate winter and the Christmas season that is now upon us.

We're going to begin with an icy cold plunge into Lake Ontario this Saturday morning, as the annual Hammer Plunge is taking place at Fifty Point Conservation Area. And in case anyone has forgotten the name of the lake, there's a giant blue sign that's right there to remind us, thanks to the Premier back in August. This event will take place starting at 10:30 in the morning. I want to offer my sincerest thanks to plunge ambassador Chandler Firth for leading the charge into the water this year.

Almost a week later, next Friday night, the annual tree lighting in Stoney Creek's historic downtown will take place. We call this Light Up the Creek.

And the very next day, Santa will be coming to town. The 66th Annual Stoney Creek Santa Claus Parade will start at 2 p.m., and I can't wait to see everyone there.

Speaker, if not for the hard-working folks in Hamilton East–Stoney Creek—folks like Tracy McKinnon from our Stoney Creek BIA; folks like Connie Behie, the lead volunteer on our historic Christmas parade going through our historic downtown—these things would not be possible. I'm so thankful for their work. I'm so thankful, on behalf of our community. And I look forward to seeing everyone out there.

SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Speaker, a new report from London's Health and Homelessness Partnership shows the effectiveness of highly supportive housing in helping people move out of homelessness and remain housed. After one year at Thompson Road Apartments, highly supportive housing operated by Indwell, residents reported 77% fewer emergency department visits and 81% fewer hospital admissions. Not only does supportive housing improve resident health, it also generates enormous cost savings for our already stretched hospital and police budgets.

Speaker, London is fortunate to have Indwell's leadership with two other highly supportive housing projects that have been supported through federal and municipal grants and community fundraising. Without a firm commitment of provincial operating funds, however, both projects are at risk. Coves Landing opened with 50 units of supportive housing last spring. Operating costs are currently funded through a private donation, but that funding ends on December 31. Hilda Stuart Lofts is ready to welcome residents into 42 brand new units, but won't be able to open its doors without operating funds.

I urge the Minister of Health not to stand by and allow these 92 units of desperately needed, highly supportive housing in London to sit empty. Do the right thing, Minister: Approve operating funding for these projects today.

RIDING OF NEPEAN

MPP Tyler Watt: I am forever grateful for the privilege of being able to stand in this chamber and represent the amazing people of Nepean. But for so many Ontarians, faith in the future is being shaken. People are working harder, struggling to get ahead and wondering whether their children will inherit a better life than their own. But when I look at Nepean, I see the very best in Ontario. I see compassion. I see resilience. I see people who show up for one another.

They deserve a government that shows up for them too: health care when they need it, a quality education for their children, a safe and affordable place to call home. These are not luxuries; these are the foundations of a good and prosperous life. We are not here to ask people to lower their expectations; we are here to rise to them. Let us measure our success not by the announcements we make, but by the lives we improve. We owe the next generation more than an explanation of what went wrong; we owe them a future worth believing in. We must never allow cynicism to replace optimism or mistake the challenges of today for the limits of tomorrow. There is far too much talent, too much goodness and too much potential in this province to ever give up on that hope.

To the people of Nepean, thank you for entrusting me with this extraordinary responsibility, and I will never take that for granted. I believe in you. I believe in Ontario, and I refuse to believe that our best days are behind us.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: Last week was an important week for Ontario's auto industry and auto workers. I was honoured to join Premier Ford and the team at Ford Canada as the first F-series Super Duty truck rolled off the lines at the Oakville assembly complex. As many of the colleagues here know, I spent 31 years at that plant, finishing my career as a vehicle auditor before being elected in this House in 2018. Returning on Friday was a special moment for me. It was great to see so many friends returning to work after two difficult years.

With an investment of over $5 billion and supported by $464 million from our government, Ford has transformed that plant in adding a world-class stamping facility. It will produce up to 100,000 trucks each year, securing over 2,000 good-paying jobs in Oakville, supporting engine manufacturing in Windsor and Essex and parts-manufacturing jobs across Ontario.

Over 100,000 people work in the auto sector and hundreds of thousands more in related industries. As American tariffs continue to threaten our auto industry, this is an incredible vote of confidence in Ontario and in our auto workers.

So again, I want to thank Premier Ford, the Minister of Economic Development, Ford Canada and my brothers and sisters at Unifor Local 707. Our government will continue to stand with you, protect and create good-paying jobs in Ontario for generations to come.

TRAGEDY IN SCARBOROUGH

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

MPP Fatima Shaban: Speaker, on Sunday, two 16-year-old boys were victims of devastating gun violence in

Scarborough. A third teenager was seriously injured. To the families and friends of these boys, my heart is with you. I cannot imagine the pain that you are feeling.

Speaker, it's an honour to rise to represent Scarborough Southwest.

Ontario has one of the highest youth unemployment rates in this country, and I see the impact of that in my riding every single day. When I was 16, I had a job. My friends had jobs. We would work at McDonald's or Cineplex. But today, if you come canvassing with me, you will feel the hopelessness that young people are feeling in Scarborough Southwest. I am begging this government to take this seriously.

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When the Ontario NDP proposed our youth summer jobs program, which would guarantee every Ontarian under 30 a paid summer job or placement, this government voted it down, as with anything sensible that we propose. So I am asking this government: Please come up with something and come up with something fast, because our kids cannot keep waiting.

HOLIDAY EVENTS IN CARLETON

MPP George Darouze: Across Carleton, communities are preparing for Christmas parades, holiday markets, tree-lighting ceremonies and festive gatherings. From Stittsville and Richmond to Manotick, Metcalfe and Osgoode, these events provide wonderful opportunities for families to celebrate, support our communities and connect with their neighbours, and I look forward to attending as many as I can with my team.

I want to thank the volunteers and community groups who work so hard to make these events possible. Their dedication helps create the traditions that make Carleton such a special place to call home.

Christmas is a time to slow down, spend time with family and friends and appreciate the people who make our communities stronger. I encourage everyone to get out, enjoy the festivities, support local events and businesses and enjoy quality time with your loved ones.

On behalf of my family and my team, I wish everyone across Carleton and in this Legislature a very merry Christmas and a safe and happy holiday season.

ETHNIC MEDIA

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Ontario is home to many diverse communities where families get their news in their own language, like Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Vietnamese, Mandarin, Cantonese, Punjabi, Tamil, Hindi, Urdu and many, many others. For many seniors and newcomers, their local ethnic newspaper, radio show or TV program is an important source of info on what's happening both here and abroad.

Ethnic media continues to be a primary source of news to many Ontarians, but today, many of these important outlets are hanging on by a thread. And much of the government's advertising with Ontario news outlets is tied to a federal designation that many small publishers don't have, leaving them at the back of the line.

The fact is, Ontario has no dedicated and sustainable support for ethnic media. That's why I've tabled a motion to create a dedicated ethnic media grant program in consultation with ethnic media outlets. This will ensure that everyone in Ontario has access to trusted news in the language they understand the best and support the ethnic media outlets that are making it happen.

Support my motion. Let's get it done.

SANTA CLAUS PARADES IN NEWMARKET–AURORA

Mme Dawn Gallagher Murphy: The annual Santa Claus parades in Newmarket and Aurora are where it was all happening this past Saturday. At 11 a.m., the Newmarket parade kicked off in the bright sunshine and the balmy temperature. It was a festive event with thousands of residents out with their families and friends to kick off the holiday season. With more than 50 floats, the crowds lined the streets to see the decorated floats, the marching bands, the costume performers and, of course, Santa Claus himself on the final float wishing everyone a very merry Christmas.

At 6 p.m., the Aurora Santa Under the Stars Parade kicked off with more than 40 floats. Once again, thousands of Aurorans were out, many dressed up themselves, all enjoying the evening's entertainment.

I would like to thank the town of Newmarket and the town of Aurora for their coordination of these annual events and the Optimist Club volunteers who help keep the parades moving, all the while watching out for the safety of residents and all the volunteers who participated with their organization's float.

A huge thank you to my constituency team as well as to all the volunteers who came out to create such a fabulous Team DGM float.

Newmarket–Aurora, from the bottom of my heart, feliz Navidad, joyeux Noël and a very happy and blessed Christmas, one and all.

DEMENTIA CARE

Mr. Lorne Coe: Fairview Lodge in Whitby will be receiving $270,000 from our government to expand the Improving Dementia Care Program. Speaker, the Improving Dementia Care Program helps homes implement emotion-based models of care, which improves residents' well-being by prioritizing their needs and fostering close relationships between staff, residents and families.

The expansion of Fairview Lodge is part of the government's plan to protect Ontario's long-term-care system by ensuring residents receive the quality of care and quality of life they need and, yes, deserve. This investment in Fairview Lodge will help equip staff with the training and supports they need to provide more personalized, compassionate care for residents living with dementia, while helping them feel safe, supported and connected.

The funding is part of a larger $300-million investment that will bring the Improving Dementia Care Program to 13 more long-term-care homes, connecting up to 1,300 additional residents living with dementia to innovative, specialized supports.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I would like to bring your attention to the Speaker's gallery where Cheri DiNovo, the member for Parkdale–High Park in the 38th, 39th, 40th and 41st Parliaments, is now joining us. Welcome back.

Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: I rise today to introduce someone who does not need an introduction. It goes without saying that this person is a great Canadian.

What he has done over the past 40 years is incredible, and here today, he continues his journey to give people of all abilities a better life. Forty years ago, the "Man in Motion" started a global tour that has turned into a worldwide movement. He has raised millions of dollars. He has brought change to policy and legislation across Canada.

I consider him to be a friend, but most importantly, he is also a friend to all Canadians.

Ladies and gentlemen, Madam Speaker: Rick Hansen.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): What an absolute honour to have you in our House today. It really is. Welcome, from everyone, to Queen's Park.

TRANS DAY OF REMEMBRANCE

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I'm going to ask for the attention of the House. The time being 10:29 a.m., as provided for by the Trans Day of Remembrance Act, 2017, the assembly will now pause and observe one minute of silence in honour of trans people who have died as a result of anti-trans violence.

I will now ask members to please rise.

The House observed one minute's silence.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): You may be seated.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Kevin Holland: I would like to welcome to Queen's Park: Caleb Garrow-Ledoux, NOMA president Rick Dumas, FONOM president Dave Plourde, as well as Jason Veltri. Welcome.

1030

Hon. Michelle Cooper: Welcome to James Budd and his family. At just 11 years old, James completed the Montreal half marathon and raised $16,000 for SickKids. Congratulations, James. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: In the west gallery, I'd like to welcome students from Upper Grand District School Board who are here to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Community Environmental Leadership Program.

I want to give a special shout-out to their teacher, Katie Gad—a long-time director of the program.

M. Guy Bourgouin: Je vais vous présenter mon maire de Kapuskasing, Dave Plourde. Bienvenue à Queen's Park.

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: I'm delighted this morning to introduce residents and staff of the Elspeth Heyworth Centre for Women in Vaughan. In particular, I'd like to extend a special welcome to the seniors program coordinator for the Vaughan location, Anu Sharma and my constituency liaison, Adele D'Elia.

The centre does God's work for women in my community, including support services for aging at home, newcomer integration programs and an award-winning reduce abuse program which supports women and children facing domestic violence.

Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Graydon Smith: It's always a pleasure to welcome visitors from the riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka. Today, Christine Tulloch and Joyce Sinton join us. Welcome to Queen's Park.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: I would like to welcome the Ontario Young Liberals to Queen's Park for their Queen's Park day. Have a great day. We look forward to meeting with you.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I am very pleased to welcome to the House representatives of the Canadian Pulmonary Fibrosis Foundation today and, as well, to acknowledge former MPP Cheri DiNovo—a good friend—as well as Jared Walker, president of Canadians for Tax Fairness.

I'd also like to give a big shout-out to Davina Hader, who's here as well—an important documentary filmmaker from the trans community. Thank you for being here.

Hon. Michael Parsa: I would like to welcome several of my friends here from IWOO, Dr. Fariba Bashiri, Dr. Noushin Khavarian, Taraneh Hajian, Fatemeh Manzoor and Denise Yousefi. Thank you for all you do and welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Mike Harris: I want to welcome two people quickly: Colin Cassin from the Invasive Species Centre and my good friend, Jon Olinski who's watching at home.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I would like to introduce family members Scott and Jennie Coffin, Grandma Nancy Bollinger and some guy named Dale Fife. Welcome to your House.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): He hates that, doesn't he? He hates it, doesn't he?

Interjection: We love it.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I know. We love it.

Mr. Steve Pinsonneault: Today in the Speaker's gallery visiting Queen's Park is the love of my life, Jodie Hogg.

Hon. Rob Flack: I would like to congratulate a page from my riding, Jate Lilley. I look forward to having lunch with him and his parents today in the legislative dining room.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: I'd like to welcome two wonderful people hailing from Erin, Ontario: Jerry Staples and Melissa Livingston Staples. They have a spectacular daughter, clever Colleen, who works for me. Welcome to you House.

MPP Robin Lennox: I would like to recognize our page captain today, Leo Rochwerg, and his family, the Loewith-Rochwerg family, in the gallery. Welcome to your House.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: From the riding of Essex, two great people: Nicholas Coté and Susan Landine. Welcome to Queen's Park.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: I'd like to recognize Honorary Colonel Carolyn Alexandra (Sasha) Darling, the first woman to serve as honorary colonel of the 48th Highlanders of Canada. They've just celebrated the regiment's 135th anniversary.

I'd also like to welcome Therese Marjan Schippers, the consul general of the Netherlands who assumed her post in 2025. She's accompanied by Stella Agbaeroh, who is the management assistant at the consulate general of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Toronto—and, of course, Cheri DiNovo, Davina Hader, Jared Walker.

Welcome to Queen's Park today.

Mr. John Jordan: I want to welcome Smith Falls councillor, and my nephew, Chris McGuire.

Ms. Lee Fairclough: I'd like to welcome representatives of the Canadian Pulmonary Fibrosis Foundation, including board member Christine Beyaert, to Queen's Park today. Welcome to your House.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I would now like to ask the pages to assemble in front of the dais.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I know; it's that time of year.

Do we have all our pages? I believe we do—no, are they still coming in? There they are. I think we have our group.

To all of our incredible pages, thank you for the commitment and professionalism that you have demonstrated during your time with us here at Queen's Park. Each of you has played an important role in supporting the work of this assembly, and we have enjoyed having you here every single day.

I know some of you have travelled great distances to be here, including our very first page from the riding of Mushkegowuk–James Bay. It is so wonderful to see young people from all corners of Ontario coming together to Queen's Park.

As you prepare to return home to resume your studies, I hope you leave with a greater appreciation of our parliamentary democracy. I hope you have lasting friendships—I know you will—and many, many fond memories of your experience.

I am confident that the knowledge and skills you have gained here will serve you well in the years ahead. And who knows? You may be back here in the chamber one day. But you will behave—you will all behave. Promise me, or you won't be back in the chamber.

I wish you all a safe journey home and continued success in your studies. I now invite all members to join me in thanking this exceptional group of pages.

Applause.

QUESTION PERIOD

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms. Marit Stiles: Yesterday, over 250 nurses came here to the people's House to support the NDP's bill on safer health care staffing levels. Not only did they witness the government speak against better patient care, they watched the government members—including this health minister—shut the House down early so they could scamper out the door to a $1,500-per-person fundraiser. It was a fundraiser that the Premier ordered his entire caucus to be at.

My question is for the Premier: If, instead of coming here to the people's House, those nurses had gone to his fundraiser, would he have been more inclined to vote in favour of safer staffing levels?

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

Hon. Sylvia Jones: I believe strongly and I know that the member for Nickel Belt also believes that when we look at who is operating within our hospital system—whether it is primary care teams, hospitals, in community or in our public health units—we work and they love to work in multidisciplinary teams. So a hospital will have respiratory therapists. They will have other clinical experts as part of that patient journey, and that is an important part of how hospitals appropriately deal with patients as they go through their treatment journey. It is not about one individual area of the hospital; it is making sure that we have multidisciplinary teams who are world class, trained in the province of Ontario, working in our hospitals.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: So no answer, again, from the Premier of this province.

We know how business gets done with this government, and while nurses were standing up for their patients right here in the Legislature, this Premier and all of his government members were running out the door. They had more important hands to shake, I guess, at that fundraiser than the hands of front-line health care workers that were here in the Legislature. The Premier would rather be shaking a hand that will pillage the public treasury than the hard-working hand of someone who is providing life-saving care. And let me reassure you: the only folks providing 24/7 bedside care are nurses in the province of Ontario.

I want to know: Will the Premier apologize to nurses for shrugging them off yesterday and actually vote in favour of nurse-to-patient ratios?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: You know, the fact that the Leader of the Opposition is jealous about our ability to provide services in the province of Ontario, and actually deliver to the people of Ontario, just speaks to her character, not ours.

We have worked tirelessly to ensure that not only are we training and licensing 100,000 registered nurses in the province of Ontario, but we are, because of the exceptional leadership of the colleges and universities minister, doing more within our colleges and universities. We have 30,000 nurses who are currently training in the province of Ontario. Why? Because they know they get world-class care. They know that they want to work in a system here in Ontario that protects the patients and offers amazing opportunities for our clinical expertise.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Still no answer from the Premier—won't respond. Not only did this Premier insult front-line health care workers, nurses, yesterday, Speaker, but the Premier actually punished them for showing up here.

On his way out the door, the Premier had those nurses who were here in their House, the people's House—well, he had them kicked out. They weren't even allowed to go—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I am going to call this House to order, and this is going to apply to all sides: The next person that speaks out of order—and I'm going to call a recess now for two minutes. I need to speak to the Clerk.

The House recessed from 1042 to 1045.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I will remind members we have two votes this afternoon, and I would hate to have anybody miss that vote this afternoon, so I'm expecting proper behaviour in the House.

I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Ms. Marit Stiles: As I was saying, the nurses that were here in the people's House yesterday—250 nurses—weren't even allowed to go and get their coats before they were removed from this building. They were sent out into the cold while staff had to run and collect almost 300 jackets, coats, scarves, gloves and bags.

I would like to know, from the Premier of Ontario: Can the Premier show such disrespect to the people of Ontario? How can he disrespect nurses that way?

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

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition fully understands we don't control the Legislature. That is up to the Speaker, and they make the rules. That's first of all.

We appreciate our nurses. We appreciate all the nurses across this province. That's why we have funded nurses. We've registered over 100,000 nurses—think of that: 100,000; 30,000 at universities. We're making sure we create an environment for them to come in to brand new hospitals across this province to a tune of $64 billion. We're making sure that we continue investing in Learn and Stay programs. We're the first government that makes sure we pay for their tuition.

But guess what, Madam Speaker? The opposition voted against those nurses. They voted against Learn and Stay. They voted against making sure we fund our doctors. They vote against any expansion of hospitals or—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Response?

Hon. Doug Ford: Am I done? I'll go for round two after.

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

GAMING CONTROL

Ms. Marit Stiles: Back to the Premier: By the way, 1,900 nurses have been laid off in this province just in the last few months—1,900.

One of the things that nurses are dealing with right now is the growing mental health crisis. Speaker, every day, young Ontarians are targeted by online gambling ads, some I've heard from are as young as 14 years old—kids—and companies are preying on them.

The Premier knows how to say the right things, but when it comes to doing the right thing, he is nowhere to be found. He has been sitting on a report that they had for two years that had all the evidence that they needed.

Suicides have tripled since the expansion of online gambling. This isn't like walking into a casino or a racetrack—the casino is in your kid's pocket now. So will this Premier, right now, ban online gambling ads and help create an Ontario where kids can be kids?

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

Hon. Zee Hamid: Let's talk about what a player sees in Ontario today. They can't be offered a free bet to sign up, and they don't see their favourite hockey player advertising or telling them to download a betting app. That's because we have set up some of the strictest advertising rules anywhere in North America.

Speaker, under the Liberals, we were on a dangerous path where players only had access to offshore, dangerous sites with no protection. The Liberals knew it, and they did absolutely nothing. Under our government, we brought those players, and we made operators follow Ontario rules. Now, more than nine out of 10 players use regulated sites with safeguards and protection.

And not just that, Speaker: With our operators, we've invested almost half a billion dollars in education, outreach and addiction treatment, and we will not stop doing that. We're always looking to do more. We'll always keep improving. But we'll do it in a thoughtful way, so we don't send players back to the grey market.

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

1050

MPP Wayne Gates: Back to the Premier: We learned that the Ontario chief coroner met with experts to figure out how to better track gambling-related deaths. It wasn't this government that brought them forward; it was a non-

profit doing this work with no government funding—seven gambling-related suicides in two years before iGaming, 30 in the first two full years that followed.

Almost five years of iGaming and here's the Premier's record: One study buried, another review unpublished. Underage gambling is up. Gambling-related suicides are up. ER visits are up.

Why are independent researchers and public health officials having to do this work without government funding while the government hides its own publicly funded research?

Hon. Zee Hamid: I think it's worth putting the history of online gambling in Ontario on record: It was a Liberal government, with NDP support, that launched the first online casino in Ontario—with ads, mind you—to advertise to players to come and gamble online. It was the new Liberal Party leader who stood up in the House of Commons, with the NDP's support, and voted in favour of legalizing single-event sports betting.

The Liberals knew exactly how big the problem was. You know what, Speaker? OLG told them that Ontarians had access to almost 3,000 unregulated, offshore, dangerous sites, and they did absolutely nothing. Do you know what we did, Speaker? We made these operators follow Ontario rules. We brought players onto regulated sites.

The member of the opposition talked about donations—they happily take donations from casinos and gambling sites. It doesn't stop them at all. That's not honest, Speaker. What we do here is protect the people of Ontario, and we'll continue doing that.

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

MPP Wayne Gates: In 2019, when offshore corporations wanted to expand online gambling to Ontario, they used firms made up of the Premier's campaign team to lobby for it. Guess who they lobbied? Not the minister, not even OLG—the Premier's office. They know the buck stops with the Premier.

Now, online gaming and ads are everywhere; nobody can deny that—no guardrails—and online gambling are causing job loss in bricks-and-mortar casinos right in my riding.

Over three years ago, my NDP colleagues and I tabled legislation to ban online gambling ads, yet the government prioritized iGaming corporations over the health and well-being of our Ontario young people.

When will the Premier listen to the families and health experts instead of iGaming lobbying firms and ban iGaming ads?

Hon. Zee Hamid: I want to be direct and honest: I agree with the Premier that the amount of gambling advertising we see today is too much. But the answer cannot be to pretend the market doesn't exist.

Let's remember the history: It was the NDP and Liberal approach that left Ontarians at risk with just offshore gaming sites. It was every single federal NDP member who voted in favour of single betting federally—every single one. They had their own bill to legalize it. It was the Liberals and NDP that started online advertising, not us, Speaker.

Together with operators, we've invested almost half a billion dollars in treatment, in help for gambling addiction. It's why the free bet and incentives are not allowed to be advertised on TV. It's why celebrities cannot go advertise on TV: because our government has set up some of the strictest advertising rules anywhere in North America, and we cannot go back to their approach of do nothing, with our head in the sand.

GAMING CONTROL

Ms. Lee Fairclough: Good morning, Speaker. The number of people reaching out for help with problem gambling has increased by 300% in the last decade. On June 30, the current parliamentary assistant to education and the previous minister for gaming acknowledged the need for action, "We understand that the time to do something is now.... I know that days matter...." I agree with him; 150 days have passed since he said that.

For many, this time of year is a joyous one. But for others, it's the time of year where they struggle the most. I used to see it first-hand at the large mental health hospital I worked at. The first week of January is the busiest time of the year.

We can make a difference here. The content of a bill is done to stop advertising for online gambling today. If the government brings it back as a stand-alone bill for the end of the year, we will support it.

Through the Speaker to the Premier: Will you make the decision to stop advertising for online gambling before the end of the year?

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

Hon. Zee Hamid: We cannot go back to the Liberal approach of anything goes. The member should talk to her own party leader, Navdeep Bains, who stood in the House of Commons and voted in favour of legalizing single-event sports betting—and every single federal NDP member voted for it. People were betting online under the Liberals, Speaker, but they were using dangerous offshore sites.

Let's remember who started online advertising for online gaming in this province: It was the Liberals, not us. Do you know what we did when we came on? We forced operators, we made them follow Ontario rules to protect players. We banned celebrities from advertising. We banned them from giving free bets and incentives, for people signing up, in advertising.

We will not stop there. We're always looking to do more, we're always looking to do better, but we cannot force players back to unregulated, dangerous sites like the Liberals did.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

Ms. Lee Fairclough: There are just so many stories of devastation because of online gambling, and I've heard them travelling to so many communities: to Timmins, to

Owen Sound, to Peterborough. People always told me a story of someone close to them, a son, a cousin or a father. Their lives have been devastated because of problem gambling.

Earlier this year I told Andrew's story here in this Legislature. He said, "Gambling quickly became an everyday habit ... then an all-day, all-night obsession. I stopped sleeping. I stopped eating. I stopped being present in my own life." He's doing better now, but he stays in touch with me to tell me the new ways these online gaming sites are pulling people in, and they don't let people out.

We need to do something about this, please. Speaker, to the Premier: Will you pass legislation to stop advertising for online gambling before the new year?

Hon. Zee Hamid: With respect, it's rich coming from the Liberals, who had their heads stuck in the sand when they were in power. Their approach was to pretend nothing was happening, that the problem didn't exist. In fact, their own leader, Navdeep Bains, voted to legalize single-event sports betting.

We understand the harms of online gambling and gambling addiction, which is why we took leadership and moved more than nine out of 10 players out of dangerous offshore sites into legal, regulated sites with safeguards and guardrails.

We've invested nearly half a billion dollars in education outreach and gambling addiction support. Our focus has always been to keep people safe. That's why it's important to take a thoughtful approach and understand all trade-offs before taking action, because we cannot push people back into the unregulated market.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

Ms. Lee Fairclough: Speaker, it's 2026, and we need to focus on what's happening today. The government is saying there are safeguards in place, but they aren't working. Ontarians bet a record $10.7 billion online in October. Think about that. Now the Premier says the ads are out of control, as if someone else did it. The government opened the market in 2022. Now the $450 million of profit from October does not even stay in Canada or Ontario; it goes overseas.

So, please, can we get a little bit more creative? Problem gambling is out of control. Suicides have tripled. The government needs to push itself to get to the root of the issue and prevent it. Help people and their families this holiday season.

To the Premier: Will you stop advertising for online gambling and especially help young men and their families this holiday season?

Hon. Zee Hamid: I'm a father to three young men. I care about this issue, and it matters that we get this right and protect what's working. We know that good intentions aren't enough. What matters is whether people are actually protected. In Ontario, they increasingly are.

But our work isn't done, as the market changes and patterns change. We're ready to do more, but we must do it in a way that improves the outcome and does not send people back to the unregulated, dangerous sites that Liberals had people under.

1100

Just look at what we've achieved so far. We've set up very strict advertising guidelines in this province, stricter than almost anywhere else in North America. Last year alone, with our operators, we invested $85 million in addiction support, in outreach and education through partners like the Responsible Gambling Council and CAMH. That's almost half a billion dollars since 2018. Every family deserves to know that help is there, and we will continue making sure that it is because if we send people back to the grey market, they will lose all help and support.

GAMING CONTROL

Mr. John Fraser: My question is for the Premier. I've listened to the responses to my colleagues' questions on online gambling, and I just have to say that we all know there's a problem. It's a really big problem, and it's affecting young men in a really bad way. We all know.

I used to work at a grocery store, and I would watch—everybody knows what Nevada break-open tickets are—a mom or a dad at the shopping cart with a child in the cart gamble away the grocery money. I'll never forget that feeling. That's what's happening to our young men. They are gambling their lives away, their futures away.

Will the Premier pass a bill to end advertising for online gambling before the new year?

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

Hon. Zee Hamid: Speaker, the leader of the third party—sorry, the member from Ottawa South; I can't keep up; they come and go so often.

It's worth putting the history of online gambling on record in Ontario. It was the Liberal government, with the NDP's support, that launched Ontario's first online casino; it wasn't us. It was that government, with the NDP's support, that started online advertising; it wasn't us. It was his new party leader that stood up in the House of Commons—and every single NDP federal member voted for it—to legalize single-event sports betting. The Liberals knew it was a problem. OLG told them that Ontarians could get into as many as 3,000 unregulated grey market sites where they had no protection, where they were highly at risk. Do you know what they did? Absolutely nothing.

We made these operators follow Ontario laws. We made them follow Ontario rules, and we got more than nine out of 10 players onto the legal market where they have help, they have guardrails and they have protection.

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

Mr. John Fraser: Respectfully, there are no guardrails; there are none. We know it. No matter what the minister says, we all know it. We see it. You can't avoid it, right?

The Premier and I are both dads. I'm going to tell you a story. I asked four young men who worked in my

office—they're younger than my son—"How many of you guys bet online? How many of you sports bet?" The four of them—all of them—said yes. "How many of you bet every week?" and three of them said they did. Then I said, "How many of you bet every day?" And one young man who was getting married said, "I do a parlay every morning," and I just went, "Wow." What's going to happen there?

Speaker, for the dads and moms and brothers and sisters across this province, will you pass a law to ban advertising of online gaming in Ontario before the new year?

Hon. Zee Hamid: Speaker, we do have safeguards. Let's talk about what we have achieved. In advertising, players cannot be offered a free bet to sign up. They don't see their favourite hockey player telling them to download a betting app. It's because our government, led by this Premier, has set up some of the strictest advertising rules anywhere in North America. If someone feels they're losing control, they can block themselves from every regulated online gaming site in a single step using BetGuard. Together with our operators, we've invested nearly half a billion dollars into education, outreach and addiction support.

Liberals pushed players into dangerous offshore, illegal sites. We made operators follow Ontario rules and moved players back onto regulated sites with real protection and safeguards.

Our work is not done. We will keep going. We will keep improving it. We will keep strengthening these protections, but we will do it without putting people at risk and without sending them back to the unregulated market.

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

Mr. John Fraser: There are no guardrails. We all know it. Your answers don't reflect what's actually happening out there.

October was a record month for online gambling in this province. We're taking over $10 billion a year in, and about 13% of that goes to sports betting, and about 87% of it goes to online casinos. So most of the money, almost 90%, goes to online casinos. And who owns online casinos and where does the money go? Number one, it goes offshore. Number two, it goes to billionaires, oligarchs. Actually, it's like a giant sucking sound of money being drained from this province that's not building our economy.

So if you don't do it for the right reasons, do it because it's just crappy for our economy.

Speaker, through you, I'm going to ask once more: Will the Premier pass legislation banning advertising for online gaming in Ontario before—

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

Hon. Zee Hamid: Speaker, the member talked about sports betting. I would encourage the member to talk to his own party leader, Navdeep Bains, who stood in the House of Commons and voted in favour of legalizing single-event sports betting.

