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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 29 October 2026

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 29 octobre 2026

The House met at 0900.

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

Prières / Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUILDING ONTARIO FASTER ACT, 2026
LOI DE 2026 VISANT À BÂTIR L'ONTARIO PLUS RAPIDEMENT

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 28, 2026, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 140, An Act to enact two Acts and to amend various Acts / Projet de loi 140, Loi édictant deux lois et modifiant diverses lois.

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

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Good morning. I will be sharing my time with the member for St. Catharines.

I am very happy to be able to rise in my place, after 21 weeks, to bring the voice of my constituents of Ottawa West–Nepean to the Legislature. I had been meeting with constituents, of course, all summer, especially in the wake of the flooding.

As I've been out and about at events for the past few weeks in the fall, when we would normally be sitting—and constituents kept asking me, "When are you going back to the Legislature?" They just really could not believe it, every time I told them that we weren't coming back until October 27 and that the Legislature was shuttered for 21 weeks, especially after the summer and fall that my constituents had, with, not least, the impact of the flooding on so many of them; but also the cuts to nurses and health care workers at the Queensway Carleton Hospital, when wait times are already incredibly long in the emergency department and for treatments and surgeries; the cost of groceries and food, which has been skyrocketing when people are already having difficulty making ends meet; and then the impact of new tariffs and the breakdown in trade talks. My constituents just couldn't believe that this government would refuse to call back the Legislature and actually put forward solutions to these significant challenges that people are facing and answer questions on their record. So I'm very happy to finally be here to participate in debate, to bring forward their voices, to call for the solutions that we desperately need and to be able to pose questions to the government on why they haven't reacted to these major challenges that people are experiencing.

Here we are, after 21 weeks, and the first thing that the government did is a return to form—tabling an omnibus bill with 23 schedules on things so disparate as blue box recycling, hydro utility governance, Highway 69, bees, archaeological activity, Metrolinx, and labour mobility. And not only is this a 23-schedule bill that covers all these things that don't actually have anything to do with each other—and it's fascinating that members opposite think it is really hilarious that the government has done this—but less than 24 hours after the government tabled this bill, we started debating it. So there was barely enough time to even read this 263-page bill, and definitely not enough time to actually consult with our constituents and hear what their thoughts and perspectives were on the bill. And that is, once again, part of a pattern by this government, Speaker, that they just really do not care about what the people of Ontario think about anything. It's one of a long list of omnibus bills that this government has tabled, and one of a number of bills that actually impacts the rights that people of Ontario have, which is perhaps why they are so eager to rush it through without time to actually consult with our constituents, because they don't want people to have time to even understand what is happening, much less react before it happens.

Just in the last year, we saw Bill 5, which trampled on Indigenous rights to consultation over what is happening on their lands, despite the fact that they have constitutional rights and rights under the treaties that we have signed; Bill 33 and Bill 101, which had a major impact on the rights of parents and communities to participate in the decisions affecting our local schools; Bill 60, which negatively impacts the rights of tenants; and Bill 100 on electoral rights, which took away the right of people to choose who represents them and who is making significant decisions within their communities.

What we see in this 263-page bill are more attacks on the rights of people to have a say on the decisions that affect them. There are several different areas where the government is doing that, and I'm just going to focus on some of the most glaring this morning, starting with gutting the Environmental Bill of Rights.

For 30 years, the Environmental Bill of Rights has given the people of Ontario a say in major government decisions that affect our environment. So whenever policies or bills impact Ontario's air, water, land or wildlife, the public has a right to be informed and consulted before those changes are made. What we see in this bill is that they've taken away that right. There's no statutory requirement for the government to give people notice about the fact that they are proposing changes that will impact the environment that we live in, and zero requirement for consultation.

So the people of Ontario have effectively lost their voice, and it won't actually speed up a single permit, it won't speed up approval, it won't make them cheaper, but it does remove transparency and accountability for decisions that are being made, and it takes away public participation in major decisions. This really matters, Speaker, because environmental protection doesn't just protect the earth and the animals and plants, the air, water, it protects us.

There are so many ways in which the environment in which we live impacts our health, our financial stability, the food that we eat, the water that we drink. You just have to look at what's happened with air quality in the past few years, the impact of wildfires that are happening due to climate change and the capacity for people to protect themselves against this air quality, the impact that it has on health systemically, the impact on pollinators, which are incredibly important for growing the food that we all depend on to live, the contamination of groundwater, which again introduces toxic elements into the water that we drink, but also the homes that we live in.

When we focus on building fast and gutting environmental protections just so that we can build them, that might seem like a great idea when we need housing, but we're actually talking about creating housing that people might not be able to live in long-term, or they're going to finally be able to invest in buying a home, and then they're going to see that asset devalued. They're going to have to put thousands of dollars into remediating it because of what is happening due to the loss of environmental protections.

I just want to give an example of this, which is that in my riding, there are multiple communities that are built on the flood plains of creeks: Graham Creek, Stillwater Creek, Pinecrest Creek. For 60 years, these communities have lived on these flood plains and there has not been flooding in these homes. So it might seem like no big deal that we built on a flood plain, and then this summer, we had a major storm, a severe storm of the kind we haven't seen before, due to climate change, and many of these homes on these flood plains flooded.

0910

We saw the same impact on the infrastructure with the LRT station at Moodie being flooded, needing to be gutted and completely renewed. Now it has delayed access to the LRT because we don't have an opening date because they have to rebuild a station entirely.

All of this is having an impact on people's daily lives: their finances, whether or not their home is safe and healthy, their access to public transportation. So it's important that we actually take time to consider the environmental impact of our decisions over the long term. That means that we have to be willing to listen to the voices of the communities that are affected.

There is a similar theme in schedule 7, which scraps the municipal veto over new landfill sites that require comprehensive environmental assessment. We've already seen the government do this to Dresden, breaking an electoral promise, and so I think it's fair for communities to wonder if they will be next.

My brother and sister-in-law live just down the road from the Beachville quarry. It's a limestone quarry. As we know, limestone is porous. The community has already successfully fought off an attempt to turn it into a landfill, and the member for Oxford was a key part of that. Now the government could turn that into a landfill after all, and the people of Oxford would have no say in that. My brother and his family could be drinking toxic, contaminated water and they would have no right to even participate in the decision or receive notice about it before it happened.

Schedule 9: The government is giving fast-track approval for garbage incinerators. They're using the same process under the Green Energy Act that they screamed bloody murder about when it was used to fast-track solar and wind power. They didn't like solar and wind power—

Ms. Sandy Shaw: They like burning garbage.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Yes, burning garbage—and I'm not a scientist, but solar and wind don't emit toxic pollutants. But incinerators spew massive amounts of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. And when we've seen the summer we just had, of wildfires and intense storms, flooding in Nickel Belt, Ottawa, St. Catharines, you would think we would want to be taking action to prevent climate change from becoming any worse. But this is just going to spew additional carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, which means we're going to be contributing to making the planet warmer, which will put people's lives at risk.

I'll leave it there, Speaker. But there are really significant concerns in this bill, again, just trampling on the rights of people and shutting out the right to participate in the decisions that affect them.

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

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I rise today to speak to Bill 140, the Building Ontario Faster Act. Speaker, I believe Ontario needs to build. We need better highways, reliable public transit, affordable housing and infrastructure that meets the needs of our growing communities and supports new housing projects.

But building faster cannot mean eliminating environmental protections, shutting communities out of decisions or giving this government more authority without accountability.

That is exactly what we are seeing in this bill, Bill 140, and that's a huge, huge problem. This is another massive omnibus bill that bundles together completely unrelated legislative changes. We are debating highway construction, environmental protections, landfill approvals, regional transportation planning, hydro utilities, recycling and many, many more—all under one piece of legislation. Some of these changes are more reasonable, others you can raise an eyebrow at, and some are undeniably a direct attack on the rights of Ontarians.

I want to begin with schedule 4, which deals with Highway 69. Speaker, my colleagues have raised this and have been calling for the completion of the four-laning of Highway 69 for years. Northern Ontario residents have

waited far too long for this important infrastructure project. They deserve safer roads, reliable connections between communities and a government that treats northern infrastructure as a priority.

This is why our party has brought forward amendments in Bill 212, two years ago, that would have designated Highway 69 a priority highway project. We supported this priority, and what happened? Yes, the Conservative government once again voted down those amendments—that included the member opposite who is now the Minister of Transportation.

Now, two years later, the government has decided that accelerating Highway 69 is suddenly a priority. And their big idea—they seem to think it's their big idea—is buried amongst 22 schedules of patchwork policy. Speaker, we welcome that decision—absolutely. But northern families shouldn't have had to wait two years for this government to change its mind and finally realize that infrastructure that connects communities is a goal we should be working toward.

Important to note, too, is that schedule 4 would exempt the highway project from the Environmental Assessment Act and establish a separate assessment process, including provisions for Indigenous consultation, which I want to point out is what should be happening. Our support for completing Highway 69 has always been conditional on the support and consent of affected First Nations communities. The government cannot use the need for infrastructure as an excuse to disregard Indigenous rights or environmental responsibilities. We can move projects forward efficiently while ensuring proper consultation, environmental safeguards and meaningful consent, and making sure these safeguards remain in place, because they are part of building infrastructure responsibly.

Speaker, I feel like I'm having déjà vu when discussing the environmental safeguards. This isn't the first time, not the second time, and not even the third time that this government has used omnibus bills to remove protections that are there for a reason and were put in place for a reason.

Moving to schedule 7: This schedule would eliminate the municipal veto for new landfill sites requiring a comprehensive environmental assessment. Think about what that means. Municipalities that currently have the authority to reject certain new landfill proposals would lose that protection completely. What's remarkably ironic is that this very government introduced that protection in 2020. When the Ford government brought forward Bill 197, their own environment minister at the time said that landfills should only be located in communities willing to host them. That was the government's position—a position that made sense, a decision that protected and supported local autonomy. Six years later, apparently, local consent is no longer important. So what changed over those six years? Did municipalities suddenly become incapable of making decisions about their own communities, or has their right to say no simply become inconvenient for this government, as another barrier to their takeover attempt on municipal operations?

Speaker, landfills have consequences for the people living around them. Residents have legitimate concerns about groundwater, traffic, odours, property values and the long-term environmental impacts of waste and disposal. Municipal governments understand those concerns because they're accountable to the people who live in the municipalities and the communities. And now this government is proposing to take away an important part of that local decision-making authority. We have already seen its approach in Dresden. The Ford government promised a full environmental assessment of the proposed York1 landfill, only to subsequently exempt that project from the Environmental Assessment Act through Bill 5. Now it wants to remove the municipal veto more broadly. That raises a serious, serious question about whether this government respects local democracy when communities disagree with its plans.

Representing a riding in the Niagara region, I know all too well that this government does not respect local democracy. We are witnessing it first-hand with the totally undemocratic appointment of our next regional chair. But that's another discussion on another day.

Speaker, schedule 8 is perhaps the most troubling part of the legislation. It proposes sweeping changes to Ontario's Environmental Bill of Rights. This legislation was introduced by the NDP government in 1994 to give Ontario residents meaningful opportunity to participate in decisions affecting their environment. For more than 30 years, it has provided important protections for people's public notice, consultation and government accountability—not hiding behind closed doors.

0920

Speaker, schedule 8 would strip away much of that framework. It would eliminate existing requirements for public notice and consultation and environmentally significant bills that are being proposed, along with regulations and policy, replacing them with much weaker provisions under the Modernizing Ontario for People and Businesses Act, 2020. Unlike the Environmental Bill of Rights, this new amendment would not require public consultation—again, swept behind closed doors, non-transparent.

How are we once again going backwards in this House? This is taking away the public's right to participate or even to have a say, Speaker.

But it doesn't stop there. Schedule 8 would also repeal requirements for this ministry to maintain statements of environmental values. It would eliminate the public's ability to apply for reviews of environmental laws and policies and to request investigations into suspected environmental violations. It would also remove the Environmental Bill of Rights provision allowing residents to pursue legal action for breaking certain environmental laws. These are substantial changes to the rights and protections available to Ontario residents.

But let's be clear: What these changes do is make it easier for this government to develop environmental policies without having to hear from the people of Ontario or the people it affects.

Speaker, that matters enormously to communities like mine, St. Catharines. We know how important environmental oversight is when dealing with contaminated industrial properties like our former GM brownfields or stormwater management. This government has to stand up and make it right.

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

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: Thank you to the member opposite for that presentation and her remarks. I have always had a lot of respect for the member opposite.

Madam Speaker, this legislation is about ensuring Ontario remains the most competitive place in the G7 nations to invest, build and create jobs and grow business. Today's economy moves quickly, technology advances rapidly, the supply chain changes and trade agreements evolve. Important investment decisions have been made every day, Madam Speaker. As a government, the process must keep pace with that.

We are facing a lot of economic challenges each and every day. Ontario is in the middle of a trade war. Our jobs and our economy are attacked. We must protect our Ontario.

My question to the member opposite: Does the member agree with that?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Taking away people's right to have a say in decisions that affect them doesn't actually do anything to make us the best place in the G7 to invest.

But you know what would make a significant difference in making us a great province to invest in and a province to which people would want to move and build a life here? It would be addressing the cost of living, making sure that people can actually afford to buy groceries.

It would be fixing our health care system so that people would be able to go to the ER without waiting for 12 hours to receive care, or that they wouldn't have to wait over a year to have surgeries scheduled.

It would be fixing our schools so that people would know that their kids would have a world-class education when they move to Ontario.

Those are all things that would make our province the best place to live and invest, and instead of doing that, the government has chosen once again to trample on the rights of people to have a say in the decisions that affect their lives.

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

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I've talked many times in this House about the GFL dump in Hamilton East–Stoney Creek and the stench that emits from that.

Let me just say that the Minister of the Environment did nothing to protect that community from seven years of this toxic smell. In fact, the city of Hamilton had to pass numerous motions demanding binding veto power, and when the minister again refused to do his job, the city of Hamilton was forced to take GFL to court looking for a temporary closure of this toxic dump. In fact, it was so bad that a planned school in that neighbourhood was cancelled because it was impossible to teach in an environment like that.

So, my question is, why would anyone believe this minister when he says there will be environmental protections and municipalities will have a say in what goes on?

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Thank you to my colleague. I can answer that we have no faith in this government to do any environmental oversight.

I'm from St. Catharines, and as I was getting to in my speaking notes, we have contaminated land at General Motors that is leaking PCBs into our water streams, and this government has sat on their hands and not done anything to help the community of St. Catharines or the residents that live around that contaminated site. Inside the fencing is so much contamination that we know is there, and we are asking this government to get on GM and hold them accountable, just like GFL should be held accountable.

If we go behind closed doors—

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

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: If we continue to let this government go behind closed doors and not let the communities that are affected in the decision-making, this is what we're going to end up with all over Ontario.

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

M^me^ Lucille Collard: Thank you for the presenters from Ottawa West–Nepean and St. Catharines. I think you've raised some interesting points, and as we learn more about this bill as the time goes, what we are seeing is that the bill is maybe providing faster access to certain procedures and administrative processes, but what it's also doing is reducing environmental protection.

Environmental protection has definitely taken a back seat in the last few years in the name of economic uncertainty. But we have to think about our future as well. I mean, you have kids. What does it mean if we are starting to ignore the environmental protection? What kind of impact are we considering—any one of you who wants to answer?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Thank you to the member for Ottawa–Vanier for that great question. We've seen in the past what happens when toxins are allowed to be in our environment without any kind of limitations, the lifelong health impacts that that can have. I don't think we want this generation of children to grow up with contaminated water, to have pollutants in the air, to potentially lose access to our pollinators. There is lifelong impact for this.

As I mentioned, we already saw in Ottawa this summer the financial implications of not addressing environmental concerns. This has lifelong impacts for people as well. There are so many ways in which failing to address environmental concerns has negative impacts on people's lives.

But also, the government in downtown Toronto at Queen's Park doesn't know the reality on the ground across the province, and that's why it's incredibly import-

ant that the people who live there, who do know the reality, who are being affected, have a chance to have their say.

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

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: We keep hearing from the government that they have no choice. We've known for years about the lifespan of our landfills. Ontario has the worst recycling rates in the country. We keep telling people that when they recycle, they're doing the right thing, let alone—now, we're going to just burn it all.

When we talk about choices, can you speak a little bit about what choices the government actually has and how they might be misleading the public by saying they have no choice but to burn all of our recycling?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Before I go to response, I would ask the member to withdraw.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: Withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The member for St. Catharines.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Thank you to the member for that question. Yes, once again, we're moving backwards here in Ontario. My predecessor MPP Bradley was the Minister of the Environment, and he brought in the recycling program, which was a very, very small step towards moving Ontario forward.

0930

I feel that this is what's happening here in this Bill 140. When they say building Ontario faster, they're just moving omnibus bills faster and faster and faster through this House with no consultation. And then they're going to be bringing these environment assessment acts through as well, faster and faster and faster, so that they can just hide it from Ontarians and go behind closed doors and make these decisions that are actually going to hurt our younger generations to come.

We have recycling programs in place. We have these laws and policies in place that have been from people that have brought it—

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

Further questions?

Hon. Graydon Smith: My question is for the member from St. Catharines. You talked a lot about Highway 69 in your remarks, and I am grateful that contained within this bill are provisions to speed up the process for Highway 69. It is unquestionably something that we all know we want to get done.

I was proud to stand at an announcement last week with the Minister of Transportation along with First Nation chiefs to talk about the opportunities we have before us to get this highway done. The measures to expedite this highway are critical measures to get it done faster and sooner and ensure the safety and protection for people that travel that highway.

So the question, through you, Speaker, is simple to the member: Are you going to support this bill? Are you going to support the building of Highway 69?

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I believe I was in the House the other day when the member from Sudbury brought this to the government's attention. This omnibus bill has so many things that we cannot support, but Highway 69—take it out of the bill, let us vote on Highway 69 and let us have the comments and let the people of northern Ontario—something they've been waiting for for years.

I said it in my speaking that they've been waiting for this expansion. People have died on that highway. They call it the ghost highway of the north. If you would pull that out of this omnibus bill, we will definitely sit in on—and we'll get it on record that we support the expansion and building it faster is a good thing.

But I will say, what I don't see in this bill, to the member opposite, is the two-way GO to St. Catharines and Niagara. I don't see that. That's building communities faster. And I don't see the—

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

Further debate?

M^me^ Lucille Collard: I will start by indicating that I will be sharing my time with the great member from Kanata–Carleton.

Speaker, it is my pleasure now to take my turn today to speak about Bill 140, that is titled the Building Ontario Faster Act, 2026. I'm just going to start by saying something that everybody can agree with: Ontario needs to get things done faster. Yes, we need more housing, better roads and public transit, modern infrastructure, investment in good jobs. With the economic uncertainty we're facing, no, we cannot afford delays that are not necessary.

So when the government says it wants to cut red tape and make Ontario more competitive, I'm in. I support that objective. But after reviewing this legislation with the limited time that I had and the government's technical briefing that was provided yesterday, I keep coming back to one fundamental question, and that question is, are we removing unnecessary bureaucracy, or are we removing protections that exist for a very good reason? Because there is a significant difference.

We've seen this government's approach before. They come up with legislation that has great titles like building Ontario faster, cutting red tape, making Ontario more competitive, and who could disagree? But when we examine the details—and that's what concerns me—not everything that the government calls red tape is actually red tape. Some of those rules are there for a reason, either for the protection of our communities, to give people a voice or to hold the government accountable.

I'm going to start by indicating what makes sense in the bill. There are measures in this package that appear to be practical improvements. For example, the government proposes creating a digital map of underground infrastructure, and I think that makes sense. Right now, the information about where electrical cables, telecommunication lines or the pipes are located are maybe held by different organizations in different formats, so that's not very

practical. A digital map would be useful in preventing costly mistakes, improving safety and reducing delays. I have to say, in Ottawa–Vanier, with our older neighbourhoods and aging infrastructure, I certainly see the value of that.

Another thing that makes sense is that the government is proposing simplifying how people initiate civil court proceedings. As a lawyer, I do welcome changes that make our justice system easier to navigate, particularly when it comes to people who are self-represented, because access to justice should not depend on someone's ability to understand complicated paperwork.

So these are examples of modernization without sacrificing important protections. Let's turn now to some of the changes that may need clarifications if we are to accept that there are good ones.

One proposal in the bill that concerned me is what the government calls a "shot clock." That's a deadline that is established for deciding on certain permit applications. If that deadline passes without a decision, then the permit can be automatically approved.

I understand the intent; businesses should not have to wait indefinitely for government decisions, but what happens if the government doesn't have enough staff to complete its review before the deadline? And shortages of staff in government services is certainly a common thing these days. So should a permit automatically be approved because the government failed to do its job? What if environmental or safety concerns remain unresolved? The government says stronger oversight will remain for higher-risk activities, but the available information doesn't clearly explain how those risks will be classified.

Automatically approving a routine administrative request is very different from approving an activity that could affect public safety or the environment. The government's inefficiency should not become the public's responsibility. If government cannot meet its deadline, then perhaps the answer is to improve its capacity rather than approve applications by default.

There was something in the technical briefing that was quite impressive. The government claims its permit transformation initiative could eliminate almost 220,000 days of processing time—that sounds impressive, okay. But the technical briefing explains that this represents projected reductions across some 375 permits; it doesn't mean that a project will be completed 220,000 days sooner. So the real question, really, is whether businesses actually will save time, projects will move faster and public protections remain intact.

One of my greatest concerns involves proposed changes to Ontario's Environmental Bill of Rights, and I think we've heard other people being concerned about that too. The government is moving to remove some of the processes, and it concerns me because those processes are there for a reason. It gives people a voice to contest or to challenge some of the decisions that the government has made. That also is very concerning.

The government also proposed removing certain rarely used mechanisms for challenging environmental decisions, and the justification is that they are rarely used. Speaker, since when do we measure the importance of a right by how often people exercise it? I'll just give the quick example, like the habeas corpus, which is the right to challenge unlawful decisions. Most Ontarians will never need it, but we would never argue that it should disappear because it's rarely exercised. Of course, constitutional rights and statutory environmental protections are not legally equivalent, but the principle remains.

There are also, in the technical briefing, some changes that are affecting industrial emissions, and I hope that the government will be very careful in applying that, because it's lowering the standard for the emission of sulphur dioxide, which is a very dangerous air pollutant. I understand there are 240 jobs attached to these facilities, but we need to take public safety very seriously.

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The government says Ontario is running out of landfill capacity and relies on the United States to manage approximately 40% of its commercial waste. Well, we clearly need a long-term strategy, and we've known that for a very long time.

But accelerating approvals for landfill and waste-to-energy facilities raises legitimate questions. Residents near a proposed landfill will want to know about groundwater, odours, truck traffic and monitoring, and those are questions that are usually dealt with or addressed during an environmental assessment, so I think that we need to be careful with that too.

I also want to emphasize that municipalities must be partners to all these changes and approvals that are contained in the bill. In Ottawa–Vanier, housing developments and intensification are very real issues. Neighbourhoods like Vanier, Sandy Hill, Lowertown and Overbrook need more housing, for sure, including affordable housing, rentals and homes suitable for families and seniors. But development also places demands on infrastructure and public services, which require the municipalities to be involved because they know the local needs.

Speaker, I want to take a moment to talk about schedule 8, which deals with labour mobility, and I do welcome the government's intention to make this easier for qualified professionals from other Canadian provinces to work in Ontario. We do need people in various skilled trades, like education, health care and other essential services.

But I would like the government to take this principle one step further because in communities like Ottawa–Vanier, we also have internationally trained professionals who possess valuable skills and experience but face significant obstacles in having their qualifications recognized, and that's something I've been advocating for for a very long time. We need the recognition of foreign credentials, and we need a bridging program to allow them to have access to the profession and fill those gaps that we have in our system.

I'm getting close to the end of my remarks, but I want to join my colleagues in saying that bringing forward omnibus legislation is problematic. Bill 140 changes numerous laws at once—24 of them—that deal with

various areas and subject matters that could use their own bill. That's the problem with omnibus legislation. We may agree with some of, or even most of, the measures proposed, but if there's something that we can't agree with, then we're not able to support the bill.

Speaker, I support making government more efficient. I support reducing unnecessary paperwork and finding better ways to build the housing and infrastructure Ontario needs, and several measures in the legislation could move us in the right direction. But environment protection, access to justice, Indigenous consultation and the public's right to be heard are not obstacles to progress.

I will end by saying that Ontario deserves a government that gets things done but also gets things right.

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

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: I rise today to speak to Bill 140, but before I address the details of the legislation, I want to address something even more fundamental. I want to talk about democracy and I want to talk about respect for this Legislature, respect for the people who elected us, respect for the democratic institutions that generations of Ontarians have worked to build and protect, because, Speaker, what we're witnessing today raises serious questions about this government's respect for the people of Ontario.

Let us consider what has happened. The Ontario Legislature rose for the summer on June 3, did not return until October 27. For almost five months, the people's Legislature was not sitting. For almost five months, elected representatives were denied the regular opportunity to question ministers in this chamber, debate legislation and to hold the government publicly accountable through the proceedings of this House. And throughout those months, Queen's Park, a magnificent building that houses one of the most important democratic institutions in our province, sat empty of regular proceedings of this Legislature.

According to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario's official website, the Ontario Legislature employs more than 500 non-partisan staff—a building and staff funded by the Ontario taxpayers, a place that exists for one fundamental purpose: to serve the people of Ontario through representative democracy. And yet, for almost five months, this government chose not to bring the Legislature back to conduct its regular business.

Then, on October 27, we returned, and what happened? Day two, October 28, Bill 140 was tabled. Today, October 29, we begin debate. The government introduced a massive piece of omnibus legislation containing 23 separate and disparate schedules, amending laws that touch almost every corner of life in this province. And just one day later, here we are debating it.

Five months without regular legislative sittings and one day to prepare to debate 23 schedules—Speaker, how can a government possibly defend that timetable as a demonstration of respect for parliamentary democracy and for the people of Ontario? This is not simply a question of scheduling; it is a question of democratic accountability. I believe this approach represents an assault on the principles that make parliamentary democracy meaningful.

Speaker, this Legislature is not supposed to be a rubber stamp for decisions already made behind closed doors, it's not supposed to be an inconvenience that the government must manage and it's certainly not supposed to be a place where members are presented with sweeping legislative changes and expected to accept them before they have had a reasonable opportunity to understand their impact and consequences. We are elected to represent our constituents. We are elected to examine legislation. We are elected to ask difficult questions, identify unintended consequences, propose improvements and hold the executive branch of government accountable. That is not obstruction; that is our job.

It is a job that matters regardless of which party forms government. Yes, government has the right to advance its legislative agenda, but a government does not have a monopoly on wisdom. Winning an election does not mean that every government proposal is perfect. It does not mean that every concern raised by the opposition is illegitimate and it certainly does not mean that the government should be immune from careful parliamentary scrutiny. Democracy is not simply about who has the most votes in this chamber; it is also about the processes that ensure those votes are exercised responsibly, transparently and with proper consideration of the public interest.

But, Speaker, we've seen this before. What does this government do when they are losing the public relations war due to mounting scandals—gravy plane, freedom of information, skills development, OSAP and private colleges, taxpayer-paid ads? What does this government do when crises are also mounting that it would rather not address because failure of the public systems is a deliberate choice? Deflect, distract, divert, divide, disguise—no notice for 23 schedules, significant changes with significant impact. It was Machiavelli who said, "Never attempt to win by force what can be won by deception."

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Now, it's time for this government to stop playing these games. Yes, there are some legitimate pieces of this legislation. There are some things that we all want to see happen. But it's like a poison pill: If you want this one good thing, you have to accept all these other things that are unacceptable. Well, it's not going to serve the people of Ontario. It may serve the political will of the government, but it is an assault on our democracy. It is an assault on the people of Ontario. If we're going to continue to go in this direction, this government will lose the complete trust of the people of Ontario.

It's happening already, or else you wouldn't have to do this. The tactics of deflection and distraction and diversion, division and disguising wouldn't have to happen if you weren't losing the trust of the people of Ontario. This is an example of what happens when a government loses its way and loses touch with the people it was sent here to serve.

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

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I just want to ask, when you go back to your communities and you ask your communities if they want an expanded or a new incinerator in your community, what do you think they're going to say? And when you tell them there will be no ERO for them to know that it's happening or to have feedback, what do you think your community members will say?

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: I thank the honourable member for this question. I know what my constituents are going to say, because they care very deeply about their environment and they care very deeply about the environment for their children. They want to know what's happening. They want to know what's going on. They want to know that all of the safeguards that are put in place to protect the environment for the future are in place, and right now, they're not going to know. If this piece of legislation—the facts—that things are going to be hidden, and they won't take it kindly.

Thank you for the question.

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

M^me^ Dawn Gallagher Murphy: Ma question est pour la députée d'Ottawa–Vanier.

Notre gouvernement a supprimé plus de 14 000 exigences réglementaires, allégeant ainsi le fardeau administratif en Ontario de près de 6 %. Cela a permis, en particulier, aux entreprises d'économiser plus de 1,3 milliard de dollars et près de 1,9 million d'heures.

Alors, madame la Présidente, qu'est-ce que tous ces nombres veulent dire? Ça veut dire créer des emplois et aussi des investissements en Ontario. Grâce à ce progrès, l'Ontario a obtenu, pour la première fois, la note « A » de la part de la fédération canadienne d'entreprise.

Ma question à la députée en face : appuiera-t-elle ce projet de loi afin de poursuivre sur cette lancée?

M^me^ Lucille Collard: Merci à la députée de Newmarket–Aurora d'utiliser la langue de Molière pour échanger dans cette Chambre. C'est toujours important et je l'apprécie énormément.

Évidemment, la question est relativement à mon approbation, mon appréciation du projet de loi avec les bénéfices que ça peut apporter. Je pense que je l'ai exprimé durant mes remarques : il y a de très bonnes mesures dans le projet de loi qu'on peut très bien supporter.

La préoccupation que nous avons—en tout cas, que j'ai exprimée—c'est face aux protections environnementales qui vont disparaître avec ces nouvelles mesures-là. Alors c'est très difficile de supporter un projet de loi, même s'il y a beaucoup de bonnes mesures, quand il y a des mesures qui vont vraiment à l'encontre des principes fondamentaux dans lesquels on croit, comme les protections environnementales.

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

M^me^ France Gélinas: As you know, the member from Sudbury and I have worked really hard to amplify the voices of the people of northeastern Ontario who want Highway 69 to be four-lane. Schedule 4 will allow this project to go faster. Anything that brings attention to Highway 69 is something that we truly support.

I wanted to ask, what do you think of a government who puts something as important as the four-laning of Highway 69 for the Patel family who lost their mom and dad, for the family of Cody, who died, and then play political games to say the NDP voted against a bill that included schedule 4 for the four-laning of Highway 69? What kind of respect for the people of northern Ontario do you see in a government who does that kind of thing? I'm curious to see what they think.

M^me^ Lucille Collard: Thank you to the member for Nickel Belt, and I know this is an issue that is very important in the north. We've heard a lot about it, and the consequences of not addressing the issue is breaking lives in families, and obviously we need to address that.

And I feel the same way. There is legislation we'll be voting on soon where there are measures that are very important to me that I won't be able to support because they are included in a larger bill that actually has issues for me that are so important that I can't support.

We are put in those dire situations because the government is using those omnibus bills to include in them some measures that they know we would be forced to vote for. And then, I guess, they are hoping we'll all swallow the poison pill or be tagged with voting against good legislation.

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

MPP George Darouze: My question will be to the member from Kanata–Carleton. She's talking about our Bill 140, but if you look at the city of Ottawa climate master plan that they've been working on in the last six, seven years, we're talking about options because our landfills really are coming to capacity.

People in Ottawa do need an option, and our city council and the cities, they are looking for options. Not necessarily that's the option, but at least working with the municipality and our government to make sure they facilitate those. I'm not sure why you're not supporting some of those initiatives in that bill.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: I appreciate the question, and you're right. I think municipalities across Ontario are looking for ways forward, ways to solve serious problems. But what this piece of legislation actually does is take away their ability to scrutinize those options.

I know the Minister of the Environment said no municipality will be forced to do anything, but that's not what the legislation says. The legislation says that they can be forced to do what they don't want to do. So, if Ottawa wants to make a decision, they will live with the consequences. It has to be Ottawa's decision. This piece of legislation takes that decision-making power away from Ottawa and brings it here to Toronto.

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

Mr. Jeff Burch: Speaker, through you, following up on my colleague's question, the member from Nickel Belt.

She's heard the member from Nickel Belt and the member from Sudbury talking passionately about Highway 69 and the need to get that moving.

We've offered to pull this out of the omnibus bill, get it moving and make sure the right highway is built as quickly as possible. Would her and her caucus support pulling this out of the bill so we can get that highway moving quickly?

M^me^ Lucille Collard: Of course, we would like to be able to dismantle some omnibus bills to put them in different bills so that we could debate them thoroughly, address them thoroughly, and really resolve the issues with everybody having a chance to speak meaningfully about such an important issue as fixing Highway 69.

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I would agree; I've never seen a government do that, though. I would be very surprised if this government would actually even consider such a proposal, even if, legislatively and democratically, it would be a very good idea. Because again, this kind of issue deserves the whole attention of this House with a separate bill.

Thank you for your question.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): We have time for a very quick question and response.

Mr. Joseph Racinsky: Very quickly: I think we need to make sure that we are reducing, ultimately, the amount of waste we're producing. I know in my community, because of the recycling changes, we're actually able to recycle more things than we were able to under the previous system.

But my question to the members is very simple: Do they support shipping our garbage to the United States of America, paying that extra fine now because of President Trump?

M^me^ Lucille Collard: Just a quick response, given the time. We have to move away from depending on the United States; that's very clear to everyone, and everybody supports that. But approving new landfill or waste-to-energy facilities should not be done lightly. It needs scrutiny, it needs consultation and it needs proper environmental assessment.

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

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I'm pleased to be here to represent the constituents of Kitchener Centre, accompanied by my colleague from Guelph. I come from the Waterloo region, which is the home of the blue box. We are very proud of the part we've played in the legacy of recycling.

I recently went to an Emterra facility where we got to see the new investments in producer responsibility. They believe in deposit return. They know that there are many, many choices we have on how to deal with our waste, and they are ready to commit to help us on this journey.

The government might say, "We don't have a choice; we have to burn garbage." Actually, they'll call it waste to energy. It's not incineration; it's waste to energy. But no matter how you dress it, we have lots of choices in Ontario and we can be more responsible with how we deal with it.

We are trashing Ontario right now. Recycling rates have gone down. We're less than 50%, whereas other provinces that have programs, like deposit return, are closer or over 80% recycling rates. We know there's a better way in Canada. We see entrepreneurs and innovators in Ontario, right now, ready to jump into solutions that work to reduce our garbage and make sure that any waste does not have to pollute our land, our air and our water.

Look at The Beer Store—another example of how we have created more garbage in Ontario. We should be ashamed of how much garbage we produce, and we should also be ashamed of the ways we've destroyed good ways to recycle. The deposit return program at The Beer Store was one of the most successful programs in Canada, with way over 90% of diversion from landfill. We see Beer Stores across Ontario closing, and more and more beverage containers ending up in recycling bins. And now, we will be burning them more often than we already are.

This is a false choice. We do not have to burn garbage. This is not the only way forward to deal with our waste. I disagree with expanding incineration. This is the most expensive and most toxic way to deal with our waste. You talk about being fiscal managers and prudent with taxpayer dollars, but this is more expensive than the alternatives of recycling, of dealing with organics, of diverting and reusing and reducing.

Instead, we look at the incinerators in Brampton. We believe Emerald—the owners of the incinerator—that this can be done well, it can be done healthy, it can be done positively, instead of listening to Peel Public Health. Peel Public Health does not want Brampton to have the biggest incinerator in all of Canada, because there are health consequences.

This is environmental racism. That's right: It is an example of environmental racism because we are taking something that the public does not want—something toxic and unhealthy—and putting it in one of the most racialized communities in Ontario. It is making people sick. There is evidence that it causes more cancer, it causes more asthma and this is the legacy that we will be leaving our kids if we continue to invest in expanding incineration in Ontario.

I want to thank John Moore. He had a program on today on NewsTalk 1010. He said that we don't need to make so much garbage. Just like the cheapest way to invest in energy is to just use less energy, the cheapest way to invest in waste is to create less waste. We can reduce the amount of garbage we create.

In Guelph, there is a Fortune 500 company—Forbes recognized these young female leaders as one of the best entrepreneurs in Canada. They have a company called Friendlier, and they have diverted 1 million to 1.5 million containers from landfills because they do not believe in single-use plastic. We have alternatives; we could use them here. It is expanding all across the country, and Ontario could invest in this way forward of reusing our containers from takeouts like Tim Hortons. They're using them at the zoo; they're using them at colleges and universities—far more in my community are using them. It's happening everywhere, and this is a solution to encourage and enrich our local entrepreneurs and build a positive economy while also doing environmentally friendly things.

It is not a binary. We can have a healthy economy, and we can invest in things that are sustainable and positive.

Finally, I want to ask, who is benefiting? Who is benefiting from the expansion of landfills? We see what happens at the Dresden dump. PC donors, again and again, are benefiting from this government's failure when it comes to reducing our waste and increasing the rates of recycling. This is broken trust. There was a campaign run on not expanding and putting a landfill there—a moment later, in a blue riding. So we should all be careful about blue ridings; those seats might not be so safe anymore if we blindly put landfills and incinerators in people's backyards without their consultation and without seriously investing in alternatives.