Speaker, people were betting online under the Liberals. They knew they were using dangerous offshore sites, and they did absolutely nothing because they didn't care. The OLG told them about 3,000 unregulated sites that were putting people at risk. And do you know what they did? Nothing. They're the ones who launched online casinos. They started the advertising they're talking against now. We put restrictions on it, and now every other province in Canada is looking at Ontario to learn from our approach. I was at FPT just last week, and several provincial representatives came up to me to understand Ontario's approach so they could replicate it in their province.

Speaker, we've done a lot, but we're not finished, because the work never stops. We will do a thoughtful thing that does not send people back to the unregulated, illegal sites.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Premier. Speaker, we now know that the Minister of Colleges and Universities was warned as far back as January 2025 about the Canadian College of Business, Science and Technology. A letter from Career Colleges Ontario identified 10 private career colleges as potential bad actors, and that college actually topped the list, with a suspicious increase of almost 3,000% in OSAP applications. In response, the minister approved that college's OSAP funding for 2025 and then again in 2026. Why did this minister do nothing about suspected OSAP fraud at that career college?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The Minister of Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Nolan Quinn: As I've stated in this House, our ministry is always running many investigations at the same time. As soon as we reach a threshold of evidence, we will revoke OSAP, as we did earlier this year with the first six institutions.

I can't speak to specifics or the details of other investigations, but as you know, no private institution is receiving OSAP currently due to the widespread nature of what we've uncovered. That is why we brought forward KPMG, the forensic auditors, to be able to bring back confidence into the OSAP system when it comes to private institutions.

As I've stated many times in this House and outside this House, one dollar going to fraudulent uses is one dollar too many. We're going to go after those bad actors. That's why we've referred it to the Ontario Provincial Police, and we're going to recover every single dollar once the investigation is complete.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Speaker, if a 6,000% increase in OSAP applications over three years didn't reach the threshold, then something is very, very wrong.

Again to the Premier: Yesterday, when the minister was asked about the Canadian College of Business, Science and Technology, he told us what he has said again today: that he acted on the concerns by freezing OSAP loans this

October, almost two years later, and not just for that college, but for every student at every single private institution in Ontario—students who had done nothing wrong.

Speaker, Ontarians deserve answers as to how this scandal was allowed to happen, how $1 billion in OSAP funding was allowed to fraudulently walk out the door. This minister is obviously incapable of doing his job. Will the Premier fire this Minister of Colleges and Universities?

1110

Hon. Nolan Quinn: As I've said, once we reach that threshold of evidence, that's when we revoke OSAP, as we did earlier this year with the first six institutions. But again, as we realized it was more widespread than initially thought, we put a pause across OSAP across all private, post-secondary institutions, Speaker. We have had years of individual investigations that led us to this point. Once we realized it was more widespread, we paused it.

But this is still evolving. Career Colleges Ontario just sent me a letter a couple of weeks ago that they suspended another 24 campuses; another 33 campuses they have concerns of backdating the applications prior to the August 1 date when we changed the grant-to-loan ratio. Another 12 additional campuses are under review.

Career Colleges Ontario understands the evolving nature of this. That's why we brought in KPMG to get to the bottom of it, to bring back confidence because, again, one dollar going to fraudulent uses is one dollar too many. We're going to make sure we bring back confidence so that it goes towards the intended use: to help students upskill.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

MPP Tyler Watt: Young people, they're not asking for special treatment from this government; they're just asking for the same opportunity that their parents and previous generations had before them. But young people, they're struggling. Many are suffering, and it's because of this government's record. Let's look at it.

Young men with gambling addictions: abandoned; young people looking for jobs: abandoned; students: abandoned; our future: abandoned—this government has completely abandoned young people and students. This is our future workforce in Ontario. They're looking to get an education; to get trained so they can grow their families, maybe buy a house, actually get into the workforce and contribute to our economy. But when our youth unemployment is the highest in Canada, that hopelessness among young people is penetrable.

Speaker, to the Minister of Colleges and Universities: How does cutting OSAP grants and ripping away loans from students help young people get—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The Minister of Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Nolan Quinn: I'll remind that member opposite that under the Liberal government, tuition went up 83%—that was three times the rate of inflation. We had the highest tuition rate in all of Canada prior to our government coming into power, cutting tuition by 10% and freezing it over the last eight years, Speaker.

If they were in power, tuition would be over $15,000 for undergraduate tuition. That is not something we can afford. That's not something students can afford. That's why we have frozen tuition, but when it comes to OSAP, we take it very seriously. That's why we've called in the Ontario Provincial Police, and we brought forward KPMG, the forensic auditors, to be able to bring back the confidence we need and go after those bad actors.

We understand the serious impact this is having on our students, and that is why we're working with urgency this session to be able to bring forward legislation that will bring back the appropriate guardrails so that we can re-release OSAP to the students that deserve it.

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

MPP Tyler Watt: While this government is focused on governments of the past, I'd like to remind them that they've been in power for nearly nine years. This is your record. This is your Ontario that you should be accountable for, Minister.

You opened up the loopholes for OSAP—you destroyed it. You keep saying that you're taking it seriously. We know it took you years to take it seriously. We've learned today that Career Colleges Ontario warned the minister in January 2025 about unusual rapid growth at 10 different campuses, but the minister went ahead and gave them $150 million anyway. So I'm not buying the story and spin that this minister is trying to sell.

At the end of the day, Speaker, it is students who are suffering. So this government can keep pointing fingers at governments of the past, the federal government—never their fault but they'll take credit for someone else's work all the time.

Why are young people suffering because of the consequences of this government's actions?

Hon. Nolan Quinn: I don't know how we can be more clear. Our ministry is always running many investigations at the same time, but as soon as we reach that threshold of evidence, that is when we act. We need the evidence to be in place before we act, and that's why earlier this year, we removed eligibility from six of those institutions.

I'll remind the member opposite: I cannot speak of the specifics of individual investigations, but, as you know, no private institution is receiving any OSAP funding across the whole sector. We've done over 3,200 individual OSAP investigations as well as 1,700 inspections into our career colleges since 2019, with a further 700 inspections of those career colleges, to ensure that we have a world-class education system.

We brought it forward to the Ontario Provincial Police as well as KPMG because we needed the forensic auditors to bring back confidence and go after those bad actors because these are very serious criminal allegations, and we're going to ensure that every single taxpayer dollar is recovered, Speaker.

INDIGENOUS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. John Jordan: Across the province, Indigenous communities and businesses continue to lead the charge by driving economic development and diversification. For our government, we have always been proud to partner in and support this leadership, as we advance economic reconciliation. This means ensuring that the right investments are in place to support Indigenous communities as they strengthen local businesses, build critical infrastructure and advance long-term economic growth.

My question is to the Minister of Indigenous Affairs and First Nations Economic Reconciliation: Can the minister share how, through his ministry, we are partnering with communities and businesses to advance Indigenous-led economic development and reconciliation?

Hon. Greg Rickford: I want to thank the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston for this important question and share with colleagues in this House that we listened to First Nations leaders and First Nations business leaders as they talked about the next important chapter of reconciliation, and that's economic reconciliation. We were, in my ministry, deployed to other ministries to ensure that First Nations were meaningful partners in major projects in transportation and mining, to name a few.

For my ministry, it manifests itself in two important programs: the Indigenous Economic Development Fund and the Indigenous Community Capital Grants Program. Now, these two programs, Madam Speaker, have helped develop forestry companies owned and operated by First Nations, construction companies, real estate companies, as First Nations buy up private lands to develop their business. And I just want to tell this House that earlier last week, I announced $9.2 million to support these kinds of programs. Applications are open until January 19. If there's anybody in this place that has First Nations communities or businesses, please come and talk to me. We would be happy to share this program with you.

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

Mr. John Jordan: Thank you to the minister for highlighting these programs.

We know how important it is to work in lockstep with Indigenous communities to create new opportunities for jobs, growth and continued prosperity. When targeted investments are in place to support economic development, the benefits extend far beyond individual projects. These investments are about more than economic growth. They are about empowering Indigenous communities so they can continue using their strengths to advance their economic priorities and create lasting prosperity for generations to come.

Can the minister provide an example of how these investments are making a difference on the ground and explain how Indigenous communities can take advantage of this latest funding opportunity?

Hon. Greg Rickford: I'm happy to, and I appreciate the opportunity. You know, colleagues, the member for Kiiwetinoong and I, we share a geopolitical boundary, but in many respects, health, social and economic activities are increasingly being shared. I'm thinking of the junction of Highways 17 and 105. The Kiiwetinoong business group has opened up a fuel station, restaurant and corner store. Now, this might not sound like much to you, but when you turn off Highway 17 and head up to Red Lake and likely, within five or six years, a road reaching into more than 10,000 First Nations people currently living in isolated communities, this is an important business plaza for their benefit and also for the benefit of the municipality of Machin, otherwise known as Vermilion Bay.

In Treaty 3, we're building large food distribution centres to support food sovereignty and food security. These are the kinds of businesses that First Nations need start-up money for, small and medium-sized enterprises, Madam Speaker, to ensure that on-reserve and in communities nearby, they have an opportunity to take their rightful place in shared economic prosperity and opportunities.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): If I could just apologize to the member, I just wanted to draw your attention to the Speaker's gallery. Joining us this morning is the Honourable John Yakabuski, who represented Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke for the 38th, 39th, 40th, 41st, 42nd and 43rd Parliaments.

1120

STUDENT ASSISTANCE

AIDE FINANCIÈRE POUR LES ÉTUDIANTS

MPP Jamie West: Speaker, the Conservative government's incompetence is failing our students. For the past two years, the Conservative government hasn't allowed French students at Université de Sudbury to get OSAP.

Last year, the students couldn't get OSAP, so Université de Sudbury gave them bursaries. This year, the students still can't get OSAP, and U de Sudbury can't afford more bursaries, so half their students can't go to school.

Speaker, Ontario cannot train the workers of tomorrow if they can't afford to go to school today. When will the Premier fix OSAP so that French students can attend Université de Sudbury?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The Minister of Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Nolan Quinn: It was our government that was proud to invest over $21 million to relaunch Université de Sudbury. We're continuing to have conversations with the leadership of the university to bring back OSAP but understanding that it's our province that's proudly delivering a world-class education in French. We're proud to support over 35,000 post-secondary students that are enrolled in French-language and bilingual programs in Ontario, the largest outside the province of Quebec.

In 2024-25, we invested $866 million to ensure that our French-language and bilingual institutions are able to provide incredible education to every francophone student. We'll continue to have those conversations with the leadership of Université de Sudbury, but they're in

partnership with the University of Ottawa right now, and we are proud to stand and support that university with the relaunch that happened over a year ago.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The member for Nickel Belt.

Mme France Gélinas: Moi, j'ai récemment rencontré les étudiants de l'Université de Sudbury. Ils veulent étudier en français dans le Nord, mais la majorité n'ont pas les moyens de continuer.

Pendant des années, le gouvernement a laissé exploser les dépenses du RAFEO dans les collèges privés. Mais quand vient le temps de donner accès aux prêts et bourses aux étudiants d'une université francophone du Nord, là, tout devient compliqué.

L'Université de Sudbury a une charte ontarienne. Elle existe depuis 100 ans. Les étudiants ont toujours eu accès au RAFEO. Ils ont une évaluation organisationnelle favorable et le gouvernement de l'Ontario les finance.

Pourquoi les étudiants francophones du Nord doivent-ils payer le prix pour l'incompétence de ce gouvernement?

Hon. Nolan Quinn: As I've said, we're very proud to be able to support the Université de Sudbury to be able to relaunch last year with a $21-million investment. But our work never stops. We're going to continue having those conversations with the leadership of Université de Sudbury to ensure that the appropriate supports are available to students.

As it is right now, the university has grants and bursaries that they have in place for the students that are currently enrolled at Université de Sudbury, but we will continue working with the leadership there to ensure that OSAP is brought forward in a thoughtful manner that ensures that the taxpayers are respected as well as the students get the supports they need.

We'll continue to be there for our French-language education across Ontario. As I mentioned, we have over 35,000 students that are in French-language and bilingual education across Ontario, and that is something we're very proud of. It's the largest outside of Quebec, and we'll continue doing the work that's needed, Speaker.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Rob Cerjanec: I'm following up on a question that was asked yesterday by my colleague the member from Don Valley North, about why this government is punishing students attending non-profit faith-based institutions like Tyndale University.

These are students studying to become teachers and pursuing religious studies, and they're paying the price for a billion-dollar OSAP scandal involving private career colleges that the current minister and the previous minister knew about and allowed to happen.

Now, so far, the minister has refused to talk about the impact on faith-based institutions and seminaries and only repeats the same canned lines about career colleges.

So Speaker, does the Premier have anything to say to the good people of Niagara West, Hamilton, Kitchener or all across Durham region who've contacted me about the OSAP impacts on students attending faith-based institutions?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The Minister of Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Nolan Quinn: I fully understand the impact this is having on the good students, the talented, motivated, driven students, including the ones that are at our faith-based institutions. But once we realized how widespread the issues were, we had to pause OSAP across all private institutions until we can have the confidence that it's going towards its intended use.

I'll remind the member opposite, because he likes to say we've ignored the problem: Since 2024, we've been focused on this problem. Career Colleges Ontario was focused as well and sent us a letter of concern. The federal government was even concerned with our private institutions as well and did their own investigation. But I'll remind the member opposite, we did targeted and enhanced reviews. We've done over 3,200 individual OSAP investigations. We've done 1,700 inspections of career colleges and 700 investigations into those career colleges.

But, Speaker, I need the confidence to be brought back before we can release another dollar towards private institutions. That is why we brought in the forensic experts at KPMG to help us bring back confidence so that we can re-release these dollars for their intended use. We also referred it to the Ontario Provincial Police, and we're going to go after these bad actors.

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

Mr. Rob Cerjanec: We hear the minister—again, it's about career colleges and issues that were found within career colleges. We haven't heard if the minister has even acknowledged that—are there issues in other institutions? Because it seems as though it's just career colleges.

A couple of weeks ago, students from Redeemer University sang very beautifully in this House—the same students who were shut off from OSAP loans. Several of the faith-based institutions and local church congregations are taking part in a day of prayer on Sunday to pray for an end to this OSAP loan freeze.

Speaker, Christmas is coming, and many people are very clearly worried. Will any member on the government side stand up and say something to the students, the families and those church leaders?

Hon. Nolan Quinn: As I've stated, we need to get to a threshold of evidence before we act, and we did act earlier this year by removing six institutions. But once we realized that it was more widespread across the private institution sector, we had to put a pause on OSAP, because we need to ensure that the dollars are going towards their intended use: to help students upskill and uptrain for their future careers. We had to pause it because, ultimately, we need to have confidence that the taxpayer dollars are going towards their intended use, Speaker.

But, ultimately, we understand the impact this is having on the students—the good, hard-working students—whether it's at a faith-based institution or one of the other good institutions that are caught up in this. That is why

we're acting urgently. That's why we have legislation before this House right now to be able to add the appropriate guardrails, and I know that party will support it because they understand the urgency to be able to re-release taxpayer dollars and OSAP back to the students in the new year.

ACCESSIBILITY FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: Speaker, for four decades, the Rick Hansen Foundation has helped Ontario and Canada make strides in accessibility. They have done this through workshops, a comprehensive rating system to evaluate accessibility across the country, positive awareness on the important issue of accessibility and much more.

The Rick Hansen Foundation has been breaking barriers, even at a time when it wasn't popular to do so. Building a more accessible Ontario means ensuring that people of all abilities have the opportunity to live, work and participate fully in their communities.

Could the Minister for Seniors and Accessibility explain what our government is doing to help this important foundation continue to break barriers?

Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: Thank you for the excellent question. I'm proud to announce that we are partnering with the Rick Hansen Foundation on our shared mission to break barriers in Ontario. Just recently, we announced $400,000 for the foundation's youth leadership summit. This will help young people and accessibility leaders collaborate on advancing accessibility.

Together, we are inspiring a future that will champion accessibility. Together, we are integrating accessibility into all aspects of life. And together, we are protecting Ontario by protecting people of all abilities.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the member for Oakville North–Burlington.

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: Thank you to that incredible minister. It is great to see visionary leaders like Rick Hansen that are passionate about expanding opportunities. It's also great to learn about this exciting new initiative to inspire the next generation. Our government is investing in the future by investing in this youth summit.

1130

Speaker, empowering young people to become champions of accessibility is critical to building a more inclusive Ontario. By equipping the next generation with the knowledge, tools and confidence to challenge barriers, we are helping shape a future where people of all abilities have equal opportunities to succeed.

Could the minister expand on what this youth summit will mean for people of all abilities?

Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: The Rick Hansen Foundation will do great work through this youth summit. With this funding, they will bring together important voices to come up with practical accessibility solutions.

This complements the practical improvements our government has made to advance accessibility. This includes our new $2.25-million EASE Grant. Like the EASE Grant, this summit will focus on reducing physical and social barriers.

I'm looking forward to joining Rick on this incredible journey.

EMPLOYMENT

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Ontario has lost 47,000 jobs since July, and the government's unemployment rate has risen to 7.3%. This is the third month in a row where this government has lost jobs. Their mismanagement of the economy is so bad that Ontario's unemployment rate is now competing at the bottom with Atlantic provinces such as Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, and Newfoundland and Labrador.

Instead of creating jobs for Ontarians who are struggling to put food on their table and pay their rent or mortgage, this government has chosen to spend $111 million on ads to promote itself.

Speaker, rather than fixing the economy, why is the Premier misusing public dollars on vanity ads?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): The Minister of Economic Development.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Thank you very much, Speaker, for the opportunity to be able to talk about the million new jobs that have been created in Ontario since we were elected. Our manufacturing jobs in Ontario are up again; that is just the fact of the matter. Last year, we attracted 750 companies into Ontario. They invested $35 billion, and they alone hired 64,000 new employees in the province of Ontario.

Speaker, that's what happens when you lower the cost of doing business. I hope and pray that this opposition will join our government in supporting our continued cost reductions and job creation in the province of Ontario.

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

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: The minister's math just doesn't add up. There are over 700,000 Ontarians that are currently unemployed.

David is a graduate from the University of Toronto with a planning degree from 2022. During his studies, he completed a co-op placement, and he then took on an additional internship to gain the workplace experience that he needed. He had to stop volunteering at his church, because he had no time or energy left after working two jobs to pay his rent. For four years, David has been sending out résumés and getting few interviews back. He's now packing up and leaving Ontario with his university degree and work experience.

David's situation is not unique. All his friends are stuck in the same boat: educated, hard-working, with no job prospects and a dim future.

Premier, why has your incompetent government given up on workers of Ontario?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, again, there are over a million new jobs created in Ontario since this government

took office. And we've had to do it alone, Speaker, not with the opposition.

We lowered the cost of doing business by $12 billion a year. That meant two things: Those businesses hired a million workers, and our revenue went up—revenue that allowed us to invest $30 billion, $40 billion a year more in health care, tens of millions more in education, all because of the $235 billion worth of new businesses that have invested into the province of Ontario. That's how jobs were created. We lowered taxes, cut red tape, got out of the way of these companies who grew and hired those million people.

AIDE FINANCIÈRE POUR LES ÉTUDIANTS

STUDENT ASSISTANCE

Mme Lucille Collard: Ma question est pour le ministre des Collèges et Universités. Le gouvernement a investi 21,6 millions de dollars dans l'Université de Sudbury pour la sauver. La communauté francophone l'apprécie.

Par contre, ce qui se passe présentement, c'est que le gouvernement laisse les salles de classe se vider en refusant l'accès au régime des prêts et bourses aux étudiants. Les conséquences sont très sérieuses, madame la Présidente. Cet automne, il y a deux étudiants sur trois qui ont abandonné l'école ou quitté le Nord. Ça, c'est seulement cet automne.

Alors, ma question au ministre : quand le ministre va-t-il rendre justice aux Franco-Ontariens et régler l'admissibilité aux prêts et bourses pour l'Université de Sudbury?

Hon. Nolan Quinn: Merci beaucoup pour la question.

It was this government, the first in Ontario's history, that created not one but two stand-alone francophone universities: l'Université de l'Ontario français and the Université de Hearst, while also investing that $21.6 million to relaunch the Université de Sudbury in partnership with the University of Ottawa.

Speaker, we're going to continue to have those conversations with the leadership at the Université de Sudbury to ensure that we can bring back OSAP. But I will remind the member that there are grants and bursaries that the institution is providing to the students that are there right now.

We are very proud of having over 35,000 students in bilingual and French-language programming across the whole province, the largest outside the province of Quebec. We will continue making those very crucial investments to ensure that we have a world-class French education system here.

La Présidente (L'hon. Donna Skelly): La députée d'Ottawa–Vanier.

Mme Lucille Collard: Le ministre peut se féliciter pour les investissements, mais l'égalité des chances, ça ne se mesure pas avec des annonces, ça se mesure à la capacité des étudiants à poursuivre leurs études.

L'Université de Sudbury, ce n'est pas un collège privé; c'est une université publique. Avec la Loi sur les services en français, le règlement sur les prêts et bourses et même le « PEQAB », le ministre a tous les outils juridiques pour régler la situation.

Alors, madame la Présidente, combien d'autres jeunes devront quitter le Nord pour étudier avant que le ministre agisse?

Hon. Nolan Quinn: As a member from eastern Ontario, I understand the importance of having bilingual constituents as well as a French-language education, Speaker. As I stated earlier, our work does not stop. That's why just this year, through our funding model, we've now invested another $284 million into small, northern, rural and French institutions. That brings the annual funding to these schools to over $310 million every year, ensuring that we have a highly skilled francophone talent pipeline.

But as I've said, we'll continue to have those conversations with the leadership of Université de Sudbury. We're very proud of the $21.6-million investment we did to relaunch the Université de Sudbury, and we're going to continue standing by our French institutions to ensure that we continue to have a world-class French education system here across the whole province.

HATE CRIMES

Mme Dawn Gallagher Murphy: My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism. Speaker, our diversity is what defines our province. Ontario is proud to be the home to people from different backgrounds, faiths and cultures, all who come together to build better lives for themselves and their families.

Unfortunately, we continue to see hate-motivated incidents targeting places of worship, cultural centres and community organizations. These incidents threaten the sense of safety and belonging that every Ontarian deserves.

Speaker, can the minister tell this House what our government is doing to protect communities and ensure that Ontario remains a place where everyone can live, worship and celebrate their culture free from hate?

Hon. Graham McGregor: I want to thank the member for Newmarket–Aurora not only for her leadership for her constituents, but, frankly, the way that she supported investments in faith communities in her riding and my riding—all across Ontario.

We live in the best province, the best country in the world, because we come from all different corners of the globe. We come from different countries. We speak different languages and worship in different ways, but we're all part of one united Canadian family. And inherent in that right as Canadians is the right to worship, to practise our faith, any way we damn well please.

And in Ontario, faith communities have a government that is supporting their right to worship faith in their manner with an investment of $70 million in Anti-Hate Security and Prevention Grant funding, with $12.5 million rolling out this year. This includes up to $10,000 in funding for critical upgrades like new cameras, strengthened doors and locks, and short-term security staff.

We heard the opposition scoffing at it. They actually vote against it every time, but I'll address that a little bit more in my supplemental, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the member for Newmarket–Aurora.

Mme Dawn Gallagher Murphy: Thank you to the minister for that response and all that he does for Ontarians.

Speaker, protecting communities from hate requires more than responding after an incident occurs. Community leaders in my riding have told me that education, outreach and prevention are just as critical to building understanding and stopping hate before it takes root. By investing in prevention and equipping communities with the tools and resources they need to combat hate, we can break down barriers, foster mutual respect and build a stronger, safer Ontario where everyone feels a sense of belonging.

Speaker, can the minister tell this House how our government is supporting efforts to prevent hate and strengthen communities across Ontario?

Hon. Graham McGregor: The member is exactly right: Combatting hate requires a comprehensive approach. That's why this year we launched a new special project stream that will fund community-led programs focused on preventing hate, promoting education and raising awareness.

This government has invested $70 million in the Anti-Hate Security and Prevention Grant. The Liberals and the NDP have voted against that measure every single time that we put it forward. Actually, as recently as two weeks ago, they voted against $12.75 million for faith communities in my riding, in their ridings and every riding in Ontario. They talk a big game in this House; it's almost like they don't think their voting record is public, Madam Speaker. But Ontarians know and faith communities know there's one party, one government, one Premier that has their back. That's this Premier, this party, this caucus. We're getting it done for our faith communities.

AVIS D'INSATISFACTION

La Présidente (L'hon. Donna Skelly): Conformément à la ligne 36(a) du Règlement, le député de Sudbury a donné avis de son insatisfaction par rapport à la réponse à sa question donnée par le ministre des Collèges et Universités concernant l'Université de Sudbury. Cette question sera considérée le mardi après la période des affaires d'intérêt public émanant des députées et députés.

DEFERRED VOTES

TIME ALLOCATION

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): We have a deferred vote on government notice of motion 21 relating to allocation of time on the following bills: Bill 105, An Act to enact the Strengthening Talent Agency Regulation Act, 2026 and to amend various Acts; Bill 140, An Act to enact two Acts and to amend various Acts; and Bill 148, An Act to enact the Intimate Images Protection Act, 2026 and to amend various Acts.

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

The division bells rang from 1143 to 1148.

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

On November 25, 2026, Mr. Clark moved government notice of motion 21 relating to allocation of time on the following bills: Bill 105, An Act to enact the Strengthening Talent Agency Regulation Act, 2026 and to amend various Acts; Bill 140, An Act to enact two Acts and to amend various Acts; and Bill 148, An Act to enact the Intimate Images Protection Act, 2026 and to amend various Acts.

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

Ayes

Allsopp, Tyler	Ford, Doug	Pinsonneault, Steve
Anand, Deepak	Gallagher Murphy, Dawn	Pirie, George
Bailey, Robert	Grewal, Hardeep Singh	Quinn, Nolan
Beattie, Jeff	Gualtieri, Silvia	Rae, Matthew
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Hamid, Zee	Rickford, Greg
Bouma, Will	Hardeman, Ernie	Riddell, Brian
Bresee, Ric	Harris, Mike	Rosenberg, Bill
Calandra, Paul	Holland, Kevin	Sabawy, Sheref
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Jones, Sylvia	Sarrazin, Stéphane
Cho, Stan	Jones, Trevor	Saunderson, Brian
Ciriello, Monica	Jordan, John	Scott, Laurie
Clark, Steve	Kanapathi, Logan	Smith, Dave
Coe, Lorne	Kerzner, Michael S.	Smith, David
Cooper, Michelle	Khanjin, Andrea	Smith, Graydon
Crawford, Stephen	Lahey, Susan	Smith, Laura
Cuzzetto, Rudy	Leardi, Anthony	Surma, Kinga
Darouze, George	Lecce, Stephen	Tangri, Nina
Denault, Billy	McCarthy, Todd J.	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Dowie, Andrew	McGregor, Graham	Tibollo, Michael A.
Downey, Doug	Oosterhoff, Sam	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Dunlop, Jill	Pang, Billy	Vickers, Paul
Fedeli, Victor	Parsa, Michael	Williams, Charmaine A.
Firin, Mohamed	Piccini, David	
Flack, Rob	Pierre, Natalie	

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

Nays

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

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day): The ayes are 70; the nays are 42.

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

Motion agreed to.

PATIENT-TO-NURSE RATIOS FOR HOSPITALS ACT, 2026

LOI DE 2026 SUR LES RATIOS PATIENTS-PERSONNEL INFIRMIER DANS LES HÔPITAUX

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 19, An Act to amend the Health Protection and Promotion Act with respect to maximum patient-to-nurse ratios / Projet de loi 19, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la protection et la promotion de la santé en ce qui concerne les ratios patients-personnel infirmier maximaux.

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

The division bells rang from 1152 to 1153.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): On November 25, 2026, la députée Gélinas moved second reading of Bill 19, An Act to amend the Health Protection and Promotion Act with respect to maximum patient-to-nurse ratios.

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

Ayes

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

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

Nays

Allsopp, Tyler	Ford, Doug	Pinsonneault, Steve
Anand, Deepak	Gallagher Murphy, Dawn	Pirie, George
Bailey, Robert	Grewal, Hardeep Singh	Quinn, Nolan
Beattie, Jeff	Gualtieri, Silvia	Rae, Matthew
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Hamid, Zee	Rickford, Greg
Bouma, Will	Hardeman, Ernie	Riddell, Brian
Bresee, Ric	Harris, Mike	Rosenberg, Bill
Calandra, Paul	Holland, Kevin	Sabawy, Sheref
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Jones, Sylvia	Sarrazin, Stéphane
Cho, Stan	Jones, Trevor	Saunderson, Brian
Ciriello, Monica	Jordan, John	Scott, Laurie
Clark, Steve	Kanapathi, Logan	Smith, Dave
Coe, Lorne	Kerzner, Michael S.	Smith, David
Cooper, Michelle	Khanjin, Andrea	Smith, Graydon
Crawford, Stephen	Lahey, Susan	Smith, Laura
Cuzzetto, Rudy	Leardi, Anthony	Surma, Kinga
Darouze, George	Lecce, Stephen	Tangri, Nina
Denault, Billy	McCarthy, Todd J.	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Dowie, Andrew	McGregor, Graham	Tibollo, Michael A.
Downey, Doug	Oosterhoff, Sam	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Dunlop, Jill	Pang, Billy	Vickers, Paul
Fedeli, Victor	Parsa, Michael	Williams, Charmaine A.
Firin, Mohamed	Piccini, David	
Flack, Rob	Pierre, Natalie	

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I will remind members that I cannot stop a vote; therefore, what happens during the vote, I cannot control. But what happens after a vote, I can, so I would ask the members to come to order.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day): The ayes are 42; the nays are 70.

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

Second reading negatived.

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

The House recessed from 1157 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: Good afternoon. I'm happy to introduce Matthew Ko, a student from the beautiful riding of Markham–Thornhill and today's legislative page captain. He's joined by his mother, Michelle Ko. Welcome to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Today, I would like to welcome my two amazing co-op students to the House, energetic Eliot Rosenblum and radiant Rowan Johnston. Thank you for all you do.

MPP George Darouze: I would like to welcome to the House a good friend and a great person from Carleton, Mr. Marcel Moncion, and my friend Richard Gardener. They visited yesterday and today, and they just went back home. So I want to welcome them here at the House. Welcome to your House.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Pursuant to standing order 36(a), the member for Ajax has give a notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to the question given by the Minister of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security regarding OSAP for faith-based institutions. This matter will be debated Tuesday following private members' public business.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received a report on intended appointments dated November 26, 2026, of the Standing

Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 110(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

PETITIONS

LAND USE PLANNING

Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady: I have thousands of names here on a petition entitled "Say No to the MZO."