These are who will benefit, these big private companies. It's another example of how this government puts the needs of the ultra-rich and wealthy ahead of everyday Ontarians. We know that deposit returns create far more jobs and have much better benefits to the population than any of these solutions that they're putting forward.

We should look at BC. When I went to BC, I looked at the Reuse it! program. It has helped lift people out of poverty. It's addressing food insecurity. It has created small-to-medium businesses all across the province, and it's reducing their reliance on landfills and incineration.

I want to thank our ancestors because we have to go back to the way they did things. Right now is canning season. I'm picking up a mason jar, I'm putting in a cucumber, and I'm making sure that it lasts a year. That reduces food waste. That mason jar gets washed and used again. And I want to thank our agricultural communities that have been repairing and reusing for generations. I want to thank our Indigenous communities that have always known that we use and take only what we need, and that we are grateful to the soil, we are grateful to the air and we are grateful to the water. We are stewards of those natural resources because our planet is not single-use. There is no Planet B, and if we keep trashing it, that is the legacy that we leave our kids.

I think we need to teach our kids better. We need to build trust with them and be honest with them about what legacy we're leaving them. There is no magic in this. We don't burn the garbage, walk away, and nothing is left. No, we have toxic sludge now that we have to bury. We have kids who can't play soccer. We have air quality controls that will be happening now that prevent people from going outside. That is a COVID-19 trauma that we are now going to be expanding across Ontario.

I do not agree with shipping our garbage elsewhere. I think we have to look that garbage in the face and make sure we don't keep making a mess in Ontario.

I do not trust this government, and I think the removal of the ERO goes another step further. We just saw all the FOI bill repeals, taking away the FOI, so pretty much every MPP and their staff never have to be open, honest and transparent about what is going on in their offices. This is a big betrayal to the public. Now we're taking away EROs. We are going to be able to put incineration expansion and landfills and people's garbage in their backyards without telling them what's happening, without giving them a voice and making sure that this level of accountability is still accessible to the public.

I think one of the recent EROs that went forward had 62,000 responses. That's the best form of civic engagement we have right now. While I appreciate that the Premier says that you can just call him, that is not serious public engagement; the ERO is serious public engagement. That is why we did not expand the Billy Bishop airport, because the federal government did serious public engagement. They got tens of thousands of responses. People did not want that in their backyard. And the federal government listened.

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Instead of asking the question, instead of listening to the people, we're just going to take away the opportunity for them to know what's happening in their communities, to have any say at all. That is a huge betrayal of trust. It is a huge betrayal to our kids, who have to inherit a world where we continue to produce more toxic garbage. And now we are going to let more of that toxicity enter the air and enter the water. I don't believe that's responsible. The people of Canada believe in nature. They want us to have a safe, healthy, clean environment, and that is going to be compromised by this bill.

So I push back against this bill, and I beg the government to put people ahead of profits.

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

Hon. Mike Harris: Scandinavian countries incinerate garbage. Would you say that they are not one of the most environmentally conscious jurisdictions in the world? The green bastion of British Columbia incinerates garbage. Why is it good enough for BC; why is it good enough for Scandinavia; why is it good enough for Germany; why is it good enough for France; why is it good enough for parts all across Europe, but it's not good enough for Ontario?

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: Well, for one, this government, since they were elected in 2018, has removed literally every environmental protection that I can think of. I should have known there was more—there was another rock that didn't get unturned.

Other jurisdictions do have better environmental protections—they 100% do. But I do not agree with any expansion of incineration, whether it's in Scandinavia or BC, and I don't think they do either. They are taking incredible steps—or at least they were until the Conservative government was elected in BC recently. They were making an effort to improve and protect their environment. So it is not good enough for Ontario. And I think if you asked Ontarians, they would agree that it is not good enough for Ontario. We can do better.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The House will come to order. Members have the opportunity to have questions and comments. And the heckling—no.

Further questions?

MPP Robin Lennox: The people of Hamilton know all too well how terrible it can be when environmental

regulations are not enforced by the Ministry of the Environment. Over the summer and for the past two decades, we have had countless reports of black soot falling over Hamilton and Hamilton Centre, where I am. Also, I'm increasingly hearing from constituents in Hamilton Mountain and Hamilton East–Stoney Creek who are so frustrated with the lack of intervention from the Minister of the Environment to actually protect our air quality and to ensure that people's homes and their children's hands and their pets' feet aren't coated in black grime each and every single day.

So I would ask the member opposite, how can we trust the Minister of the Environment to protect us when they are already failing in their responsibilities to enforce environmental regulations in Hamilton each and every single day?

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I would say that they can't trust this government, especially when it comes to the environment.

I worry about the impact of that black soot on the people of Hamilton, and the health consequences.

I hope that people who are citizen scientists start putting sensors up all over Ontario, because we cannot trust these billion-dollar corporations to be honest with us, to care about our neighbourhoods—because they do not live there. Let me tell you, they do not live where that black soot is falling, and they only extract dollars from this government—putting tax dollars into the pockets of big corporations while also doing harm to our communities.

So, no, you can't trust them. I think we have to start looking at who owns the landfills, who owns the incinerators, and how much they are donating to the PC Party.

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

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

VETERANS MURAL

Mr. Steve Pinsonneault: Today I rise to recognize a meaningful new addition to the community of Thamesville that serves as a lasting tribute to the brave men and women who have served our country.

Recently, Royal Canadian Legion Branch 367 in Thamesville unveiled the mural on their building to honour our veterans.

The mural depicts soldiers looking towards the sunrise over a field of poppies, with a boat and an aircraft, representing service by land, sea and air. A Canadian flag fades into the sun on the horizon, symbolizing hope, remembrance and the enduring legacy of those who served.

This project was brought to light through the vision of Darren Carther, alongside Legion president, Bobby Wooldridge; former president Ian Davis; and the many volunteers who contributed their time and effort, including members of the Thamesville fire department, Thamesville Sertoma Club, Legion members and Thamesville residents.

Their collective efforts have created something truly special for Thamesville: a powerful reminder of the courage, sacrifice and service of our veterans. This mural will stand as a permanent reminder for generations to come, ensuring the stories of our veterans remain visible and their sacrifices are never forgotten.

Congratulations to all those involved, and thank you for this wonderful addition to our community.

LABORATORY SERVICES

M^me^ France Gélinas: Today I want people to know about the bad services that my constituents are receiving from LifeLabs.

Last January, LifeLabs announced that they would be closing their Sudbury lab and start shipping lab tests to southern Ontario. As I just found out, some of the tests are actually shipped across the border to labs in the US.

But if that's not bad enough, let me give you an example: My constituent Chris lives about an hour drive away from the closest LifeLabs location. He booked an appointment, went to the LifeLabs to get his blood work done and was turned away—not once, not twice, but on three occasions—because they were short-staffed. Chris is a senior with cancer. His doctor wants the test to be done on a fixed schedule, but—not available.

The government's increasing reliance on for-profit health care services means operators cut corners to make a buck, but for every corner cut there is a reduction in patient care. The Minister of Health must act now to ensure lab services are focused on quality patient care, not on maximizing financial returns for a US corporation.

We deserve better, Speaker.

MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

ÉLECTIONS MUNICIPALES

Mr. Stephen Blais: Good morning. I want to begin by congratulating newly elected and re-elected school board trustees across Orléans and Ottawa.

Félicitations à mes amis Marc Roy, Musset Pierre-Jérôme et Mathieu Fleury pour leur élection, et à Dan Boudria et Johanne Lacombe, qui ont été élus par acclamation.

And congratulations to Rick Bédard, Bob Rainboth and Cathy Varrette on their election victories this week. Thank you for stepping up to serve our community, support students and advocate for the resources our schools need. I wish you all the best, and I look forward to working with you.

Now, Madam Speaker, Ottawa's municipal election cost taxpayers an estimated $9.3 million. At the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board, only one of the previous trustees was re-elected this week. Ottawa voters have chosen new trustees, and they deserve the opportunity to do the jobs they were elected to do. Yet this minister says

he won't restore the elected board's authority, leaving the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board under provincial control.

For more than a year, families and students across Ottawa have been left without locally elected trustees to advocate on their behalf. Parents and students deserve to know that their votes count and that their hard-earned tax dollars belong in the classroom and not in a costly supervisor's paycheque. This government must respect Ottawa voters, Madam Speaker. The minister must end provincial supervision and return control of the school board to its new duly elected trustees.

EVENTS IN SCARBOROUGH–AGINCOURT

Mr. Aris Babikian: Throughout the summer break, I had the pleasure of visiting businesses across Scarborough–Agincourt and meeting with constituents. Throughout the break, I had the honour of attending over 276 community events, galas, announcements and meetings with residents across the community.

I was particularly delighted to join the Scarborough Centre for Healthy Communities at the opening of their new primary care clinic in Bridlewood Mall, alongside my Scarborough MPP colleagues. This project is supported by a $3.94-million investment by our government, which will continue to connect up to 9,600 people to primary care as part of our government's primary care action plan.

1020

Working in partnership with Scarborough Health Network, SCHC will identify and support individuals with unmet health needs, facilitate attachment to primary care providers, and provide access to integrated health and community supports for residents across Scarborough. This work includes SCHC opening new primary care clinics at Scarborough's Bridlewood Mall, Shepherd Village and Agincourt Mall. These investments are strengthening health care capacity across Scarborough and ensuring residents have access to the care they need, close to home.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

MPP Alexa Gilmour: Can you feel a chill in the air? Halloween is Saturday, and Parkdale–High Park does not do Halloween halfway. Lavinia, Pacific and Glenlake all welcome hundreds of kids for tricks, treats and truly horrifying lawn ornaments.

But lately, the scariest things in Ontario are not on anyone's porch. They are the grocery bills. They are the rent, the ER wait time. And this government is way more trick than treat. It let a few bad-actor career colleges run monstrously wild, and then it pulled OSAP from every career college student in the province.

Now, Mary Shelley fans will remind you that Frankenstein was the doctor, not the monster. So when the monster goes loose, Speaker, look at who was in the lab.

The government drops a 71-page bill with 23 schedules on the table Tuesday afternoon and gives the opposition less than 24 hours before debating it. That is not a fair debate schedule. That is a jump scare.

A minister resigns in July, and then by fall, he's back with a new title and a $22,000 raise. In this government, well, friends, even resignations rise up from the dead.

The Premier says he's ending hallway medicine while hospitals cut hundreds of registered nurses in London, in Hamilton and across the province. That is not a cure, Speaker. That is a curse.

Happy Halloween. I hope this government hands out a few more treats this time.

GOVERNMENT INVESTMENTS

Mr. Jeff Beattie: First, briefly, a congratulations to the incoming mayor and councillors recently elected during the recent municipal election in the city of Hamilton—a mix of new and familiar faces, and I look forward to working together with them on our important, shared priorities.

Housing is one of those priorities, Speaker, and our government has already followed through with an investment of over half a billion dollars through the DC relief program to support new infrastructure projects both in Hamilton East–Stoney Creek and throughout the city of Hamilton. This, along with the recent HST cut, will help Hamiltonians finally get into the housing market instead of having to leave our communities and live elsewhere.

Another shared priority, Speaker, is to support our steel producers and steel processors, our advanced manufacturing industries and auto parts makers in Hamilton during this unjustified trade war. I toured many of these businesses recently with Minister Rae, and I can tell you that our industries are ready to roll up their sleeves and do what is necessary to emerge stronger, more resilient and to support good-paying jobs within our community.

I know that we won't back down. I know that we'll get the job done, and I look forward to continuing to work hard for good-paying jobs in our community.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

MPP Wayne Gates: This government shut down the Legislature for five months and spent $117 million on ads telling Ontario everything is just fine, but the reality tells a very different story.

Every day, 2,088 people wait in hallways for hospital care, up 52% since the PCs took office in 2018. The Auditor General said more investment in urgent care centres is needed to reduce ER wait times, yet in my riding, hours at Fort Erie urgent care centre are being cut. More than 600 hospital jobs have been cut in Hamilton and Niagara. MRI wait times are increasing in Niagara's public hospitals, with machines sitting idly because of lack of funding, while this government hands $155 million to private, for-profit clinics.

Our education system is in crisis, with overcrowded classrooms and rising violence.

Poverty levels and food bank use are at historic highs. In Niagara alone, nearly 40,000 residents, including more than 14,000 children and 2,200 seniors, visited food banks last year according to Feed Ontario.

Imagine what $117 million could do if invested in health care, education, affordable housing and homelessness supports.

This is about priorities. Ontario needs a government focused on delivering the services that people depend on, not spending billions promoting itself. Families are struggling for care, education, the support they deserve and to even feed themselves.

SEASONAL EVENT IN BURLINGTON

Ms. Natalie Pierre: Good morning, colleagues. I am pleased to rise today to share with the House a wonderful community event that I recently hosted in my riding of Burlington.

Last weekend, on October 24, I welcomed Burlington residents to Pumpkins, Crafts and Chats, a fun fall gathering that brought together families, friends and neighbours for an afternoon of connection and conversation. The event featured mini pumpkin decorating, face painting, treats and plenty of opportunities for families to enjoy the season together. Most importantly, it provided a chance for me to meet with constituents in a relaxed setting and hear directly from them about the issues that matter most in their daily lives.

One of the greatest privileges of serving as Burlington's MPP is the opportunity to connect with residents, to listen to their ideas and learn more about the priorities that shape our community. I would like to thank everyone who attended and helped to make the event such a success.

Burlington continues to be a wonderful place to live, work and raise a family, and I look forward to many, many more opportunities to connect with residents in the days and months ahead.

NICK SMITH CENTRE

MPP Billy Denault: Last month, we unveiled the revitalized Nick Smith Centre arena in Arnprior. It was a privilege to join town staff and council to celebrate a generational project that holds a special place in my heart.

I grew up at the Nick Smith Centre, volunteering at Camp Wanago, working as a lifeguard and summer student with the town's recreation department. It was a second home to me and the opportunities I was given there helped shape who I am today.

In 2024, while serving as a councillor, Mayor McGee, members of council and I attended the delegation at ROMA with my predecessor, MPP Yakabuski, to discuss provincial partnerships, including the Nick Smith Centre arena. That work helped point us towards the Community Sport and Recreation Infrastructure Fund.

Through continued advocacy, I was proud to announce a $1-million provincial investment last summer to support this project alongside the town.

I want to give a special thank you to Graeme Ivory, Patrick Foley and all town staff, past and present, who have helped bring this project to life, as well as the many people who made a difference in my own life during my years with the town.

This project reminds us what public service is all about: working together to build something that will serve generations to come and giving back to the communities that helped shape us.

Congratulations again to the town of Arnprior. I'm proud to have played a part in this project, and I look forward to continuing to work with communities across Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke to deliver results for the people who call them home.

INDEPENDENT MEMBERS

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Members, the government House leader is seeking unanimous—I'm going to recognize the government House leader.

Hon. Steve Clark: If you seek it, you will find unanimous consent for two minutes to be allotted to the independent members as a group to respond to the Minister of Finance's fall economic statement during ministerial statements today.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I can also finish his sentences.

1030

The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent for two minutes to be allotted to the independent members as a group to respond to the Minister of Finance's fall economic statement during ministerial statements today. Agreed? Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Please join me in welcoming a visitor to the Clerk's table today: visiting from the Parliament of Victoria in Australia, Vaughn Koops, the Deputy Clerk. Vaughn is with the Office of the Assembly for a two-day visit. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Also visiting us today is my sister Sharon, my nephew Drew and my niece Fallon Kolohon, who are visiting all the way from Guelph. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Also visiting us today in the Speaker's gallery is a person who you will remember, Monique Taylor, the former member for Hamilton Mountain for the 40th, 41st, 42nd and 43rd Parliaments. Welcome back.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I also want to welcome a good friend and now a new staff member to my team who is going to be joining my Team Stevens, Monique Taylor. Thank you for coming today.

Hon. Graydon Smith: I'm pleased to introduce Todd Lewin, president of Muskoka Brewery, from my great

hometown of Bracebridge. Todd, welcome to Queen's Park.

MPP Jamie West: I want to wish my son a very happy birthday. Happy birthday, Mr. Sam.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Happy birthday, Jamie's son.

MPP George Darouze: Good morning, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to welcome Lauren Weldon-Vaughn from Munster in my riding of Carleton. Lauren serves as director of external affairs for the Carleton University Conservatives and is visiting Queen's Park as a participant in the Ontario parliamentary forum, proudly representing Carleton. Please join me in extending a warm welcome to Lauren. Welcome to your House, Lauren. Thank you.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I believe they're arriving shortly, but in the gallery today, we are so happy to have CUPE Ontario president Yolanda McClean, joined by CUPE child care workers who have been locked out by their employers since October 5. Welcome to your House.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): We do not make political statements during introduction of visitors. Can we withdraw that statement, please?

Ms. Marit Stiles: May I make one additional announcement today?

I would like to congratulate and wish best wishes to the opposition whip, MPP for London West, Peggy Sattler. It's her birthday today.

Singing of Happy Birthday.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): You can start the clock.

Mr. Lorne Coe: I would like to welcome to the Legislative Assembly Jeff Talmey. He's the president of Town Brewery from Whitby, and he's here with the Ontario Craft Brewers association. Thank you.

Mr. Dave Smith: Also from the Ontario Craft Brewers association: Scott Simmons, the president; Natasha Fritzley, president of Cowbell Brewing; Josh McJanett, president of Dominion City Brewing; Greg Taylor from Steam Whistle Brewing—Jeff has already been announced by Lorne Coe—Mandie Murphy from Left Field Brewery; Troy Burtch from Great Lakes Brewery; Ryan Cole, Policy Concepts; and Jonathan Rose, Policy Concepts as well.

Hon. Stephen Crawford: I'm proud to welcome the page captain today, Shreya Bapatla from Oakville, and her family who are here in the gallery: father Satya, mother Swarpa, sister Sravpa.

I would also like to give a welcome to some of my staff: Zahra Javaid, Mark Rizzotto, Eric Punzalan and Rejaa Khalid. Thank you, and welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Good morning, everyone. I would like to welcome some beautiful Beaches–East Yorkers. Arjun Prajapati, at just five years of age, is already a member of esteemed high-IQ societies Mensa Canada and Intertel. Maybe we need him down here. He is here with his parents, Dr. Vishal Prajapati and Mahita Thota, and his awesome sister, Aadya. Welcome to your House.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Good morning. ᒥᓂᑎᐦᐃᐧᐣ

It's always an honour to be able to welcome people from Kiiwetinoong, especially from the town of Sioux Lookout. Laura Lilly, Carmelia Augustin, Bill George, Maria George, Matt Stewardson, Annette Berry and Randi Dogget. Meegwetch for coming.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: I would like to welcome Virginia Burton, a service animal advocate from York South–Weston, and her beautiful service animal, Pockets.

Mr. Chris Glover: I just want to add to the welcome for the Ontario Craft Brewers association, including Mandie Murphy, who runs the Left Field Brewery in the fabulous riding of Spadina–Fort York.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I want to welcome the incredible Canada Powered by Women, the leaders who are with us, including Tracey Bodnarchuk and her entire board of directors. Welcome to Queen's Park.

OPPOSITION DAY MOTIONS

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Yesterday, the leader of the official opposition and the leader of the third party each filed notices of opposition day motions for consideration next week. I have selected the notice standing in the name of the leader of the official opposition to be debated. The third party's notice will be removed from the orders and notices paper.

PREMIER'S COMMENTS

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): On Tuesday, October 27, 2026, the member for Kingston and the Islands rose on a question of privilege to express concerns about remarks made by the Premier on August 24, 2026, while the House stood adjourned. According to the member, the Premier's remarks to the media diminished the authority and dignity of the House and therefore constituted contempt of the Legislature.

I have had the opportunity to review the Premier's remarks; Tuesday's Hansard; the written submissions from the member for Kingston and the Islands and the House leaders for the government and the official opposition; as well as the relevant precedents, practices and authorities, and I am now prepared to rule on this matter.

I would like to first note that in raising the question of privilege, the member for Kingston and the Islands correctly identified the underlying issue as relating to contempt rather than parliamentary privilege. Privilege exists as a defined set of rights and immunities, but there are many potential offences that would obstruct or undermine the functions of the Legislature that cannot be categorized as breaches of privilege. Any action or conduct, including words, against the authority or dignity of the Legislature is considered contempt.

In the Canadian House of Commons on October 10, 1989, Speaker Fraser explained the difference between privilege and contempt in the following terms, at page 4,459 of the Hansard for that day: "All breaches of privileges are contempts of the House, but not all contempts

are necessarily breaches of privilege. A contempt may be an act or an omission; it does not have to actually obstruct or impede the House or a member, it merely has to have the tendency to produce such results. Matters ranging from minor breaches of decorum to grave attacks against the authority of Parliament may be considered as contempts."

Let me now turn to the substance of this matter. During a press conference, the Premier was asked whether he would consider the official opposition's request for a recall of the House in order to deal with matters relating to the imposition of tariffs. The Premier's response to these questions included, among other statements, use of the term "gutter politics" and a comment that, "If they have suggestions, call me up. Everyone else calls me up."

In his remarks in the House and his written submission, the member for Kingston and the Islands shared his interpretation of these comments. He contends that the Premier equated the request for the House to be recalled so that members may perform their parliamentary functions to "gutter politics."

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Additionally, the member advances that the Premier's suggestion to "call him up" was offered as an acceptable alternative to parliamentary proceedings and a reduction of the role of the Legislative Assembly to a means of communicating suggestions to the executive.

The member for Kingston and the Islands submits that these statements amount to contempt because they diminish the authority and dignity of this House and its proceedings. If the Premier did in fact degrade the proceedings of the House and undermine its functions, it would raise grave concerns. It is well established that an attack on the dignity or authority of the institution of Parliament can constitute a contempt. As the member highlighted in his submission, my predecessors in the Speaker's chair have found prima facie cases of contempt on those grounds.

The government House leader, in his submission, offers another interpretation. In his view, the Premier's statement was not that phone calls should replace parliamentary proceedings but rather provide an additional opportunity to make suggestions, akin to the meetings that all members regularly conduct with constituents and stakeholders. He claimed that the phrase "gutter politics" was used in reference to the actions of political opponents, not the Legislature itself. The government House leader also noted that in his comments, the Premier referenced the return of the House and requested support for the government's proposals upon that return.

I have reviewed the video of the Premier's press conference, and I do not know, with any degree of certainty, what his intention was in making those statements.

The Speaker's role in ruling on questions of privilege and contempt is to determine whether a prima facie case of privilege or contempt exists. The second edition of Maingot's Parliamentary Privilege in Canada provides the following explanation at page 221: "A prima facie case of privilege in the parliamentary sense is one where the evidence on its face as outlined by the member is sufficiently strong for the House to be asked to debate the matter."

In the present case, although I do not know precisely what the Premier intended, my own genuine interpretation of his comments is that they do not directly challenge the dignity or authority of the Legislature. All members are honourable, and in the absence of sufficiently strong evidence to the contrary, I am reluctant to attribute negative motives to any member. My ruling is that the comments made by the Premier on August 24 do not amount to a prima facie case of contempt.

I want to thank the member for Kingston and the Islands for bringing this matter to the attention of the House.

QUESTION PERIOD

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Marit Stiles: Families in our province can't find a family doctor or afford groceries, but if you've got the right lobbyist and some cash to spare, the doors of Queen's Park swing wide open.

John Mutton, the now-banned greenbelt lobbyist, who the former Integrity Commissioner referred to as "Mr. X," needed a special favour for his client. The MPP from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, a member across the aisle, was ready to help, with one condition: selling some tickets to the infamous PC leaders' dinner so that she could meet her quota.

This is a question to the Premier: Is the Premier promising favours to lobbyists provided they max out donations to the PC Party?

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

Hon. Graydon Smith: Let me just say that our government recognizes the importance of clear and transparent rules to ensure public confidence regarding MZO tools. It's why our ministry introduced zoning order frameworks, which ensure that all orders made meet a high standard. The framework is publicly available to see right now online so the public is aware of any process behind a decision. Under this framework, MZOs must advance a provincial priority or have local support, and we invite public consultation.

Let's be clear on what MZOs do. They get critical infrastructure built, they get homes started, they advance long-term care and many more things that are beneficial to our communities in Ontario. They help build our province.

The opposition can continue to look to the past. Our government is looking to the future to continue to build Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Supplementary?

Ms. Marit Stiles: All right. I don't really think that answered the question.

Anyway, Ontarians are paying more—and we know that—for absolutely everything, while the Premier's friends get into the fast lane. You don't have to take it from me. You can take it from the Integrity Commissioner's

report into Mr. Mutton's lobbying, which he determined to be illegal, which was released today by the Trillium.

Here's what the MPP's text messages say—I'm going to read it: "Do you think you could get a couple of your people especially the ones we just helped to buy a few tickets for (the) March 2nd event? They have to go thru my portal so I get credit."

That is what the member wrote in a text message to John Mutton on February 2, 2023. Right. They closed the deal, and she's saying, "Pony up. I've got to meet my quota."

So, back to the Premier: Are you directing your MPPs to trade government decisions for political donations?

Hon. Graydon Smith: We continue to work at building communities in Ontario. Government decisions are made with information. Requests around MZOs are made with information, often coming from communities that want to see more built in their communities—more long-term care, more hospitals, more housing, more things that make communities strong.

Speaker, we'll not apologize for wanting to continue to build communities in Ontario. We use clear and transparent tools to do that, and we will continue to do so.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Well, Speaker, I'll tell you, it is clear how this government operates. People buy their way into this Premier's inner circle. Their caucus is out there like travelling salesmen, with quotas to close lobbying deals, and selling fundraising tickets. Their priority isn't, and has never been, about delivering for the people of Ontario; it is raising money for the Premier, for their party coffers.

When an emergency room was closing in that member's riding, she was singing for her dinner at the Albany Club.

Is the Premier going to admit that the only way to get things done in Ontario is by filling his party's pockets?

Hon. Graydon Smith: Again, we continue to make sure that communities in Ontario have a chance to grow. That is what community leaders have told us they want; that is what we've seen with the elections this week, municipally, all across Ontario—an opportunity to grow. This government continues to listen to those communities. This government continues to develop tools that provide the opportunity for communities to grow—again, for more long-term-care homes, for more hospitals, for more transit-oriented communities, for more municipal infrastructure, for more supportive housing. We'll not apologize for the continued effort to make sure that communities have the opportunity to grow.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Marit Stiles: Back to the Premier again: When the special favour for Mr. X's client was taking too long, the member for Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock had some advice for him. She texted this lobbyist and she said to "call the Premier on MZO" and "give him a nudge." Not the ministry, not the housing ministry even—the Premier. She clearly knows that the buck stops with the Premier. You sweeten the pot, and you are sent straight to the top. So I want to ask the Premier, did he or anyone in his office get a nudge from Mr. X or from the member about this MZO?

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

Hon. Graydon Smith: I'd just note that in April 2024, we introduced a new zoning order framework, again, centred around a transparent intake process. Through changes made in past bills—Bill 17—we've strengthened the framework by allowing for conditions to be placed on MZOs for them to proceed. So I'll highlight again: greater transparency, while making expectations and requirements to the proponent very, very clear—and we do this to make sure that communities in Ontario continue to grow.

It is not business as usual; it is business in 2026. We need to use clear, transparent tools to make sure we have the opportunity to continue to build the components of communities that make them better, that make them stronger, that provide opportunities for the residents in those communities to prosper. We'll continue to do that and continue to work with people throughout Ontario to make sure that Ontario is the best it can be.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Supplementary.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Transparent? This is a Premier who changed the law to hide his cellphone records. I mean, please.

Speaker, the member had another idea for moving that decision along. She texted that lobbyist that she would phone the chair of the PC Party's fundraising arm. It seems PC Party fundraisers play a very key role in government decision-making. And when it was time to sell tickets to the Premier's own leader's dinner, she told the lobbyist that the sales had to go through her portal so, again, she would get credit.

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So the party keeps score on who raises the most and lobbyists know exactly who to call. Is that how this Premier's party decides who gets ahead in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Graydon Smith: Our priority is to work with communities and community leaders to make sure that they have the opportunity to grow. That's what they have told us time and time again, and I speak from a position of experience as a former community mayor, as a former president of AMO.

We want to be able to work with all parties to ensure—and I'll underline it again—those components that we know contribute to better communities get built: hospitals, long-term care, supportive housing, housing developments for seniors, housing developments for new families. We need to make sure that these opportunities exist.

We have a number of tools; we've strengthened the tools that we use to make that happen. We'll continue the conversations with communities and community leaders, and continue the conversation with people that bring op-

portunities to the table to help communities, big and small, all across our province continue to grow and prosper.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: I get it that they don't want to answer this question, but don't worry, because I'm going to be filing another investigation request to the Integrity Commissioner, and we'll get the answers then from the Integrity Commissioner into this MPP's behaviour.

But look, the people of Ontario are working harder than ever. They follow the rules. And when government members are out there eating lobster dinners and steak on their fundraisers' dime, let me tell you, people out there are trying to figure out how they're going to put food on the table. It is outrageous. People are waiting in hallways to get health care.

Clearly, the only way to get ahead in the province of Ontario anymore is to buy your way into the Premier's inner circle. So I want to ask the Premier one more time: How many leader's dinner tickets is it going to take for someone to get out of the hallway and into a hospital bed?

Hon. Graydon Smith: Let's talk about some of the great things that have happened using the new and improved MZO framework in Ontario: in August of 2025, used to facilitate the development of a long-term-care facility, enabling up to 256 more long-term-care beds and 800 residential units for seniors; more opportunities to build water and waste water servicing in another community in September 2025; more opportunities to make sure that the system is transparent and available for communities that want to use it to grow their communities and continue to make sure that they provide opportunities for the people of their communities to prosper.

Speaker, we have been clear and transparent on the MZO framework. It is a tool that is used to make sure that prosperity can come to communities quickly and effectively.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. John Fraser: My question is for the Premier. In 2021, the Auditor General released a value-for-money audit on career colleges, and here are some of the things that the auditor said:

"Ministry staff have limited guidance for assessing whether new applicants will operate in accordance with the law and with integrity and honesty....

"The ministry lacks processes to identify colleges that overcharge students."

The Premier and the minister have known about this since 2021, and since 2021, that Auditor General's report has been collecting dust in the minister's office.

Speaker, can the Premier explain why the Auditor General's 2021 report has been ignored?

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

Hon. Nolan Quinn: Speaker, as I've said many times to that member, these are serious criminal allegations and we take every single tip seriously.

Over 3,200 OSAP cases have been investigated since 2020. After months and months of individual investigations and inspections into individual career colleges, we recognized that the problem was more widespread, and that's why we brought forward KPMG to understand the severity of the impact of fraud across our OSAP system. We will not release another dollar until we have confidence that there is no fraud and the dollars are being utilized towards their intended purpose: helping students train in career colleges.

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

Mr. John Fraser: Madam Speaker, it was 2021—and if the Premier and the minister had read the Auditor General report, they would understand this. This is the conclusion: "Our audit concluded that the Ministry of Colleges and Universities ... does not effectively administer, oversee and enforce the legislation and ministry policies that are in place to protect the interests of existing and prospective students of private career colleges in Ontario."

So the question is, why did they ignore it? Well, following the release of this auditor's report, the previous minister hosted an industry dinner which collected over $150,000 for her riding. That was in March 2022. Remember that date, guys.

Speaker, did the government ignore the report because their donors wanted them to?

Hon. Nolan Quinn: As I've said before, in late 2024, we recognized that there was a growing volume of OSAP applications across the career college sector. In January 2025, Career Colleges Ontario understood the same concerns that we had, and they sent us a letter to highlight those concerns.

In May 2025, the federal government concluded their investigation and provided information to the ministry, and we did enhanced investigations across the sector. In July 2025, we did very specific targeted investigations into those career colleges.

In May 2026, we issued non-renewal to six career colleges across the sector. But in August of 2025, we understood it was more widespread than we originally understood, and that's why we brought forward KPMG and paused all OSAP payments to career colleges to ensure that taxpayer dollars are respected.

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

Mr. John Fraser: Well, Speaker, the story continues, because in June 2022, that same minister's chief of staff, Ari Laskin, became the CEO of Career Colleges Ontario, and donations, they continued to flow. The Auditor General's report? Well, it continued to collect dust. And regulations? Well, they were relaxed, and the government made asynchronous online permanently eligible for OSAP. That is why we're here today.

Why is the government more concerned with filling its party coffers than it is with protecting students, families and taxpayer dollars?

Hon. Nolan Quinn: Donations have no effect on policy decisions across government.

The investigations that take place are multi-faceted and include reviewing the data we have, asking for data from the institution and in-person inspections. But I would not expect the interim leader—the third-time interim leader—of the party to understand how complex and nuanced these investigations are. Often, they take over a year to be able to gather the required data to ensure that we're able to move forward with an inspection and an investigation.

We brought forward enhanced reviews and targeted inspections, and we also eliminated eligibility from a handful of career colleges before we realized this is widespread criminal activity. And we brought forward KPMG to ensure that there is trust in the OSAP system and taxpayer dollars are well respected by ensuring that they're going to their intended use: to help students go through their education process.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. John Fraser: Let's fast forward to 2024. Ari Laskin leaves Career Colleges Ontario, and Kate Bartz, the wife of former Minister Monte McNaughton, takes over. Interestingly enough, about $30,000 of donations flow to Lambton–Kent–Middlesex. We all know whose riding that was, right?

Career Colleges Ontario is run by government insiders—donations, relaxed regulations, their donors get rich and the cycle continues. That explains why this government and this Premier are trying to cover this up.

Speaker, the question that I have is, is it worth letting so many hard-working, honest Ontarians down because this Premier and this government are more concerned about their donors?

1100

Hon. Nolan Quinn: While the interim leader focuses on me, I'm going to focus on the bad actors that defrauded the OSAP system.

Unfortunately, they have defrauded the OSAP system, and that's why we're bringing forward legislation in the coming weeks to add more guardrails to OSAP on career colleges, removing online-only eligibility at private institutions. We're going to require all private institutions to meet stricter criteria for OSAP as well as ensuring every single dollar is well respected and used for its intended use.

I understand this is a serious course of action but it was a necessary one, understanding what we uncovered and why we brought it forward to the Ontario Provincial Police, referred it to the Auditor General, as well as referred it to KPMG to have the experts really do a forensic audit to ensure that taxpayer dollars are respected and being utilized for students and not for fraud.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Question?

Mr. John Fraser: That begs the question, is the first thing that the Premier writes in a mandate letter, "Show me the money"? Is the first the that comes out of a ministry staff's mouth: "Show me the money"? Is the first thing that comes out when the Premier's having a meeting in his basement, "Show me the money"? Is it the first thing that comes out of MPP's mouth, "Show me the money"?

Well, Premier, on behalf of honest, hard-working Ontarians, show me the money.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Please direct your questions and responses through the Speaker.

I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Doug Ford: Well, through you, Madam Speaker, he's having a relapse of the Liberal government in 2018—he, personally, was selling $10,000 tickets to sit down for dinner. That's what he's focused on.

I'll tell you what we're focused on, Madam Speaker. I'll tell you what we're focused on. We're focused on the economy. We're focused on building the northern shield, expanding nuclear, making sure we get the road to the Ring of Fire up and creating more jobs. That's what we're focused on until the young people in these colleges actually have a future, unlike under the Liberal government and NDP. They didn't have a future. They lost 300,000 jobs. Companies were leaving in droves because of high taxes—high red tape.

We aren't that way. We're creating opportunities and jobs for the next generation.

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

Mr. John Fraser: Just show me the money, okay? A $150,000 industry dinner by the Minister of Colleges and Universities, right after the Auditor General's report—show me the money. The member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, show me the money. Mr. X, show me the money.

Every minister here is saying to their stakeholders, "Show me the money." This government is just, "Show me the money." Ontarians are asking you. Hard-working, honest, good people—people that you've abandoned—are saying, Premier, "Show me the money."

Will you do that today?

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I've asked you once. I will ask you again: Please, direct your questions through the Speaker.

To the Premier.

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Madam Speaker, we're showing the taxpayers money. We're showing them how much we're saving, at $12 billion each and every single year. We've eliminated the 10.7-cents gas. We eliminated the stickers that they kept increasing constantly We have never, ever raised a tax. We're putting money back into people's pockets.

We're creating the opportunity for $236 billion of investment in the province. As they chase every job out of the province, we are making sure that we're attracting new companies on a daily basis. The Minister of Economic Development, every single day, sends me a message of a new company coming here, because we've created the environment—we've created the climate—for companies to come and invest.

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS
PROTECTION POUR TRAVAILLEURS

MPP Jamie West: My question is for the Premier.

Speaker, there were more than 700 WSIB workers who are being forced out of their jobs, and this isn't because of tariffs or Donald Trump. It's because the Premier won't lift a finger to protect them.

Instead, the Premier is protecting his hand-picked CEO. The Premier won't protect workers like Kayla. Kayla told me, "I've done all the 'right' things—waited to be secure in a career that I loved to have a baby and to buy a house." Then, "in a 30-second notification, my security was ripped away."

Speaker, Kayla is just one of the 750 families losing their livelihoods, while the Premier sits in his hands. Why won't he protect them?