"Whereas Haldimand County has requested a minister's zoning order ... to accelerate the development of a proposed city of 40,000 on industrially zoned ... land in the Nanticoke Industrial Park;

"... the housing development will grow the population of the Port Dover Nanticoke area from about 7,000 to about 47,000 people."

The undersigned on this petition are asking this government not to grant the MZO to Haldimand county.

I wholeheartedly support this petition, will affix my signature to it and send it to the Clerks' table with page Matthew.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Sandy Shaw: As we all know, today is the made-in-Ontario book fair. I know we're all very appreciative of the books that they were sharing with us here in the Legislature, so I have a petition in support of Ontario book publishers, and it is entitled "Put Canadian Books in Our Schools."

The idea here is that we would like to make sure that more kids have access to Canadian books and books that are written in Ontario. What we would like the government to do is to create an accessible and dedicated fund for public schools and libraries so that they can purchase books produced by Ontario's independent publishers.

I think it's a great idea. I think our kids and our schools would benefit from this—

Ms. Catherine Fife: Great idea.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I agree: a great idea.

I'm going to add my name to this, and I'm going to give it to page Léa to take to the table.

TAXATION

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Again, in honour today of the Ontario publishers being here in the House, I have a petition that asks the government to expand the Ontario Book Publishing Tax Credit. What we don't know here is that while there is a publishing tax credit that's very important to this industry, books that have been translated into a second language or books that are graphic novels—graphic novels are the kinds of books that young people read—do not qualify for a tax credit.

In order to make sure that these translated works reflect the heritage so that books can be accessible in the French language or in Indigenous languages, we think it's very important that this book publishing tax credit is expanded to include these works.

I think it's a great idea. I'm supporting their ask. I'm going to affix my name to this, and I'm going to give it, again, to page Léa to take to the table.

STUDENT ASSISTANCE

MPP Lisa Gretzky: I have a petition here from thousands of students in Windsor-Essex county that says, "No to OSAP Cuts! No to Tuition Hikes!"

This government has made vast, long-ranging cuts to OSAP, which is either causing a lot of students to go into a lifetime of debt that they may never get out of or forgo post-secondary education altogether.

Speaker, in my area and universities and colleges around this province, they're facing deficits because of lack of funding and cuts to public education by this government. Now more than ever, for our students and for our future, this government needs to reverse course on the OSAP cuts and ensure that every single student in this province has the opportunity to go to a properly funded post-secondary education institution.

I fully support this, will sign my name and send it with the page.

LAND USE PLANNING

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I have a petition here. We've had thousands of these coming in. I have a few hundred today, people raising concerns about the unsustainable loss of farmland in Ontario and how that threatens Ontario's economy, food security and food sovereignty.

The petitioners note that we're losing 319 acres of farmland each and every day, which threatens our $52-billion agri-food economy, which employs over 875,000 people in Ontario—one in nine jobs. This is particularly important given the tariff threats coming from the US.

The petitioners are asking the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to instruct the Ontario government to create a food belt to permanently protect farmland in Ontario from being paved over for non-agriculture uses.

I fully support this petition, will sign it and ask page Daniel to bring it to the table.

COMMISSIONER FOR DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS

Ms. Jessica Bell: This petition is entitled, "Protect Democratic Rights." It is signed by individuals who are very concerned about the Ontario government's authoritarian approach.

We have seen some pretty alarming democratic backsliding over the last few years with the elimination of power that school board trustees have, to the elimination of entire levels of government that we are seeing in regional areas, to shutting down transparency so citizens cannot get access to freedom-of-information rules and

government documents to better understand what this government is doing with our money. The list goes on. I'm very concerned about it.

This petition calls for the establishment of a commissioner for democratic rights as an independent officer of the Legislative Assembly to oversee and strengthen democratic participation in Ontario.

I support this petition, and I'll be giving it to page Humza.

COMMISSIONER FOR DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS

Ms. Catherine Fife: This petition is entitled, "Protect Democratic Rights."

Listen, these institutions in the province of Ontario are absolutely under attack. We've seen a steady backsliding of democratic engagement, public consultation and silencing the voices of Ontarians. We are not going in the right direction, Madam Speaker. Even overriding Kingston and London's right to have ranked ballots for their voting systems, overriding democratically negotiated collective bargaining in the province of Ontario—this is a growing list that reveals the true intentions of this government.

It is my pleasure to affix my signature and support the call for stronger democratic processes in Ontario.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: The following petition I have to read into the record is entitled, "Put Canadian Books in Our Schools."

This petition calls for an accessible and dedicated fund so that public schools and libraries can purchase books by Ontario's independent publishers. As a former teacher-librarian, I am excited to present this petition to the Legislature.

At this time of threats to our sovereignty as well as our identity, we need to make sure that we are telling the stories of our history, of our people, of our dreams, of our communities and of our lives.

Did you know that of the 20 books taught in Ontario schools, only three are by Canadians? The rest are American or British, and 1,600 Canadian books are published every year by Canadian-owned, Ontario-based publishers.

I fully support this petition, will affix my signature and deliver it with page Georgia to the Clerks.

1310

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

MPP Lisa Gretzky: I have a petition here on behalf of the workers at WSIB who, under this government, have had their jobs cut.

Some 700 WSIB workers in this province have had their jobs cut because of this Conservative government. This is calling on the government to reverse those job cuts and to be accountable for their hand-picked, appointed head of WSIB, Jeff Lang, who is out there touting using AI in order to be able to cut these jobs and eliminate these positions.

These workers, and people all across Windsor–Essex and across the province, are calling on this government to actually support workers and injured workers in this province, by stopping these job cuts and reinstating these positions.

I fully support the petition and will send it to the Clerk.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr. Mike Schreiner: This petition has been read by so many people, but another 350 came in to my office that Dr. Sally Palmer is collecting, about the fact that social assistance rates are way too low in Ontario.

I think it's particularly poignant now, given the recent data we've seen where an increasing number of people experiencing homelessness in Ontario are on Ontario Works and the Ontario Disability Support Program. They simply can't afford to live in legislated poverty.

The petition calls on the Ontario Legislature to double ODSP and OW rates. I fully support this petition. I will ask page Humza to bring it to the table.

CONSENT EDUCATION

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Speaker, as you know, November 25 marked the first of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence. I have a petition before me that would really help prevent gender-based violence, particularly against young women.

The petition is calling on the Legislative Assembly to establish Consent Awareness Week the third week of September, which would be an opportunity to raise awareness of the meaning of consent and the importance of consent in schools, university and college campuses, workplaces and households across the province.

There are approximately one in three women in Canada over age 15 who have experienced sexual assault. If we can raise awareness of the meaning of consent and empower people to express their right to give consent, we can help reduce those statistics and protect all women in Canada and Ontario from experiencing gender-based violence.

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

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

MPP Lisa Gretzky: I feel like I'm the France Gélinas of petitions today.

I have a petition here, and I want to thank Sally Palmer, who consistently goes out in the community, engages and collects signatures from people that are impacted. It's a petition to raise social assistance rates.

We have been saying this for years, that under this government and the one before them, social assistance rates are too low. It is legislated poverty. I would challenge anyone in this House to be able to find a place to live, put

food on the table, be able to afford to buy clothing and other supplies to actually be able to go to work if they're capable.

So I would challenge the government to do that: Double social assistance rates, at the very least. We've been calling for years for this to happen. We know the affordability crisis is only getting worse under this government. Do the right thing. Support people with disabilities. Double social assistance rates.

COST OF LIVING

Ms. Peggy Sattler: At a time when so many Ontarians are struggling with cost of living and affordability pressures, I am very proud to present a petition calling on the Legislative Assembly to remove HST from all food, to increase grocery competition in Ontario by prohibiting lease agreements that block competition and to reconsider the opposition that we heard to a ban on surveillance pricing.

We have seen food prices grow significantly, and that is certainly one of the biggest pressures on families' monthly income.

This petition removing the HST from food and increasing competition in the grocery sector would make a meaningful difference for people in this province to help put food on the table.

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

TENANT PROTECTION

Ms. Catherine Fife: This petition addresses the need to freeze rent in Ontario. We know that when the Conservative government removed rent control, they further destabilized 1.7 million renters in the province. And we also know that removing rent control also destabilizes the economy because so many people right now—their rents are going up. Their disposable income is being impacted. They're living paycheque to paycheque. Many are feeling very vulnerable because there is no stable rental market in Ontario.

So it's my pleasure to affix my signature and to call on this government to freeze rent for 2027 and 2028 on all rent-controlled homes, providing immediate relief and stability for renters. Put that in your commercials.

EDUCATION FUNDING

MPP Lisa Gretzky: It's my pleasure to rise. I have thousands, I would say, of signatures here calling on the Legislative Assembly to reduce class sizes in our public elementary schools. This is not a new problem; it's a continued, growing problem. Under this government, we're seeing larger and larger class sizes. Now this government itself is admitting that it is a failure that students, especially those with special needs, are not getting the supports that they need in classrooms because this government is failing to properly fund public education, leading to burnout, a lot of staff leaving and going into other jobs.

So with the government admitting its own failures, it's about time that they actually take action to support students and education workers by reducing class sizes in our elementary public schools.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PLAN TO PROTECT ONTARIO ACT (BUDGET MEASURES), 2026 (NO. 2)

LOI DE 2026 SUR LE PLAN POUR PROTÉGER L'ONTARIO (MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES) (NO 2)

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 26, 2026, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 143, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various statutes / Projet de loi 143, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre les mesures budgétaires et à édicter et à modifier diverses lois.

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

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It's an honour for me to rise today and add the voices of the great people of London North Centre. I'd like to note, before I begin my debate, that I'll be sharing my time with the member from Niagara Falls, the member from Windsor West and the member from University–Rosedale.

Speaker, as we look at Bill 143—or the fall economic statement, as it's otherwise known—it really is a statement of missed opportunities. It shows, really, a great deal of incompetence from this government and how they have missed the mark for so many people in so many different domains.

As I first look at this, I think to my community of London, which has just recently learned that because of the bills that this government is currently putting on the order table, they are going to pause a tax subsidy that was meant for people who are developing affordable housing.

Saint Vincent de Paul in my riding of London is about to open a 73-unit residential complex. They were set to open in February 2027, but because of the pause this government has placed upon this subsidy, it's going to punch a $150,000 hole in their budget. The society can't simply absorb this cost. The chair of the committee, Larry McKenzie, called this a "punch in the gut," and it's a punch in the gut from this Conservative government.

We have also learned that Indwell, in London—an amazing organization that has provided highly supportive housing geared to some people who are struggling the most—have shown how their housing costs $88 per day, whereas other costs—to be in a shelter, for instance, is $273 per day, whereas a stay in the hospital is $1,585 per day. So the province can spend $88 or they can spend $1,500, nearly $1,600.

1320

With Indwell, they had an amazing group of community-minded developers who all came together. They pitched in together. They covered the capital costs. They received money from the municipal government. They received money from the federal government. These developers pitched in and redeveloped a building that was formerly a long-term-care home called Coves Landing. They've also redeveloped Hilda Stuart Lofts, which is part of a hospital complex in London. There are going to be 92 units of highly supportive housing for some people who are struggling the most. And yet, they just received the news from this government that they wouldn't receive operational dollars. They covered the capital costs themselves, and the province won't pony up the operational funding.

So it's jarring to me that we have the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul and we have Indwell—great people doing great things—wanting to help people who are most in need, and they can't do so because they don't have the government having their back. Why on earth are we blocking all of these highly supportive units?

When we look at the FES, the fall economic statement, it's frustrating to see that there are so many examples of this government's incompetence. With the OSAP scandal that has recently erupted with this government—and I'd like to read just some of the headlines from some of the news coverage that I've seen: "Ford Government Moves to Shield Itself from Lawsuits Related to OSAP Fraud Probe"; "Ontario Proposes OSAP Changes After 'Systematic and Widespread' Problems at Private Career Colleges"; "Part of New Bill Would Prevent Lawsuits Against Ontario Government Over OSAP Pause"; "Why Doug Ford's OSAP Scandal Goes Beyond Private Colleges"; "Ontario Students Are Left Paying for Doug Ford's Funding Fumble"; "Thousands of OSAP Applications Came from a Single IP Address, Ministry Alleges"; "Ontario Was Warned About Career College ... Letter Shows."

Speaker, when we look at the scandal that has erupted in this, it makes one wonder. There were notifications or warnings from the Auditor General back in 2021 and in 2023, and a warning from Career Colleges Ontario. So it took years for this government to act. If, let us say, someone warned you that a bank was going to be robbed and then found that the bank was being robbed—and still the government decided, "Well, let's worry about that in a couple of years' time," and two years later they decided to phone the police and say the bank has been robbed—that's what this government has done. They ignored the writing on the wall. They ignored all of the signs. It does make one wonder as to why they waited that long. Could it have been because they were receiving bucketloads of donations from those private career colleges that were obviously acting in bad faith, with some of their registrations going up 3,000% or, in three years, 6,000%? It does make one wonder.

This government, as well, paused a program known as Better Jobs Ontario. We frequently heard this government peddle their line again and again and again, ad nauseam, that the best social assistance is a job—a very judgmental and a very mercenary way of looking at people on social assistance, unfortunately. That is something that we've heard again and again in this chamber. However, they don't even seem to follow their own talking points. Better Jobs Ontario was a program administered through Pathways in my riding of London North Centre, and it was to help people who found themselves on social assistance to reskill, to retrain, to find something that they were passionate about, something that could change their lives and their families' lives. However, because of the OSAP fraud that it took this government years to act upon, they've also paused funding for Better Jobs Ontario. It seems as though this government is content keeping people in poverty.

Since 2020, they have known about this issue with OSAP and yet they've done absolutely nothing. It does make you wonder why they were silent for so long. Is it because of all of the donations that they were receiving?

Speaker, when we consider the plight of people who are denied housing within our system, it is one that affects every single person across our communities. Most of those people are denied a safe place to call home. It has been shown by Ivey Business School in my riding that it costs between $25,000 and $65,000 to house someone with full wraparound supports—even the most acute cases—as opposed to $100,000 to do nothing, to leave them languishing in homelessness, when you consider criminal justice costs, when you consider health care costs. Yet this government seems to have failed again and again and again when it comes to housing. Why is that? Is it the same sort of judgmental, ideological position, similar to the way in which people on social assistance are treated? It seems to become a pattern with this government.

But Speaker, when we look at the housing starts, one would think that this government was not encroaching as much as they have been on some of the best farmland in the world in Ontario. Yet right now we're losing 319 acres per day of prime farmland. This government has shown such complete and utter incompetence when it comes to supporting our rural and agricultural communities.

Right now, we hear the Prime Minister and the Premier talking about these big projects, these nation-building projects, and yet so much of our money goes to foreign-owned multinational corporations. Some 80% of our economic backbone is with small business, and yet this government pays them lip service but does not follow through with any sort of meaningful supports for them. Farmers are small business people as well.

Did you know that with Ontario Pork, they have to ship thousands of live pigs to the United States for processing? If we had a provincial government that invested in nation-building projects such as processing, then we would be able to keep those here. We would be able to have more good-paying jobs with benefits, with long-term prosperity, and we wouldn't have to ship products to the United States and then have to buy them back again. Where is the wisdom in that? Where is the economy in that? Where is the good business sense? There simply is not one.

When we consider what is happening in our classrooms across Ontario, we see that teacher groups have voted

overwhelmingly in support of job action. That's going to be something that is an incredible disruption to families. But I can tell you, Speaker, prior to the pandemic, families, educators and students were all on the same side, opposing this government and its cuts to education. We've seen $6.4 billion cut out of education since this government first took office. One of their first acts was to repeal the health and phys ed curriculum, peddling to a socially regressive ideological base. But then they had to backpedal on that when the public stood up and told them they were going to have none of it—again, yet more incompetence from this government.

And this government, in its so-called wisdom and so-called business sense, has decided to take public money and to ship it to Staples, a US-owned company. Recently, Staples had a breach of customer data with one of their websites. It's rather disturbing when you consider that this government has also awarded them with ServiceOntario responsibilities. You could not make this stuff up, Speaker; nobody would believe you.

Yesterday, this government voted against nurse-to-patient ratios, something that has been proven in many jurisdictions in this world to promote good health and to make sure that nurses aren't burned out, run off their feet.

Right now, in London, the London Health Sciences Centre and St. Joe's together have had to lay off more than 400 nurses because of this government. This government itself, across Ontario, has laid off thousands of nurses. Yesterday they arrived here in the chamber hoping to convince this government, hoping to speak to this government, and all this government did was turn tail and run. They had to get to their $1,500-a-plate fundraiser that evening, so speaking to people they had at one time called "heroes" was not important to them at all.

1330

We also know, and this government has admitted it themselves, that wage parity is a massive issue affecting all different domains of health care. We on this side, of the official opposition, say a nurse is a nurse is a nurse. A nurse within home and community care, home care, as well as mental health and addictions, should be paid the exact same as an acute care nurse. And yet this government treats nurses so poorly through their policy and through their inaction and through their position.

It's really absolutely unfair because there are some nurses who might enter home care, for instance, they might enter community support services, they might enter mental health and addictions, and it might be the most ideal position for them. They might love the patients that they're looking after and love the work that they're doing. But because they're not paid fairly by this government, they sometimes have no other choice but to move on. You cannot blame someone for wanting to do as well as possible by their family. But they may enter another, different domain of health care that isn't the one that they love the most.

Speaker, we've seen this government embroiled in scandal after scandal. I mean, some people have said they can't even do corruption right; they simply can't even hide their tracks. They have the inability to govern. It's becoming an embarrassment.

When you consider patients who have come here, who have been seeking treatment for cancer—cancer treatments that have been approved by providers in the United States—and yet this ministry becomes political, shuts them down, and they have no other hope but to fundraise—I think of Sydney Gesualdi in London–Fanshawe, who had to fundraise nearly $500,000 for an operation that was recommended and that could only be performed in the United States. I was really pleased that the MPP from London–Fanshawe was able to host Sydney here, to bring Sydney's story to the Legislature.

But overall, I would say that this government has a great deal of experience being inept. They've shown that they cannot avoid scandal—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. John Jordan): I'm going to warn the member for unparliamentary language.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Thank you.

You know, it's really unfortunate, and it's something that—I wish that this government could get their act straight, get their act together, and look after the people who have come to this House who need your support. You need to fix the fall economic statement.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. John Jordan): I recognize the member from Windsor West.

MPP Lisa Gretzky: It's my pleasure to rise on behalf of my constituents in Windsor West to talk about the government's fall economic statement.

It is incredibly, deeply disappointing, the fall economic statement. This is a government who claims to be fiscally responsible and is spending record amounts of money for the smallest amount of results for the people in the province of Ontario.

The vast majority of people in this province are not doing okay, regardless of the ads that this government is spending millions on to try and convince them they are. Just last night, within a 20-minute period, five times an ad came on from this Ontario government to convince people in this province that they're not struggling to put food on the table; that they're not struggling to keep a roof over their head; that they are not sending their kids to schools with large class sizes and not enough education workers; trying to convince them that when they go to the hospital and spend hours upon hours in the emergency room, in the hallway, and there aren't health care workers there to provide support, that they're still doing okay. That's what this government is doing.

Rather than actually putting money into the supports and services that the people in the province need and deserve and pay for, this government continues to throw money at a private luxury spa, buying a private luxury jet for the Premier, spending hundreds of millions of dollars on ads that don't help the people of this province.

Speaker, over one million Ontarians are turning to food banks for help and that is up 87% from 2019-20 to last year—that's under this government. And they can't say it's all because of tariffs, because that number continues to

climb under this government, long before the tariffs came in.

There were over 8.7 million visits to food banks. So over a million Ontarians are going to food banks—those are seniors, those are working people, those are children—for a total of over 8.7 million visits, which was an increase of 165% over 2020. That's a 165% increase, yet this government is saying, "We're doing great. We've got your back. Don't believe your own reality."

According to Feed Ontario, 13,520 people accessed a food bank in my riding alone in 2020. And in the most recent report, there were nearly 909,000 visits by March of last year, which was nearly 11% higher than in March 2025. We're seeing soup kitchens—one in my own riding is seeing a sharp increase in demand, with the number of people coming through its doors now consistently reaching 150 to 200 a night. This is a small organization we're talking about. When you start talking about the Downtown Mission, when you start looking at the numbers for UHC - Hub of Opportunities, that number is massive. It is massive.

These are all charities. The soup kitchens are doing it based on support from community, not from the government. Wendy Daniels, a member of the Soup Shack's board of directors, says the organization has seen an influx of new faces over the past couple of weeks.

Speaker, this is a policy failure of this government. They choose to allow people to live in legislated poverty, and many of these people are working people or seniors or people with disabilities on social assistance. This government will tout the historic investment into social assistance: "We're the first government to add inflationary increases to social assistance." I challenge any of the government members to live off of $703 a month—or $1,400 a month if you have a disability—to be able to keep a roof over your head, food on the table and maintain stable employment, if your disability doesn't exclude you from being able to work.

We've seen regional growth. In southwest Ontario alone, food bank visits rose 94% since this government took office—a 94% increase in food bank use because of this government's policies.

In health care, there are nearly 3,000 people a day waiting in hospital hallways for health care. And yet, today, this government voted against our motion to mandate nurse-to-patient ratios so that we don't have people waiting in hallways at hospitals for health care, so that we would ensure there were enough nurses and other health care professionals in hospital to provide care.

I had shared a story, I believe it was last year, about my mom who, in London, was taken to hospital and was never put into a room. She was in the hallway the entire time. She was taken in the bed and put beside a door where they take the garbage in and out of the emergency department. The carts go by with the garbage. Directly across the hall was the family room where they bring families in to tell them that their loved one has died and to give the family an opportunity to grieve, and she's listening to these families receiving this horrible news.

Meanwhile, she was very ill herself, and so she called and said, "I don't want to be here anymore. I need you to come get me, because I don't want to be here anymore." Then, she told me of the nurse that was working in the emergency department that night who was sobbing because of what my mom was going through and because that nurse and all the others in the emergency department that night were short-staffed and had too many patients who they were responsible for, and she couldn't provide that care that my mom needed and deserved. She felt terrible and embarrassed to working in an atmosphere where patients are in a bed next to where the garbage is for the entire department.

1340

Yet this government will stand up and defend their record on health care. They promised—they promised. In their very first campaign and every campaign since, they talked about ending hallway health care. Look, the Liberals, not great, but you guys, the Conservative government, have taken it to an entirely different level. It's like hallway health care on steroids with you guys. It's like a race to the bottom.

Make no mistake, this is done on purpose. Much like what they're doing to the education system, this is done on purpose because this is what Conservatives do when they want to privatize systems and make sure their private corporation buddies and their donors benefit. They underfund and under-resource our public systems to the point where it collapses, and then they can justify piecing it out to the private corporations, who make sure that they scrape their profits off the top from the public purse before any of that money makes it into the system to actually provide care in health care or provide education in the public education system. They want to privatize the education system; they want to privatize the health care system.

Hon. Mike Harris: They're funny. You're literally crazy.

MPP Lisa Gretzky: Oh, it's funny? The member opposite just called me crazy, but it was actually his father who was Premier who fired nurses and attacked education workers. That, my friend, is crazy—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Order. Stop the clock.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I've asked the House to come to order. The Minister of Natural Resources will come to order.

Everything goes through the Chair, and every member will have an opportunity to ask questions at the end of the debate time.

I will return to the member for Windsor West.

MPP Lisa Gretzky: Thank you.

The Minister of Natural Resources should look at his father's own record when people died in Walkerton because he privatized water delivery. He should look at the 407 and how his father as Premier privatized the 407, which is now gouging people who use the 407.

Interjections.

MPP Lisa Gretzky: I seem to have struck a nerve with that side of the House, and I should, but instead of yelling at me and calling me crazy, maybe you should do something to actually invest in and support the people of this province and the public services that they rely on every day. It's classic; that's what Conservatives do when you point out their bad record. They want to be like the ads that they're spending millions on where they try to gaslight people into believing the government is doing good, when really—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Stop the clock.

The member will withdraw the unparliamentary remark.

MPP Lisa Gretzky: I withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I return to the member for Windsor West.

MPP Lisa Gretzky: Thank you, Speaker.

We've also seen a sharp increase in the number experiencing homelessness in the province under this government—since 2018, we have seen a sharp increase in the number of people experiencing homelessness. Again, those are working people, those are people with disabilities, those are children, those are seniors, and this government is literally leaving these people, at this time of year, out in the cold. Meanwhile, the shelters and the service providers that try to support these folks are struggling to keep up.

And nobody is fooled when any of these government members show up at a food bank or a shelter and take a picture and say, "Good for these guys. The need has gone up, but good for these guys for doing the great work in supporting the people of this province." Everyone knows that it's government policy that is driving the increase in food bank usage. It's government policy that is causing people to become unhoused. They could change that, but that is not reflected in the fall economic statement.

I want to turn to post-secondary education. This government, under an affordability crisis, has cut OSAP for students wanting to go to college and university—and they want to talk about supporting the next generation of workers. If they can't afford to go to school, we're going to continue to see shortages in key sectors and key jobs in this province. We're going to see students who either graduate with a lifetime of debt that they will never get out of—never get out of—or they're just not going to go onto post-secondary school at all.

We are seeing post-secondary institutions, colleges and universities, all facing deficits. In our health care sector, I'm not sure there is a single hospital that isn't facing massive deficits right now because they're not properly funded, and we're seeing it in post-secondary too. It is a race to the bottom with this government, but they have an opportunity—which they've missed in the fall economic statement—to actually invest in the public services that everyone in this province needs.

The government likes to say, especially when they're talking about social assistance and those with disabilities, "The best social program is a job." But Speaker, if you want to be fiscally responsible—not only do I believe that it is the morally right thing to do. But if you want to just talk about the financial aspect and the economic aspect of it, when you ensure that you are taking public dollars and investing them into the public services that people rely on, that all of us will rely on to some degree at some point; when you ensure that they can access safe, stable, appropriate, affordable housing, which includes supportive housing; when you ensure that they can put groceries on their table—and one way the government could address the cost of groceries is follow our plan to remove tax off of all groceries and take on the big corporations that are gouging people—but when you make sure they have safe, stable, affordable housing; when you ensure that they can put healthy food on the table; when you ensure that transportation is affordable so they can get to and from work; when you do those things, when you ensure that they have timely access to health care and education—when you make those investments, the savings on the back end is much larger than the initial investment.

You see savings in the health care system because fewer people are going to the emergency department for care because they're able to access a primary care physician, or they're able to make healthy choices when it comes to food, or access food at all. You'll see a savings to the education system, which is supplementing this government's failure by having to provide food programs or bring in clothing in the wintertime, coats and mitts and things—and it's the education workers doing that, by the way. You'll see a savings to the justice system—because I know this government likes to talk about criminalizing those that live in poverty, but when you ensure they have all the things in place, you'll see a savings on the justice system as well.

So I call on this government to look at this fall economic statement and do better. You are spending a ton of money on things that aren't actually helping people in this province, and the people of Ontario deserve so much better than that. And they deserve better than you doing a $1,500-a-plate fundraiser last night for yourselves while people are lining up at food banks.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I recognize the member for Niagara Falls.

MPP Wayne Gates: I'm going to start with a little better thing here. Today is Thanksgiving in the United States, and I can say I hope they're all having a great day. In my riding of Niagara, we rely on the Americans to come, buy our wine, go to our museums, enjoy the falls. So I just want to say to all the Americans, I hope they're having a great day. I'm going to finish by saying that part of it: Go Bills, go! They play tonight against KC, and down in Niagara we're big Bills fans.

But I'm here to talk about this bill. Speaker, it's always a pleasure to rise in the House.

I want to start with what is not in the economic statement. I want to talk about our kids and our grandkids and what they're facing today. I want to talk about what they're inheriting from this government. The Ontario projected deficit is now $16.9 billion—that's with a B.

That's $3.1 billion higher than projected in the spring budget. The government now is saying they're delaying balancing the budget until 2030.

Speaker, you can run a deficit, but it matters a lot more about the resources the province has. You can't run a deficit and run health care into the ground. You can't run a deficit and leave young people with no jobs and gut their education system. You can't run a deficit and spend a historic amount of money on partisan self-promoting ads. Year over year now, this government is running a deficit to break its own record on advertising.

1350

You know, Madam Speaker, this year it's $117 million on advertising. What really bothers me, because it's on the radio, it's on the TV—you talk about iGaming and that advertising; well, they're only second to the Conservative government. But what bothers me is, at the end of all that advertising, do you know what it says? "This ad is bought and paid for by the provincial government." Well, do you know who's paying for it? All of us, the taxpayers. That's who's paying for their advertising.

What does this economic statement actually mean for the people of Niagara Falls, Fort Erie, and Niagara-on-the-Lake? For those that don't know, that's my riding. We're a border community, and we are some of the hardest hit by the American tariffs and economic uncertainty. Are the provincial resources reaching the people and our communities that need them? I've not heard once, not a single time, that any small business or worker has told me they have.

I'm hearing about the cost of failing to invest in preventive publicly funded, publicly delivered health care systems. I'm hearing about the failure of delivering on affordable housing. I'm hearing about infrastructure. In Niagara, we have a giant waste water project that still needs funding. It's one of the oldest in the province, and without investment, we can't even build homes in our area.

The one that I've talked about a lot here is health care in Niagara. Niagara Health announced another round of urgent care closures on November 24. Tomorrow, Friday, November 27, it's in Fort Erie. The urgent care centre will close at 2 p.m. It will only be open for four hours, servicing 40,000 residents in Fort Erie. It used to be open 365 days a year, 24 hours a day. On Sunday, Madam Speaker, Fort Erie urgent care centre will be closed for the entire day, forcing seniors—and, by the way, Niagara has one of the oldest populations of seniors in the province and maybe even in the country. They're asking our seniors to drive down a highway, and if anybody has heard, starting tonight—my understanding—we're going to have severe weather again, whether it goes into freezing rain or just rain—because I know they're calling for terrible weather for the Bills game today. You're asking those seniors to go down that highway, many of them over 80 years old. Many of them don't have a car. There's no public transit to get back and forth. And yet what we are doing? We're closing it for an entire day.

My colleagues here: Port Colborne urgent care centre will also be closed early on Saturday and be closed all day Sunday. So that means that entire area of my riding and part of Niagara Centre's riding is going to be closed all day, forcing them to go where? Forcing them to go to Niagara Falls or St. Catharines, your emergency room, to have any care. Does that make any sense? So instead of spending $117 million on advertising, maybe it would be a good idea to invest in urgent care centres.

And do you know why they should do that? Madam Speaker, I know you're nodding your head on this one. Do you know why they want to do that?

Interjections.

MPP Wayne Gates: Maybe she wasn't.

Do you know why they want to do that? Why wouldn't they want to take care of our hospitals, invest in health care? It drives me nuts.

And then what they've done as they turned down the bill today for our nurses, nurse ratios—do you know what they do? They're closing our urgent care centres in Fort Erie, Port Colborne, forcing us to drive to the emergency room even though the AG report says you should invest in urgent care centres, not close urgent care centres, if you want to alleviate the problem that we have in health care in our emergency rooms—because our wait times in emergency rooms are through the roof. We know that. So we've got to stop those types of cuts.

Now we've got another problem: We're laying off nurses in Niagara—and Hamilton, by the way, not just Niagara. We're going to lay off 600 nurses and PSWs in Niagara as you close urgent care centres. Does that make sense to anybody? And if you include Welland, where they're going to close a long-term-care facility, it's another 150 jobs that may be leaving—instead of investing.

The province is spending $155 million over two years for 57 new centres, 35 doing MRIs and CT scans. They are all private. So you wonder why we've got a problem in health care? That's where the problem is. It's because you're taking money from a public system and putting it into a private system.

The day that they announced those layoffs in Niagara and Hamilton—and I'm sure my colleagues will remember this—they had a press release going that they're spending over $100 million in private clinics the very same day. They're sending a clear message: They're not supporting our nurses; they're not supporting our doctors; they just want to privatize our health care system.

We should be supporting our front-line staff, our nurses, our physicians, our local communities. The FAO projected that the spring budget spending plan would support—listen to this—2,407 fewer funded hospital beds by 2028-29. That's a disgrace.

We all know that we're going to need more beds, particularly over the next 10 to 15 years. Anybody know why? Because everybody is catching up to me in age. We're all getting old. Our seniors are going to need to be in hospital beds. More money should be going to home care, more money going to long-term care.

The Fort Erie urgent care centre that you want to close—I'm saying to you, keep Fort Erie's urgent care centre open 24/7, 365 days a year, because 40,000

residents in Fort Erie are depending on that. I'm saying it very clearly. When the minister stands up and says everything is wonderful in the province of Ontario—how many remember that the other day when he did his 40 minutes on the bill? I'm saying everything is not wonderful in Ontario.

How do we know that? I've been here for a few years now. I can tell you, the first time I came here, you know what I'd never heard of? Encampments. Never heard of the word "encampment"—didn't even know what it was. I knew there were homeless in our area, but not encampments—didn't even know what it was.

Then we went from encampments to food bank use. It's the worst it's ever been in our history in the province of Ontario. They can't keep up. More and more people are going to food banks. My colleague mentioned all the stats, but I'll tell you the stat that doesn't come out: It's the people that have full-time jobs, and on Friday, they're not excited to go to the bank to cash their cheque. You know where they're going because they can't afford their rent, they can't afford their mortgages, they can't afford to feed their kids? Their first stop, you know what it is? It's a food bank to get food for the weekend.

That's what's going on in the province of Ontario that everybody wants to hide. They tell us it's great. Well, it's not. I don't believe that at the end of your life, quite frankly, our seniors, who built this great province, should have to have to go to food banks to survive. Or they're being renovicted because they can't afford their rent.

I know some of my colleagues—I hope they're listening. I don't know anybody with a minimum wage job who can afford to pay rent in the province of Ontario when it's over $3,000. How can you afford that? You can't. You just can't.

And why did that happen? They don't want to admit why it happened, but I'm going to try and help them remember. Because this government decided in 2018, I believe—I might be out by a year, but I think it's 2018, maybe 2019—to get rid of rent control on new builds. And when you take rent controls off new builds, what happens with our rent? It goes up and up and up. You know what hasn't gone up? Wages with the same amount of increases to our rents.

1400

I can't see the clock; how much time have I got?

Interjections.

MPP Wayne Gates: Three? I've got reading glasses on. I can't see the clock. That's just the way it is, man. Three minutes.

What do I want to talk to? Oh, this is good. I've got some stats here; I didn't realize it.

A report last month pointed out that nearly 40,000 residents in the Niagara region used food banks last year—14,000 of them were children, 2,200 are seniors.

I want to thank Feed Niagara, Niagara Nutrition Partners, Project SHARE, Newark Neighbours and many more groups for all they do.

Our businesses, our non-profits and communities are doing what they can, but at the end of the day, these conditions that the province is ignoring are bad; the lack of funding makes it worse. That's because affordable housing is not a priority for this government. Nothing in this budget will move that dial.

And listen to this one—I don't have much time left—the wait-list for Niagara regional community housing for a one-bedroom unit—anybody want to guess how long it is? Twenty-one years. A four-bedroom unit is 18 years. By the time you apply and the time you get it, your kids are already grown up, probably gotten married. It would be a different family. It makes no sense.

I'll finish up by talking about what I've been talking about the last couple days.

Speaker, local jobs are taking a hit by their own iGaming policy. I see no real changes in the bill to make iGaming better. OLG's own 2024-25 annual report acknowledged that some online gaming growth has come from customers migrating from land-based casinos. Niagara resorts' first-quarter fiscal 2026 revenue is down 9.3%.

And I'll finish up by telling what's going on because of iGaming in my riding. The brick-and-mortars that were voted on by the residents of Niagara Falls to say they wanted casinos, and why did they want them? They wanted to enhance the tourism; they wanted to enhance jobs.

Well, guess what's happened since you brought in iGaming? One thousand jobs have been lost in Niagara, and across the province 10,000 jobs have been lost. These are good-paying jobs. Some people worked here 20, 25, 30 years; matter of fact, they'll celebrate their 30th anniversary on December 9. We have to make sure we protect good-paying jobs.

The last thing I'll talk about real quick: We've got a flooding issue in Niagara we've got to take care of.

I've got 30 seconds. I want to make sure we talk about GO trains. If you want to bring visitors to Niagara, you've got to have two-way, all-day GO trains, all the way to Niagara Falls.

Thank you very much for your time.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I recognize the member for University–Rosedale.

Ms. Jessica Bell: This afternoon we are debating the fall economic statement. The fall economic statement comes in two parts: There's the spending side, which is essentially a mini-budget, and then there's the actual bill itself which is accompanying it. I'm going to spend most of my time talking about the actual bill, but I want to make a few remarks about the fall economic statement itself before I begin.

If we were government—and my goodness, I hope we are government come next election—we would present a fall economic statement that invests wisely in public infrastructure and services to create good jobs and bring in measures to make life more affordable, like no tax on groceries and real rent relief.

What we got in this fall economic statement was a mega tax cut for big businesses and cuts to the public services we rely on. I went and looked at the different ministries to

see whether we were going to see an improvement in service quality or a cut, and it's pretty alarming.

Health care quality: We're going to see a cut. The government opposite will say, "Well, no, no, the money is going up. There are going to be improvements." But when you factor in inflation and population growth and the fact that we are aging as a country and as a province, it is a cut. It means emergency room wait times will go up. It means there will be less nurses per person, per 100,000 people. It will mean a decline in service quality.

Education: cut; you're not even trying on that one. Post-secondary education: massive cut.

Housing starts: down. And you should be winning on that one, but you're not. Housing starts are down.

But what we see going up is unemployment. We have over 700,000 people in Ontario who are unemployed. People got up this morning and started looking for work.

Your government ran on a promise of economic stability, to have people's backs when it comes to the economy, and you have failed to deliver on that. The government has failed to deliver on that.

What's also gone up is a shocking amount of waste mismanagement, incompetence and scandal. Rarely a week goes by where we come in here and see yet another example of fraud, from the greenbelt to the Skills Development Fund, and now we have this growing OSAP crisis. I know, once the police start investigating, it's going to get really ugly for you guys—the former minister and current minister—because my guess is they knew a lot about this fraud and they chose to look the other way for a little bit too long.

Right now, students are paying the price for that because you've severed access to OSAP for so many students who've done everything right. You're hoping that that little schedule you've put in there to indemnify yourself and protect yourself from the lawsuits is just going to make everything okay. It's not.

What we also see going up is the debt—up and up and up. I listened to the Financial Accountability Officer give a presentation about the long-term budget outlook for this government, and if you think it's bad now, just wait. By 2050, if the government does not take some appropriate measures on revenue and spending, Ontario is on track to be at a level of debt of $1.5 trillion. That is astronomical. Never before have we seen a government that has spent so much and delivered so little.

There are my comments on the fall economic statement itself, and now I want to get to the bill. This is the bill. There are some things in here that are okay, and then there are some things in this bill that are truly, truly terrible. I'll do my best to go through what I can.

There are a few schedules that look at strengthening oversight and enforcement of cannabis regulation. You're not going to see us oppose that; it makes sense. We have seen a proliferation of stores, and some of them are operating in a quasi-legal environment. It makes sense to improve enforcement. That wasn't our issue.

Schedule 1: A-okay. Schedule 2: That's when things started to get ugly, and I, as well as the other MPPs present in the committee, including the Conservative members, would have received dozens of letters from lawyers and affordable housing providers saying, "Stop. Do not pass schedule 2."

The reason why they were concerned about schedule 2 is that schedule 2 essentially makes it more expensive to build and maintain affordable housing. What it does is, it says, "Moving forward, if you are an affordable housing provider, we are no longer going to guarantee you a property tax exemption," which means those organizations that are doing those small miracles, going up against this massive mountain to raise the revenue they need to build that critical affordable housing in your ridings and mine to house people who are currently fleeing domestic violence, being released from a correctional facility, leaving hospital, leaving child welfare, child support agencies and foster care homes—a lot of people who end up homeless, that's where they begin. People who can't afford the rent anymore end up on the streets.

The goal is to end homelessness. The goal is to build more affordable housing. Ideally, we'd have a fall economic statement that would roll out the red carpet for affordable housing providers: loans, easy access to grants, assistance in accessing the federal money that's flowing. Instead, this government said, "No, no, no, no, no. We're going to keep giving out massive handouts to our for-profit developer friends, but when it comes to affordable housing, no, we're going to make things much tougher for you.

I want to thank the many organizations who reached out to us to express concern about this: Kensington Market Community Land Trust, St. Clare's Housing, Habitat for Humanity—multiple groups—the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association, the Chelsea Green Home Society, Homes Unlimited, Indwell Community Homes, London Jewish Community Village—these are providers in your ridings too; supportive housing, affordable housing—St. Angela Non-Profit Housing Corp., London Particular Council, Gather Housing Communities, London Affordable Housing Foundation. We heard from many of them.

1410

In committee, we heard the members opposite say, "No, this is just a temporary pause. Don't worry. Everything is fine." No one believes you. None of these lawyers reached that conclusion.

Now, I will give you credit: The university sector also came and said, "Hey, look, do you want to get rid of our property tax exemption too?" and at the very last minute, you did bring in amendments to level the playing field and make it more consistent for universities, so that they know if they're going to get a property tax exemption or not. It seems like they're going to.

Why do it for the university sector but not for affordable housing providers? What's the logic there? Don't you want to fix homelessness? You have businesses in your riding who are downtown operating. I'm sure they're calling you and saying, "Hey, look, people are no longer coming downtown like they used to, because they have to walk by tents and people who are having a really tough

time with a mental health issue that they can't get help for. Help us." You get those calls. I know you get those calls.

I've been to many of your ridings when I did pre-budget consultations. I heard the testimony. Well, this is the solution to that, and you're making it harder. That hurts, that schedule, and the government members voted to keep it in—really messed up.

Schedule 3: This is classic Conservatives. The Building Ontario Fund used to be the Ontario Infrastructure Bank; now it's called the Building Ontario Fund. This is a fund that provides investments sometimes to companies, universities, public agencies to help them. They gave money to Trent University, the Darlington nuclear plant, the LP transmission line up north and also $1.3 billion to High Art Capital to buy and convert unsold condos, which is a massive, massive giveaway—very interesting there.

What you've done with schedule 3 is that you've said, "I know it would be preferable if the Building Ontario Fund was subject to scrutiny and oversight and accountability with the Legislature, but we don't like that, so we're just going to sever it from that kind of accountability. We're going to hive it off and just keep it secret." They use taxpayer money, but we don't know what they're doing. That's essentially what schedule 3 did. As you can imagine, we voted against it.

Schedule 4 was interesting. I was really torn over this one. Some of it, I liked; some of it, I didn't. Essentially what schedule 4 does is it brings in a beneficial ownership registry so we know who the true human owners are of numbered corporations, so they can be held to account. We can make sure that they're paying their fair share of tax, for instance. The government is moving ahead with it slowly, but in this schedule, you also carved out a big exemption, so there's a whole bunch of companies that no longer have to abide by beneficial ownership. Interesting.

I'm going to move on. Schedule 7 was probably one of the most alarming ones, so I'm going to spend a bit of time here. What Schedule 7 does is: We have an Ontario Financing Authority, which basically manages the government's massive debt—$500 billion in debt, we're nearly there—as well as managing interest payments and so on. Instead of being transparent, the government decided to make it next to impossible—impossible, in fact—to use the freedom-of-information process to find out what the government is doing with its debt and what the debt authority is doing. That is really alarming. Don't we all collectively believe in accountability and responsibility when it comes to using taxpayer money? Can't we agree on that?

My first instinct when I saw this schedule was, "Why is it that when the government has reached the highest debt level in history, they are making the alarming move to shield the authority responsible for managing its debt from public scrutiny?" My first thought was, "What are you trying to hide?" That was my second thought too, actually, and my third.

It wasn't just me who was expressing concerns over this; it was also the Information and Privacy Commissioner, who doesn't have a lot of nice things to say about you guys lately. They wrote a letter to all the MPPs saying, "Please do not keep schedule 7 in Bill 143 because it is important that taxpayers and the public have information about what the government is doing to manage its massive debt"—hopefully not out-of-control debt. "Please get things under control." So that was pretty alarming. The privacy commissioner actually gave a whole summary of the many things you have done to limit the public's access to government documents. She's expressed concerns with all of them, and this is another example of it. I share a lot of her concerns; I think it's pretty alarming.

Schedule 9 is also a really, really messed up schedule. What schedule 9 does is pretty typical of the Conservatives. It's essentially a power grab. It's looking at conservation authorities, and it gives the minister greater control over the boundary that conservation authorities have—each individual one. The minister is allowed to issue directives to conservation authorities, essentially in secret. You used to have to go through the regulatory process, public consultation; you posted it, people could understand what you're doing. Now you've said, "Actually, we're just going to issue directives to conservation authorities, and it's going to be really tough for the public to find out what we're saying."

You've actually made a decision to give yourself the right to ban local elected officials from sitting on local conservation authority boards. I've got to wonder why—pretty alarming. My guess—this is the cynic in me, although there is a track record of you doing this—is that you want to continue to have the situation where, if a developer calls you up and says, "Look, I really want to build there because I bought the land cheap and I want to build some housing there, but it's on a flood plain and the conservation authority keeps saying no because they don't want people to buy a home in an area where their basement is going to be flooded in the next two years"—because that's one of the things that conservation authorities do. And you were like, "Yes, yes; you're right. Let's just take some power away from the conservation authorities and make it so that there's very little oversight so that you can continue to call us and we can do your bidding."

That's what I think schedule 9 is all about. My concern with that is that conservation authorities have a really important job. They make sure our drinking water is clean, and they make sure we're not building in flood plains so that we're protected and aren't suddenly subjected to a massive flood that's going to cost us thousands and thousands of dollars to clean up from—very important.

Those are the bad ones. Then there were a lot of ones that I abstained from. They're not bad; they're not good—housekeeping stuff. You won't see a lot of complaining from me about that.

I want to conclude in my final 20 seconds to say that I think this fall economic statement has all the wrong priorities. You're giving a whole lot to big business with questionable benefit, but when it comes to improving public services, fixing health care, fixing education, getting our debt under control and addressing housing affordability, you've failed.

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

Hon. Mike Harris: Do you know what, Madam Speaker? It is crazy to hear the member from Windsor West, who constantly, constantly stands up in this place and preaches about all these things—all the investments she wants to see—when we're doing those things. We're investing in health care; we're investing in education. But do you know what she does when those bills come before the House, Madam Speaker? She votes against them every single time—every single time. She waxes poetically about how great an NDP government will be and how terrible the Conservatives are, but the very people that she's looking to protect, the Bob Rae government couldn't even pay them.

So the member opposite, my question is to you, through you, Madam Speaker: Will you support this bill, will you support these investments, and why are you constantly standing up against the people of Ontario?

1420

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Response? I recognize the member for Windsor West—through the Chair.

MPP Lisa Gretzky: Through the Chair—thank you, Speaker.

My friend, I'm so glad you want to play this game. I will just remind the member opposite that it was his father who was Premier of a Conservative government that brought in privatized water that killed people in Walkerton. It was his father's government that attacked health care workers and called them obsolete, like hula hoops. It was his father's Conservative government that told starving people on social assistance to just eat peanut butter sandwiches and dented cans of tuna. It was his father, the Conservative Premier, who ushered in the privatization of long-term-care and retirement homes and then sat on the board of one of those long-term-care homes while thousands of people died in those homes during COVID.

I will take no lectures from the member opposite when you follow in your father's footsteps when it comes to poverty—

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

Further questions?

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is for the member from London North Centre. Earlier in his speech, he commented on the state of nursing in Ontario, and he said a nurse is a nurse is a nurse, whereby we acknowledge that nurses in the community or in long-term care or in hospital are all valued people in the health care system.

My question to the member is, given the state of the fall economic statement and the subsequent bill, why do you think this government will not acknowledge that nurse-to-patient staffing ratios are insufficient, hurting nurses and hurting the public at the same time?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank my friend from Waterloo for an excellent question. This government has not instituted nurse-to-patient ratios because they want to try to destroy the publicly funded and publicly delivered system. You see, there are insiders across the aisle who stand to benefit financially from privatized health care, such as Nurse Next Door, so it really is in their best fiduciary interest personally to strangle that system so that one of the only options for care are those hired-gun agency nurses.

You can't blame those nurses for going to that agency because they're paid poorly because of this government and their inaction. Unfortunately, we see that LHSC in London has one of the youngest nursing workforces, and that's because so many people have left. But what has left with that is that experience, that ability to pass on that mentorship, and it's so unfortunate. They've really caused a fight within the health care system.

This government continues to attack nurses—Bill 124 and more.

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

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. You're doing a fine job this afternoon in the chair, but you also do a fine job every time you are in that chair.

This question is for anyone over there beside me to the—well, it's actually to my right. Ontario is in a state of turmoil right now; there's mass destruction on so many fronts. If you thought of a government that actually respected taxpayer dollars, what should be in this fall economic statement?

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you to the member from Beaches–East York for that very lowball question; I really appreciate that.

It's hard to know where to begin. I'm just going to give one example: Fix OSAP—just fix it. Stop with the waste and the mismanagement and the scandal and the incompetence and stop forcing students who have done everything right to pay for your mistakes. Fix your mistakes and restore OSAP.

We didn't get that in this fall economic statement. We got cuts to post-secondary education when we should have seen investment.

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

Hon. Mike Harris: Again, the member for Windsor West thinks this is a game. This isn't a game; this is about the people of Ontario. You'll notice, colleagues, that she didn't answer the question. She didn't answer the question. She wanted to throw personal insults out there, talk about my family, which is fine. I'm very proud of the track record that my father holds in this place and the two back-to-back majority Progressive Conservative governments he had—just like I'm very proud to stand up here and defend the record of our three back-to-back-to-back majority governments, Madam Speaker.

So I'll ask the member again: Why does she consistently stand up in this place, talk about all of these things that she wants to see, but when it's not her idea and when the Progressive Conservative government actually puts these things into place she, every single time, votes against it?

MPP Lisa Gretzky: I'm not even going to dignify most of that with an answer. I feel very passionately about the things—

Hon. Mike Harris: Why not? Are you scared? Tell us why.

MPP Lisa Gretzky: No, I'm not scared. In fact, I will remind you, maybe, since you're so—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Through the Chair.

MPP Lisa Gretzky: —proud of your father's record as the Premier of this province, when the Premier stood and said, during the Ipperwash confrontations, to get those "effing Indians out of the park," that resulted in one of the—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Stop the clock.

We're going to bring the temperature of the debate down. The House will come to order. The language needs to be parliamentary, and you cannot say indirectly what you cannot say directly, so I will ask the member to withdraw.

MPP Lisa Gretzky: Withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I'm going to continue with questions, and we're all going to bring it back to a parliamentary level.

Question?

Mr. Jeff Burch: My question is for my colleague from University–Rosedale, who's done a great job for us as finance critic. We noticed that in this budget, the government has continued the practice of running deficits in hospitals and forcing hospitals to continuously run deficits. Niagara has got a $26-million deficit. Of course, that forces them to lay off front-line staff, as they've done, and to raise fees like hospital parking rates in order to struggle with their deficits.

Why is the government continuing this practice of constant deficit funding for hospitals, and why aren't they doing what most businesses recognize as a good business practice, which is stable, multi-year funding?

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you for that question. In order for us to be treated in medically recommended timelines, we need to have a robust and fully funded public hospital system. What we've seen with this fall economic statement is a continuation of the death by a thousand cuts to our health care system, and that is trickling down to our hospitals.

In my riding, I'm very worried about SickKids. They have a massive deficit. It's going up every year. They have asked the government, as you'd expect—I'm sure this is happening in Niagara as well—for stable and consistent funding so that they can hire and keep good staff, and the government has refused to do that. Why? My guess is that they want to bring in a two-tier health care system: one for those who can pay a lot and one for everybody else. And that is not the way to go.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): A very quick question from the member for Beaches–East York.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: I have schools in my riding that need an investment in education funding to renovate them. Do you have schools in your riding that are desperate for funding?

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you so much to the member from Beaches–East York for that lovely lowball question.

Yes, most schools—especially in downtown Toronto—are over 100 years old, sometimes 120 years old. They are in serious need of repair—no air conditioning. I once took my son to a soccer game that was in the field of a private school. It was on a Saturday. We walked into the building, and he said in that instant—the first thing he said was, "Wow, this place has air conditioning and on a Saturday." He couldn't believe it, because he'd never been in a school with air conditioning before. That's the—

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

Further debate? I recognize the member for Don Valley West.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Woo! Woo! Woo!

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: Thank you, Speaker. Thank you to my lovely colleague from beautiful Beaches–East York.

As always, it's a privilege to rise in the chamber on behalf of the residents of Don Valley West. Today, of course, we're speaking about Bill 143. I would also like to say that I'll be sharing my time with the member from Ajax.

1430

Speaker, what we see here today is a perfect analogy of what I've been talking about around this government's advertising. They claim they are protecting workers, students and patients, but when you look past the press release and the slogans, it is just empty words. They're spending over $100 million in advertising just to convince people that everything is okay, but the people of Ontario know things are not okay, and they're tired of the ads trying to tell them so.

The failing Doug Ford Conservative government is trying to use tariffs that have been in place for a year and a half to justify the six earlier years of missed housing targets, rising debt, infrastructure cost overruns and a deficit that still has not been eliminated despite promises year after year after year.

The government's financial issues started long before the last US election. People in Ontario are tired. They're tired of longer wait times for health care. They're tired of class sizes that have gotten bigger. Seniors are tired of not having enough access to the personal support workers they need. And Ontarians see all this when they pay their rent, go to the grocery store worried about high prices and wait for months for services they really need.

Ontarians deserve an honest plan, one focused on affordability, jobs and the public services that families rely on, and this fall economic statement does not even come close.

The government is once again trying to blame anyone and everyone else for problems of their own making. Every problem is because of US tariffs. Every missed

target, every broken promise; maybe even the private career college scandal—I don't know—is because of US tariffs.

But it's worth reminding people what the Premier did when the current US President won the election: He actually stood up and cheered. He said he was 100% happy with the outcome, and do you know why, Speaker? Because he would have another person to try to blame for all of his failures.

Let's not forget that the government called an early, expensive election, telling people that they would protect Ontario from the US President and US tariffs. They said they needed a new mandate because they were going to spend billions of dollars. Well, the public accounts and this fall economic statement show that that is just not the case. Where is the money almost two years later?

The Ontario Together Trade Fund: $150 million, and less than $5 million has gone out the door to protect communities and workers. The workers who were promised support are still waiting. The businesses that were told help is on the way are still waiting. The communities that depend on manufacturing and the auto sector are still waiting. The people of Ontario were promised protection, and what they got was a lot of advertising.

The Minister of Finance and the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade like to brag, falsely, really, about growth that just isn't there. You just have to look at the numbers, Speaker. In the spring, the government's own numbers told Ontarians the economy would grow by 1% this year. Now, it's cut that to 0.5%—cut it in half.

And real GDP per capita, which is the broadest measure of economic prosperity, is stagnating. In fact, we have to go all the way back to the NDP government of the 1990s to find a time when GDP per capita grew more slowly than it has under this Premier.

What is the Premier's answer? He brought 15 projects to the Canada Investment Summit, put together by the federal government, and only one of them made the short list.

It's a shame that we are having to bear the cost of the expensive ads of over $100 million. We'll find out again soon what the next wasted millions have been on those ads. Yet we're not getting the results that we need. Things are getting worse.

I think instead of chasing fantasy projects like a tunnel under the 401, the Premier should maybe sit down with the Prime Minister and have a frank conversation about what projects would actually be nation-building projects that could get built. Maybe it's a 400-series highway in the north to connect Ontario to the rest of Canada. Maybe it would be things that would help actually remove interprovincial trade barriers, instead of just signing MOUs.

The Premier loves to stand at a podium and say he's bringing billions of dollars in investment to Ontario, but the reality is different, Speaker. Private business investment has been falling as a share of our economy. Today, it is lower than it was in 2019, before the pandemic, before tariffs, before any of the other convenient excuses this government tries to rely on.

It's not only investment that is falling. According to Statistics Canada, Ontario is losing small businesses. Almost 4,300 of them closed so far in 2026 alone. These are the family restaurants, hardware stores, local shops on main streets that help make our communities vibrant. In 2019, small businesses employed two thirds of Ontario's private sector workforce. Today, it's below 60%. That is the lowest in three decades.

This government, which likes to brag about how it's helping small businesses, has failed small businesses. More of them are closing than are opening. Less than 60% of private sector employment is coming from small businesses in this province, Speaker. It is a travesty, and this government needs to wake up and admit that their plan is not working.

The government talks about workers, but their own forecast shows 16,000 fewer jobs in 2026 and 2027. The labour market is actually weaker than this government predicted just a few short months ago. And workers are paying the price. Nearly 650,000 Ontarians are unemployed. Almost 200,000 of them are young people—people who went to school, maybe got a trade, and now cannot find a job.

We're not technically in a recession, but we are seeing recession levels of unemployment. We're seeing recession levels of financial stress in households, including mortgage delinquencies at levels that were not last seen since the financial crisis. And, of course, we're seeing record numbers of people using food banks here in Ontario.

Families in this province are doing their part. They're working hard. They're working multiple shifts. I met with a PSW recently who told me, "I often work two shifts a day. Right now, some days I'm taking on three to help my son pay for his school expenses." These are the kind of things that people in Ontario are facing because of this government's bad choices and misplaced priorities.

The numbers confirm the hardships that I'm talking about here, the people who I met in the last few months. Since the beginning of the year, wage growth in Ontario has been below the national average. Again, things are not all rosy. I'm a big fan of the band Blue Rodeo. You know their song Hasn't Hit Me Yet is getting lots of attention these days because it talks about Lake Ontario and everybody stands up and cheers when they sing "Lake Ontario." But there's another song, "she sees the world through rose-coloured glasses." This government is trying to make us see the world through their rose-coloured glasses, and it's not working.

People are suffering. Ontario wages increased just 1.5% in Q3, the slowest in a decade, and that was less than, of course, inflation: 2.3%. People are saying they're feeling like they're falling further behind. Well, they are.

We talk a lot here about the cost of living and groceries, things like fruit and vegetables, meat. Prices are going up almost three times faster than wages. Of course, that makes up a large portion of what people spend their monthly budgets on, about one third of their budget. So

when those things go up, they feel it. When their wages are not keeping up, they feel it even more.

I do wonder, where is the plan from this government to help those people, to help workers who are struggling, families who are finding it hard to put food on the table? Where is the government in actually creating jobs?

I'll come back to the Ontario Together Trade Fund: $150 million. We found out from the public accounts that only $4.84 million has left the building, Speaker.

1440

We have towns across this province, cities across this province struggling because of US tariffs—$5 million, less than $5 million. What did the election cost us? Does anyone know? I forget. It's over $100 million, right?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's $360 million.

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: It's 360 million? Thank you to the member from Waterloo for that help. It's $360 million, Speaker. They've spent less than that.

That's actually really interesting: $360 million on an election. You know how much money they've sent out the door? About $145 million, $140 million from the Protect Ontario Account. I mentioned before that I asked that to the finance minister at the review of this bill. I heard from his deputy that $140 million has gone out the door from the Protect Ontario Account. They promised $5 billion. Even the $1 billion they promised in the first release of that money—$140 million, less than the cost of the election. That's kind of hard to believe.

I want to come back to some more stats that just show how tough things are. Seven southern Ontario metropolitan areas are on the list of Canada's top 10 cities where the cost-of-living crisis is most severe. Oshawa, Windsor and Hamilton top the list, and in those communities, almost 40% of households say they are facing difficulty meeting their financial needs.

But even here in Toronto, in St. Catharines, in Niagara, one third of households are struggling, according to Statistics Canada. And again, we saw no new relief for those families in the fall economic statement because this government can't afford it. Do you know why? Because they've been wasting money on the wrong things.

They say that they can balance the budget, but they've been spending money on things like a billion dollars to get alcohol in corner stores a year early—a billion dollars, Speaker. They're building a spa in Ontario Place, a parking lot for the spa. They're building a science centre, but guess what? They fired all the scientists. They laid them all off recently. Where is the science in the science centre if you don't have any scientists on staff? These are the kinds of decisions this government is making, Speaker.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Get out the experts.

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: Yes.

Again, they talk about the path to balance, and this government, once again, says that they have a plan to balance, but now by 2030. It was originally going to be 2024. Here we are in 2026, and we haven't made it yet—but 2030, they promise. It's like a pinky promise, though, with this government, because it's actually built on unrealistic assumptions. Independent offices like the Financial Accountability Office are highlighting that, Speaker. That's their job. Their job is to just tell it like it is. They don't use adjectives; they just use the facts, and they tell it like it is.

They're basically saying that that plan is not realistic, that the government would have to cut $10 billion or raise revenue of $10 billion next year to make sure that they could actually reach their goal of balancing the budget by 2030. Again, the government is not talking about or telling us that they're going to cut services. Are they going to do it and let us find out later? We don't know. Are they going to raise taxes? They say they won't, but who knows? This is the mess they're in, Speaker, because they've been wasting so much money.