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

Hon. Trevor Jones: Good morning, Speaker.

Thank you to the member opposite for the question, because when anyone loses their job anywhere, in any sector, it has a profound impact on them, on their family and on their community.

But let me be clear: This place here, we're lawmakers. We make the laws and regulations, and we have the arm's-length agencies like WSIB actually create the infrastructure and the framework to actually deliver the service, which is insurance service to protect injured and ill workers who are injured in the workplace.

Let's be clear: The deviation of responsibilities—we make the laws, and the arm's-length agencies deliver the outputs and the services to protect injured and ill workers.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member for Thunder Bay–Superior North.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: My question is to the Premier. After cutting over 700 jobs, there is no longer anyone at the WSIB who understands northern communities, et il n'y a pratiquement personne qui peut servir la population en français.

And now, believe it or not, the WSIB is desperately trying to hire back summer students and convince their remaining highly stressed and under-resourced staff to work evenings and weekends. Is this a dazzling display of CEO Jeff Lang's incompetence, or was all this just so your government could give yet another bonus to employers at the expense of injured workers?

Hon. Trevor Jones: Merci beaucoup pour votre question.

I understand that challenges in the north are unique; however, we're making investments in the north. When employers return dividends to support workers, we can make investments, like $125-million investments, to support mine rescue and mine rescue training in the north, supporting workers.

In Sudbury and throughout the north, the WSIB continues to deliver best-in-class, best-for-performance service to injured and ill workers. Since 2020, workers haven't been live in offices, but if an injured or ill worker picks up the phone, they get a live person with quick responses to deliver the outcomes and services the workers need.

STUDENT ASSISTANCE

Mr. Rob Cerjanec: The Minister of Colleges and Universities has been on his job for more than two years. The issues with career colleges and OSAP happened under this minister's watch. He was warned about them, he let it get worse, and now he refuses to take any real responsibility while students and staff at private colleges and universities in Ontario have to pay the price for this minister's mismanagement.

Students were approved, enrolled and abandoned, but there are private colleges and universities located in Canada but outside of Ontario listed on the OSAP website as approved for the 2026-27 school year. That's on the OSAP website right now.

My question to the Premier: Have any OSAP payments been made for students attending a private college or university operating in Canada but outside of Ontario?

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

Hon. Nolan Quinn: I will remind the member opposite again, these are serious criminal allegations, and that is why we brought it forward to the Ontario Provincial Police once we understood it was a widespread issue across the career college and private institution sector. We brought forward a third-party auditor, KPMG, to really understand the breadth and challenges with the fraud that's happening across the career college sector.

That is why we're bringing forward legislation this session to be able to add more guardrails to the OSAP system across the career college sector to ensure that it is going to be used for its intended use: to help students achieve their goals of upskilling and training for future careers and jobs.

But we will not release another taxpayer dollar until I have assurances and confidence that it's going towards its intended use. I know that member wants us to release the dollars when there's no confidence in the system, but I need the guardrails in place and I need confidence across the whole OSAP system that there will respect of taxpayer dollars moving forward.

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

Mr. Rob Cerjanec: My question was very specific: Have any OSAP payments been made for students attending a private college or university operating in Canada but outside of Ontario? They're listed on the website. It's a very simple and direct question, Minister. We get the same response—it's like a windup doll—over and over when we're asking very specific, serious questions.

1110

The minister is treating all private colleges and universities within Ontario the same, including those that have recently passed audits and others that are degree-granting institutions, like Tyndale University or the Royal Conservatory of Music. It makes no sense.

Right now, at career colleges in Ontario, there are staff already being let go and others wondering if they're going to have a job.

Speaker, my question to the Premier is, why does the Minister of Colleges and Universities still have his job?

Hon. Nolan Quinn: Well, Speaker, if we're talking about a windup doll, let's talk about the third-time interim leader of the Liberal Party. The province of Ontario doesn't even trust them enough to be the official opposition. They've been sitting off on the sidelines, just waiting for the trust of the people.

It's a simple answer: When it comes to OSAP outside of Ontario, those are federal dollars, so speak to your federal counterparts to tell them that they don't want OSAP dollars flowing outside of Ontario to those institutions. We are the provider of OSAP to the students, but it's those federal dollars that are flowing outside of Ontario. So speak to your federal counterparts about that.

Again, these are serious criminal allegations of fraud across the OSAP system, with private institutions. That is why we referred it to the Ontario Provincial Police and brought in a third-party auditor. The ministry investigations and inspections made us realize that this is a widespread issue. That's why we acted swiftly and brought in KPMG, put a pause on OSAP payments, and ensured the third-party auditor has all the information they need to make sure that taxpayer dollars are respected.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Anthony Leardi: Speaker, this question is for the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery and Procurement.

Workers, manufacturers and local businesses continue to face economic uncertainty as a result of ongoing US tariffs. President Trump is imposing tariffs. He is imposing broader trade restrictions and creating more uncertainty for workers and for job creators who rely on one of the most important trade relationships in the world. These actions put Ontario jobs and Ontario investment and economic advancement at risk, and they serve as a reminder that we cannot take access to foreign markets for granted.

At the same time, families across Ontario want to know that their tax dollars are being used to create jobs in Ontario, support businesses in Ontario, and strengthen communities in Ontario.

Speaker, my question to the minister is this: Would he explain to this House what the Buy Ontario Act is and does for Ontario and why the Buy Ontario Act is so important at this moment?

Hon. Stephen Crawford: Thank you to the member from Essex for that really good question.

At a time of global economic uncertainty and ongoing US trade pressures, it's more important than ever that our government takes action here at home to keep Ontario taxpayer dollars right here in Ontario.

The Buy Ontario Act is about making sure Ontario businesses and workers are first in line to benefit when public dollars are invested. By mandating hospitals, schools, colleges and universities, municipalities and other public sector organizations to prioritize Ontario-made goods and services, we're creating more opportunities for local businesses to grow and prosper. Taking a Team Ontario approach means standing with our workers and businesses so that people can buy products that come straight from our farms, our companies and our organizations right here in this great province.

When Ontario succeeds, Ontario families succeed. That's why we're using every tool available to strengthen our economy, protect jobs and build a stronger, more self-reliant province for the future.

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

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I thank the minister for that response.

My supplementary question is as follows: At a time when Ontario workers and businesses are facing uncertainty from US tariffs, it is important that we use every tool available to us to support Ontario jobs and Ontario investment here, in our own home province. People across Ontario want to see their communities remain strong. They want to see their local businesses supported and remain successful. They want to see their tax dollars working in their communities and supporting their province, where they live and where they work.

Ontario's public sector purchasing power is more than $30 billion in both goods and services every year. Procurement, Madam Speaker, can be a powerful tool to support local jobs and strengthen the domestic supply chain.

To the minister: Please explain how the Buy Ontario Act is actually helping Ontario workers, businesses and communities.

Hon. Stephen Crawford: Again, thank you to the member from Essex.

Speaker, across Ontario, people want to know that the products that they buy, the services they support and their tax dollars are contributing to help create a stable and prosperous Ontario. That's exactly what the Buy Ontario Act does.

The Ontario public sector purchases more than $30 billion worth of goods and services every single year. Now, thanks to our buy Ontario policy, those $30 billion in purchasing power are bolstering the power of Ontario-made products in this province.

We're already seeing the strength of this policy come through with Ontario businesses on Supply Ontario's vendor of record accounting for 89% of businesses and Canadian businesses accounting for 97%. Those numbers show that Ontario's procurement system is being powered by thousands of local businesses and entrepreneurs. Almost nine in 10 suppliers approved on that list are Ontario-based.

Now more than ever, Ontarians of all political stripes need to come together and send a clear message: When our economy is under pressure, when one of the best trade alliances is under pressure, when Ontario workers are threatened by tariffs, Speaker, we will stand with Ontario

workers, Ontario businesses, wave the flag and support our local businesses.

NORTHERN AIRPORTS

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Meegwetch. Speaker, 27 of the 29 remote airports owned and operated by Ontario are in First Nations. Most are in Kiiwetinoong. Nishnawbe Aski Nation's 2025 needs assessment reports the cost for Ontario to address the infrastructure gaps in northern airports is $1.5 billion.

Speaker, I am asking once again: When will this government, when will Ontario commit to the infrastructure funding needed to fix these airports?

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

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Thank you to the member for their question.

We understand and appreciate how important First Nations and remote northern communities' airports are, as they serve as lifelines for those communities. Every year, we invest close to $27 million into those 29 remote airport communities, and we'll continue to work with communities that are impacted in those areas to continue to operate safely and make sure that they're reliable for the communities.

Now, we have undertaken many measures with respect to aging infrastructure, including new terminal designs, upgrades to the facilities as well as improving the safety and reliability of those. We'll also work with the federal government to continue to ensure that the supports meant for those airports are also flowing through and continue to work with that member and others in those communities to ensure that happens.

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

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Speaker, I know that this is probably the eighth or ninth time since I've been here asking this question to improve the infrastructure at airports in Kiiwetinoong.

Too many times, people in the north have died while they're waiting for essential medical care that is delayed because of airport conditions. Yesterday, Chiefs of Ontario and Nishnawbe Aski Nation released a documentary that tells some of their stories.

Speaker, through you: Will the Premier commit to $1.5 billion in funding to fix Ontario's northern airports and prevent more tragedies?

1120

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: We'll continue to work with the members in the remote northern communities as well as First Nation communities across the province. We recognize how important these airports are, the lifelines that they serve for those communities, and we'll continue to make sure that we're in constant dialogue.

Every year, we put forward over $27 million into the 29 remote airports. We work with many of those to ensure that not only regular maintenance but other provisions are made to ensure that the airport is safe and reliable. We'll continue to engage in conversation on how we can better service those northern and remote and First Nation airports into the future as well. We'll also engage with federal partners, who also oversee many of these airports, to see what funding mechanisms might be available to ensure that these communities can also access those.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

MPP Andrea Hazell: My question is to the Premier. This summer, I attended a private career college graduation in Scarborough. The member for Scarborough Centre was in attendance. He saw first-hand the impact that these career colleges have on real families to get ahead. Over 80 mature students crossed that stage with their families cheering them on—moms and dads that went back to school to reskill and upskill their careers to have a better quality of life in Ontario.

A mother with a nine-year-old daughter who went back to school to give a better life to her family—now their futures are on hold. A family of five with one income—mom decided to go back to school to reskill. Now, her family's future is back to a one-income household.

Through you, Madam Speaker, to the Premier: Was the minister told about the fraudulent activities with the eight private career colleges in his transition briefing, or was he handed this file with blinders on?

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

Hon. Nolan Quinn: I've been very clear, these are serious criminal allegations, and we take every single tip seriously and we investigate and inspect them thoroughly. These are very, very complex investigations that take over a year to be able to gather the required data, Speaker.

But again, these are serious criminal allegations. That is why we brought it forward to the Ontario Provincial Police, because bad actors have defrauded the taxpayers of Ontario. If you're okay releasing taxpayer dollars without confidence in the whole OSAP system, that's on you. But I'm not going to release another taxpayer dollar until I know it's going to its intended use: to be able to help support students with their training and their future goals.

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

MPP Andrea Hazell: Your response said nothing to my answer and I'm not going to respond to you.

Madam Speaker, in 2023, Career Colleges Ontario raised the alarm about suspicious OSAP applications. Grant money to private career colleges jumped from $554 million to $994 million in a single year, and that did not raise a red flag and—guess what—not even a yellow tape warning.

This government woke up one morning and just decided to abruptly freeze OSAP funding to all private career colleges because of their Big Bad Wolf mentality. They gave no warnings to the families that they will be hurting due to the failing mismanagement of this file.

So once again, Madam Speaker, to the Premier: Was this file given a fundraising target before you pulled the

rug from underneath the genuine families that were given an education opportunity to upskill and reskill to get back in the job market?

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

Hon. Nolan Quinn: Speaker, through you, because I guess that member is not listening to what I'm saying—she's not speaking to me as well. But these are very, very, very serious criminal allegations, and we've taken every single tip and every investigation very seriously. But once we realized that this was more widespread than the six and eight institutions that she referenced, we understood we needed to refer this to the Ontario Provincial Police, we needed to bring in a third-party expert forensic auditor to ensure that taxpayer dollars are well respected.

Speaker, we will not release another taxpayer dollar until we have confidence in the OSAP system. If that member is okay releasing taxpayer dollars with the fear of fraud, that's on her. But I need confidence and assurances from the third-party auditor that taxpayer dollars are going towards their intended use.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

MPP Billy Denault: My question is for Ontario's first-ever Associate Minister of Artificial Intelligence Adoption.

AI is quickly transforming every corner of our society, and constituents like mine and people across this province have worries about what this future might bring. We are seeing governments around the world, including in other jurisdictions right here in Canada, increasingly appoint leaders with a mandate to drive safe and responsible AI adoption.

Ontario has already been a leader in ensuring we protect the sensitive data of all Ontarians. As we look ahead, it is important that discussions surrounding AI and its power to influence our lives are not left ignored.

Can the associate minister explain how the government plans to strike the right balance between ensuring the safe and responsible use of artificial intelligence while harnessing its potential to drive innovation, attract investment, create good-paying jobs and strengthen Ontario's economy?

Hon. Vijay Thanigasalam: Thank you to the incredible member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke for that question. We know AI is here and it's moving fast. I understand the fears that many people have. These fears are normal when new technology emerges, as we saw from the dawn of electricity to the rise of the Internet, Madam Speaker.

I want to reassure the people of Ontario that our government is committed to embracing the safe and responsible use of AI. That means implementing appropriate guardrails, as we have already done in the public sector, that require AI systems to be transparent and accountable to the people of Ontario. We have already ahead of the game doing exactly that, through Ontario's trustworthy AI framework, which was backed by legislation which was passed in this House, enshrined in the law, Madam Speaker. We are building AI and adopting AI in a responsible manner as we are receiving advice and recommendations from experts across this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Back to the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

MPP Billy Denault: Thank you to the associate minister for that response and his leadership in advancing safe and responsible AI adoption across Ontario.

Ontario is home to some of the brightest minds in artificial intelligence, with over 1,600 AI companies and over 22,000 tech firms right here in our beautiful province. That's nearly 450,000 workers developing the next generation of technology that is driving responsible growth across the province.

The Ontario-made AI solutions these workers are building have the potential to transform every sector, and we must ensure we take advantage of these innovations while protecting people's jobs. Can the associate minister provide an example of how the government is advancing a human-centred approach to artificial intelligence while ensuring AI serves as a tool to empower people, support workers and enhance productivity?

Hon. Vijay Thanigasalam: Madam Speaker, we are committed to a people-centric AI approach. We believe that AI has an overwhelming potential to complement workers, like at St. Michael's Hospital here in Toronto, where they developed Canada's first AI algorithm that identifies and triages potentially catastrophic traumatic brain injuries in the emergency department within just two minutes, Madam Speaker. That's not AI replacing the health care workforce; that's actually acting as another tool working with them while saving many lives. That's why our government is supporting workers as AI reshapes the future economy.

Madam Speaker, through the Vector Institute, we provided funding to ensure we upskill and reskill our workers so they are ready for the next generation of innovation. In Ontario, we are building AI and adopting AI that enables workers to do more and giving them tools to remain competitive in the global market.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is to the Premier.

At the height of the pandemic, we learned how unsafe and undignified the conditions of Ontario's long-term-care homes were. This Premier promised to reach four hours of daily care workers by 2025. Records obtained by the Star reveal that this Premier failed to keep that promise. Madam Speaker, a year past the government's deadline, nearly 300 long-term-care homes don't meet the promised standard of four hours of daily care. One home reported only one hour and 16 minutes of care in a day.

We know short-staffed homes have higher rates of infections and falls and death rates. My question to the Premier: Why are you allowing Ontario seniors to go without care?

And your seat is over there. You can answer the question.

1130

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member for Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston.

Mr. John Jordan: Four hours of care has been a priority of this government, and we're very pleased with the progress we've made on that. In fact, on an average across this province, we continue to meet our goal of four hours of care.

Just a reminder: In 2018, when this government came in, the hours of care that were acceptable to the previous government were 2.7. So this government is proud to be a national leader in long-term care, and we are making historic investments to ensure Ontario seniors receive the high-quality care they need and deserve. The difference is that this government has set high standards, and we will continue to work with all of our long-term-care homes to help them meet that standard of four hours of care.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Supplementary.

Ms. Catherine Fife: How can you be happy and pleased with widespread failure? Half of the homes are not delivering four hours of hands-on care. It is an abject failure. Own it, because you won't fix it unless you own it.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: The recent report of the National Institute on Ageing said that "Ontario's approach remains largely fragmented." Advocates have long called for a comprehensive aging strategy.

We know that daily hospital fees for seniors are between $700 and $1,200 a day. Nursing homes, long-term-care homes, are $200 a day. We can care for seniors, ensure that they are healthier, keep them out of hospitals, save money. This just makes fiscal sense, but also it is the ethical thing to do.

Dr. Samir Sinha says, "Who is stepping back and actually saying, 'What is the overall game plan?'" In other words, he's saying, "Why aren't you doing your job?" That's the question for the Premier of Ontario on behalf of seniors in Ontario.

Mr. John Jordan: I'm actually surprised at the question because these should be no secret to anybody in Ontario—the investments this government has made in long-term care. We've made a commitment to build new and reconditioned long-term-care homes in addition to things like sprinkler systems and air conditioning in all our homes: $4.9 billion to create thousands of new long-term-care positions across this province to reach that four hours of care.

Interjection.

Mr. John Jordan: We have reached four hours of care, and, again, we're proud of that fact.

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

Mr. John Jordan: There's $2 billion every year to further hire nurses, personal support workers and allied health professionals; a $3-per-hour wage enhancement for PWSs in permanent state; and $100 million in new programs to attract and retain close to 8,000 highly skilled nurses. When you go into long-term-care homes, the biggest change is the number of staff that we have—

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

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: When answering a question about the government's OSAP and career college boondoggle yesterday, the Minister of Colleges and Universities said a few bad actors threaten the whole system.

If we're talking about performances, we could give out a few Academy Awards to the government for starring roles in this horror movie. Best lead actor goes to the minister himself for letting this mess go unchecked for years. Best supporting actor could go to both the Minister of Finance and the President of the Treasury Board for failing to notice that $385 million was awarded to only seven schools. Or was this all just an act that they didn't notice?

Speaker, my question to the Premier: Please explain why the government chose to punish everyone, including Marca College in my riding versus the seven specific private career colleges at fault.

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

Hon. Nolan Quinn: Speaker, these are serious criminal allegations. It's more than the seven institutions. I don't think the member understands. When we went from individual inspections to multi-faceted inspections across the whole sector when we brought in a third-party auditor, that's when we realized it's more widespread that the seven she's referencing.