The government has actually—you know, they talk about how they're making record investments. Again, it's just empty words. They're going to reduce program spending from 17.7% of GDP to 16.1% by 2030. Those are things we will all feel, Speaker. Every family in this province might have, again, one fewer education worker in their schools or fewer nurses in their hospitals. We know that they're laying off nurses right now, in times when we see wait times rising. We see ERs struggling to meet the demand of people who don't have a family doctor. Over two million people in this province don't have a family doctor. So it's going to be very hard for them to improve those services when they're actually going to spend less money on them. And so when they tell Ontarians that they're going to balance the books, they're just not telling the whole story.

And they know, Speaker, they have a credibility problem. It is becoming apparent. It's not just me saying it. The finance minister actually said in his fall economic statement that he's committed to eliminating the province's "structural deficit." That's an interesting word. He doesn't use that language very often—the last time, I think, was 2024. And that's basically to describe the persistent gap between what the government collects and what it spends. So he's actually admitting they are collecting much less than they spend and it's a structural problem—a structural problem in the economy and, of course, in how they're managing it. So now that they're—they're kind of naming the problem, and now they say they're going to fix it? They've got no credibility on that.

The FAO released its long-term budget outlook yesterday, and because, of course, we've got the private career college scandal and we've got all these other things going on, maybe it doesn't make the headlines that it really deserves. Again, if we follow the money and rely on what the FAO is telling us—because they are independent, and they don't have a horse in this race, as they say. The FAO says that Ontario's debt will grow to $1.5 trillion in the next 25 years. That's the trajectory this government has put us on. We're going to get to half a trillion very soon. And at $1.5 trillion, that will push the debt to 47% of GDP. That's pretty incredible. It's pretty scary. People I talk to are scared. They're worried about their kids. They're saying, "This is a financial burden that my children and my grandchildren will have to bear."

The government has a target: They want to keep that number below 40%. Their numbers say they'll keep it under 40% by 2030 because they're magically going to balance the budget. But again, the FAO says no, that's just not realistic. Without that $10.1 billion next year—whether in cuts to spending or raising revenue—the government's plan to balance by 2030 is just pure fantasy.

Speaker, the Premier likes to say he's good at managing the economy, I guess because he ran his father's business for a little while—I'm not sure if that gives him the track record to do that—but his record says otherwise. He is set to exceed all three of his own debt targets. He and the finance minister—the whole government needs to take account for that.

Of course, I've mentioned this before, but the finance minister used to work at a credit rating agency. And he is making light of the fact that S&P, one of those credit rating agencies, warned that the Conservative government's fiscal path could trigger a downgrade of Ontario's AA credit rating. That will, of course, drive borrowing costs higher. That means bondholders get more while workers and families get less.

Speaker, on the path that this government is on, interest costs will double by 2051 and eat up more than 12 cents of every dollar of revenue the government collects, compared to six cents now. Every dollar spent on that is a dollar that isn't spent in a classroom or in a hospital or building something else that we really actually need, like affordable housing. I'll come to that again later.

The Conservative government needs a real plan. They actually need a real plan to clean up the fiscal mess they've created, especially while they waste over $100 million on ads telling people they're protecting Ontario.

That is where eight years of this government's bad choices have led us—eight years of waste, of cost overruns, of spending on pet projects while core services fall behind; eight years of advertising instead of eight years of results.

The people of Ontario want transparency from their government on where the province's finances stand, and the government has not given them that. It has given them unrealistic assumptions, rising debt, growing interest costs and a credit outlook headed in the wrong direction.

I want to come back to health care. The government talks about how they're spending more on that sector than any government before. Well, you've heard me say it: Never has a government spent so much to deliver so little. And this is a perfect example: They talk about hiring more nurses, yet the Ontario Nurses' Association has tracked over 1,900 nursing and health care position cuts since January 2025.

1450

A constituent reached out to me recently and said this: "These cuts mean fewer nurses to meet growing patient needs, resulting in longer wait times, compromised care and increased risks to patients.

"Cutting registered nurses undermines patient safety, fuels workplace violence, lengthens wait times and leaves our public health care system unprepared for predictable pressures, including flu season. The erosion of RN care increases the risk of complications and failure to rescue, when a patient's deteriorating condition is not recognized or acted upon in time. ... This is unacceptable." Speaker, I couldn't say it better myself.

Let's talk about projects. The Ontario Line—and of course, we absolutely believe in public transit. We need public transit not just here in Toronto but across the province. It was promoted as a more affordable transit solution, but now we learned the estimated project cost has roughly tripled from its earliest projections. I don't think you can blame all of that on US tariffs, you know? Yes, I understand that projects—there's change and sometimes things happen, but the scale of that kind of increase is difficult to ignore.

It's kind of like the Ottawa Hospital. That jumped from—what was it, $10 billion to $28 billion? Something like that, I think—no, I'm going to get that wrong. Someone help me out here—$2 billion to $10 billion, yes—$2.8 billion to $10 billion. Maybe the government side could help me out. It jumped from $2.8 billion to $10 billion, so not quite four times higher, Speaker. What is going on? Who's in charge? Where's the shop floor manager here, right? Yes, no one is in charge. It's really hard to claim to be good fiscal stewards when you've got costs that balloon by two, three, almost four times the initial estimate.

Speaker, I also want to talk about something else that caught my eye in the fall economic statement. The government uses the word "fraud" a number of times in this fall economic statement, and I think we know why now: It's because of all this OSAP, private career college stuff. They've known about it for a long time, and they've just recently, finally, taken action.

This is what the document says: "Efforts are focused on strengthening oversight, accountability and program integrity," making sure "resources are directed to priority outcomes for people in Ontario. This includes strengthening payment integrity, reducing fraud, error, waste and abuse, and reviewing key provincial agencies." Speaker, they have a lot of work to do to claim any credibility on that. They have sent hundreds of millions of dollars of taxpayer money out the door to fraudsters, and we will probably never get that money back.

I also want to talk about the latest misguided priority: casinos. Why do we need more casinos in Niagara? The people I see in casinos are mostly older people. I was there once a number of months ago, walked through one for an annual meeting of—I think it was the egg farmers, and the casino was empty, Speaker. So now, even their own government members—we don't know who, but they're talking, because they all know this is a really bad idea, to build more casinos. The people using casinos, sadly, are getting older, and we know what happens when you get older, Speaker: Eventually, it's time to say adios.

We know that gambling online has created huge troubles for young men in particular, and of course, our caucus has been talking about that; the official opposition has been as well. We all know this is a problem. The government side knows. In fact, the Premier even admitted

himself recently that oh yeah, these online gambling ads have gotten "out of control." Speaker, it's under his control. He's the one out of control. They're the government out of control. They need to bring this back into control.

I do not see how building more casinos anywhere in this province is going to help the people of Ontario. I would really love to hear from the government side about why they think building more casinos is the right answer for the people of Ontario.

Let's actually spend money on the things we need, Speaker: teachers in classrooms, nurses in hospitals, schools that actually don't have roofs caving in—what's in your riding?

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Secord public school.

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: Secord public school that is in desperate need of repair has been on the top list—I think it's the top school in the province to get repaired, and yet this government chose to repair schools in Conservative MPP ridings. I think that's a problem, Speaker.

Then, let's talk about non-profit housing, and I'll leave it there, Speaker; I'll wrap up in a couple of minutes.

We've got in this bill an appendix that basically makes affordable housing less affordable—interesting, Speaker. It's so dire that 24 non-profits from my hometown of London, Ontario, came together to say that this change in this bill jeopardizes their ability to follow through on projects that are "planned, financed and budgeted on the understanding that they would not be subject to taxation." I really don't understand this one. This is one that really, frankly, puzzles me. I know we often agree on principles and things and priorities, but this is one that I'm really struggling to understand. Why would they put an additional tax burden on not-for-profits who are building affordable housing across our province? We all know we need more housing. We know that this government is building housing at a rate—other provinces are building housing at a rate of one and a half to two times higher than we are in this province. The Bank of Canada's interest rate is the same everywhere—it's failure of policy, and this is another failed policy that will hurt the number of houses getting built.

Speaker, I will wrap up here. I want to, again, just talk about the fiscal situation here in Ontario. The government called an early election, saying it was going to spend billions of dollars to protect Ontario. Almost two years later, less than $150 million has reached workers and communities. Meanwhile, the economy is falling behind. The growth forecast is cut in half. GDP per capita is stagnating. Business investment is lower than it was in 2019. Thousands of small businesses are closing. Nearly 650,000 people in Ontario are out of work, including almost 200,000 young people. That is not a record of success; that is a record of failure.

This fall economic statement, Bill 143, is making their failure worse. Ontarians know it; we know it. We will continue to work to hold this government to account because their failures mean the people of Ontario are suffering, and we need to make sure that the government is awakened to the fact that their plan is not working. They need a new plan, and this bill is not it.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I recognize the member for Ajax.

Mr. Rob Cerjanec: Good afternoon, folks. What a day. The Detroit Lions are playing. The Buffalo Bills will be playing later today. I know folks in our border cities, I'm sure, will be watching what their favourite teams are. I think it does go to show that, hopefully, once we get through this trade situation with the United States, people will be able to come back together again, and that would be something that would be fantastic.

I'm rising to speak to Bill 143, the Plan to Protect Ontario Act. I'll note that the title of the act, I think, was a copy-and-paste from last year. I think we're doing that now a couple of times, copy-and-pasting the name of the act. I guess we're still in this "Protect Ontario" phase. It's interesting, right, because this was the slogan during the election campaign of the PC Party and now it's the slogan of the government of Ontario as well. I think that definitely crosses some lines, Speaker, but here we are.

This government has spent a lot of time talking about protecting Ontario. We've seen the announcements. We've seen the press conferences. We've seen the signs all throughout the province and, of course, Speaker, the advertising. But after eight years of this government, I think Ontarians deserve a very simple answer to the very simple question, who exactly is this government protecting? Is it the family struggling to put groceries on the table? Folks are making decisions at grocery stores, putting items back because life is getting harder. Is it the student trying to afford rent while pursuing an education with now minimal assistance from OSAP? I don't think that student is being protected, Speaker. Is it the senior worried about rising property taxes?

For folks in Ajax and Durham region, the thing that I hear the most at the door is property taxes. I'd like to congratulate our regional council for holding their inaugural meeting very recently. In Chair Ashe's remarks, he spoke about what they all heard at the doors in Durham region during this last municipal election, which was that property taxes are too high. They are putting hard-working folks, folks that are living in multi-generational households, at a disadvantage because we've seen provincial downloading on municipalities.

1500

In Durham region, we've got two proposed housing projects, one in Ajax and one in Oshawa—supportive housing to deal with the issue of homelessness—and they don't have operating funding from the province. What that means is those projects won't be moving ahead any time soon. We know the federal government stepped up in there, offering about $50 million or so that would be eligible for these projects. The region has stepped up with $8 million in capital, but in order for those projects to move forward, they need operating funding from the province.

So we see municipalities stepping up, we see the federal government stepping up, but we continue to see the provincial government stepping back. What that will ultimately mean is higher property taxes for folks because municipal governments have got to balance the budget. They're struggling under the services that they are required to provide by this province without nearly enough help to do so.

Is the young person who has applied for dozens of jobs and who still can't find employment being protected? I don't think so. We've got an incredibly high youth unemployment rate—I believe the highest in the country. It's why we've offered solutions, as Ontario Liberals, to create a youth jobs program and to urge action by this majority government on giving youth not just the opportunity to succeed but the choice to build a better future for themselves. But there needs to actually be able to be a choice there to do it, because right now the choice is unemployment, because they're not finding those job opportunities, Speaker.

Who exactly is the government protecting? I think they're protecting themselves in some ways. We see it with legislation that comes forward, protecting itself from lawsuits from people who, undoubtedly, they know will be suing the government on it. So let's make sure that we put that in the legislation, Speaker.

I find it particularly troubling that we see this government spending hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars, saying, "We're protecting Ontario." Let's think about that for a moment. Folks are struggling to make ends meet. Their own tax dollars are being used to tell them how well things are supposedly going. It's like we're in Roman times and Caesar—they're putting on a show at the Colosseum—"a show;" we really mean people fighting to the death with lions, Speaker. But I guess that's entertainment to distract folks from the real things that are going on in their lives.

Taxpayers shouldn't have to see or pay for advertisements telling them that they're being protected. They should be able to see and feel that in their everyday lives. And frankly, Speaker, they're not. They should see it when they visit an emergency room or a hospital, when they have to wait to see a doctor or months to get an MRI.

They should see it when their children go to school. Right now, we've got large class sizes. We've got a government openly fighting with teachers, almost trying to dare them in some ways, when we've seen our education unions, very early on, ask the government to come to the table, ask the government to negotiate a deal in good faith.

And they're doing that, frankly, not for themselves but for their students, because students aren't getting the support that they need in the classroom. Students with special needs aren't getting the support. Teachers are feeling left behind by this government, and school boards are trying to do more with less, which—there's only so much juice you can squeeze from an orange.

Folks should see it when they board a GO train to get to work. But that's not what we're hearing from people across Ontario.

I've had the privilege, over the last year and a half, to be able to travel this wonderful province and hear from folks in their own communities, in ridings represented by all the parties in the Legislature. What I hear on the ground is very different than some of the spin and the, really, government-by-communications exercise that we see that takes place right now.

The government has been very good at announcing things. They're extremely good at announcing things. They're good at re-announcing things, Speaker, but not nearly as good at delivering them. I think back to the last time we were in session, earlier this year. I went through the facts and the data around prisons—for example, provincial jails—that needed to get built, and what I saw was that a project in Thunder Bay that was originally announced by the previous Liberal government got re-announced by the government, then got re-announced again before even moving to construction. That's just one example, I think, of so many.

My colleague the member from Don Valley West was talking about, "Why are we seeing the costs of projects go up so much?" Well, because the government is extremely slow at moving those projects forward. So the announcements get really great headlines. It gives the public—the people—the perception that things are getting done, but in reality, they're actually not getting done. Then we see more announcements, and you wonder why my colleague from Oshawa, last week during question period, was talking about the capital plan for hospitals by the government, and asking how on earth is the government going to get all of those hospitals built for the amount of money that they've committed to it.

As we've seen with the Ottawa Hospital, of course—the project cost quadrupling. And who's going to have to be on the hook for that? Well, the municipality has got to raise its local share. But the deal was, at the beginning, that the project was going to be under $3 billion. Well, now what's the deal? How much more are taxpayers in Ottawa, how much more is the community going to have to fundraise, for example, to do that?

That's why I was calling on the government to move forward the Whitby hospital to the next stage, so the community can do the fundraising that they need, because they know it's going to take time. So the more time that community has to be able to fundraise, I think, would be a very good thing.

Now let's look at the government's own numbers. Provincial spending has reached a record $247.3 billion. My colleague from Don Valley West says it so extremely well that I know others in this chamber have started to borrow that language as well: "Never has a government spent so much to deliver so little."

The projected deficit has grown to $16.9 billion, about $3.1 billion worse than projected in the budget. Just over a year ago, though, the government projected a deficit of just $7.8 billion for this year. So now, it's more than double that. Every year, we see these projections not really in line with reality. It feels as though the government is just kicking that can down the road. And once again,

we've seen the government push back its timeline for balancing the budget, this time to 2029-30.

When I looked back to see over the last eight years or so of this government, I think there was one surplus—a very narrow surplus, but one surplus. And every year we hear, "Oh, there's going to be a path back to balance. There's going to be a path back to balance." It's almost as if you say it enough times, it will become true. But we know eventually you can't hide the numbers at the end of the day, and we always know we have the trusty FAO to help us understand the numbers in a very non-partisan way.

Now, Speaker, I know the government will undoubtedly point to President Trump's tariffs and the uncertainty facing the global economy. And look, no one's denying the very serious challenges that we have as a province and that we have as a country, but what we see a lot of the time, is we see the federal government stepping up and we see the province waiting for the federal government to step up and do something.

In Sault Ste. Marie, for example, there was a recent announcement to invest in a port in Sault Ste. Marie, something that, when I visited there almost over a year ago now, I had called for, as local leaders were calling for. I think everyone agreed that that would be something really important for their economy there, to help move goods and help support the manufacturing that is taking place there. There's a great supplier, Tenaris, that uses steel from Algoma Steel, and they do fantastic work over there. But this announcement about the port was $250 million in provincial and federal support.

But now, let's look at the details, Speaker. The federal contribution was a grant. The provincial contribution is a non-repayable loan. So I'm glad that the province did come to the table at least with something, with some financing—absolutely, Speaker. But once again, we see the federal government stepping up, the federal government doing a lot more than what the provincial government really should be doing.

1510

There's a difference, though, between some of the economic pressures that are coming from Washington and the fiscal decisions that are being made right here at Queen's Park. The trade war doesn't absolve the government of its responsibility for how it manages taxpayer dollars. Every dollar that this government borrows comes with a cost. Every dollar spent serving the provincial debt is a dollar that can't be invested elsewhere without additional borrowing or revenue. And now look: Ontario is facing concerns about its credit rating outlook. S&P Global has revised our outlook from stable to negative, and I think that's a very loud warning sign to the government. We know that a downgrade could mean higher borrowing costs for taxpayers in our province.

Being fiscally responsible doesn't mean refusing to invest—we need investments in health care, education, housing, transit and infrastructure—but it means investing wisely, managing projects effectively and delivering what was promised, because, right now, there are serious reasons to question whether this government is meeting those very basic responsibilities. This government doesn't have a problem spending money; it has a problem managing the money that it spends.

Now, Speaker, I want to spend some time discussing one of the more concerning provisions in the legislation. I sit on the finance committee, and we were debating this earlier in the week. I proposed amendments around a property tax exemption for affordable not-for-profit housing providers. We're in a time when we have an affordability crisis in our province, and the changes that the government has made in this bill—they voted down those amendments at committee after we heard from dozens—dozens—of affordable not-for-profit housing developers, very, very reputable organizations like Indwell, that does fantastic work across the western part of the GTA and beyond into rural areas as well, St. Clare's Housing, Habitat for Humanity, organizations representing ridings all across our province coming forward with alarm, coming forward with concern. In my very short time here, I have never seen that many organizations come forward and raise concerns so quickly, saying it is going to harm their long-term ability to finance projects. A property tax exemption for an affordable housing developer can mean the difference between being able to move forward with that project or not.

Now, the government says they're introducing a pause because they need to consult, but they missed one aspect of consulting. They didn't consult the sector that is impacted the most by those changes: organizations that are really great developers that have projects already in the pipeline, that have financial assumptions, that are waiting on lending, waiting to go to the next stage. They didn't consult those organizations; they said, "We're going to make the change, then we're going to consult afterwards."

What the government could have done is adopt the amendment to strike that from the bill, go out and consult, make sure you've got the people who know best how to build affordable housing in this province. Consult with them, consult with the municipalities and then come forward with changes in the budget or changes in whatever other piece of omnibus legislation that the government is going to bring forward—because God knows there's going to be more omnibus legislation from this government. That's what they could have done. That's what they should have done. Unfortunately, what it very well could mean is these affordable housing organizations are going to struggle to get new projects. It's going to put a chill on building affordable housing.

When I talk about affordable housing, I'm not talking about rent-geared-to-income, that social housing that folks think; I'm talking about workforce housing. I'm talking about folks who are working as janitors or secretaries in our schools. I'm talking about folks who might be driving a bus. I'm talking about folks who are just trying to do everything they can to get by and provide a brighter future for their family. Those are the people who are being served by these affordable housing organizations.

We need to encourage a more entrepreneurial not-for-profit housing sector in our province, Speaker. We need to

do that. This change does the exact opposite, and it breaks trust with those very organizations. I hope the Minister of Finance will make this right and fix it because I think it's going to be a really big problem.

I have an article from CBC in London about this, "'Punch in the Gut': Affordable Housing Organizations Stand to Lose Key Tax Exemption." These are 24 London non-profits coming forward with their concerns: the Vincent de Paul society, London Affordable Housing Foundation, First Nations Housing Co-op and so many other organizations. But the government put up—it seems as though, right now—another barrier here. Folks like Habitat for Humanity, all of the Ontario chapters, touching most of the ridings in the province—I didn't use my notes for this section; I've got to flip through it.

I used to work in this sector. I've done some really good work with folks in the sector. These are folks who work in affordable housing because they care, because they care about the future of their communities, because they know, and the people who partner with them know as well, that they are providing homes for folks who need housing.

We talk about the homelessness crisis in the province. When I was upstairs in my office, I heard my friend, my colleague from Niagara Falls talk about how when he had gotten here to the Legislature, you didn't hear about encampments. You didn't hear about some of the homelessness challenges that now we're seeing in this province. Over the last eight years, holy smokes, it's gotten a lot worse, Speaker.

If we want to prevent people from falling into homelessness, you need to have affordable housing. You need to have it across the housing spectrum. But in this area in particular, that could be the difference between somebody who is working a job, who is working, who is trying to contribute to society, who is trying to contribute and support their family, falling into homelessness and having to live in a shelter, live out of their car or couch-surf, because we know that takes place in the province as well. That's the hidden homelessness, so to say, that we see. So, removing the property tax exemption and not doing its due diligence in consulting with the sector is an absolute failure.

We see the federal government stepping up. Build Canada Homes is stepping up, the newish federal agency that is set up to support and help facilitate the construction of affordable housing, supportive housing and all types of housing in the country, relying on partnerships, looking at what is the deepest level of affordability that we can provide. The federal government is stepping up, but we see the province stepping back and stepping away from this. I think that's extremely unfortunate.

In schedule 7 of this bill, it amends the Capital Investment Plan Act so that the CEO of the Ontario Financing Authority can exempt any records that are under their control going as far back as January 1, 2025, from disclosure under freedom of information. I do wonder why they selected that date, January 1, 2025. What's happened from January 1, 2025, to now that would require going back until then? I think that's a very valid question.

For those folks that don't know, the OFA is a crown agency responsible for managing Ontario's borrowing, investments and financial risks.

Now, when asked at a technical briefing about what kinds of records need to be kept confidential, the OFA officials cited, amongst other things, transaction level information, records of negotiations, internal strategies, proprietary information, material non-public information and counterparty exposures. When asked about the rationale for confidentiality, officials cited a chilling effect on negotiations if certain information was not kept confidential.

The next question is, why is this change needed now? We asked that question, given that the province of Ontario for decades has been accessing capital markets and managing cash flow through debt issuance and repurchases, interest rate and currency derivates or money market operations. Officials weren't able to give an answer to that question. My colleague the member from Kingston and the Islands asked this during question period, and the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance, I think, was talking about procurement, which had nothing to do with the Ontario Financing Authority. So I really hope to get some answers as to why this change is needed. And hopefully, maybe during debate later or maybe ask some questions, the government will be able to provide some answers around it.

1520

Here are some hypotheticals, then, I guess, in this situation, of where this maybe could go, developed by somebody who has worked in this area: Is the market pushing Ontario to issue shorter maturity bonds? Is something pushing underwriters or derivative counterparties to ask for extra basis points? Has there been a recent increase in the concentration of counterparty risk? Or is it just part of the overall trend to more secrecy by this government? We don't really have any answers on that. I hope we'll be able to get some answers on that.

We know this government has faced serious questions about how it manages public money. We've seen concerns about procurement, infrastructure costs, and the oversight of major government programs. At a time when financial transparency, I would argue, is more important than ever, the government wants to make certain records harder to access.

Speaker, if anybody wants an example of why financial oversight matters, well, we need to look at what has happened with OSAP. The government has presided over a billion-dollar scandal involving student financial assistance and private career colleges, and the most troubling part is that the government was warned not once, not twice, but at least three times. Career Colleges Ontario raised concerns about suspicious OSAP activity. We didn't see the government act with the urgency these warnings demanded. We saw OSAP grants to private career college students increase dramatically, from about $554 million to almost $1 billion in a single year. I think we're at a billion-dollar OSAP scandal now—money that went out the door that shouldn't have gone out the door,

which is contributing to the deficit and also the debt that we have in this province.

By the way, for folks at home, you're paying interest now on that wasted money; so you're paying now, in the long term, and our kids and our nieces and nephews and folks who haven't even been born yet are going to be paying for this OSAP scandal now for years to come. That's what happens when money isn't managed well, when the checks and balances aren't in place, or maybe if somebody looks the other way or is told to look the other way. We don't really have answers to that yet, but I'm sure we'll find out one day; it just might take a little bit more time for us to get there. Students are paying the price, and some of those folks might need to access the affordable housing, which I was mentioning earlier, later on. So the government is making it harder for folks in this province.

We see similar problems in education. The government talks about improving accountability in our schools. But what are students, parents and educators actually experiencing? School boards are facing significant financial pressures. Special education programs are struggling to meet growing demand. Teachers and education workers are raising concerns about classroom conditions, staffing and student supports. And families are increasingly worried about whether their children are receiving the education that they deserve.

This bill does make further changes to how education property taxes are collected. I did say at committee that in some ways it kind of formalizes what the government has been doing for a long time. It might be a little bit more symbolic than anything. The education property tax goes directly to the Minister of Finance. I think it's probably a bit more symbolic, at the end of the day. It doesn't fix the issues that we're seeing in public education.

I also would just note that we're going to have a very real problem soon with educational development charge deficits that school boards have. In fact, at many school boards we already have this problem, and I'm urging the government to think about that piece and provide some relief for those school boards, number one, and a more robust model and way in order to purchase the land that's necessary for new schools to be built in areas where there is growth.

Speaker, I want to turn to our economy now, because protecting Ontario shouldn't mean simply reacting to the latest crisis. The fall economic statement is an opportunity for the government to reassess where our economy is heading, whether its policies are delivering results and what more needs to be done. And given that economic uncertainty that we're facing, I'd hoped to see a more ambitious strategy to grow Ontario's economy from within.

I do agree that we have enormous economic potential in this province. We've got world-class universities. We've got researchers, entrepreneurs and innovative businesses. We've got leading institutions like the U of T, Waterloo and so many of our other public universities in this province. We've got talent in advanced manufacturing, in AI, in life sciences, in clean tech and emerging industries. But having that talent isn't enough. We've got to create the conditions for that talent to succeed here.

I'm just going to pull up some stats—if I can find them—around what the impacts are that we're seeing in this area. There we are: There are currently more than 500 US technology companies with a Canadian founder, worth a combined US$414 billion; it's about C$590 billion. Half of those were founded in the last three years—so, more than 500 US tech companies, Speaker, with a Canadian founder, worth a combined almost C$600 billion, that have been founded in the last three years. Since 2024, US visas for Canadians have increased by 142%. We're seeing a brain drain of some of our best and brightest in this province.

There's a lot of work to do if we're going to change that around, because those are companies in the United States, that are contributing taxes to the United States, that are employing folks in the United States and not here because our policies—and this is both the provincial and the federal level—are not set up in a way for those companies to have the incentive to stay here. The funding rounds—there's more money abroad than here, so we're losing some of those fantastic companies that are being built that can create new wealth and opportunity for our province. Speaker, that's what we're leaving on the table right now.

Now, the Financial Accountability Office released its long-term economic and fiscal outlook today. Over the next 25 years, our labour force is projected just to grow by 0.8% annually. Labour force participation is projected to decline from 65% to 62.5%. We've got an aging population, slower labour force growth and increasing demand for public services. Knowing those challenges are ahead of us, Speaker, I would have liked to see a much greater emphasis on productivity, innovation and business investment in the fall economic statement. It's a serious question on how are we going to prepare Ontario for those demographic and economic changes.

In Durham region, and I mentioned it a little bit earlier, around health care and some of the health care challenges, outside of the number one issue that I hear in my riding—it's property tax—I would say the number two issue that comes forward, depending on the day, is either health care or the GO train. A lot of the time it is health care, and people are concerned about health care in my community. That's why the proposed new Whitby hospital is going to be so important for us in Durham region and, as well, the Pickering post-acute care centre. It's going to help reduce the pressure on the Ajax Pickering Hospital in my community, and I really do hope that the Minister of Health, on her desk, moves that forward to the next stage.

I'll just leave this: Protecting Ontario should be more than a slogan. It requires responsible financial management, transparency and accountability, things that we really haven't been seeing, at least in my time here in this House, Speaker, and I look forward to the questions. Ontarians deserve better.

1530

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

Mr. Lorne Coe: Speaker, you'll know from your time as the MPP in Oshawa that in the region of Durham and

other parts of Ontario, steel and automotive sectors are facing some of the greatest challenges in decades. Rather than abandoning these industries, our government has secured an $8.7-billion partnership with the federal government to protect jobs, modernize facilities and strengthen our industrial base.

Will the member from Ajax support these investments, or would he like to explain to the steelworkers at Gerdau in Whitby and the auto workers in your riding in Oshawa and Lear in Whitby why their jobs are not worth protecting?

Mr. Rob Cerjanec: I do hope the member for Whitby voted for the former and current member of Parliament for Whitby, Ryan Turnbull, because it's the federal government that has been leading on that. So I do hope in the last federal election that the member for Whitby did vote for Ryan Turnbull because Ryan Turnbull has delivered so much for the community in Whitby and has delivered so much for folks in Durham region.

I support MP Turnbull's efforts to lead as the parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Finance, and that Ontario has been following what the federal government has been doing. I do think it's great that the province and the federal government are working together, but let's be very clear here, Speaker: It's the federal government that's leading on these issues, not the province of Ontario.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: The cost of living is becoming more expensive. Nearly one in four Canadians are spending at least half of their take-home income on housing. Half of Canadians say they're not confident that they could find another suitable, affordable home in their own community if they had to move.

What this government does is they cancel rent controls on new builds after 2018. They've also made it financially harder for not-for-profits in my community, like Saint Vincent de Paul and Indwell, to keep people housed and provide affordable units.

I'd like if the member could discuss where in the government's financial economic statement it provides funding to keep vulnerable people housed.

Mr. Rob Cerjanec: I think I'm going to need a magnifying glass because I don't think I've been able to see it in the fall economic statement.

I had mentioned earlier in my remarks, in Durham region, there are two supportive housing projects that the region has put forward that do not have operating funding commitment from the province. Without any commitment from the province, those projects aren't going to be moving ahead. I don't think that's protecting Ontario.

We just saw the actions around the property tax exemption for affordable housing providers, temporarily removing it for 2027 for projects that haven't received that sign-off and approval, which dozens of organizations, like Indwell that the member mentioned, called for this government to remove from the bill. Unfortunately, they didn't. I look forward to seeing what the government is going to do to fix that.

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

Hon. Mike Harris: I actually enjoyed listening to the member from Ajax. He always speaks very eloquently in the House and made some good points today.

I'd like to just go back in time a little bit to the previous Kathleen Wynne government that had two historic downgrades in credit here in the province. When we look at what was happening over that time versus what's now happening over this time with a global pandemic versus trade disruptions—some may call it a trade war with our neighbours to the south—whether or not, looking back, he would have supported those budgets with those two credit downgrades, with the most historic debts that the province has ever seen, when times were actually pretty good.

Mr. Rob Cerjanec: Thinking back to that time when I was in university, I know the world was going through, arguably, an economic crisis much bigger than the one that we're seeing today, where we almost saw entire financial markets crash, Speaker.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Order.