These are serious criminal allegations. That's why we referred it to the Ontario Provincial Police. Bad actors have defrauded the Ontario taxpayer. If you are okay releasing taxpayer dollars without confidence from a third-party auditor, that's on her, but I need confidence before we release taxpayer dollars to students for the intended use. I need reassurances from the auditor before I am comfortable releasing taxpayer dollars. If you're comfortable releasing taxpayer dollars without assurances of no fraud in the system, that's on the Liberal Party.

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

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Speaker, I think Charlie Brown's teacher has clearer answers than this minister. Any first-year student would know that the math does not add up. How does the Minister of Colleges and Universities fail to see $1 billion in grants going to private career college students?

This government was warned about indicators consistent with suspicious activity back in 2021. They did nothing for four years. Then, when specific career colleges were flagged, they ignored the signs for nine whole months before beginning inspections in 2025, and only launched

an OPP investigation in October 2026. Perhaps they were too distracted by the donations coming into the PC Party to notice the millions flowing out of taxpayer pockets and into the hands of select corrupt colleges.

My question to the Premier: When will you prioritize students over your donors?

Hon. Nolan Quinn: Again, I will reiterate, because I don't think the Liberal Party is listening: These are serious criminal allegations of fraud across the private institution sector, Speaker. I need to ensure that taxpayer dollars are respected. But if they're okay releasing taxpayer dollars without comfort of understanding that they're not used for fraudulent purposes, again, that's on them.

These inspections are multi-faceted, they're complex and they take almost a year to be able to gather the required data. Speaker, we've been doing the inspections since we had concerns in late 2024 of the growing volume of OSAP applications across career colleges. In 2025, we launched enhanced targeted inspections towards those institutions, but in 2026, when we realized this is widespread across the sector, we had to put a pause on OSAP, because we need to ensure that taxpayer dollars are utilized for their intended purpose and that bad actors won't continue to defraud the Ontario taxpayer.

Speaker, that is why we have referred it to the Ontario Provincial Police. As much as they will make jokes, this is a serious matter.

AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY

Mr. Joseph Racinsky: My question is for the Minister of Agriculture. President Trump's unjustified tariffs threaten our farmers and their way of life. I hear every day from folks in Wellington–Halton Hills who are anxious about the future and uncertain about what comes next.

I know our government has our farmers' backs and will protect them during these times of geopolitical instability. In my community, I've seen first-hand how our government is not only protecting our agriculture sector, but is helping it grow and become even stronger. Could the Minister of Agriculture please tell us what he has done not only to protect Ontario's agriculture sector, but also to strengthen it?

Hon. Sam Oosterhoff: I thank the member for Wellington–Halton Hills for his leadership in defending farmers and ag producers in his riding. I have to acknowledge the Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development for his leadership on this file. Thank you, sir. I appreciate the opportunity to work and to follow in your footsteps.

Earlier this month, we broke ground on an incredible research facility in your riding, in beautiful Elora. It's the new Poultry Research Centre. This is going to drive innovation in our poultry sector for all of our feathery friends, the farm boards that are represented by the egg farmers, the chicken farmers, the turkey farmers, the broilers and the hatchers. This is supporting thousands of farmers to ensure that they are competitive and that they are able to build out a sovereign, secure, and self-reliant agri-food sector here in the province of Ontario. That's what we're working to do to protect the hundreds of thousands of jobs that are in the agri-food sector, who will stay focused on driving jobs and growth in that industry.

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

Mr. Joseph Racinsky: Thank you, Minister, for that response. I'm proud; not only is Elora very close to the University of Guelph and the researchers there, but also Wellington county is the highest per capita of chicken farms anywhere in the province of Ontario. I'm very proud of that. It was my pleasure to have the minister in my community for the ground-breaking and I cannot wait to have the minister back when it opens.

When our chicken and turkey farmers take advantage of the research produced by this new centre, they will be looking to expand into new markets. While the United States will always be an important trading partner for our agriculture sector, it is now more important than ever that we diversify our trade relationships.

With the constant threat of tariffs and restrictions on our exports, we can no longer depend on the United States as a reliable trading partner. I know our government is supporting businesses as they seek out new markets.

Can the minister please explain what the Ministry of Agriculture has done to help industry find new and expanded export opportunities?

Hon. Sam Oosterhoff: I want to thank the member for his question. I'll say the Premier has a clear mandate for us to cut costs, to reduce red tape and to improve access to new markets. That's exactly what we're doing to build out a sovereign, secure and self-reliant agri-food sector here in the province of Ontario.

I want to talk for a moment about the Market Diversification and Trade Resiliency Initiative. It's providing support to 130 projects across the province, supporting almost 1,000 new jobs in the food processing sector. It's really about enhancing access to new markets. I know many of you have had successful recipients in your ridings. That's really about growth in the agri-food processing sector.

We know how important it is not only just to grow raw commodities here in our beautiful province, but also to add value to them, to create products that people around the world can know and trust because they come from Canada and they come from Ontario. And that's exactly what that market diversification fund is doing. It's providing more jobs and resources in your riding and more jobs and resources across Ontario.

CHILD CARE

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My question is to the Premier. Investing in child care means investing in the workers and the educators that keep child care centres running. Yet only 36% of RECEs report planning to stay in the field in the next five years.

We have child care workers here today that have been locked out by their employer, Ideal Child Services Group,

as of October 5, and they're here to fight for fair wages and decent benefits in the workplace.

My question to the government is, why has this government failed to create a workforce strategy that recruits and retains child care workers?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: I do appreciate the question from the honourable member. Of course, this government has made significant improvements and investments in the child care sector across the board. We understand how important it is that there is affordable child care—not only affordable child care, but the workers within that sector. That's why we have, of course, augmented wages in this sector.

We've worked very closely with the federal government to ensure that there's an expansion of the CWELCC program and have recently signed an extension with the federal government to ensure the stability of this program over the next number of years.

The situation that she's talking about are workers who are in a negotiation with a private company, and we expect both the company that employs them and the workers to come to a negotiated settlement that is in the best interests of not only the workers but of the families who rely on child care in that part of the province.

DEFERRED VOTES

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

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

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

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

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

The division bells rang from 1144 to 1149.

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

On October 28, 2026, MPP Gretzky moved second reading of Bill 117, An Act to enact the Access (Assistance for Care, Commuting and Essential Specialized Services) Act, 2026.

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

Ayes

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

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

Nays

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

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day): The ayes are 40; the nays are 71.

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

Second reading negatived.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

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

Hon. Steve Clark: Point of order, Speaker, under standing order 59: Obviously, this afternoon it's the government's intention to present a fall economic statement. We'll follow that introduction with second reading debate of Bill 140, including the maiden speeches for the member for York Simcoe and the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek. We'll then end the day with private member's notice of motion number 79.

On Monday, November 2, in the afternoon, there will be opposition day, followed by third reading of Bill 119.

It's the government's intention on Tuesday, November 3 and Wednesday, November 4, both in the morning and the afternoon, to have debate on the fall economic statement. The private member's bill on Tuesday will be notice of motion number 20. The private member's bill on Wednesday will be second reading of Bill 120.

Thursday, it's our intention to have a unanimous consent, on Thursday, November 5, to do speeches for Remembrance Day and Veterans' Week for the members of the Legislature.

Again, if this bill gets reported back to the House earlier next week, it's our intention, both in the morning and in the afternoon, to have third reading debate on Bill 109.

We'll end next week with private member's bill second reading of Bill 122.

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

The House recessed from 1154 to 1300.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated October 29, 2026, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies.

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

Report deemed adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF GOVERNMENT BILLS

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

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

Mr. Bethlenfalvy moved first 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): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Would the minister like to make a statement?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Absolutely, Madam Speaker. He'd love to make a statement.

Thank you to all my colleagues.

On behalf of Premier Doug Ford and the entire government of Ontario, I will sit down.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): That was my mea culpa.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PLUG INTO THE SUN ACT, 2026

LOI DE 2026 POUR LA CONNEXION AU SOLEIL

Mr. Tabuns moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 144, An Act to establish a Plug-in Solar Panels Advisory Committee / Projet de loi 144, Loi créant le comité consultatif pour les panneaux solaires enfichables.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Would you like to speak to the bill?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, across the United States and throughout the European Union, jurisdictions are legalizing plug-in solar panels, which allow people to buy a panel for a relatively small amount—$100 to $200—and plug it into the electrical outlet in their home and provide themselves with power. This has helped people save substantial amounts on their monthly electricity bills.

Here in Ontario, we need a road map to do the same. This is the intent of the bill.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ECONOMIC OUTLOOK AND FISCAL REVIEW

PERSPECTIVES ÉCONOMIQUES ET REVUE FINANCIÈRE

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: On behalf of Premier Doug Ford and the entire government of Ontario, it is my honour today to present to you the 2026 fall economic statement.

J'ai l'honneur aujourd'hui de vous présenter l'exposé économique de l'automne 2026 de l'Ontario : Un plan pour protéger l'Ontario.

This is perhaps the most consequential time in our country's recent history. We are living in a post-free-trade, protectionist world. The impact of US tariffs, which have hit, among others, our steel, our auto, our manufacturing sectors, and global conflicts such as the Strait of Hormuz impacting energy prices have led to a world awash in a sea of instability. Canada is not immune from these forces. Many of our values are being challenged and events are impacting our country.

Le Canada n'est pas à l'abris de ces forces. Nos valeurs sont souvent remises en question, et les événements qui s'enchaînent ont une incidence sur notre pays.

We need to look no further than the price of gas, rising costs of goods due to tariffs, and the impact of uncertainty on investment and employment. As a result, Ontario families and businesses are feeling the impacts. No doubt, the world has changed.

But, Madam Speaker, we have a plan—a plan that we started on day one, a plan that is working. Our plan to protect Ontario is fortifying our industrial base, including our auto, our steel, our forestry and manufacturing sectors, in order to unleash the growth-ready sectors of the future, including nuclear energy, critical minerals, artificial intelligence, defence, advanced manufacturing, life sciences, the agri-food sector and many more.

Our plan starts with discipline and responsible fiscal management. We are in a strong position. In fact, our government has received two credit rating upgrades. This is almost unheard of, not only in Canada but around the world. Our borrowing costs are the lowest they have been in decades, and we have even more good news: Our net debt-to-GDP and our net debt-to-revenue for this fiscal year have both decreased when compared to our last budget. This is indeed good, sound fiscal management.

During this time of heightened global economic uncertainty, it is more important than ever that our government remains prudent. Higher global interest rates, slower economic growth, heightened uncertainty, along with tax cuts for people and businesses have Ontario projecting a deficit of $16.9 billion in 2026-27 and a return to balance by 2029-30. And while deficits are not desirable in the long term, they are absolutely necessary in the current environment.

As we have shown, our government will continue to invest in protecting our economy. At the same time, we will continue to root out wasteful spending, review agencies and ministries for efficiencies and take actions to save taxpayer dollars and enhance value for money. This means ensuring government is sustainable over the long term while continuing to deliver the greatest value for scarce taxpayer dollars.

Over the past year, when I travel across Ontario, I hear a common message from workers: They are proud of what they do; they are proud of what they build. They want to know that their government has a plan and, Madam Speaker, we do.

Since April 2025, Ontario has announced nearly $30 billion in tariff relief and support, including measures to build long-term economic resiliency and prosperity. We acted early to help employers weather uncertainty. We acted early to support communities facing economic pressures, and we acted early to protect good-paying jobs right across the province. We did not sit idly by.

Our supports have been expanded and are available for businesses right now. Just last week, under the leadership of Premier Ford, we announced, alongside the federal government, nearly $9 billion to support automotive, steel and critical mineral and energy industries and their workers.

Madam Speaker, we're not stopping there. These actions are helping businesses adapt, attract investment, create good-paying jobs and strengthen Ontario's resilience. Our plan ensures that future generations have the same opportunity that makes Ontario the best place in the world to live, work and raise a family.

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Ontario's response is clear: fortify our industrial bas, build a stronger economy, support our workers and strengthen a more competitive and self-reliant Ontario for the future. It starts, Madam Speaker, with cutting taxes. Every time you fill up your car, you're saving through our cuts to gas and fuel taxes, putting over $2.3 billion back into the pockets of families and businesses. When you buy a new home, you're saving 13% HST, delivering up to $130,000 in savings to eligible homebuyers. When you hop on the transit, you're saving $1,600 every year through One Fare.

Interjection: Only in Toronto.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: No, this is right across the GTA.

This year alone, our government is delivering $12.5 billion of relief to support families and individuals.

But we didn't stop there. We cut the small business tax rate by over 37%, and I'm pleased to announce we are lowering the cost of capital investments by $8 billion through the Ontario competitiveness tax cut, creating more than 30,000 new jobs. When combined with measures already announced earlier this year, this brings the total tax relief to more than $12 billion over the next five years.

Madam Speaker, the world is changing. Supply chains are shifting, competition for investment is intensifying, and countries around the world are competing for industries that will define the future. Ontario is leveraging one of our greatest competitive advantages: our world-class nuclear sector. We're building the largest nuclear expansion on the continent and securing Ontario's place as a global energy superpower.

It starts with upgrading existing plants at Darlington, Bruce and in my riding of Pickering. In Pickering–Uxbridge, we are investing $27 billion to refurbish four nuclear generating stations, or about 2,000 megawatts of clean, green energy. In fact, that project is creating more than 30,000 new jobs—people such as electricians, millwrights, pipefitters, boilermakers, ironworkers, engineers, technicians and many more—to refurbish the nuclear station.

Madam Speaker, in total, our government's nuclear build-out will add 150,000 new jobs and $800 billion to our economy. So we're not sitting idly by. This build-out of large-scale nuclear will require nearly a million tonnes of Ontario-made steel and metals and 4,500 kilometres of electric cable—enough to reach from Kincardine all the way to the west coast of Canada. These will be built with Canadian technology and a made-in-Ontario supply chain. The refurbishment is expected to contribute—just the Pickering refurbishment—$42 billion to Canada's GDP, and more than 90% of that project is staying in Ontario and

in Canada. This is the type of investment that is creating jobs today and for generations.

We are also investing in diversifying export markets. In fact, we exported seven times more electricity than we imported. And since 2018, we have increased all non-US exports by 75%, and nearly 28% just in the last year alone.

Ontario, in addition, is leading the country in removing interprovincial trade barriers. We were the first to remove party-specific exceptions, leading to greater free trade within Canada. This July, I was pleased to announce we are joining the Canadian securities passport system. For 20 years, provinces lobbied Ontario, and this year, we said yes. Madam Speaker, Ontario's leadership in removing interprovincial trade barriers could unleash up to $200 billion of GDP in Canada.

But it doesn't stop there. Ontario is also advancing transformational interprovincial projects, such as the proposed Northern Shield Energy Corridor, strengthening Canada's energy sovereignty.

Madam Speaker, Ontario is a land of opportunity. In fact, northern Ontario is home to some of the most promising mineral development opportunities anywhere in the world, including the Ring of Fire. In addition to our $1-billion investment to build infrastructure, such as all-season roads, and support for our communities, we have also signed agreements with Webequie First Nation, Marten Falls First Nation and Aroland First Nation that will help advance shared economic and community priorities.

After years of calling on the federal government, I am pleased to announce, along with the Premier, that just last week, they have committed to match Ontario's investment of $1 billion to advance road infrastructure for critical minerals development. Realizing this economic potential could generate up to $22 billion in economic activity while supporting more than 70,000 jobs in Ontario.

Madam Speaker, at a time when countries are searching for secure sources of critical minerals, Ontario has had an opportunity to lead because for too long, major projects were delayed by unnecessary red tape and fragmented approval processes. Our government is focused on cutting that red tape and lowering the cost of doing business.

We have passed 15—count them, 15—red tape reduction bills since we came into office, saving businesses 1.8 million hours and billions of dollars, and we are cutting the time the province spends processing permits by nearly 200,000 days. That's a lot of days. Do you know what this means? This means shovels are in the ground. This means that there are more good-paying jobs and there's prosperity for all Ontarians.

And we aren't stopping there. Innovations like the red tape shot clock—I really like this shot clock, where a time limit is put in place to get an answer on the application, and if the government doesn't give you the answer by the time limit, the answer is yes. What an innovation. What a concept, right here in Ontario. That's what leadership is about.

Madam Speaker, economic resilience requires strong foundations. Those foundations must be built today, if Ontario is to succeed tomorrow.

Earlier this year, we were thrilled to announce that we signed the Canada-Ontario Partnership to Build program, committing $8.8 billion to support housing, infrastructure and economic growth. Communities right across Ontario are benefiting from this support now, including Essex, including Windsor, including Hamilton, including Guelph, including Vaughan, including Mississauga, Barrie, Sudbury and Toronto. This is what leadership and economic development looks like in the province of Ontario.

Through our $210-billion capital plan, the largest in Ontario's history, we are building transit, highways, hospitals and schools right across the province. Madam Speaker, we are proposing to widen Highway 69 between Parry Sound and Sudbury. We're expanding Highway 3 in St. Thomas. We're building Highway 413 and the Bradford Bypass. We're widening Highway 11/17 between Nipigon and Thunder Bay. We're expanding GO Transit services, building subways and fast and reliable light rail right across the GTA. Ontario is building for the future.

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And we couldn't do it, Madam Speaker, without a world-class workforce. To make sure that they have the skills they need, we are investing over $2 billion in training and reskilling. We're also adding an additional $6.4 billion in our colleges and universities, including $1.7 billion to support an additional 70,000 seats in high-demand fields like science, tech, engineering, math, artificial intelligence, health care and the trades.

In fact, just last week, we announced the $730-million priority growth fund to train an additional 40,000 students for good-paying jobs in high-priority STEM fields, including 1,100 master's graduates. That's what supporting our workforce of tomorrow looks like.

In fact, overall, Ontario's world-class workforce will add more than 125,000 graduates in STEM and AI every single year because by investing in talent, we are positioning our youth for the jobs of tomorrow.

Madam Speaker, we cannot control every challenge beyond our borders, but we can control how we respond, and Ontario's response is to build, and to build together. Ontario has faced challenges before, and each time the people of Ontario have risen to meet the moment.

L'Ontario a fait face à des difficultés dans le passé, et chaque fois, la population de l'Ontario s'est montrée à la hauteur.

The challenges may be different, but I believe in Ontarians, I believe in Canadians. That is why I am optimistic. We are a resilient people, and we will come out together, better and stronger in Ontario, making for a better and stronger Canada.

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member for University–Rosedale.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Here we are, debating the fall economic statement. We are in consequential times, and this is quite honestly the most mediocre fall economic statement that I have ever seen. We have just listened to the

minister opposite present a very rose-tinted-glasses view of the government and the economy. But reality tells a very different story.

This fall economic statement is being released at a time where over 700,000 people woke up today without a job—workers at Stelco, Algoma, General Motors, at hospitals like Hamilton Health Sciences and Ottawa hospitals. Many people woke up today, and I guarantee you, a lot of them, sometime between now and when rent is due in two days' time, have no idea how they are going to make ends meet.