Mr. Rob Cerjanec: I know the member from Whitby may think about Kathleen Wynne from time to time—I'm hearing the heckling over there—but I think what we are seeing then in Durham region is folks are looking for change. We saw that in the last election results in the election, Speaker. We saw that in Ajax where they elected a Liberal instead of a PC, and I expect we'll probably see more of that.

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

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I would like to thank the member for Ajax for mentioning the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul as well as Indwell.

We see this Conservative government blundering forward incompetently when it comes to building housing. We've seen the inept failure of their subsidies to multinational corporations who are trying to withdraw from Ontario and the failure of their subsidies to for-profit developers.

I think we need to build a new relationship with good not-for-profit partners.

Would the member like to see a coordinated agency, something similar to the CMHC, which took over for Wartime Housing Ltd., to finally get to the business of building truly affordable and supportive housing?

Mr. Rob Cerjanec: I would just like to thank the member from London North Centre for that question as well.

I'm not sure if an agency at the provincial level is necessary. I think a lot of that work can be done within the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, but in any case, it requires a very concerted effort to do that work.

The federal Build Canada Homes agency has been set up, so I look forward to seeing what progress they make, and then from that time, what we may or may not need to do in the province to do it. But the reality is, I don't think

we see nearly enough attention paid to how you incentivize not-for-profit housing providers, how you create that entrepreneurial spirit and culture. They're doing it on their own.

The province can be a greater part to what the member was talking about. It could very well be that, but I think the details would really matter in that situation.

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

Mr. Jonathan Tsao: You know, the government loves to delve into the past and take us to that point so they can avoid looking at their failures in the present. So I would like to take this House back to the past as well, to about January 2025, before the Premier called the needless election early.

The logic that we were told as Ontarians: that he had to call an election to protect Ontario; that there would be great investments made in this province in order to do so; that we would see record investments; that our streets would be paved with gold, everyone would be employed, no one would be homeless, crime would end. And that's why he would call an election.

The election was called. The Liberals gained five more seats. So I want to ask my colleague from Don Valley West, does she believe that election was worth it, beyond just the five seats that we managed to increase to get actual party status in this House?

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: I'm certainly delighted we got those extra five seats, including the member for Don Valley North and the member for Ajax, who are here today.

I do want to talk about that election. In my debate, I was talking about the cost of it, and the actual cost—I want to thank the member from Waterloo for giving me the right number—was actually $189 million, so not $360 million as I said before. But you know what's interesting, Speaker? It's still more money than this government has sent out the door to help Ontario businesses and communities.

Speaker, they have only sent out the door less than $5 million from their Ontario Together Trade Fund out of $150 million, and of their $1 billion or $5 billion total Protect Ontario Account, they've spent only $140 million, Speaker. So $140 million plus $5 million equals $145 million, less than the cost of that election to "protect Ontario." It's all a farce.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Thank you. There isn't enough time for another question.

Further debate?

1540

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: It is a privilege to join the debate on Bill 143 and to offer my support for this proposed legislation, the Plan to Protect Ontario Act (Budget Measures), 2026. I'm going to begin my remarks, if I may, Speaker, by focusing on schedules 9, 11 and 17 of Bill 143, which propose to take the next steps in the ongoing modernization and consolidation of Ontario's conservation authorities.

But before I go into detail, I want to take a moment to look back on the past year because it demonstrates what we can accomplish when we set a clear goal, listen carefully and follow through.

Conservation authorities were created on the basis of a simple, enduring idea: Rivers and watersheds do not stop at municipal boundaries, so the people who protect them should not either. That idea has served Ontario for generations. But the system had grown to 36 separate authorities, each with its own policies, standards, fees and staffing levels. Builders, farmers and landowners could face very different timelines depending on which side of a boundary they were situated in.

Our goal then was simple: to make them more consistent, better resourced and better prepared for the challenges ahead.

In October 2025, as part of last year's fall economic statement, we announced our plan to modernize the system by consolidating 36 conservation authorities into larger, watershed-based regional entities to be coordinated by the new Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency, which will offer leadership, common standards and oversight.

Nearly one year ago—on November 7, 2025, to be exact—we posted our proposed regional boundaries on the Environmental Registry for a 45-day comment period. We hosted virtual sessions with conservation authorities, with municipalities, with stakeholders and with Indigenous communities. We held six regional workshops, led by the chief conservation executive. More than 500 people took part in those sessions, and thousands of members of the public submitted their comments and their feedback.

We heard a clear message, Speaker: Maintain local expertise and local relationships, protect local representation, align boundaries with watersheds and ensure a stable transition. And that's exactly what we did.

Our original proposal was for seven regional authorities. In response to what we heard we adjusted the plan to nine regional authorities, better matched to watersheds and source protection regions and better balanced across rural, urban and northern communities.

The proposed Lake Erie authority became two. The proposed Huron-Superior authority became the Lake Huron Regional Conservation Authority. Cataraqui moved into the eastern Lake Ontario region, where it fits more naturally, and Lakehead region kept its current boundaries under the new Northwestern Ontario Regional Conservation Authority.

While this consultation process was under way, the Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency was in the process of becoming operational to support the upcoming consolidation process.

Following our extensive consultation earlier this spring as part of Bill 97, we established the boundaries for the nine new regional conservation authorities in law, formally beginning the transition. These new conservations authorities are:

—the northwestern regional conservation authority, for the Thunder Bay area that I already mentioned;

—the northeastern regional conservation authority, for the Timmins, Sault Ste. Marie, Sudbury and North Bay areas;

—the Lake Huron Regional Conservation Authority;

—the Western Lake Erie Regional Conservation Authority;

—the Eastern Lake Erie Regional Conservation Authority;

—the Western Lake Ontario Region Conservation Authority;

—the Central Lake Ontario Conservation Authority, which, among other areas, serves my riding of Durham;

—the Eastern Lake Ontario Regional Conservation Authority; and

—finally, the St. Lawrence River Regional Conservation Authority.

What matters most about this transition is that it protects continuity. Consolidation is proceeding by statutory amalgamation, which means the assets, liabilities and agreements of each predecessor authority become those of the new regional authority. Existing partnerships with municipalities and Indigenous communities carry on. Permits and other actions already under way continue, and residents will keep working with the same local teams who know their watershed. Transition committees with the chief administrative officer and a municipally elected board member from each current authority are actively leading the planning, with consolidation set to take place on February 1, 2027—in just over a few months.

That brings me to the legislation in front of us today, Bill 143, which will help carry this work across the finish line. Schedule 11 makes several practical refinements to the Conservation Authorities Act to ensure that the new regional structure works well from day one.

First, it supports strong local representation by enabling municipalities that participate in a new authority to agree to be treated as one municipality for the purpose of appointing board members, if needed.

Second, it ensures strong leadership in each new conservation authority. The legislation would allow the Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency, OPCA, to direct a new regional authority to enter into an employment contract with the project executive who serves as its first chief administrative officer, because every new organization needs steady, experienced leadership from day one.

Thirdly, it establishes a clear and orderly process for establishing and amalgamating conservation authorities after consolidation. Municipalities will retain the ability to request the establishment of an authority or a change to an area of jurisdiction according to the process proposed in Bill 143.

Fourth, it respects local decision-making. The agency's directions are limited with respect to land acquisition and disposition, certain local policies, hiring and terminating employees and authority budgets and asset management plans. Regional conservation authorities will retain control over the decisions that matter to their communities.

Fifth, and finally, it promotes transparency by establishing a requirement to publish digital maps of each authority's area of jurisdiction along with a list of its participating municipalities so that any resident, farmer or builder can see exactly who they are served by.

Now, I want to speak directly to two other schedules, schedules 9 and 17, of Bill 143. We are committed to drinking water source protection under the Clean Water Act and watershed protection under the Lake Simcoe Protection Act. Families in each and every corner of this province turn on their taps, trusting that their drinking water source in particular is protected, and I want to be absolutely clear to this House: Those protections remain exactly where they are.

The amendments in schedule 9 are technical and consequential. They exist simply so that the Clean Water Act recognizes the new regional authorities. Existing source protection areas continue. Existing source protection plans remain in place. The science-based approach that communities have relied upon with its assessment reports and source protection plans carries forward. The new regional conservation authorities will simply take over the responsibility that their predecessors held for the areas they served, and the people doing this work continue. Each regional authority will establish watershed councils—that's the local voice—and those councils will carry on the work already done by source protection committees with the same local knowledge and the same commitment to protecting our drinking water sources. Where certain administrative duties are exercised by the authority directly, that simply aligns the act with the way the new regional authorities will operate.

Speaker, schedule 17, the third schedule that I want to address that is subject to the input of my ministry, is even more straightforward: The Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority joins the new Lake Huron Regional Conservation Authority, and this schedule updates the Lake Simcoe Protection Act, 2008, so that its references point to the new regional authority. The only change is to the name of the conservation authority; our protections for Lake Simcoe and the commitments behind them remain unchanged.

1550

Speaker, what will Ontarians see, then, when consolidation is complete on February 1, 2027? Consistent permitting and planning advice from one region to the next; stronger technical teams with the depth to retain hydrologists, engineers, planners and ecologists; better preparedness when flood waters rise; clear governance, with one provincial agency overseeing nine regional authorities; and the lasting protection of our drinking water and our watersheds, delivered by regional authorities that remain independent, locally governed and guided by local knowledge.

I want to thank the staff and the board members of our conservation authorities for carrying on their vital work through this transition period. Also, I salute the municipal leaders and all the members of the public who engaged with us along the way. A year ago, we set out to strengthen Ontario's conservation system and, since that time, we have established the agency, we have consulted widely, we have listened and adjusted, we've set the new boundaries, we've legislated the consolidation and now we move forward to complete the framework.

Speaker, with the time I have remaining, then, I want to speak more broadly to Bill 143 and to the fall economic statement delivered by the Minister of Finance.

It's perhaps an understatement to say that our world has changed. Unwarranted US tariffs have impacted our steel, our auto and our manufacturing sectors. Global conflicts and shifting supply chains are pushing up the price of gas and the cost of goods. And uncertainty is weighing on investment and employment. Families and businesses right across Ontario are feeling it each and every day.

Now, we cannot control every challenge beyond our borders, but we can control how we respond, and that's exactly what we're doing with our plan to protect Ontario. It fortifies Ontario's industrial base—our auto, steel, forestry and manufacturing sectors—so that we can lay the foundation to unleash the growth sectors of the future. Since April 2025, Ontario has announced nearly $30 billion in tariff relief and support for workers and businesses. We acted early to help employers weather the uncertainty. We acted early to support communities facing economic pressures. We acted early to protect well-paying jobs. And we are not stopping there.

We recently announced nearly $9 billion to support the automotive, steel, critical minerals and energy industries and their workers. We have expanded eligibility for the Protect Ontario Financing Program, the Ontario Together Trade Fund and the Trade-Impacted Communities Program so that businesses can keep their doors open, find new markets and keep people on the job. We have enhanced the Ontario Made Manufacturing Investment Tax Credit by $1.3 billion over three years, and our buy-Ontario policy is making sure that Ontario tax dollars support Ontario workers wherever possible.

I can say with certainty and confidence that our plan is working not only across Ontario but also in my riding of Durham. Earlier this year, I was pleased to announce a manufacturing investment of more than $4.3 million by the Ganawa Company in Bowmanville, creating 15 new well-paying jobs. That is what protecting Ontario looks like on the ground.

But it's not just about making those critical investments. The people of Ontario need a government that is consistently cutting taxes and keeping costs down. That's why we permanently cut gas and fuel taxes, putting over $2.3 billion back into the pockets of families and businesses. We removed the tolls on Highway 407 East, Highway 412 and Highway 418 to get people moving in Durham region and eliminated licence plate renewal fees.

We brought in One Fare, which saves daily transit riders an average of $1,600 each year.

And we removed the 13% HST on new homes, providing up to $130,000 in relief for eligible homebuyers.

This year alone, our government is delivering $12.5 billion of relief to families and individuals, and we are doing the same for businesses that create jobs. Through the Ontario competitiveness tax cut, we are lowering the cost of capital investments by more than $8 billion over the next five years. Combined with the accelerated writeoffs announced earlier this year, that brings total tax relief for capital investment to more than $12 billion, and it is estimated to attract at least $11 billion in additional investment and create 30,000 new jobs.

We've cut the small business tax rate by more than 37%. That's a $1.1-billion tax cut over three years for more than 375,000 small businesses, saving each an amount of up to $5,000 each and every year, because small businesses are the backbone of Ontario's economy, and our Ontario government is standing shoulder to shoulder with them.

Supply chains are shifting, and countries are competing for the industries that will define the future. Ontario is ready to lead.

It begins with nuclear, one of our greatest competitive advantages, including the Darlington Nuclear Generating Station in my riding of Durham, where construction is now under way on the first of four small modular reactors. Across the province, our nuclear build-out at Darlington, Bruce and Pickering will add—wait for it—150,000 jobs and $800 billion to our economy.

The Pickering refurbishment alone supports about 30,500 construction jobs, with more than 90% of project spending staying in Ontario and Canada, and the build-out will call for nearly a million tonnes of Ontario-made steel and metals. That is an investment creating jobs both today and for generations to come.

In the north, we are fortifying our domestic resources. Ontario ranks first in Canada and second in the world for attracting mining investment, including in the Ring of Fire. Realizing this potential could generate up to $22 billion in economic activity and support more than 70,000 jobs.

We're also diversifying our markets. Since 2018, we have increased non-US exports by 75%, and by nearly 28% in the last year alone. We exported seven times more electricity than we imported, and Ontario is leading the country in removing interprovincial trade barriers.

We are also building Ontario through the largest capital plan in our history. We're building the largest expansion of public transit in North America. In January, we broke ground on the Bowmanville GO extension in my riding of Durham. This will extend the Lakeshore East line 18.7 kilometres further into my riding, accommodating 17,000 daily trips and putting 10,400 jobs within walking distance of transit. In August, major construction began at Durham College Oshawa GO station to support this new expansion.

But that's not the only capital project under way in Durham. We are redeveloping Lakeridge Health Bowmanville Hospital to add new beds and building a new elementary school in Bowmanville for 769 students with 73 new licensed child care spaces.

And not only are we building, but we're building faster and smarter. Our Ontario government has put forward 15 red tape reduction bills, saving businesses $10.2 billion and 1.8 million hours every year. We are reviewing every business-facing permit in the province of Ontario. More than half have been reviewed, eliminating nearly 220,000 permitting days. And in many cases, we are putting a time limit on the government's answer through a shot clock approach so that proponents can have predictability in planning.

Speaker, this is what protecting Ontario looks like. As I've said before and I'll say again, we cannot control every

challenge beyond our borders, but we can control how we respond. That is why I proudly support Bill 143. That is what A Plan to Protect Ontario is all about. I encourage everyone to support this plan and this bill, and I thank you for your kind attention.

1600

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

MPP Alexa Gilmour: I thank the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks for his speech on the budget estimates there.

I'm asking about the $3,000 to $4,000 per household in servicing our debt. In Parkdale–High Park, where I serve, we have basements that are flooding. We have the Humber River and a waterfront that is experiencing erosion. We have the black oak savannah that needs protecting. We have water quality issues at Sunnyside Beach. We have extreme heat concerns for our vulnerable residents.

I know that that's what they would prefer that we were spending our money on, instead of servicing this government's massive debt that has been created by the incompetence of the last eight years.

For the minister, I wondered what your residents of Durham would prefer that money be spent on?

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: I'm proud to say that our Ontario government, over the last eight and a half years, has consistently increased spending in health care, has consistently increased spending in education and in social services. Like all Western democracies, we are dealing with debts and deficits and the servicing of that debt, but we are also making the key investments in infrastructure. That's part of our 10-year capital plan.

I was proud for 11 months to be acting Minister of Infrastructure, and I reported at that time, and I can repeat now, $236 billion invested in infrastructure over the next 10 years. That kind of investment is about looking forward not to just next year or this electoral term, but over decades to come.

That kind of an investment is the right investment, and we're proud of it while we're also investing and continuing to grow our spending in health care, education and social services.

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

Mr. Rob Cerjanec: I'd like to thank the member for Durham for his remarks. I know it wasn't necessarily in his remarks, but I'm curious if he might have any insight around schedule 7 of the bill, around the Capital Investment Plan Act, and whether he might know why this change is coming forward now, exempting any records under their control as far back as January 1, 2025, from disclosure under freedom of information. My question is if he might know why those changes are coming now and why they are needed now if they haven't been in place for many years.

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: I appreciate the question from the member for Ajax. I was here for part of his speech, and I join the Minister of Natural Resources when I say that I appreciate his articulate participation in the debate on the bill.

The schedules of the bill—some of them are housekeeping amendments in nature. That's part of any bill. The issue of transparency and accountability, I think, is clearly answered by this reality that ministers of the crown, including the Minister of Finance, who tabled the bill, are accountable to this House, report to this House, are transparent with this House.

We make it very, very clear and we make sure there's no doubt about it that what we are talking about here is an investment looking ahead half a century or more. What will the province look like towards the end of the 21st century, not just within this electoral cycle?

That big-picture thinking is one of the key reasons why I support this bill. It is transformative in nature, but yes, of course it has some minor housekeeping amendments as well. That's part of the machinery of government.

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

Mme Dawn Gallagher Murphy: I'd like to first off thank the minister for all his work on the environment file, specifically on the conservation authorities. I know he was speaking about that in his remarks. In my Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority, we are looking forward to becoming the new Lake Huron Regional Conservation Authority, so thank you very much for all your work on that.

My question, though, is going to be on supporting research and innovation, because our government does recognize that supporting research and development is critical to attracting, really, investment and ensuring that Ontario remains competitive in the emerging industry.

So the question to the minister: Can you please explain how these proposed tax changes will help businesses invest in research, develop new technologies and strengthen Ontario's innovation economy?

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: I thank the excellent member for Newmarket–Aurora, now in her second term. We're both members of the class of 2022, first elected to the 43rd Parliament. The citizens of her riding are fortunate to have her as a member.

I appreciate the conservation authorities comment because, of course, we proposed, we consulted, we listened, and then we came up with the final plan, which really has a very wide consensus.

Now, when it comes to supporting research and innovation, we know that innovation is essential to Ontario's economic future. Our government is committed to ensuring businesses have the tools they need to develop new technologies and compete globally. That's why the fall economic statement for 2026 proposes enhancements to the Ontario Research and Development Tax Credit and the Ontario Innovation Tax Credit. These changes would restore capital expenditures as eligible expenses under these credits, helping businesses to lower the cost of research and development.

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

Mr. Chris Glover: My question is to the member from Durham. I want to thank you for your comments today. You mentioned that your government, this Conservative government, is building faster and smarter, that you've passed 14 "building faster" bills, that you've given $5 billion in taxpayer funds to developers to build homes faster, that you've gutted the Environmental Bill of Rights and now you're gutting, basically, the conservation authorities' ability to protect our environment. And yet Ontario has the second-lowest number of housing starts of any province in the country. We're at 3.7 per thousand in housing starts; the provincial average is 6.3.

So will you admit that the path that your government has taken us down for the last eight years has been an utter failure and that maybe instead of giving all these taxpayer donations and gutting the Environmental Bill of Rights etc., you should actually just do what the NDP government did when they were in power? We built 15,000 units of affordable housing. Will you build affordable housing?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Remarks through the Chair, please.

Response?

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: Speaker, I appreciate the question, but I think the measure of success and the measure of consensus comes from the people we serve. While the NDP government of 1990-95 was elected once and then rejected after that one term, our Ontario Progressive Conservative government, led by Premier Ford, has been elected in 2018, re-elected in 2022, re-elected in 2025—three strong, stable majority mandates—because we have consensus for our plan. Our plan is improving the conditions for businesses, improving life for families, tackling the issue of affordability to make life more affordable, cutting taxes, cutting fees and creating the conditions for businesses to succeed, including cutting red tape and regulations and making investments over 10 years in infrastructure and improving conservation authorities while we're at it.

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

Mr. Rob Cerjanec: Thank you once again to the member for Durham for his well-argued points on Bill 143. I do want to ask a question just around schedule 11, the Conservation Authorities Act, and in particular, how the bill removes—I believe it's lower-tier municipalities from the administration of conservation authorities, and ask the member some of the rationale behind removing that from the conservation authorities, the lower-tier municipalities.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): A quick response from the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks.

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: I appreciate that, Speaker.

In response to that specific question, municipal representation on conservation authorities will continue. That will include smaller rural municipalities, because every municipality is going to be guaranteed at least one board member regardless of their size. Quite frankly, it's disproportionately better for smaller municipalities because of the way it's structured, because there will be a maximum number of board seats, even for the largest municipalities. We respect rep by population and we respect the rural voice.

1610

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

MPP Robin Lennox: It's always an honour to rise on behalf of the people of Hamilton Centre and I appreciate being given the opportunity to speak to the economic outlook in Ontario. Certainly, when I go back to my community in Hamilton, so many people are concerned about the state of the economy and about how life has become increasingly unaffordable. I think there's always so much hope every time we see a new budget or a new fall economic statement that we're going to see those priorities of everyday people reflected in the priorities of the government.

Unfortunately, in this fall economic statement, I was disappointed to see that we are once again prioritizing corporate tax relief over providing direct support to workers impacted by tariffs and also to fortifying our public and social services. It estimates in this fall economic statement that the business tax cuts announced would total about $13 billion over the next five years. When we contextualize that number, that's the funding gap that we would need to see, that influx of funding, to be able to maintain existing levels of health care in this province. Again, when we look at how the government is distributing its funds, it's an issue of priorities and we clearly see where the priorities of this government are.

I also note that despite this government having run on a mandate to combat the impacts of tariffs and to ensure that we are protecting working people in this province, unfortunately, there are no direct supports for workers who are going to be impacted. In Hamilton, we have a number of tariff-related industries that have been significantly impacted. When we saw one of those companies under threat, there was no plan in place to provide direct support to workers that would actually stabilize them for a period of time, enable them to find new employment or to re-enter their employment in the same field in which they are trained.

When we talk to workers, that's really what they're looking for. They want to be able to stay in their industries, to continue to contribute, to use their skills, and they want to be able to support their families in doing so. It was disappointing that we yet again don't see that. I know there's still a lot of uncertainty and precarity in the community, in the steel industry in particular, and so there's very little in this fall economic statement that could give any comfort to workers in the steel industry that if these unjustified tariffs continue, that they will see relief and that they will be able to pay their bills. That's one thing that I was concerned about in reading this.

The other thing is just more about our broader economic stability. I find it deeply concerning that we see another fall economic statement, another budget, that is projecting the highest debt that we have ever seen in the

history of this province—nearly half a trillion dollars worth of debt. It's unsurprising that that amount of debt is going to be handcuffing this government and subsequent governments from being able to free up funds to invest in the services that we need because we are spending so much money just servicing that debt.

You know, I've said it before, but every single household in Ontario, $3,000 to $4,000 of their tax money is going towards debt interest and debt servicing charges. That's money that's not going towards schools for their kids, it's not going towards health care, it's not going towards helping them find meaningful employment or keep a roof over their heads. I think that in the best of circumstances, many people want to have faith in government. They want to know that their tax dollars are going towards worthy causes, things that are going to uplift their communities. I think it is very difficult for people to stomach that so many thousands of their tax dollars every year, from just regular households, are going towards debt interest because this government has not been able to increase revenue significantly enough or decrease spending. And particularly when it comes to this government, I'm very concerned about the spending.

But when we look in terms of the Financial Accountability Office, in terms of their projections, we see that the nominal GDP for Ontario is expected to rise at an average rate of about 3.9% per year, which is slower than the historical rise of 4.2% over the past 25 years. So we are actually going to see significantly less growth over the next 25 years than this province has enjoyed for the last generation. That's particularly concerning because, right now, we have a significant yearly deficit.

There's actually, interestingly enough, legislation—the Fiscal Sustainability, Transparency and Accountability Act, 2019, which was passed by this government—which mandates that the government must plan for a balanced budget every fiscal year unless it determines that extraordinary circumstances require a budget deficit for one or more years.

In this FAO projection, over the next 25 years, we are consistently going to be in deficit every single year, and a large part of that is the fiscal hole that this government has dug us into, and it's difficult to see why that would be considered reasonable.

We also see that Ontario's net debt as a share of GDP is projected to increase from 36% last year, in 2025-26, to 47% by 2050—47% of net debt as a share of our GDP. That's one of the strongest indicators of our fiscal health. It's very concerning to see where we are headed and where this government has weakened the economic foundation that we stand on, to put us in that position.

The FAO also said that, essentially, we have three fiscal sustainability indicators—we have a net-debt-to-GDP ratio below 40%, a net-debt-to-revenue ratio below 200%, and the share of revenue dedicated to interest payments below 7.5%—and that all three of these indicators, we are failing at, and all three are set to deteriorate over the next 25 years. That's very concerning. This government has said many times that we are being economically challenged by tariffs and by other economic conditions. And the fact that we have become so economically weakened under this Conservative government that we are not going to see significant recovery over the next 20-plus years is very difficult, and I imagine it is going to be very unsettling for Ontarians.

One of the biggest responsibilities of a provincial government is to ensure that we are in a strong enough fiscal position that we can sustainably fund our health care, our education—all of the services that we rely on. This government has set us up so that so much of our money is actually going to be just trying to maintain a basic fiscal standing, and we're not going to be seeing that money going in those other directions.

There was a bar graph in the FAO projections about historical and projected spending growth across all sectors, and, essentially, for every single one—the historical annual growth compared to the projected growth—we are seeing declines. In health, the historical annual growth was a 5.9% budget increase; it's going to decline to 4.4% per year. Education: It was a 4.1% increase; it's going to go down to a 3% increase per year. Post-secondary education: an even greater discrepancy, 5.2% compared to 2%. Children's and social services historically has gone up 4.6% per year; it's going down to 3.1%. The only piece in that that is actually going up is the amount that is going to interest and other debt servicing charges. Historically, that number has increased by 1% per year. The projection based on the position that this government has put us in is that that number will increase by 6.5% per year for the next 25 years. That's more than will be going into health care, education, all of those other budget lines. That is very concerning. And I don't think any single Ontarian would have supported this government if they knew that that was what they were doing.

And then it comes to the part of, what are we giving up—what are the missed opportunities by being put in such a fiscally unstable position?

Just yesterday, when asked about ending homelessness and bold ideas about ending homelessness, the Premier said that that would be very challenging. And do you know what? It will be very challenging to end homelessness. But a serious government should be capable of doing hard things. A serious government should be able to confront those challenges and have a plan to address them.

Each year that goes by that we do not address homelessness, we see thousands more people fall into homelessness, and that will make it that much more difficult for us to finally end the crisis. Because for every year that this Conservative government is in power, the longer that they drag their heels on investing in the evidence-based strategies to house people, the more money and time it will ultimately take us to end the crisis when we see a change in government—and more than that, the more suffering that we will see in our streets, in our communities, in our families and in our friends, for people who are losing their housing at unprecedented rates because this government has not created the material conditions to support people in maintaining their homes.

1620

In last year's budget, there were only 425 net new supportive housing units for the entire province. That's 425 units that are then going up against the demand of 85,000 people who are currently unhoused, many of whom are sleeping outdoors on our streets. That is a significant underinvestment in one of the most evidence-based strategies we have to reduce homelessness. It's also just a really significant missed opportunity for us to do more while saving more, because when we invest in supportive housing, we know that for every dollar we invest, we save on other provincial budget lines. For every dollar we invest, we save two dollars on average in justice costs, in safe social services costs and in health care costs.

With the fiscal position that we are facing, with the fact that our debt is so high, we need to find every opportunity for savings that we can. In this case, investing in supportive housing is actually a strategy to reduce our expenditures while delivering more for the people of Ontario. Maintaining the status quo of record levels of homelessness is neither morally acceptable nor fiscally sustainable. With a government that is headed into record-setting debt, we cannot miss opportunities to reduce our spending while expanding services and meeting the needs of Ontarians.

Similarly, this fall economic statement doesn't include any provisions for what we really need to do to address our ongoing housing crisis. We need a public agency that will build and acquire non-market housing units to create deeply affordable housing options that will keep us out of a housing crisis.

Our Ontario NDP Homes Ontario proposal is the kind of forward-thinking housing policy that should be included in this fall economic statement. Homes Ontario is a bold public plan to finance and deliver hundreds of thousands of permanently affordable homes, treating housing like the essential infrastructure it is. We will mobilize public land to get projects moving faster and ensure that it is used to serve people, not profits. Homes Ontario will prioritize non-market, non-profit, co-op and supportive housing providers—the ones who are truly focused on affordability and meeting the housing needs of our communities.

We can also use Homes Ontario to invest in those in skilled trades in Ontario. We can use Ontario-sourced materials, Ontario workers and public infrastructure to create good union jobs and help build the stable, inclusive communities that make our economy stronger. Affordable housing is an economic imperative. People can't contribute to our workforce or economy if they cannot afford a place to live. Homes Ontario is how we get Ontario building, with public leadership, long-term investment and real affordability. Unfortunately, we are seeing no such bold housing strategy in this fall economic statement.

I would also like to bring up challenges in health care. We are seeing a projected decline in the amount that is invested in health care, and we are seeing inadequate investment to actually reduce wait times, improve quality of care and ensure that people can get the care they need when they need it.

I'm going to share some stories to illustrate the problem that we are in right now and what our health care situation truly is.

This story is from Diana from Mississauga. Diana wrote in that, "Last night the health care system failed my eight-month-old baby. Due to the overcrowding of hospitals and lack of funding, my eight-month-old baby had to wait over six hours to be seen by a doctor." She said, "Please do more to improve the declining state of our health care system, as no baby should have to wait that long to see a doctor." Diana is right, but there is nothing in this budget that is going to increase the capacity of our pediatric ERs to see people in a timely manner.

Similarly, I'd like to share the story of a constituent living in North York. She wrote, "My 88-year-old mother was recently admitted to North York general, where she spent two full days in the hallway of the emergency room. She was not alone—there were easily 30 other patients in similar conditions, all waiting for proper care and a room. Watching elderly and vulnerable individuals endure such circumstances was both distressing and unacceptable."

The hospital staff "were clearly overwhelmed and stretched far too thin. The issue is not a lack of dedication—it is inadequate funding and the resulting shortage of space, staff, and resources."

This constituent asked that we ensure that we properly fund our health care system. She said, "These are not optional priorities—they are the foundation of a just and functioning society. You must reconsider spending priorities. It is difficult to understand investments in projects such as a spa at Ontario Place ... and an airplane for your personal use while essential public services remain underfunded and strained." This was a constituent who signed off that she was living in Richmond Hill.