Thousands of students, they woke up today, and they are worried about how they're going to stay in school because they can no longer access the loans and grants that they were promised by this government. Everyone I know—every single person that I know—goes to the supermarket every week, and they are scared to look at how much the final tally is going to be at the checkout counter and whether their credit card is going to be able to cover it.

We have an affordability crisis, we have a jobs crisis, and our services are buckling under the strain of helping people and serving people because of this government's cuts.

How are the Conservatives responding to the challenges we face as a province and as a nation? They took a 147-day break from the Legislature. They bought a private plane for the Premier and then sold it but only after they got caught. They said yes to thousands of dollars of donations from private career colleges and conveniently looked the other way when these very same colleges robbed the government till. They have gutted OSAP and made it so much harder for a young person in Ontario to go to college or university and build a career in this tough job market. They have put us on track—I am shocked, Minister, that you did not talk more about the debt and the deficit—this government has put us on track to be in debt to the tune of $500 billion. That is the highest debt load in history. Then we are seeing cuts to health care and cuts to education.

I think—we think—this fall economic statement should be laser-focused on fixing the things that matter and on helping people. What does that mean? It means that if you need a doctor's appointment, if you are waiting for surgery, if you have made that awful decision to have to go down in an emergency room because you are in pain and you do not know why, then our public health care system should be there to quickly diagnose and treat you. I don't think this fall economic statement is going to meet that standard.

If you have a child, you should feel confident, when you hug your child goodbye and watch them walk into school, that they are going to be supported and safe and learn something valuable. I don't think this fall economic statement meets that standard.

And if you are in the job market, if you are a young person, you should trust that this government is making the right kind of investment in public infrastructure and the economy so that you can have a future here, find a good job here, raise a family here, afford a home here, retire here. I don't think this fall economic statement meets that test.

I think it's pretty clear: Ontarians do not want the scandals and the waste, the five-star hotels. They don't want that anymore. What they want is a fall economic statement that is going to invest wisely and responsibly in the things that matter: jobs, affordability, education and health care. And that is what we on this side of the House are going to be fighting for.

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

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: It's an honour to rise to speak in the chamber to respond to the minister's fall economic statement, but it's not a pleasure, Speaker.

What we see today is not a plan to protect Ontario; it's a plan that pretends to protect Ontario. Here we go again: another fiscal update, another delay in the path to balance from this fiscally irresponsible Conservative government.

People are worried. They're worried about their jobs. They're worried about their kids. They're worried about whether or not they'll ever be able to afford a home. They're worried about crumbling public services. And what do we have here? No credible plan to help those families, those workers.

Ontarians are being asked to accept larger deficits but not because it will help them. We're accepting higher debt costs. We will be paying interest larger than the growth in program spending for years to come, Speaker, because of this government's irresponsible spending. We have to accept weaker fiscal sustainability indicators and little evidence that this government is delivering results.

Speaker, it sounds familiar, right? Because the minister has actually said, seven times in a row—unlucky seven—that they will balance the budget, but once again they have kicked that plan down the road.

I don't believe for one second that this plan is any different. The Financial Accountability Office, who accurately predicted what this year's deficit would be, projects that in 2029-30—when the government once again is promising to balance the budget—the province will have a deficit of $8.9 billion. That's not a minor difference of opinion.

But at the same time, growth in our public services, in the spending that we need to support families who are suffering during this trade crisis and during the affordability crisis—spending growth will only increase by 0.9%. That's less than the cost of inflation. That means that services will not keep up. That's according to the Financial Accountability Office. How can we count on this government to offer the services we all need when their spending is not growing at the pace it needs to?

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Speaker, we still have sustainability measures that are deteriorating, with one already surpassed, one approaching surpassing its limit, and one not far behind. In the government's own slow-growth scenario, all three fiscal guardrails of their own making are overrun. Add to this the fact that the money we spend just servicing the debt will

become the third-largest budget item by the end of the decade.

And there's even more bad news. Ontario's job growth is now 13,000 jobs fewer than it was projected to be by this government just six months ago. Fewer jobs means less income growth, which means less revenue for the province.

We're going to have 16,000 fewer housing starts, meaning housing affordability will get worse, not better.

The minister talked about removing interprovincial trade barriers; in fact, he boasted about it. But guess what? He didn't say one word about what that will add to our GDP. It's a lot of words and not a lot of results.

Let's talk about sectors that are hurting.

I'm talking to a lot of farmers these days. The government talks about food security and stronger supply chains, yet spending on agriculture is declining. The Risk Management Program still—being spent over three years instead of over one, like we called for. Farmers need support now, not years from now. Just $7 million is dedicated to agri-food production. That's the same as what they're spending on the Premier's office. Maybe they should cut the Premier's office spending in half and increase this spending by 50%.

Education spending is down by nearly $300 million. Justice sector spending is down, while the government boasts about making safer streets. Emergency preparedness and firefighting funding is down, during a climate crisis. Post-secondary education investment is down, at a time when the world is changing and we need a highly skilled workforce. Economic development spending is down.

Let's talk about infrastructure. They describe their plan as ambitious. But do you know what, Speaker? The spending on infrastructure is being reduced—except when we talk about the Ottawa Hospital. They said it would cost $2.8 billion, and now we find out it's going to cost $10 billion. Are they going to ask the taxpayers in Ottawa to pick up the increase in the local share? I don't think they should. If this government can't get its projects under control, they need to bear the brunt of that.

Let's talk about municipal—

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

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Eight years of this government, and people cannot afford to live in Ontario. Homes unaffordable, groceries through the roof, hospitals overflowing, kids crammed into crowded classrooms, OSAP cuts, people with disabilities forced to live in legislated poverty, electricity prices going up—all this pain, and the government projects an even bigger deficit of $17 billion. Everyday people are struggling while the rich get richer. It is not fair.

That is exactly why the fall economic statement should have included a wealth tax on the super rich, to raise $26 billion so we can reduce the deficit and invest in what people need: affordable homes, better health care, better education, and low-cost renewable energy to power our economy.

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

Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady: We just heard the finance minister deliver the fall economic statement. The minister says that deficits reflect the world we are in. But today's mini budget does little to explain how we got here, beyond pointing to Donald Trump. Of course, I support helping Ontario businesses and industry navigate economic challenges. But we cannot forget that "we" also includes the people getting up every day, going to work, paying bills, putting food on the table and supporting their families.

One of the greatest concerns I have with this Conservative government is that it tinkers—it reacts to problems, recycles announcements, and then moves on without clearly measuring whether its policies are actually working.

Ontario needs sound economic policy, measurable targets and a willingness to adjust course—because announcing a program is not the same as delivering results.

And while this government points to the world around us, Ontarians deserve a government that takes responsibility for its own decisions.

At the end of the day, Speaker, an economic policy must deliver results—

The Speaker (Hon. Donna Skelly): Orders of the day?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUILDING ONTARIO FASTER ACT, 2026
LOI DE 2026 VISANT À BÂTIR L'ONTARIO PLUS RAPIDEMENT

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 29, 2026, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 140, An Act to enact two Acts and to amend various Acts / Projet de loi 140, Loi édictant deux lois et modifiant diverses lois.

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

MPP Susan Lahey: Thank you, Madam Speaker. As I take my seat to join the first session of the 44th Parliament of the Ontario Legislature, I do so with an enormous sense of gratitude, an understanding of the responsibility entrusted to me by the people of York–Simcoe and a profound respect for this institution.

I am the 1,995th member of provincial Parliament. How is it that I, Susan Lahey, proudly stand here today? It's a story about family, faith and freedom. I'm going to take you back to the very beginning, but trust me, I will keep it as lively as possible.

In 1830, my maternal Scottish ancestors, the Gordon family, arrived by ship in Ontario, Canada, in the village of Pickering—now Ajax—decades before our great nation was formally known as Canada. To think that, almost 200 years later, one of their descendants would be a member of provincial Parliament speaks to the incredible opportunities and possibilities for those who call Ontario home and is a testament to our great nation. When they arrived,

through their tenacity and faith, they farmed the land, built homes and roads, taught in a one-room schoolhouse, raised their families, and prospered.

Having lived in different parts of Canada—Toronto and York region—and other places, including Taiwan and England, my travels and experiences give me a unique perspective and appreciation of our magnificent province.

I am grateful for the leap of faith that my ancestors demonstrated embarking across the ocean to an unknown place. They believed in Matthew 17:20 of the Bible: to have faith like a mustard seed. This means faith the size of a tiny mustard seed enables anyone to command mountains to move and makes nothing impossible. They not only survived but thrived. I'm grateful to my family, who led by the example of hard work and instilled in me the value of learning about as much of the world as I could from their humble beginnings.

When heading off to university, like many other young people I was unsure of what I wanted to study, but I knew I enjoyed languages, history, art and music, and thought I'd learn about a different culture. I chose a first-year course in Mandarin Chinese—also taking a leap of faith to try something new and challenging. I like a challenge. The rest, as I say, is history.

I graduated and lived in Taipei, Taiwan, for two years, my experiences from which, one day, I could write a book about, including typhoons and earthquakes. But it is where, after arriving in the blazing heat and humidity of August to this tropical island, which is of a size that could fit in Lake Ontario, after three days of exhaustion—my clothing drenched in sweat, overwhelmed by new sights and sounds—I looked in the mirror and realized I was at a crossroads in my life. I had to decide whether I was getting back on an airplane and coming straight home to Canada or sticking with it. I chose the latter, and I am so grateful that I decided to persevere.

Later, I studied Asian art in London, England; pursued a master's degree in Vancouver, British Columbia; married and became a professional art appraiser specializing in Asian art; worked in the auction world; and grew my own family. When I faced choices in life and was uncertain, I chose the path less travelled.

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Madam Speaker, being an art appraiser is rather like being a detective and there are many transferable skills to politics, as I would later learn. I would see many fakes of porcelains and paintings and jades over the years, learned to spot invisible repairs on ceramics and was trained to pay close attention to detail to identify objects of every shape and kind.

I paid my dues for two years, unpacking boxes for general estate sales. My first boss gave me great advice: "Every specialist, like me, who specialized in the art of China, Japan, Korea and India, should become a generalist, and every generalist should have a specialty."

It was satisfying when I solved the mystery of an object, where it came from and whether its date was correct to the period its owner claimed it to be.

One day, I recall a fellow who brought in a Japanese vase to tell him what it was worth. He had been watching the Antiques Roadshow—that show was responsible for many art appraisers being asked difficult questions from hopeful viewers—and placed a Satsuma vase in front of me at the auction house, sharing his dreams of selling it, just like the one on TV that had been highly valued, so that he could retire. It was sad I had to inform him that, in its cracked state, with worn paint, and being of a much later date of manufacture than the Meiji period one he saw on TV, he would not be able to retire on the proceeds.

Over the years, hearing hundreds of personal stories about how individuals and families acquired, accumulated or collected objects, as an art appraiser I learned there are many types of monetary value: insurance, fair market, donation and probate. While there is value in objects, relationships and community are priceless. And life is all about relationships and how we treat others.

After having children, my focus increasingly turned to politics, our communities and the various levels of governments that shape our daily lives. I had ideas about how I could contribute and make our community not only better for my children, but better for everyone and future generations. I believe it is every individual's duty to contribute any way we can. My focus shifted outward to serving the community.

I am proud of my riding and the people in it. I want to share a bit about what makes Mount Albert and York–Simcoe so very special.

Anyone who has lived in Mount Albert for a significant period knows all about our famous cat, Beemer. Everybody knew Beemer and Beemer knew everyone. The six-toed, large orange-and-white cat would stroll casually throughout our small town as de facto mayor of Mount Albert. When I would go to the local paint store, he would be there and would, throughout the course of a day, make his rounds to all the small shops on Centre Street, visiting with residents. At nighttime he would rotate to various neighbours, sleeping in their homes. He owned our town like the King of Kensington. The king of Mount Albert, he added unique flair to our friendly Leave It to Beaver kind of place, where neighbours still know each other's names and look out for each other.

Mount Albert is also famous for its annual community fair. This summer, we celebrated our 101st year of the Mount Albert community fair. It is a traditional, good old-fashioned fair, with baking contests, spaghetti-eating contests, rides, food trucks, softball games, loads of talented singers and bands performing, and even a baby-judging contest—which I declined to be a judge for because I wanted to keep all the moms onside as supporters during the by-election. There was no way I was going to judge the most beautiful baby and remain in public office.

Every year the fair is organized entirely by volunteers, and I invite everyone to attend next year. It's always the first Saturday in June.

As a dedicated volunteer, I served the local Mount Albert Lions Club, church's food pantry, the East Gwillimbury library board, the Women's Centre of York Region

and many other groups, dedicating my spare time to community events and committees.

Catherine, Steve, Shannon, Linda, Bev, Joanne, Leanne, Stuart, Mary, Laurie, Jody, Mike and Mary, and so many, many more, are just some of the individual volunteers who I had the privilege of getting to know.

My church, Hillside, led by Pastor Brian and the elders, and all those who prayed for me to have strength and wisdom in my life as a public servant, I thank you—especially Gerry and Margaret and our house group. Your prayers have sustained me throughout the years as a town councillor on days when I needed uplifting and remembering. As the lyrics say in my favourite hymn, Holy Forever: "All thrones and dominions / All powers and positions / Your name," Jesus, "stands above them all."

Madam Speaker, my work as a town councillor involved committee work and decisions on projects about public infrastructure, accessibility and community safety. I learned that good government begins with understanding what is happening on the ground.

The work of municipal politics was excellent training for the next level of my work as a member of provincial Parliament. That experience also taught me that government works best when it understands that progress requires partnership. Municipalities, the province, community organizations, the federal government and, most importantly, constituents may approach a problem differently, but by listening carefully and focusing on practical outcomes, we can find solutions together. That is the approach I bring to Queen's Park: working with my colleagues in our government and across this Legislature to address the challenges facing our province.

I'm grateful for the foundation of faith that provides the calmness and confidence with which I will serve York–Simcoe. Having my sons, now such fine young men, Nicholas and Oliver, brought richness to my life and provided the inspiration for my community work. Thank you for your ongoing love and support. I'm so proud of you both.

I am absolutely humbled to be elected the member of provincial Parliament for York–Simcoe. To the people of York–Simcoe, thank you. Thank you for putting your trust in me and for placing your confidence in our Ontario PC team and the leadership of Doug Ford. I met thousands of you at your doors, at community events and across every corner of this riding. I listened to your priorities, heard your concerns and learned even more about the communities that make York–Simcoe such a special place to call home.

I wouldn't be standing here without the hard work and dedication of the entire campaign team and volunteers—thank you. Campaigns truly are a team effort, and my victory also belongs to all of you.

I want to thank the many members of our Ontario PC team who joined us on the campaign trail. You gave generously of your time, warmly welcomed me to the team and helped bring our message to the people of York–Simcoe. I am delighted to join you at Queen's Park and get to work.

I want to give a special thank you to former MPP the Honourable Caroline Mulroney. It is a privilege to call her a friend. She served York–Simcoe with tremendous dedication and I'm grateful for her friendship, her encouragement and for believing in me from the very beginning of my political journey. I look forward to building on the progress she delivered to our riding and the entire province.

When I ran the first time for public office in 2018, for town council, I was not successful. It was a difficult evening with the crushing news of the results. When Caroline called me up the next day, I was still in tears. I was exhausted after investing my heart and soul in the campaign. Her words of advice and comfort stay with me to this day: "Keep being who you are and doing what you do, Susan, and everything will work out." She was right—she was right.

To all the candidates from Monday evening's municipal election who did not come out on top, I would share those same words with each of you: Keep on being who you are. Rest for a few days, but then dive right back in to contributing to making our communities a better place.

I did not give up and, four years later, I decided to run again, having spent the interim continuing to share my energy, skills and ideas volunteering in the community and, in 2022, I was successful.

I regard Caroline Mulroney as the epitome of a leader, raising others up and leading in a way that seeks not the credit for the accomplishments of the team but being an anchor helping others and our communities reach their full potential. I will be eternally grateful for her faith in me and look forward to building on the progress already made addressing challenges and working with colleagues across this House to accomplish further improvements for all the constituents of York–Simcoe.

Julia Munro, former MPP—Mulroney's predecessor—and the longest-serving female MPP in Ontario, deserves to be recognized as well for her contributions, including as a history teacher and her knowledge of the Magna Carta, which resulted in a dedication here in Ontario of Magna Carta Day on June 15 of every year. Julia's motto used to be "Democracy, don't waste it." Monday's municipal elections are a reminder of the importance of our democratic system to the qualities of our lives where we live in Ontario, and as Remembrance Day approaches, we must always remember those who sacrificed their lives for us to have the right to vote. In the Mount Albert Community Centre, there is a marble plaque on the wall, quoting Milton Mainprize, which reads, "They are not dead who live in the hearts of the friends and neighbours."

I thank Premier Ford and my colleagues in the Progressive Conservative caucus for their confidence and support as I join your team, contributing to the work of our government as we focus on the priorities that matter to Ontario families, businesses and workers. Those priorities for York–Simcoe include building the infrastructure our communities need, bringing health care closer to home, addressing affordability issues such as housing, while

continuing to protect our natural and agricultural heritage, such as Lake Simcoe.

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York–Simcoe is more than a riding on a map; it is home. I believe it's the most beautiful riding in Ontario; however, I know that would be hotly debated amongst my Ontario PC caucus colleagues. From the Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation of the southern shores of Lake Simcoe, the crowning jewel of our riding; to the Sharon Temple, built by Quakers, who believed in freedom in faith, in the early 19th century, which still stands as a beacon of the ideals of equality and peace and symbolizes the democratic spirit; to the Holland Marsh, with its fertile soil that grows the vegetables that our dedicated farmers harvest, like those of the Holland Marsh Growers' Association; and Bond Head in King, every part of York–Simcoe is blessed with beautiful land and beautiful, hard-working people.

Madam Speaker, one of the challenges facing York–Simcoe is ensuring that infrastructure and public services keep pace with growth. The Ford government understands that growth must be supported by infrastructure. The Bradford Bypass is an excellent example of the investment being made to save commuters up to 30 minutes in traffic and improve our movement of goods and services throughout the province. It's good for the economy, and it's good for families. Our government is in action. Digging has begun, and we are well on the way to making it a reality.

It also means moving forward with the new acute care hospital in East Gwillimbury and the Southlake distributed health system with advanced care centres in Georgina and Bradford and connecting more people with a family doctor closer to home, as our government just made another historic announcement of investment. It means building the infrastructure our communities need while growing and protecting the quality of life, farmland and Lake Simcoe that make York–Simcoe such a great place to live.