Jegan wrote in, wanting to share about their experience with ER wait times and overcrowding:

"I am writing to share serious concerns regarding the critical overcrowding, severe delays, and conditions my mother and I experienced tonight at the Etobicoke General Hospital emergency department....

"I want to state clearly that I do not blame the front-line staff. The nurses and doctors are visibly exhausted, understaffed, and working under unsustainable pressure. The systemic breakdown in care delivery and facility capacity, however, is deeply alarming."

Jegan wrote that they waited two hours just to have blood and urine tests done. When they asked what was causing the delay, they were informed that there was only one person available for blood draws in that emergency room. That delay affected everyone else in the emergency room, including young children who were forced to wait hours for blood work.

"The waiting room filled beyond capacity, leaving sick patients with no choice but to sit and lie on the emergency room floor. Seeing patients lying on the floor of a hospital in Canada is heartbreaking and unacceptable."

Outside of the hospital, we know that patients in the community are waiting far too long to see specialists for their specialist conditions, particularly in the domains of women's health.

One constituent named Maxine wrote in to me to talk about her experience. She shared that in June of this year, she had abdominal symptoms that were so severe that she went to the emergency department. She thought she had appendicitis. Following a CT scan, they had no identified cause of her pain, but she was referred to a specialist clinic for potential endometriosis assessment. The expected wait time for that appointment was eight to 10 months, and at the time she thought that wasn't so bad. She was able to secure an appointment through a cancellation list and finally received a diagnosis for endometriosis, which had taken years. Prior to this, her referrals for a gynecologist had been denied. Following her formal diagnosis, she was referred to an endometriosis specialist, but when she contacted the office, she was informed that she would not be seen for another year.

Again, these are the types of delays that are just not acceptable. You should be able to expect that in Ontario, if you need a specialist appointment, you should be able to receive one in a timely manner.

Nowhere in this fall economic statement do we see a transformation of our specialist referral system to ensure easier access to care. One very easy, low-cost thing that we could do would be to move towards an electronic, centralized specialist referral system that has been called for by the Ontario Medical Association and others. In that way, you could put in your information and be referred to the nearest available specialist in your community or a nearby community, and be able to track in real time what your wait time is—and more than that, your doctor would know who has the shortest wait time and who they can direct you to for the best care. This is something that we could do. This is something that would be very attainable. But again, we see only distractions in this fall economic statement and no significant improvements for the people of Ontario.

Instead, we see the Ontario government aggressively promoting greater for-profit involvement in health care delivery, the most pronounced policy shift we've seen in health care in decades. We saw, in 2025, the provincial government awarded $280 million to newly licensed for-profit facilities for orthopaedic surgeries and medical imaging. We know that for-profit surgeries have been prioritized in this province over the surgeries conducted in our public hospitals. For example, the volume of surgeries completed in independent health facilities went up 117%—in that same time period, the number of surgeries in our public hospitals only went up 10%. And many of those hospitals have operating rooms that are sitting empty on evenings and on weekends, because they are not funded for the number of procedures that they could accommodate. That is something that we could change in this budget but, unfortunately, the government is not doing so.

1630

The government's policy direction favouring private, for-profit clinics is again spending more money than it is delivering real services to people in Ontario. Cataract surgeries are a great example. We see, despite a significant investment in for-profit cataract surgeries, that all patients are getting are the same or longer wait times and increasing fees paid for out their pockets. I hope the government changes direction and sees a budget that centralizes the priorities of working Ontarians.

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

Mr. Rob Cerjanec: Thank you to the member from Hamilton Centre for her remarks. I know the member for Hamilton Centre and the member for Don Valley East have been very strong advocates for those patients that are seeking life-saving cancer treatment. I guess my question to the member from Hamilton Centre is, when she looks at the fall economic statement and looks at some of the spending decisions that are made within that statement in comparison to how we ensure those individuals and others like them are able to receive treatment—I'm just wondering what the member's comments would be around that.

MPP Robin Lennox: Thank you. I greatly appreciate that question, and it is such an important issue. Certainly, when we think about this government's priorities, we see that the amount that is required to fund one person's life-saving cancer treatment was estimated at about $750,000. When we look at the amount of waste in this budget, the amount that is going towards pet projects and frivolous spending, we could easily find that money, and that is something that Ontarians across the province are unified in: that they want money going towards people's health care, particularly in some of the most vulnerable moments of their lives. They don't want a single dime spent on something frivolous until every single person's health care is paid for in this province.

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

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I wonder if you can help me understand why the government is subsidizing Galen Weston's electricity when we have ballooning debt and we can't even provide enough for roof and food for our most vulnerable.

MPP Robin Lennox: Thank you so much for the question. I wish I could provide an explanation but, truly, I don't understand why this government is dead set on subsidizing billionaires and large corporations when we have everyday Ontarians struggling to afford groceries at those same businesses where those corporations, even recently, had been linked in bread-fixing schemes, and yet we still feel like we need to subsidize their electricity when they're actively ripping off the people of Ontario just for a loaf of bread.

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

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I've been listening to the member from Hamilton Centre. Last week, I was at the Ford plant in Oakville. We announced the launching of the new Super Duty truck built here in Oakville, and the provincial government gave them $464 million in the total of a $5-billion retooling of their plant.

You have a lot of residents in your riding that are in the steel industry and that work at the Ford plant. Are you in favour of helping a company, like Ford Motor Co., or are

you against helping these workers that are unionized, that are my brothers and sisters that I worked with for many, many years?

MPP Robin Lennox: We absolutely support investments in workers in Ontario, and that's something we have an outstanding record on. What I do have an issue with, and what we've seen in other areas like, for example, Stellantis or other corporate subsidies is when there are not rock-solid strings attached to ensure that those jobs are going to stay in Ontario, we are not guaranteeing a good return on investment for Ontarians or for those workers.

I would love to see more transparency about that deal, about what the requirements are to ensure that the $400-plus million that we are investing is tied to such strict conditions that those good, unionized jobs are guaranteed and that that company isn't going to hightail it out of here or close up shop after getting that investment.

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

MPP Alexa Gilmour: I appreciated the member from Hamilton Centre's remarks on this fall economic statement.

I've been thinking about the people in Parkdale–High Park, who I rise and speak on behalf of with tremendous humility and honour, and I've been thinking in particular about the renters. Some 60% of them are renting; 40% of those spend more than a third of their money on rent. We just learned in the Who's Hungry Report that in Toronto, a quarter of Torontonians that use the food bank are spending all of their money on rent.

Then I think about how each and every household is spending about $3,000 to $4,000 per year servicing the debt, and you mentioned that in your speech. I know what I would spend it on in terms of the people in Parkdale–High Park. I wonder what the member in Hamilton Centre would spend it on for her people.

MPP Robin Lennox: Thank you so much for the question.

You know, $3,000 to $4,000 a year could go a long way for many Hamilton families. For context, in the riding that I represent, one in five children are living in poverty. In one of the postal codes within my riding, that number goes up to one in three. Yet we have seen no substantial increase in the Ontario Child Benefit, we continue to see rates of Ontario Works flatlining and we continue to see rates of Ontario disability support payments that are below the poverty line.

So I would like to see some direct assistance to families, particularly to families with children who are living in poverty, to lift them out of poverty, to ensure that they can afford food, to ensure that they can afford a roof over those kids' heads and to reallocate that money to the people who count.

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

Mr. Rob Cerjanec: I know the member from Hamilton Centre knows about the importance of transitional and supportive housing for folks who are unhoused or need those wraparound supports with the health supports to help get their lives back on track and get the treatment and the support that they need.

When I looked through the fall economic statement, I didn't really see anything new around there, and it's impacting my community in Durham region. I know communities across the province as well that are looking for operating funding for transitional and supportive housing because we see the federal government stepping up on capital.

I was just wondering if the member from Hamilton Centre can explain about what that can mean for somebody who is unhoused and how it can help them get their lives back on track.

MPP Robin Lennox: Thank you. I deeply appreciate the question.

Supportive housing is certainly near and dear to my heart. I've been able to witness in real time the impacts when I was caring for a group of women who were living in an encampment several years ago. Many of them were struggling with their health. We were seeing people die outside on the streets. Then there was an investment at that time—not from the provincial government but from other orders of government—into a supportive housing unit that moved 72 of those women into supportive housing. We saw that their health improved dramatically. They stayed housed; more than 95% were housed after a year.

I got to see how they reflected on that experience. Many of them felt that they were able to then focus on getting back in school, getting work, reconnecting with their families. It was truly transformative.

Beyond that, it was just a good investment—a really good investment into a serious issue. So I would love to see some more investment in an evidence-based intervention like supportive housing.

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

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: We've seen this government make it easier to evict people. They will be evicted if they don't pay their rent within seven days. But we know if you lose your job, EI, OW, ODSP doesn't come within the seven days, so basically, anybody who loses their job is likely to be evicted.

What would you like to see in terms of the speed in which people can get that housing allowance, increases to housing allowance and the Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit to prevent people from becoming homeless in the first place?

MPP Robin Lennox: Thank you so much for the question.

Certainly, we know that there has been an oversized emphasis in emergency response and so little emphasis on prevention in terms of someone falling into homelessness. So I would love to see an increased investment in rent supplements and other homelessness prevention supports and in also just tightening up rent control, closing the loopholes that are allowing for above-guideline rent increases.

I have a group of tenants on fixed income in one building who are seeing their third above-guideline rent increase in the last four years. Their rent will have gone up

10%, and they are supposed to be in a rent-controlled unit. This is what is pushing people out of their homes. It's costing us a significant amount of money, and it's putting people in a significant amount of precarity.

1640

So I would like to see all of those things invested in, but particularly prevention and rent control.

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

Ms. Lee Fairclough: Good afternoon, Speaker. It's great to be here to talk about the budget measures bill, Bill 143.

I'm just going to start with a few comments more generally, though, on how we are tracking with our current fiscal situation in this province. There's no question that we are now at a point where we have record spending. We've got the biggest deficit that we've seen, and you would argue that we don't necessarily have the results that would go with that. In fact, if we're spending money and we're seeing a return on that investment, I would feel more positive, but I'm not feeling that way today as I look at our current fiscal situation.

I think that one of the biggest things is that we've seen a $3.1-billion worsening in the actual deficit that has grown from the projected $13.8 billion at the beginning of this year. When I look at that, what does that mean for how we're servicing that debt? We're paying $17.4 billion in interest. One of my colleagues pointed out to me—I think that's $500 a second on interest. I think about the amount of taxes that people pay and what that represents for somebody who is on a salary, paying their taxes, and that they know that $500 a second is actually going to pay the interest.

The other thing that I think is a bit concerning is that we heard yesterday from the Financial Accountability Office that the likelihood of being able to actually bring this budget into balance by 2050 is actually going to take a lot of work. So I think that, unfortunately, the financial situation is a little bit worrying.

The other thing that actually worries me with that is that public services are also failing at the same time. This new projection for the year actually includes spending $500 million less on health care, $600 million less on education and $100 million less on post-secondary education.

Again, I want to talk about education for a second. This is something I care a lot about, and I know you, Speaker, do actually care a lot about education as well. I've got a teenage son who's in grade 12 at the moment, and I continue to see the impacts this is having for educators in classrooms. The Auditor General has pointed out that we've got not nearly enough of the kind of investment that we need into special education and that in fact we need to be putting more supports in classrooms to support kids at this moment. So the idea that we're actually now going to spend $600 million less this year on education and that investment in our young people does have me a little bit worried. I'm surprised the government isn't even more worried, that's for sure.

I also want to just say, too, that when I listened to the fall economic statement speech, it was notable to me that there wasn't any discussion about health care. I don't know if my other colleagues, my other critics, noticed that. There wasn't even a mention. There wasn't a mention of education.

Part of that was that it seemed like a very boastful speech on the current state of the economy and the ability of this government to be able to protect the future of Ontario and protect Ontario. Well, I'm not sure we're there. I mean, we've seen 20,000 jobs lost in September. Unemployment is at 7%, and it's the highest of any large province. And if you look at what that is in the youngest generation, it's actually the highest that it's been in decades.

I think as well that the forecast for growth this year has now been halved from 1% to 0.5%. And I think that the Premier and his team have actually decided that this $4-billion fund that was supposed to be there to support companies and industry is not going to be there in the same way. So if I were the government, I'd be feeling pretty concerned about the economic picture that we're working towards.

On the budget measures, there are a few schedules that I really did want to highlight. I got excited for a minute when I saw the gaming commission act on the table. I thought for one second maybe we might actually do something about the problem that we've got in online gambling. I see the minister here. I got excited. I thought, "Oh, he's going to do it. He's actually going to put something in the budget measures that might stop the advertising for online gaming."

People will know this is something I care a lot about. The data is pretty compelling on this one: $83 billion wagered last year; last month, record wagers—$10.7 billion. That, to me, should be troubling. Think what all people could be using that money for, let alone the skyrocketing numbers that are reaching out for help with problem gambling, the tripling of suicides that we've seen, which I'm very concerned about.

Anyway, I would just point out, especially because the minister is here, that it's a bit of a lost opportunity. But we can still pass some legislation before the end of the year if the government chooses to do so.

On the second schedule, which is the Assessment Act, the one thing that I was a little worried about was a comment here about municipalities sending education property taxes to the Minister of Finance rather than directly to school boards. One of my concerns that I've had around the kind of power grab that we've seen around our education system, the reduction of the ability for school boards to actually govern those boards and make the right choices for those boards is—I've been very worried actually more generally about the real estate associated with some of our school properties and what might happen with that real estate.

I certainly hope that what I'm seeing here are not signals that the government is planning to, say, sell a school that maybe is an older school now that isn't as

needed in a community and decide not to put that money back into that same school board, because I actually think that's what needs to happen. We have so many schools in Toronto that we know actually need to be redeveloped. And yes, there might be differences from neighbourhood to neighbourhood, but I think that the school board has every ability to be able to manage what some of those requirements should be, and I think that actually we should trust them to do that.

On schedule 9, which is the Clean Water Act, I think, once again, we see—there are actually two schedules here that are somewhat related; there's schedule 9 and schedule 11. What these get at is, once again, reducing the ability of more local governments to be able to make choices and decisions around their own water and how we might want to protect it.

Water is an incredibly important thing. And I can tell you, with the reduction in the number of conservation authorities, a lot of people are really concerned about the kinds of decisions and the environmental impact of the kinds of decisions that are going to be made.

I think about when I was up in Bruce county this year. There's an example where one of the Conservative members even spoke out against the decisions that are being made around the conservation authorities because they cover such large areas now. Having grown up up there, I know that there are very distinct environments along the shoreline versus further inland.

So I'm not surprised that that MPP actually spoke up to say we shouldn't be collapsing these conservation authorities. I think that, again, schedule 9 and schedule 11 look to kind of underscore doing that and reducing the powers and abilities of lower-tier governments to make more of those decisions.

These are a few of the areas that I really wanted to dig into today. I'll come back to the fact that we also see, still, some of the other investments and costs continued in this statement. We know that there was this $28.9 million private jet on the books earlier in the year, and we still haven't seen whether there was any money that was recovered around the forced sale of that and what has happened subsequently.

1650

We know that there has been spending of a record number on ads. I think it was $117 million last year. I can't wait for the Auditor General's report this week. I guess we'll get to have a good glimpse into what the spending on advertising has been since then.

And then, unfortunately, we saw public spending on hotel stays around the hotel scandal earlier in the summer as well. I think about every decision in here. I think about that $500 a second that we're putting just on the interest on the debt, and I think about those choices around spending $500 to $1,000 on a hotel room at the same time. I think we could be using the money a little bit better in this province.

With that, I think that I am going to wrap up by just saying what I really do see missing in this budget is that there's really no net new help to address the cost of living for families. We've been proposing many other options for how we might be able to do that. I don't see anything in the current budget. I also don't see net new support for workers that have been hurt by tariffs. No question, as I travelled along, especially in some of the border communities this last year, I definitely heard examples of how families are hurting, and we're going to need to be investing in retraining and supporting them through that.

I will also say that this is where mental health care really comes into play. I remember talking to a mayor in a community where they just lost thousands of jobs, actually, and the ripple effect in that community was pretty immediate. And then, yes, the restaurants were emptied, less purchases being made, fewer groceries being purchased. But then we saw that, actually, the mental health needs started to increase.

So we've got $500 million less spending planned on health care in this plan, but yet we're not going to be there for people at a time when the loss of jobs is having a tremendous impact, but also the need for that safety net to be there around their health care is not going to be there. I think that the government could really start to emphasize more how investing in those things is actually an investment in people, but it's also an investment in their future economic prosperity as well.

I also didn't see, sadly, again, another opportunity in here to really address the impact for students that we've been seeing. I know we're going to be talking about OSAP in another bill, but, again, there could have been an earlier opportunity to make some adjustments in these budget measures as well.

Then, finally, I don't see any new housing measures even as the housing starts are starting to fall. I care a lot about understanding what's happening in homelessness in this province. We see that it continues to rise. I think that we need to be starting to think seriously about how we stop people from losing their housing in the first place. What measures are in here to be able to help to address the rising costs of rents? I really don't see anything in this fall economic statement that tells us that we're going to get more serious working with our municipal partners on how to address that.

So with that, I think I'm going to end this debate and say I hope that our next budget, our next discussion about the budget will paint a different picture. I think that, again, I continue to worry about this rising deficit while, at the same time, we've had $4-billion funds being set aside and not used by this government while we decide to invest less in education and we decide to invest less in health care.

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

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I wonder if the member can speak a little bit about the impact of private health care.

From my understanding, you ran a hospital. I hear from a lot of hospital operators that they don't have the funding to make sure that operating rooms are open and can do more procedures at a better cost than moving money into the private sector. What do you think about the privatization of our health care system?

Ms. Lee Fairclough: Thank you very much for the question. I'm really worried about this. On one hand, we've got constant pressure on our health care system. The demands for care have been increasing. We knew they would; we've known this for 30 years. But meanwhile, we've got a government that's willing to pay three times as much for the same care in a private environment versus a public environment. And then just say, as we've seen as well—I will just argue that on the primary care front, yes, we're making investments now, but that's to fix a problem of the creation of this government as well. So what's happened? Emergency departments are overflowing, hallways are full and then the solution has been, "Oh, let's create these outside clinics to be able to take off some of the burden, but we'll pay them three times as much to do the same care." It's outrageous.

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

Hon. Mike Harris: It's an interesting conversation that you've opened the door to here, because you and I have worked very closely over several years with St. Mary's hospital. If we're talking about "privatization of health care," you worked at a hospital where there was a partnership with private organizations around cataract surgeries, and I know that we had the opportunity to celebrate that many times. So I guess I'm a little bit confused as to how we could go from a few years ago to say those are really good things, but now I hear you stand up in the House and say, "You know what? Maybe it's not."

Ms. Lee Fairclough: Actually—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Response? I recognize the member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore—through the Chair. Thank you.

Ms. Lee Fairclough: Through you. Thanks for the question. You're right; we did work on that, and I happened to believe that since that arrangement was set up, a new deal was negotiated. So I feel very strongly that we're not going to pay more for something in the public versus the private system.

I don't want to speak out of turn—I mean, those are contracts. But I can tell you that any rates that would have been used—and those ophthalmologists worked at St. Mary's hospital and then they performed some things in the clinic, but I didn't pay a cent more than what we would be paying to our public institution for the same care. So that member might want to check what is happening in other communities, because what I understand is there are a whole lot of other clinics that have negotiated very different rates, and I'll just leave it at that.

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

Mr. Chris Glover: I want to thank the member for her comments today. The FAO released a report yesterday that said that this government is on course to never balance the budget in the foreseeable future and that by 2050, we'll have a $1.5-trillion debt in the province. It's already the largest sub-sovereign debt in the world, and it's already heading for a trillion dollars next year. Yet at the same time, they're bankrupting our colleges, our schools, our universities and our hospitals.

How is it this government can be so fiscally irresponsible that they'll run up that massive debt without even providing basic funding for our essential services?

Ms. Lee Fairclough: Yes, thank you very much. I mean, it is a bit alarming, isn't it? It's more than a bit, that we're going to see—given what the FAO statement said yesterday.

I mean, I think that what we need, actually, is just more creativity on one front, which is around growth and productivity so that we can actually be generating more revenue. I don't think that the plans that have been put in place to achieve that by this government have borne much fruit. And then, at the same time, we see a lot of waste in areas that I don't think anybody wants to be investing in, like a tunnel under the 401, or let's—

Mr. Chris Glover: Ontario Place.

Ms. Lee Fairclough: I was just going to mention—in the good member's riding, Ontario Place.

But also decisions that were made a couple of years ago, like moving up the accessibility of alcohol by a year at the cost of a billion dollars—I heard a lot about that all over this province, I can tell you.

So it comes down to, I think, making sure the economy is going to work but then also, let's reduce the waste that we're—

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

Question?

1700

Mr. Jonathan Tsao: I would like to ask my honourable colleague—I know she has travelled the length and width of our province over the past few months and had an opportunity to speak to real Ontarians who are having real struggles—if this was her FES, if this was her opportunity to actually help people who need it, what would she do differently?

Ms. Lee Fairclough: Thank you for the question from my colleague. It is true: I have talked to thousands and thousands and thousands of people across this province, and they are hurting in their day-to-day. They are concerned about losing jobs. They are concerned about young people in their lives, whether it's their sons, their grandsons, their granddaughters or whoever it may be. They are concerned about their future.

So the first thing that I would think about is, is there enough in here to support young people in lifting them up? We know there's the OSAP scandal that just suddenly made it that much harder for all of them as well while they're trying to pursue a future, but I think that was one thing that really stood out for me.

The other one? I cannot skip the opportunity to say I thought schedule 1 might actually address stopping advertising for online gambling. That was the chance to put the schedule right in here in the budget measures, and they chose not to.

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

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: You talked about being fiscally responsible. I wonder if there is a laundry list of vanity projects in Toronto that are a waste of time and money.

Ms. Lee Fairclough: Yes, I think that there's a long list of ways that we would invest things differently.

Certainly, the contracts and the management around Ontario Place have come up at several hundred million. When the Premier suddenly said, "It's time to build a convention centre on the waterfront," I thought, "Wait a minute. Can we get wait times down in emergency departments before we go too far on that front?" The tunnel under the 401—I would say for all the northern members, you might want to re-evaluate that, because they're looking for some attention on Highways 11 and 17 to make that a safer route as well, before we get into that.

Then in terms of not just vanity or pet projects, that $4 billion that was put aside to actually help the economy—I'm shocked that we didn't get more from it. I think that there are lots of businesses across Ontario that would feel the same, not understanding what it was meant for. I met companies—and I think about industries like the clean tech industry. This could actually be an area of real economic growth for us, but they don't seem to be a priority anywhere in the discussions of this government.

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

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I'd like to ask a question of the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

I think that there's the Rexdale Community Health Centre, which serves the constituents of Etobicoke–Lakeshore. My understanding is that the Rexdale Community Health Centre received $4.3 million under the provincial primary care action plan and can, with that, attach approximately 10,475 patients to primary care.

I understand that they're well on their way to that number, and I invite the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore to join me in congratulating Rexdale Community Health Centre on their success in getting to the goal of 10,475.

Ms. Lee Fairclough: Thank you very much to the member for Essex for pointing out that fact from the government.

If I'm not mistaken, the Rexdale Community Health Centre is in the Premier's riding, actually, so we can celebrate for the Premier's constituents and riding; I imagine there might be a few from my riding that would travel that far north to access primary care.

But my comment on primary care earlier was this: I used to track that measure in my day job leading into 2018, the attachment of patients to a family physician or primary care provider, and it has fallen off under your leadership.

You're fixing the problem. I'm glad we're fixing it. I'd finish the job too on team-based care.

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

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I'm proud to rise, as always, representing the good people of Kitchener Centre, no matter their income, no matter where they're from, no matter their influence.

I also want to thank the GPO team, who punch above their weight. Stacey Danckert gets a shout-out. She's our one-woman legislative team and goes above and beyond all the time to make sure we can show up with good statistics so we can speak with honesty.

I do want to thank the government. The investment in primary care is substantial, and we see it making a benefit in our community. The twinning of the GO train tracks and getting people more access to transit has been helpful, and the investment in youth hubs and HART hubs and reduction of development charges are all very good measures.

I do want to start off by framing my conversation about this budget. I do want to talk about homelessness, education, energy and climate, and the answer to that is a wealth tax.

I want to start off by saying I did grow up Catholic, but I am a proud member of the Grand River Unitarian Congregation in Kitchener. I'm happy to see leaders in the United States leading from a place with their values, with love and compassion. So I want to start by paraphrasing James Talarico. He said, "What would Jesus do?" What would Jesus do if faced with a tax system that favours the rich over the poor? What would Jesus do about a health care system that requires patients to use a GoFundMe page to save their lives? What would Jesus do about an education system that leads kids with special education needs out of school and under-supported? What would Jesus do about investments in a justice system that aims to put more people behind bars, especially those who are homeless, especially those who are sick? And what would Jesus do about a system, an environment, a government that puts the profits of the already rich over the planet and what it needs in a planet that sustains us? Jesus would not pray, judge or misinform, but instead disrupt the systems that perpetuate these injustices, and not just do charity, but get rid of the need for charity by disrupting these systems, because charity should be unnecessary.

It made me think of charity as I visited Covenant House yesterday. This is an amazing place that helps kids who are homeless or at risk of being homeless, and 75% of their budget comes from fundraising. So instead of the government stepping forward and preventing our youngest, most vulnerable teens from becoming homeless, they have bake sales to fund these things.

I want to start off with homelessness. In Waterloo region, last year, we had a doubling of homelessness in our seniors. In my riding and in the Waterloo region, for every affordable unit we build, we lose 39 in the private sector. This government has done more to make people homeless by making it easier to evict. Seven days, now, is all that you need to be late on your rent, and you will be evicted. We know—those of us who've worked front-line in social services—that Ontario Works, EI, ODSP do not arrive in seven days. So for every one of the 50% of Canadians who are living paycheque to paycheque, if they lose their job or they get a gambling addiction, we will see more people homeless. The number one cause of homelessness in adults is eviction.

We should be doing more to ensure that people can stay housed by ensuring that our housing allowance for Ontario Works can come and rise to what it actually costs to rent a room. With $385 a month, you can rent almost no room,

anywhere in the province of Ontario. So this is why we will continue to see people homeless—85,000 people are homeless now, and that is set to rise to 300,000.

We should be investing in housing allowances. We should be investing in the Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit to prevent people from being homeless, because people get very sick when they're homeless, and they end up in our justice system, emergency rooms, couch-surfing. They lose their kids. They stay in violent relationships because they can't afford anywhere to live.

I want to talk about education. I just got off the phone earlier with a teacher in my riding who said the conditions in her school are not okay, that there are more and more kids who run, who are aggressive and violent because they don't have the emotional tools to self-regulate. These are kids in kindergarten. We cannot blame a child in kindergarten for not having the emotional literacy to cope with the demands of school, but we have not done our job to find out what the root causes of this behaviour are, and we definitely haven't funded the supports in our school.

Last year, when I was talking about estimates in our committee, $500 million went unspent for the Ministry of Education. Think of where our schools would be right now if that $500 million was spent on making sure sick days were fulfilled. Most boards balance their budget by not filling sick days. That means those are classrooms without teachers, kids without special education support, or kids who are left to stay home because that educational assistant doesn't have the support they need to attend school.

1710

This is unacceptable. We need to invest in our schools, maintain—and put it above the rate of inflation so we can repair the backlog and we can properly staff our schools.

I also want to talk about energy. This government is hooked on nuclear. Nuclear is the most expensive—that and gas are the most expensive forms of energy. We are doubling down on SMRs, which is an American plan that uses enriched American uranium.

This does not create benefit to Canadian businesses, and we know that that is going to drive higher energy costs for people across Ontario. We saw a 30% increase in our energy bills last fall, and I know that OPG is asking for a 70% increase. This doesn't make sense. If you look at the trend lines, those forms of energy are always over budget and off their time frame.

Look what's happening to Darlington right now. When those nuclear plants go offline, guess what we use? It's 24/7 gas plants, though that's not what gas plants were for, and we just ended up buying more gas from the Americans. Why are we giving Donald Trump our money, especially to buy things like liquid natural gas, which pollutes our air, ruins our environment and wrecks any chance of a livable future for our kids?

We need to be investing in cheaper renewables. The price of batteries is dropping off a cliff. It is the one form of energy that is getting cheaper and cheaper every year, and we can't afford to wait. The climate crisis is happening now, and the north in Canada is getting warmer faster than the rest of the world. We're going to see that this winter. We're going to see the impact on our tourism industry when we don't have enough snow. We saw the impact of that in Toronto; it was $4 billion worth of damages in three hours from a flood, and we have done very little to mitigate for flood.

We got rid of the Build Back Better fund, for example, that helped Bracebridge. The member from Muskoka would know that Bracebridge had the 15% to build back better, and so when they flooded this year, it was not a state of emergency. That doesn't make the news. Maybe you want the state of emergency so that you can look like a hero and come in when we have a wildfire, when we have a flood, and look like you're saving the day when these things are preventable. We saw that in Bracebridge, and we need to adapt and invest in that adaptation now.

That's why we need to tax the wealthy. There are 1,550 people who have wealth of over $100 million. A 5% tax would mean $27 billion for the coffers. That would get rid of the debt and properly fund ending homelessness, education etc.—the OSAP scandal. What would that mean to those 1,550 multi-millionaires? They might not get an extra yacht, right? Their money barely even stays in the country. They put it all into holding companies.

We wonder why Ontario has a productivity problem. It's because we're taxing wages at a far higher rate than we tax wealth. That is unacceptable. We have a progressive tax rate, and it drops off a cliff when it comes to billionaires. We're subsidizing Galen Weston's electricity, and we're letting him off the hook. If we had a wealth tax, his wealth would go from $22.7 billion to $22.5 billion. That is not making life more expensive for Ontarians. It's making life more expensive for people who have enough.

I appreciate that people here don't like the word "tax," but there is a room for tax, and that is a wealth tax.

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

Mr. Ric Bresee: I appreciate the comments from the member from Kitchener Centre today. She's very passionate about her thoughts on these things.

I do have to pose a question if I may, Speaker. The idea that batteries produce energy is a little bit misunderstood, I think. Batteries store energy, absolutely, but they are not a stand-alone method of producing energy. Nuclear is a stand-alone method of producing energy, and for our economy, for the residents of this province, we need energy stability.

So through you, Madam Speaker, will the member agree that having a stable energy network across the entire province is a goal worth seeking and that this government is achieving?

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I'm not saying we get rid of the nuclear that we have. We have enough nuclear for that stability. We sell our hydroelectricity at a fraction to the United States. We don't make good use of our evening energy, our excess nuclear.

I just talked to a gentleman yesterday who bought a battery for himself so that he could use the overnight rate, the cheap rate, store energy, and then get all of his appliances operating off of his battery during the day. It's all

about energy optimization. We could get rid of a nuclear plant by having proper energy storage in batteries.

When you look at Texas, they had a big catastrophe when there was an ice storm because of gas. The wind was blowing then. The wind was blowing when they had that ice storm. If they had had batteries to harness that wind energy—it's all about finding a balance. It's all about finding a mix, and batteries are the cheapest when compared to nuclear and gas.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, through you to the member, I appreciate the commentary you have on energy and the bill as a whole. Could you address what you see as the consequences of the province's reshaping—in some ways, I think profoundly damaging—conservation authorities?

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I think it's going to take away that local understanding. When you have such vast areas, we're not going to be able to zero in and properly protect the natural infrastructure that we know is actually very valuable.

People think of a swamp as if it's disposable, that it doesn't matter, that we can pave over it. I've seen the erosion because of land use planning decisions etc. We're paving over the recharge area. We're jeopardizing the groundwater in my area, for example. We're going to see greater impacts of flooding because we're jeopardizing the ecosystems, the watersheds and the wetlands. I'm just using wetlands as one example.

When we look at the natural infrastructure, it's the cheapest, best way to protect those areas when it comes to the impact of climate crisis because as it warms, more moisture gets in the air, and we're going to see major downfall of water. We want to keep that water in the ground so we have something to drink.

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

Mr. Rob Cerjanec: I know the member from Kitchener Centre knows how passionate I am about innovation, so my question to you would be around green innovation. What can we do here in Ontario to grow our economy, but do that in an environmentally responsible way?

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: Well, the funny thing is people often say—I've heard it yelled at me—that because I care about renewable energy, I don't care about jobs. When I think about the green tech sector, it's small and medium companies. We know that when you invest in small and medium companies, that money stays in your community. If you think of a dollar store, it comes into your community and it siphons all the excess money that you could possibly have and sends it to the States. That means that other grocery store that's independent and from your community goes out of business.

When we get rid of small and medium companies, we lose people who are our neighbours, people who buy things in our downtowns, people whose kids go to our schools. It's a tax base.

We really should be looking at renewables as an economic resilience measure. If you look at countries like Australia, they've invested in renewables, they get three hours of free energy, and it's built a lot of resilience among small and medium businesses instead of these mega-corporations who buy yachts and send half of their money out of the country.

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

Mr. Dave Smith: It's a little bit earlier than I thought I was going to stand up; I guess that's because the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore only took 10 minutes of her 20 minutes. That's okay. I was kind of hoping I could finish up the day today on a Thursday and it would end on me, but I'm going to run out of speaking time before we run out of clock tonight. It's unfortunate that I didn't get the last word in. My wife tells me that I want to get the last word in all the time, but that's not going to be the case tonight.

When we look at what we're talking about, though, Bill 143, this is the fall economic statement. And I have heard about nine hours of debate in second reading and a little bit more than five hours so far, so we're 14 or 15 hours now into it. What I think has been really interesting is that there has been some confusion about what an economic statement is. I've heard from the opposition members talking about this, "We need to be spending more money here, and we need to be putting more in there, and I'm not seeing things in this mini-budget" and language like that.

1720

The reality is a budget, that we put out in the spring, is a comprehensive financial plan. It's typically for the year, but it has a multi-year view. A fiscal update, or an economic statement—really, it's a shorter progress report that updates the forecast and the financial projections from a budget. And I find it really interesting because we have about 25 different schedules in this, and what I've heard from the opposition members repeatedly is, "We need to spend more on this. We need to spend more on that. We need to put more money into this." And then I also hear from them, "And the deficit is too big." I struggle with that concept because I hear things like, "Oh, you know what? You're borrowing too much money, but we've got to spend more money."

What the overall theme, though, of the fall economic statement is is protecting Ontario in this global uncertainty, what the economy is doing. And yes, we put some projections out back in March. We had some expectations on things, what the world was going to look like, and that all changed when we look at September, when the gentleman—and I use that word very loosely—in the United States stood up and he said that Canada had it too good and he was going to implement some more tariffs on us and throw some more things on us and make it more difficult and really try to pull industry out of Ontario. He's attacked the steel industry. He's attacked the auto industry. He's attacked a lot of the things that have made Ontario as good a province as it is.

What we need to be doing is we need to be making sure that we're continuing to support those industries. We need to make sure that we're doing the things here in Ontario to

protect that. The reason that we do that—I'll get into a little bit of the technical side, and I hope I don't lose anyone; there are a lot of things that get into play. Effectively though, Ontario generates about 13.2% of our GDP in government revenue. So, if the economy is not doing well, our revenues are not as good. When the economy is doing well, government revenues are higher, and we've seen that consistently over the eight-plus years that we have been in government. We have increased government revenue by a little bit more than $50 billion over those eight years, and how we've done it is by growing the economy.

Now, with the United States doing what they're doing, with President Trump attacking industry in Ontario the way that he has, it has put some of that economic growth in jeopardy, and we've had to make sure that we're doing things in a fiscally prudent manner. That has caused some concern, I'll call it, from the opposition. They have come at us. They've attacked us on these types of things: "Why are you doing this? Why are you running a deficit? Why are you not doing some of this? Why are you not spending money someplace else on all these things?" What we have looked at is, how do we make sure that we're putting the investment in the people of Ontario? How do we make sure that we're putting the investment in the industries in Ontario to keep them moving forward?

Yes, we did make an adjustment in what our growth projections are. The economy is not going to grow as fast as we had originally anticipated, but that's not to say that we're not focused on growing the economy.

We've had to make sure that we're protecting our industrial base. We have a program, $8.7 billion. It is in conjunction with the federal government. It's the Canada-Ontario action plan. And what is it for? It's for the steel industry. It's for the automotive industry. It's for critical minerals, like in the Ring of Fire. It's about making sure that Ontario's economy can continue to grow. There is a small short-term pain so that we end up having that long-term outlook.

Now, we've heard from some opposition members about the steel industry in Hamilton in particular and how an American company made the decision that they were going to lay off everybody at the Canadian division for it. I do find some irony in some of the language that comes from the NDP in particular about this, because they've stood up and they have said, rightly so, "We need to be protecting this industry. We need to make sure that these employees, that these unionized workers still have a job to go to." They gloss over the fact it's Cleveland-Cliffs, an American company, that owns it. They do gloss over that fact. They talk about the layoffs, and then they attack us.

The member from London North Centre referenced Staples in one of his speeches earlier today and the fact that the Ontario government was doing something with school boards that supported the 10,000 Canadian employees for a company that has US ownership. And yet, they stand up here and say, "Stelco"—which has American ownership—"we need to do something to support those 500 to 1,000 employees." You can't square that circle. Either you believe that you need to invest in Canadian employees or you don't. We're investing in Canadian companies. We're investing in Canadian employees. We're reducing red tape. We're making it easier for businesses to do business in Ontario.

Some 375 business-facing permits over the next three years are being reviewed. Why? Because that is a non-monetary reduction in cost. The expression is, "Time is money," so when a business spends less time having to do something, having to get something approved, that is money for that business. And what do they do with it? They reinvest it back into their workers. They reinvest it back into the people who are providing those services.

Now, we've also done an Ontario competitiveness tax cut as part of what we're doing to help the people of Ontario. It's $8 billion in provincial relief for businesses.

I'll go back to something that the NDP have talked about, and that's the layoffs—the layoffs at Stelco. If a business is not doing well, they lay people off. If the government of Ontario is supporting those businesses and those businesses continue to do well, they don't lay off people. People still have jobs. So I do find it kind of ironic when I hear from the opposition—both the Liberals and the NDP have talked about this—that we're providing relief for businesses, we're not providing relief for individuals. That's not true. When we're providing relief for a business and the business is able to continue to succeed and the business is actually able to grow and they're hiring more people, they're not laying off people, that's actually helping the average person.

I'm going to use someone in particular in my riding, Havelock Metal. They received a grant from us to do an expansion. They make metal roofing. There is a company that absolutely should be hit by the US tariffs because they deal with construction material and metal. What they have done very, very successfully is they have adjusted their clientele and they're predominately in the domestic market. They've been able to grow; they have an expansion. And they have an expansion because they're focused on Canada, they're focused on Ontario first—a perfect example of what companies should do; a perfect example of what the Ontario government sees as a positive investment.

1730

We're providing them with some funding so that they can do an expansion, so that they can provide that construction material for other Canadian companies and allow for that Canadian growth, and they hire more people as a result of it. That is good fiscal policy. That is what we should be doing, positioning companies so that the companies that are in advanced manufacturing, companies that are in the defence industry, companies that are dealing with critical minerals can continue to grow.

We're also removing interprovincial trade barriers. We've talked about free trade. Canada historically has not had free trade between provinces; we're making sure that we are. We have removed—and we are the only province that has done this—all of the exemptions that are there so that we can work with any province. We can make it easier for Ontario product, Ontario services to be used or

purchased in other provinces. We've made it easier for other provinces to do business with us.

The Parliamentary Budget Office federally has looked at this and said that if we had free trade across all provinces, it's $200 billion worth of trade. That is a massive growth, and Ontario is leading the way in it because we recognize that by doing those things, it strengthens our economy. And when we strengthen our economy and our economy grows, tax revenue for the province grows without raising taxes. Think about that.

When we first got elected, government revenues were about $150 billion. Government revenues now are well over $200 billion, and we removed the gas tax—nine cents a litre. We took the tolls off of the 412, the 418 and the 407 East. Those are savings for people. We implemented One Fare, so if you're in the GTA area, you pay once for transit and you can use multiple forms of transit—$1,600 a person on average is what that is saving.

Now, the opposition will say, "It's good. However, you're reducing your revenue." It's an interesting concept. When you give people more money to spend, people will spend that money. When that happens, I, in the Ministry of Finance, get more revenue.

Because when you're buying more things, I have retail sales tax. When we have more products sold, I have more money coming in through the retail sales tax. When I have multiple companies having more products sold, those companies have to service their clientele. How do they do that? They hire more people, so I get more income tax. I have more people who have more money to spend, so I get more retail sales tax, so I don't have to raise taxes. We see that growth in the economy, and that is what raises government revenue.

It is a really novel approach apparently because we're the ones who see it, but the opposition oppose it. They say things like, "Oh no, you can't cut the tax on business. That's bad." I'm doing a PhD right now, and the PhD is in corporate income tax and the effect on the economy. Can you grow your economy through taxation policy?

Here's an interesting statistic from 27 different jurisdictions in the European Union: From 2002 to 2018, that 16-year period, when they saw a 1% reduction in corporate income tax, they saw a 0.78% growth in the GDP, which actually resulted in higher taxes going back to the jurisdiction because the GDP grew. It grew by a much higher amount than what the tax cut was.

When you look at it, how do you grow your economy? How do you grow your tax base? You can grow your tax base and the amount of revenue for the government by not raising taxes, by giving breaks to people, by doing things like reducing the cost of business by $12 billion a year. That's money that gets put back into your economy. That's money that goes back into the employees. That's money that goes back into purchasing.

When we took the licence plate fee off, the $120 per car—this is an interesting stat, and all of you, feel free to look it up in past budgets—we heard from the opposition that it's a $900-million reduction in government revenue. Well, go look at what the retail sales tax was year over year that first year. It was about a $1.5-billion increase in retail sales tax because more people had more money to spend, and they spent it. These are the types of policies that make a difference.

When we look at housing affordability, $8.8 billion over 10 years—that's what's being invested in it. When we cut the 13% HST on new home builds, we saw an influx of new homes being sold. Between that and the development charge reductions, we're seeing about $200,000 less for a new home. That makes a very big difference in the affordability for someone.

Now, I've had people say to me, "Okay, that's fine. You've reduced the price of the new home, but the first home that someone is in, the existing home, has gone down as well." Okay, but it's the delta between the two. If I've taken $200,000 off the price of the new home and I've only taken $150,000 off the price of your existing home, you're $50,000 ahead when you move from that first home to the second home. It has made it more affordable for you; your mortgage is less.

When we look at what we've been doing, when we look at the fiscal update, we have that plan to help businesses, to help workers, to help companies, to help individuals, and that's what we're doing.

We are in very unprecedented global uncertainty because of what has happened in the United States. I know the opposition has said, "Oh, but you know that has only been the last 18 months or so. It's not that big of a deal. You're making a bigger deal of it." We have made the investments in Ontario to make sure that Ontario continues to grow, to make sure that Ontario has that economy that is moving forward, to make sure that the people of Ontario have an opportunity to succeed, that they can continue working.

We know that we're going to have some more tough times because of what has happened with the United States. We know that with businesses, they need to have a stable and predictable environment, and that's not the case right now because of that uncertainty. But we also know that this is a short-term pain that we will weather, and you can see that with what our fall economic statement is. We've made some adjustments. We are moving forward. We are doing the things that we need to do to protect the people of Ontario.

I'm proud of the fact that we have a Minister of Finance who has stood up and said, "I'm going to make sure that money is being invested in the areas it needs to be invested to make sure that our economy continues to grow so that we continue to have the social safety network that we all depend on." We need that revenue in order to do it, and that is what our fiscal update is actually doing.

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

MPP Robin Lennox: Thank you so much to the member opposite for that. The member opposite brought up Stelco and the issue of corporate subsidies and when we do step in. Interestingly, in the third quarter of this year, Cleveland-Cliffs actually said they had their strongest quarter of the year, the third quarter of the year, and then they were also at the same time laying off 500 employees.

Cleveland-Cliffs had gone on the record saying they actually bought Stelco because they wanted to undermine the competitors of Canadian steel and benefit their US-based company.

1740

I guess in that context, when you're dealing with potentially bad-faith US owners rather than investing hundreds of millions without strings attached, we had proposed, what about considering public ownership? Because in that way, if you're going to invest and you're going to take on some risk, why aren't you taking a stake in the profit as well?

Mr. Dave Smith: I appreciate the question. I'm going to start off with this: I am a market economist. I believe in a free market. I'm not a Marxist. I don't believe that the government should be owning any of the industry. I believe that when a government does that, you're putting your thumb on the scales and you're causing more problems than you're actually solving.

Now, when we look at the Stelco situation, the member opposite is right to make some questions around some of that, but I would also like to point out that it's actually the federal Liberals that approved the sale of that. It's the federal Liberals who made the deal with Cleveland-Cliffs on it and put in what they thought were the appropriate protections. And it was the federal Liberal government who stepped forward and said, "If Cleveland-Cliffs continues down this path, we're going to take them to court. We're going to sue them." Because it was a federal deal; it was not a provincial deal.

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

Mr. Rob Cerjanec: My question won't come as a surprise to the member from Peterborough–Kawartha. I want to ask about schedule 7 of the bill around the Capital Investment Plan Act, that the CEO of the Ontario Financing Authority can exempt records under their control as far back as January 1, 2025, from disclosure under freedom of information.

My question to the member is, why now? Why are these FOI exemptions needed now if they haven't been in place for many years?

Mr. Dave Smith: I do think I addressed it once already in question period, but I guess the member either wasn't here or wasn't listening. I'm not supposed to say that they weren't here, so in all likelihood the member wasn't listening because obviously he didn't understand it. That's why he's bringing it back up again.

One of the challenges that we have on any type of procurement process—and the financial authority has part of that process—is that when you have intellectual property that can be FOIed that is not in the public domain, you create a competitive imbalance when you do that. You put companies in a position where they're not actually going to be able to go through that process with the provincial government.

We want to make sure that we're not opening up a hole so that someone could get trade information that is not appropriate.

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

Mr. Chris Glover: I was just listening to the member from Peterborough talk about how it was the federal Liberals who allowed Stelco to be bought by Cleveland-Cliffs, and that's true.

But in 2007, Stelco had been a Canadian company for 100 years, and the Harper Conservative government allowed it to be bought by US Steel, who wanted to buy it and shut it down because it was their competition. The Harper Conservative government also allowed American and other corporations to buy Inco, Dofasco, Algoma, Bauer Hockey, Tim Hortons. Just about every major Canadian corporation was bought out by American or international corporations, and so we lost the ownership of all those corporations under a Conservative free market government.

Do you not realize now that this was a huge mistake and put us in much graver danger for our sovereignty and for our economy now that we've got Trump in the States?

Mr. Dave Smith: Perhaps I could have a little indulgence to talk about political parties. The NDP has a close association with the federal NDP. In fact, I believe in their constitution it lays out that the federal NDP is actually the head of it. The Liberal Party has a close tie to the federal Liberal Party as well—so close right now that their current leader was the right-hand man for Justin Trudeau. The Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario is the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario. We have no ties to any other political party anywhere else in the country of Canada.

So if you want to ask me about what another political party did 20 years before I ever got into politics, my answer is going to have to be, I have no affiliation with them. I have no idea why they did what they did. That's not me or my party.

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

Hon. Matthew Rae: It's a pleasure to rise to ask my colleague from Peterborough–Kawartha—the member from Ajax can still stand up—and ask him about, obviously, concerns in my own area of Perth–Wellington around Donald Trump's unjustified tariffs. I really wanted him to expand on some of the remarks he made in his comments this afternoon about how our government is there supporting our large and small businesses and helping them weather this economic storm that we are currently in in the province of Ontario.

Mr. Dave Smith: I want to thank the member from Perth–Wellington for that question. We have put in a number of programs that help industry: the $12 billion in annual savings for it, the Ontario competitiveness tax cut, accelerating the capital—sorry, I've lost my train of thought on that one. We're making it easier for industry to make that investment and then receive that funding or that tax break as a result of it. They're not amortizing it over multiple years; they actually get the tax break in the very first year for it.

These are the types of things that make a big difference for industry, and when industry has that additional money,

they reinvest back into their employees. They are doing the things that the people of Ontario need to make sure that they have those jobs.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Before I go to further questions, I will remind the House that I attempt to do a rotation, but I require the members to stand to be identified, and that is how I recognize them.

I recognize the member from University–Rosedale.

Ms. Jessica Bell: My question is to the member from Peterborough–Kawartha. I sat in committee when we were debating the fall economic statement. Now, the Conservatives have always been extremely stingy when it comes to investing in affordable housing and supportive housing to end the crisis of homelessness, but I did not think that they would actively obstruct the construction of affordable housing, and that's exactly what happened with this bill and in committee.

By removing the property tax exemption that affordable housing providers can access moving forward on all new developments, you're doing two terrible things: You're making it more expensive for affordable housing providers to maintain a building, which means they'll have to raise the rent on low-income people. And, number two, you will make it much harder for affordable housing projects to complete that small miracle of cobbling together the financing needed to get a project off the ground.

Why on earth did you do it?

Mr. Dave Smith: I appreciate the question opposite, and I'd like to point out that, as the member has said, she was in the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs. She was there for the public delegations. She was there also for the clause-by-clause.

The member opposite has said that this is a terrible piece of legislation but did not offer a single amendment—not a single amendment. The member opposite can stand there and say, "Oh, we're going to vote against it"—did not provide any meaningful input into what we could do to make it better according to her, because she said that it was so horrible.

Rather than take the effort of saying, "Here's something that you could modify. Here's something you could change. Here's something that we believe would make this a stronger piece of legislation," she washed her hands and said, "I'm not voting for it."

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I'll go to the member from Ajax for a very quick question.

Mr. Rob Cerjanec: Just on this very same topic, because I did offer an amendment in the area around affordable housing providers and the property tax exemption, my question is, what is the government's plan and message to all of the organizations that wrote in who were concerned?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): The member for Peterborough–Kawartha can answer very quickly.

Mr. Dave Smith: Time is up.

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

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: I'm proud to rise today to spend a few minutes to speak about the fall economic statement, Bill 143, also known as the mini-budget. Currently, it does not recognize the actual needs of what Ontarians are going through, which is actually hitting a breaking point. There's something profoundly wrong, Speaker, about the economic priorities of a government that does not understand the hardships that Ontarians are facing today.

1750

This is a government that tells Ontarians that there's no money for public services that they desperately need. This is a government that says there's no money for education, universities or colleges, that there's no money to actually build the affordable housing that will end homelessness. This is a government that is saying they just don't have enough to even meet the staffing ratios needed for safe nursing and working conditions, and yet the government is able find money for their own political priorities. Whether it's making announcements around questionable procurement decisions, making priorities around corporate subsidies, paying high-powered consultants, using advertising dollars from the public to put themselves in a favourable light, this is a government that is leaving taxpayers asking many serious questions about what they're getting for their tax dollars. That to me, Speaker, is the central problem of the fall economic statement. It simply misses the moment.

We all know that the deficit is too high and that the debt is now rising even more. We recognize that Ontarians are not getting enough in return for their money, and this is about priorities. There are members across that have tried to provide lectures, I would say—speaking in a tone that only they seem to know how economics work. As a small business owner, as someone who ran several businesses, I would say that I don't think everybody here has actually had to make payroll. I can tell you that it is very difficult and certainly not everyone has done that.

I want to say, Speaker, that for workers that are currently unemployed, they're going to find very little comfort in this fall economic statement. For the young people who can't find a job, this fall economic statement will leave them yearning and wanting more. I think about the people that this statement—the mini-budget—leaves behind. Families are unable to pay their rent or afford their mortgage, seniors are watching their savings evaporate with the high cost of living—even the basic essentials are out of reach for them—students are graduating with debt and uncertainty and the people who rely on public services are increasingly stretched ever so thin and asking themselves how they are going to make it in Ontario.

We can spend a lot of time talking about the GDP, and certainly there are moments for that. I don't have endless time today, Speaker, as we come to a conclusion on Thursday afternoon, but I do want to focus and dedicate my remarks to those hard-working Ontarians, and I want to begin by talking about the government's own numbers because I think that's a very good place for us to jump off from.

The fall economic statement is projecting a deficit of $16.9 billion for 2026-27, and Ontario's total debt is on

track to exceed half a trillion dollars. Yesterday, the Financial Accountability Officer was looking out even further on the horizon and now projecting that Ontario's debt is going to remain on the books until 2050, which contradicts the government's claims that they will be able to balance the books by 2029-30, but, more importantly, looking out on the horizon, according to the FAO, this government is committing this province and all its citizens to $1.5 trillion in debt—$1.5 trillion, Speaker; the number of zeros on that is really hard to fathom. As citizens are struggling to just do their very best to survive in an increasingly expensive Ontario, they're asking themselves, "How did this government became so incompetent, and when did they give up on its citizens?"

The fiscal reality can't be solved here or captured with just a simple slogan and sound bite at every single budget announcement. It has to be demonstrated through real results, and the results we're seeing from the government are quite dismal: 700,000 Ontarians are unemployed, and for three straight months, this government has recorded job loss. People are literally picking up, with their degrees and working experience, and they're leaving Ontario because they don't see a future here for them. We are literally losing our regional competitiveness, never mind global competitiveness, if you can't even keep them in Ontario. And the numbers are so bad that not only have we lost jobs in Ontario, under this incompetent government, for the last three months consecutively; it has been on track in the same direction for now almost 12 months.

The challenge that we have here is that we have a government that has no jobs strategy, that has no understanding about the hardships that Ontarians are facing.

The provincial government is now dragging down the national average on unemployment because our numbers are so low. We're now competing for bottom ranking with Atlantic provinces: New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Labrador. At one point in time, you really had to think how far back you'd have to go to be competing with Atlantic provinces for unemployment numbers, and yet here we are—Ontario, Canada's financial heart and capital, what we believe is the economic engine of this country. Now we are a have-not province, under nine years of Conservative government rule.

So allow me to just say, as I get ready to close—because I don't have the time, as I mentioned. But I want to just stress to everyone in the House, and in particular to the government, that we have a job to do, and that job is to make sure that we invest in the services to support the residents we all proudly serve.

And to the government: Borrowing is not a solution onward and forever. It is irresponsible to continue to grow the debt and deficit in the way that you are.

Governments need to build hospitals and schools and transit systems, but we need to do it in a responsible fashion. And the way this government has spent money is entirely irresponsible.

We've seen this government blow through a billion dollars on its scandals—Skills Development Fund. Ontario Place, $2.24 billion—something that no one asked for. The science centre relocation is costing Ontarians a billion dollars, when it's standing proudly and empty, still. OSAP—the government has blown through a billion dollars. The Skills Development Fund—another billion dollars. In one year alone, it spent $112 million on vanity ads promoting itself.

So if you want to talk about what a budget should contain, a budget should contain the values and priorities of the government, who is acting on behalf of the people. And I tell you, Speaker, this government does not understand the priorities of Ontarians. This government is failing Ontarians at every twist and turn. This fall economic statement is the problem, and it is all out for everyone to see.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Seeing the time on the clock, it is now time for private members' public business.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

Report continues in volume B.

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
Temporary Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes par intérim: Jeffrey Haskins

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	
Beattie, Jeff (PC)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	
Bell, Jessica (NDP)	University—Rosedale	
Bethlenfalvy, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (PC)	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 du troisième parti
Brady, Bobbi Ann (IND)	Haldimand—Norfolk	
Bresee, Ric (PC)	Hastings—Lennox and Addington	Deputy Speaker / Vice-Président Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Burch, Jeff (NDP)	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	
Calandra, Hon. / L'hon. Paul (PC)	Markham—Stouffville	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Cerjanec, Rob (LIB)	Ajax	
Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Raymond Sung Joon (PC)	Scarborough North / Scarborough-Nord	Minister for Seniors and Accessibility / Ministre des Services aux aînés et de l'Accessibilité
Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Stan (PC)	Willowdale	
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 du troisième parti
Cooper, Hon. / L'hon. Michelle (PC)	Eglinton—Lawrence	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associée délégué à la Santé mentale et à la Lutte contre les dépendances
Crawford, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)	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	
Downey, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte	Attorney General / Procureur général
Dunlop, Hon. / L'hon. Jill (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Minister of Emergency Preparedness and Response / Ministre de la Protection civile et de l'Intervention en cas d'urgence
Fairclough, Lee (LIB)	Etobicoke—Lakeshore	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Fedeli, Hon. / L'hon. Victor (PC)	Nipissing	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique, de la Création d'emplois et du Commerce
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Waterloo	
Firin, Mohamed (PC)	York South—Weston / York-Sud—Weston	
Flack, Hon. / L'hon. Rob (PC)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Premier / Premier ministre Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Leader, Third Party / Chef du troisième parti
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Première Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn (PC)	Newmarket—Aurora	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gilmour, Alexa (NDP)	Parkdale—High Park	
Glover, Chris (NDP)	Spadina—Fort York	
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Grewal, Hardeep Singh (PC)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	
Gualtieri, Silvia (PC)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	
Hamid, Hon. / L'hon. Zee (PC)	Milton	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Gaming / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et des Jeux
Hardeman, Hon. / L'hon. Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Hon. / L'hon. Mike (PC)	Kitchener—Conestoga	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Hazell, Andrea (LIB)	Scarborough—Guildwood	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Holland, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin (PC)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	Associate Minister of Forestry and Forest Products / Ministre associé des Forêts et des Produits forestiers
Hsu, Ted (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin—Caledon	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health / Ministre de la Santé
Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Trevor (PC)	Chatham-Kent—Leamington	Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de l'Immigration, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences
Jordan, John (PC)	Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Kanapathi, Logan (PC)	Markham—Thornhill	
Kernaghan, Terence (NDP)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	
Kerzner, Hon. / L'hon. Michael S. (PC)	York Centre / York-Centre	Solicitor General / Solliciteur général
Khanjin, Hon. / L'hon. Andrea (PC)	Barrie—Innisfil	Minister of Red Tape Reduction / Ministre de la Réduction des formalités administratives
Kusendova-Bashta, Hon. / L'hon. Natalia (PC)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga-Centre	Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones Minister of Long-Term Care / Ministre des Soins de longue durée
Lahey, Susan (PC)	York—Simcoe	
Leardi, Anthony (PC)	Essex	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Lecce, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)	King—Vaughan	Minister of Energy and Mines / Ministre de l'Énergie et des Mines
Lennox, Robin (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	
Mamakwa, Sol (NDP)	Kiiwetinoong	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
McCarthy, Hon. / L'hon. Todd J. (PC)	Durham	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs
McCrimmon, Karen (LIB)	Kanata—Carleton	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
McGregor, Hon. / L'hon. Graham (PC)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism / Ministre des Affaires civiques et du Multiculturalisme
McKenney, Catherine (NDP)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
McMahon, Mary-Margaret (LIB)	Beaches—East York	
Oosterhoff, Hon. / L'hon. Sam (PC)	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et de l'Agroentreprise
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	
Parsa, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (PC)	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires
Pasma, Chandra (NDP)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	Deputy House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Piccini, Hon. / L'hon. David (PC)	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Pierre, Natalie (PC)	Burlington	
Pinsonneault, Steve (PC)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	
Pirie, Hon. / L'hon. George (PC)	Timmins	Minister of Northern Economic Development and Growth / Ministre du Développement et de la croissance économique du Nord
Quinn, Hon. / L'hon. Nolan (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	Minister of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security / Ministre des Collèges et Universités, de l'Excellence en recherche et de la Sécurité
Racinsky, Joseph (PC)	Wellington—Halton Hills	
Rae, Hon. / L'hon. Matthew (PC)	Perth—Wellington	Associate Minister of Energy-Intensive Industries / Ministre associé des Industries à forte consommation d'énergie
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Indigenous Affairs and First Nations Economic Reconciliation / Ministre des Affaires autochtones et de la Réconciliation économique avec les Premières Nations Minister Responsible for Ring of Fire Economic and Community Partnerships / Ministre responsable des Partenariats économiques et communautaires pour le développement du Cercle de feu
Riddell, Brian (PC)	Cambridge	
Rosenberg, Bill (PC)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Sarrazin, Stéphane (PC)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Saunderson, Hon. / L'hon. Brian (PC)	Simcoe—Grey	Minister of Sport / Ministre du Sport
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Chris (IND)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Scott, Hon. / L'hon. Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	
Shaban, Fatima (NDP)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Shamji, Adil (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Skelly, Hon. / L'hon. Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	Speaker / Présidente de l'Assemblée législative
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, David (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Graydon (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre associé des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Smith, Laura (PC)	Thornhill	
Smyth, Stephanie (LIB)	Toronto—St. Paul's	
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Tangri, Hon. / L'hon. Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	Associate Minister of Small Business / Ministre associée des Petites Entreprises

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Thanigasalam, Hon. / L'hon. Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	Associate Minister of Artificial Intelligence Adoption / Ministre associé de l'Adoption de l'intelligence artificielle
Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Rural Affairs / Ministre des Affaires rurales
Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Associate Attorney General / Procureur général associé
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	
Tsao, Jonathan (LIB)	Don Valley North / Don Valley-Nord	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Vaugeois, Lise (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
Vickers, Paul (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	
Watt, Tyler (LIB)	Nepean	
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
Williams, Hon. / L'hon. Charmaine A. (PC)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity / Ministre associée des Perspectives sociales et économiques pour les femmes
Wong-Tam, Kristyn (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	