It means continuing to make life more affordable for families, whether that's never raising taxes, permanently cutting the provincial gas tax or helping put the dream of home ownership within reach by removing the provincial HST from qualifying new homes. York–Simcoe needs housing and rental opportunities for people at different stages of life with different incomes. At a time when US tariffs threaten Ontario workers, businesses and our economy, it means standing with Doug Ford and our Ontario PC team to protect Ontario jobs, support our local businesses and keep our economy strong.

I am delighted to be appointed parliamentary assistant to the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, the Honourable Michelle Cooper, within the Ministry of Health, led by the Honourable Minister Sylvia Jones. In my role, I intend to bring my listening skills, to carefully listen to those who have lived experiences so I can support the work of the Ministry of Health.

My campaign was about bringing people together and earning your trust. Now my job is to keep that trust by showing up every day and being a strong voice for the people of York–Simcoe. In the weeks, months and years ahead, I look forward to working with residents, community organizations, businesses, seniors, young people and families across York–Simcoe to build on the progress we've made and keep our communities moving forward. I'm particularly excited to start conversations with the municipal mayors and councillors newly elected and tap into their shared energy and experience.

Thank you for your trust. Thank you for your support. I want every resident to know that my door is open and my commitment sincere. I intend to fulfill my duties with hope, optimism, resilience and kindness that my ancestors brought to their new life and adventure in Canada almost 200 years ago. Their motto, "Bydand," is a Gaelic word which means to stand and fight, to be steadfast and loyal. When I look at York–Simcoe, I see a place of tremendous opportunity, with faith, family and freedom as the guiding pillars of community.

Now let's get to work.

Applause.

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

M^me^ Dawn Gallagher Murphy: Thank you so much to the new member from York–Simcoe. That was an amazing inaugural speech. I'm so happy to be here with you and serve with you, especially being my neighbouring riding.

My question to you is, knowing that you have experience in council life, and I know oh, so well in East Gwillimbury, they are building—and you're right, infrastructure is so critical. Could you give me one of your experiences? You talked about building partnerships. Could you give us a good example of partnership in East Gwillimbury?

MPP Susan Lahey: Thank you very much, MPP Dawn Gallagher Murphy. I appreciate the question.

I think that the work that the Southlake hospital is doing right now and the investment of the province as well as the municipality of East Gwillimbury—and as a former town councillor who was involved with the application to be selected for that new acute care hospital, I am very confident in the collaboration to move the project forward with the investments of the province as well as the municipalities and Southlake hospital itself.

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

MPP Catherine McKenney: Thank you to the new member from York–Simcoe for that inaugural address. It's always good to get to know each other before we start debating and working together.

You did note that you also have council experience, so you've been in the political realm for quite some time. If you gave some thought to what compelled you—if there was even one thing that compelled you to seek public life, whether it was here or earlier on as a councillor—was there any one thing that you can point to that helped you to make that decision?

MPP Susan Lahey: Thank you for that question. I would say, as indicated in my speech, that my children were an inspiration to me in terms of looking outwards to

the community. I cannot speak to one specific moment where that light was ignited within me; however, it was more of a gradual process, realizing that I had the ability to contribute at a higher level and make an even greater impact with our communities.

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

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: That was a great inaugural speech by the new member. It's always tricky to get up and stand here the first day; we were all there once.

We have 124 ridings all over Ontario, and I'm always curious about each other's ridings because they're so vastly different. I'm wondering if you can share, do some bragging about your favourite things in York–Simcoe.

MPP Susan Lahey: Thank you very much. Well, I don't want to brag too much because I've just given my inaugural speech, and I don't want to start arguments about where the most beautiful place is. But on my days of campaigning, I would be in farm fields in the morning, on the shores of Lake Simcoe in the afternoon and in the urban centre of Bradford in the evening. So we have everything that you could possibly want in a riding in terms of all of the varied geographies and demographics. I think it's a place of great opportunity and growth.

If there's one place that I'd like to talk a little bit more about, it would be the Sharon Temple, which was the gathering place built around 1812, around the time of the War of 1812, by the Quakers who came up from Pennsylvania. They built this temple based loosely on King Solomon's temple in the Bible, as the story goes. They were all about equality and freedom and sharing in their communities, so they were one of the first groups that started the banking system that helped out all of the farmers in the community. Also, they are a national historic site, and some of the members of the Quakers there played a role as well in the rebellion which led to the formation of Canada—

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

Questions?

1400

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I can't possibly miss this opportunity. I absolutely have to ask a question about the six-toed cat. Never in my life have I seen a six-toed anything. I've got to learn more about this six-toed cat. You've got to talk about that cat. Tell me about that cat.

MPP Susan Lahey: Thank you very much for that question. Yes, I hadn't seen a six-toed cat myself before that either. Very big paws is what it means, and Beemer was quite the character. He owned Mount Albert. He just went wherever he pleased and whenever he pleased, and everybody respected him as he crossed roads and lived his long life. He has now since passed; however, he really does embody the independent spirit of Mount Albert and of York–Simcoe, I would say.

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

MPP Alexa Gilmour: Thank you to the member for York–Simcoe.

It was a pleasure to listen to your inaugural speech, and we share Gaelic roots and deep heritage and history here. Who knows; maybe some ancestors came over at the same time.

It was really lovely to hear you describe your vision and your hopes around infrastructure and housing. It made me wonder: Let's say it is October 2027 and you're standing in the House and you're talking about the one thing that you are most proud of getting done for York–Simcoe. What would it be?

MPP Susan Lahey: It's hard to single out one item, but I would like to look at a place—a very special place—that just opened a couple of weeks ago in Bradford called the LOFT, which is all about Leap of Faith Together, which is what LOFT is short for.

With the investments, it's a great example of the collaboration of all levels of government that came together—both municipal, provincial and federal—to double the number of units available for people with complex health needs—seniors, mostly—to raise the number to 99 affordable units within this LOFT building. And much credit is due to the local municipality, because these things don't happen overnight; they take many, many years of cooperation to build.

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

MPP George Darouze: Thank you very much to the member for York–Simcoe for sharing those inaugural speeches. They are really amazing, and it gets the members to know each other on a personal level. I know that we met you a while back, but it's important to share some of those events in your life.

I want to ask what you, Susan Lahey, the MPP for York–Simcoe now, do on your own. What's your hobby? You shared with us your professional life; you shared with us your historical love and all that. What's one thing you would like to share with your members and caucus about your hobby?

MPP Susan Lahey: Thank you, MPP Darouze, for that question.

I alluded to the fact that I get great satisfaction from solving mysteries. I love reading mysteries from everyone from Sherlock Holmes to Louise Penny, and my favourite TV channel is BritBox, so I'm a real fan of all of those British shows, of the mysteries, because I do like a good mystery.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): We have time for one more quick question and answer.

The member for Mississauga–Malton.

Mr. Deepak Anand: My question is very simple because we don't have much time: When you were growing up, did you ever want to be what you are today? I remember my cousin wanted to be a pilot—every time he'd see a plane, he'd run out—and today he's a pilot. So an answer to that, please.

MPP Susan Lahey: No. The answer is no. I was unaware of even the town councillor job and role. I've been asked that question by a resident, if I'd always wanted to be a town councillor since being very young. I said, "I had no

idea about that role." I think, like many young people, we grow up and we discover our interests and we are exposed to different ideas and we follow that.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I just want to congratulate the member from York–Simcoe on a very gracious inaugural speech. I also would note that it's clear that strong women supported you throughout your career, and that's a very notable fact around here.

We are debating today Bill 140, the Building Ontario Faster Act, and I have to tell you, Madam Speaker, it's coming in a very interesting time here, in the history of this province. You will know that we were shut out of this place for 147 days, Madam Speaker, not being able to bring forward legislative solutions to the ongoing tariff crisis, not being able to address the emergency room and hallway medicine, hallway health care crisis in Ontario. Meanwhile, the government members kept trying to put out the fires that they themselves created.

This piece of legislation is coming in a really concerning increase in the backsliding of our democracy, and I always say this: When people show you who they really are, you should believe them. We have so many examples that have led to Bill 140, which undermines environmental rights, economic rights, Indigenous rights. It's like one-stop shopping for undermining democratic integrity in Ontario.

We have so many examples: This is the government that rammed through far-reaching omnibus bills at breakneck speed, banning public participation in committee hearings. That's this government.

This is the same government that set up special economic zones exempt from democratically decided local rules and regulations and environmental protection. That is this government.

This is the government that forced municipalities to bring in strong-mayor powers so one mayor can overrule decisions made by the majority of duly elected councillors. We have minority rule in Ontario, Madam Speaker, something I thought I would never say out loud in this Legislature.

We have this government appointing officials to set tax rates and direct a level of regional governance in Waterloo, in Niagara, in Durham. I think it's worth noting that it is now three days after the municipal election in Ontario, and Waterloo will not know who the regional chair is for 30 or 40 days—a completely untransparent process. Removing the democratically elected regional chairs is something that speaks to who this government is. By giving those regional chairs strong-mayor powers, it's basically establishing puppets in these roles to do the government's bidding. It is the very definition of democratic backsliding.

This government has eliminated the fixed election days, which is, of course, very interesting. They've given themselves the sole and distinct advantage of choosing when Ontarians go to the polls, and only they will know that. They've removed our ability to plan appropriately within an election cycle. That's what this government has done.

They've gutted the freedom-of-information processing, even while this Premier, when we do see him, says that he is the most transparent Premier in the universe. This is exactly the opposite of who the Premier of Ontario is. Remember well: In 2018, they gutted Toronto city council seats in half, in the middle of an election. They banned Kingston and London from using their locally decided ranked ballot voting system, just stomping down on the neck of democracy. They've overridden democratically negotiated collective agreements and imposed wage suppression on public sector workers by bringing in Bill 124, which was deemed unconstitutional. That is who this government is.

This growing list reveals a troubling disregard for the democratic principles that are fundamental to Canada. I can tell you, Madam Speaker, that I chaired the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians internationally, and if this was happening in other Commonwealth jurisdictions, there would be a huge red flag, because it's consistent behaviour which demonstrates a complete and utter disdain for democracy. And that is what we are dealing with now.

1410

These measures that they have brought in, and now coupled with Bill 140, are essentially about control. It is about power and it is about democratic backsliding. And it is not good enough for the people of this province.

My colleagues yesterday did the lead on Bill 140. I will say, this bill just got dropped on Tuesday at 3 o'clock. Leads were yesterday—scrambling to make briefings happen of any sort. We're still not sure if this government is even going to take this to the people that we are elected to serve. We take an oath when we come to this place that we will put those people first. Bill 140 is the exact opposite of putting the people of Ontario first.

So the bill itself is called Building Ontario Faster. It is a rushed 23 schedules in this piece of legislation, 263 pages—my colleague from Sudbury yesterday gave it a very good name; he called it a "dog's breakfast"—tabled the day before debate, no time for MPPs or communities to even review it. The feedback, actively, is still coming in right now and the feedback is very, very concerned about the direction of this bill.

Just to give you some high levels of where it is right now: The bill guts environmental protections and public oversight. It will be forcing dumps and incinerators on unwilling communities while the recycling program in Ontario actively falls apart, like right in front of you. Even in those 147 days where we weren't in this place, you would have seen and heard from multiple stakeholders. But for those who are trying to deal with tires in Ontario, there is a huge backlash on your plan right now: (1) because it's not working, and (2) because you didn't consult. You'll never get policy and legislation right if you don't talk to the people who understand the issue.

I think that we can all summarize it, that you did not understand how recycling was working in Ontario, because now we have dumps of tires. And, really, the concern is that we could have one day, of course, a massive fire.

We've been through this before. You're supposed to learn and remember your history so that you don't make the same mistakes, but this government seems addicted to moving in the wrong direction.

I think most concerning for us—I mean, there's a number of issues. But my colleagues from Sudbury and Nickel Belt had done an extensive, non-partisan campaign on the four-laning of Highway 69. Highway 69 isn't here—it's in schedule 4—and this is an urgent and life-or-death piece of the bill. Our colleagues have garnered support from across the province, from every sector—from chambers of commerce to Indigenous communities, to paramedics, to the health care sector who has to deal with the destruction of this highway.

We asked you just to pull this part out, just pull schedule 4 out of the act. Let's deal with it as a separate, urgent issue because it is a matter of life and death. The government denied us that opportunity. And yet, we, of course, had brought this bill forward to four-lane Highway 69 back in 2024, and the government voted against it. So you've buried it in here with a number of other schedules that you know that we can't support—we won't support. We're never going to vote in support of reducing environmental protections or overriding Indigenous rights. We are never going to do that. So you've put the little poison pill into the omnibus bill, thinking that you're so smart. The good work of our northern members on Highway 69, though, will prove you wrong, because people really have caught on to this government, I would say, Madam Speaker.

Also, the government could act on Highway 69 right now. Like, there's nothing really stopping the government from doing it. I mean, let's remember, the Premier himself promised to four-lane Highway 69 in 2018, in 2022 and in 2025. However, there were zero dollars in every budget and fall economic statement since. The rhetoric on this highway while people die is unconscionable in this day and age.

I have to say, I was sitting with the member from Sudbury as he was talking yesterday. When he starts telling the stories of real families who have paid the price for this dangerous highway, it's impossible not to get emotional about it—from the Patels, who were killed in April; to Jack Snow; to Jeannine Lacasse; and Erin's nephew Cody.

Paramedics, chambers of commerce, northern councils all say the same thing: "Get it done." You could do it now. You have a majority government. You could pull schedule 4 out of this bill. You could call us all into this chamber after 147 days, and we would say, "Do it." We could actually do something together. But no, no, no—not this government. I guess that's not the game—as if the lives of people in northern Ontario who travel on Highway 69 is a game. It's pretty disgusting.

This bill is not about building faster. It's a developer wish list that hands more power to ministers and shuts the public out, municipalities out and First Nations out. That's what Bill 140 is about.

The government had a chance to set a new tone for this next chapter here.

You have to be absolutely blind not to see how people are hurting in Ontario, and our finance critic, responding to the fall economic statement today, caught the emotion of that. In our ridings, we all are dealing with seniors who can't find homes or afford their lives, parents who can't find child care, people in our communities who can't find a doctor. People are afraid to go to the emergency room, even when they're in pain, because now we have 2,000 people every single day receiving health care in hallways. And you come back with a piece of legislation that not only completely misses the crisis on housing, health care, education—almost everything is on fire, honestly, in the province of Ontario, and you come back with a bill that overrides public consultation, removing the voices of the people of Ontario and the ability to engage with government. You've removed that right. Actually, when you do that, you also remove our rights and undermine our rights as members of provincial Parliament. So this is not going in the right direction.

I'm going to focus a little bit on the move around lessening environmental protections.

I'm going to quote Phil Pothen from Environmental Defence. This is what they've done—they ran this through their counsel as well. They said, "Bill 140 would deal yet another crushing blow to Ontario's anti-corruption, democratic and environmental protection infrastructure. If passed, schedule 8 of the Building Ontario Faster Act, 2026 would gut the Environmental Bill of Rights, letting the government create, change or erase regulations and policies that impact public health, the environment or public safety...." And this would be effective immediately, with no mandatory advance posting on the Environmental Registry of Ontario. So this is a major step backwards for one of the largest provinces in Canada. And people are watching what's happening in in this province; I can tell you that much.

They went on to say, "This would create a corruption and public safety risk because it would allow polluters and developers to exploit newly created loopholes before the public, other levels of government or citizen groups can even find out they exist." So it's basically shopping around opportunities for people who are on the inside.

We heard this morning that there is definitely an inside and an outside with this government. Now we have some documentation that demonstrates that this is a quid pro quo sort of situation, whereby you can get an MZO or you can get some advance notice on what's going to be for sale in the greenbelt if you sell your tickets to the leaders' leadership levy. It's shocking to actually see it in a text. We kind of always knew it was happening; we went through this with the Liberals for the cash for access. That's when the Auditor General said, "Listen, you can't have a government-run event and then also charge tickets specifically for special side events for lobbyists." And they changed that—they had to; they had to change the policy. A few people went to jail, but in the end, they had to pony up.

1420

I think all of us in the House are looking forward to the day when we can have some assurance that members of this provincial Parliament are not being asked by partisans to sell tickets in order for public policy. It's overt right here, right out in the open. Does Bill 140 stop this? No. In fact, I think it legitimizes the entire process.

This piece from Environmental Defence specifically around schedule 8 goes on to say, "Contrary to the government's claims, the Ontario Regulatory Registry is not a plausible substitute for the Environmental Registry of Ontario postings. That is because posting on that registry in advance is optional for the government." And we haven't seen the government saying, "Hey, listen"—well, we haven't seen it in the front room; we've heard about it in the back room when the Premier announced to some developers that as soon as he got into power he was going to open up the greenbelt, right? He certainly wasn't saying that in front of the microphones in front of the media. But thankfully, we did find out that the Premier was making some promises. It's so funny that he could those keep those promises, but he can't keep the promises around, for instance, four hours of care for seniors in our long-term-care system.

What I heard this morning was just astonishing, quite honestly, that the parliamentary assistant says that they're so pleased that 300 long-term-care homes in Ontario are not meeting that four-hour duty of care. I'm sure that he wouldn't want one of his family members in a long-term-care facility only getting one hour and 16 minutes of hands-on care a day. That has to strike a chord with some of you over there. You must have parents who require that kind of care and who are clearly not getting it in Ontario despite the 2025 promise to complete it.

Does Bill 140 address some of these real issues that are impacting the people who we're elected to serve? No, it doesn't. Bill 140 is about control and about solidifying that control. So Environmental Defence makes some very good points.

There is this one part in this bill which I found really interesting. It's schedule 17, the Ontario Heritage Act. Basically, a group of whistle-blowing archaeologists had previously identified issues with the province's registration regime, and then, all of a sudden, those archaeologists—I never thought of archaeologists in Ontario as the evil, anti-housing, obstructionist kind. But this schedule 17 will undermine their ability to do their work to disclose the findings of what they're seeing out there, and the government has said, "Oh, this is going to reduce the housing wait by 80%."

Archaeologists in Ontario are not the problem with the housing crisis. You should look in the mirror. This government is the problem by creating chaos and by not addressing the deep need for deeply affordable, attainable housing which would create jobs in all of our communities, which would create a procurement chain from our forestry sector to our concrete sector.

There are solutions before you. Somebody must have had a couple of good ideas when we were out in our ridings and not here in Ontario's Legislature for 147 days. But what do you come back with? A piece of legislation that not only misses the moment, does not address the ongoing crisis that is happening in Ontario but, more to the point, encapsulates and hoards more power for this government, preventing us as legislators from doing our jobs through the public consultation process.

There is an opportunity here to switch your modus operandi. There really is. It's not too late to start to work with us towards solutions. I guarantee you Bill 140 is not the piece of legislation that will meet the moment that people in Ontario need, and it's once again another failure of leadership.

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

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: It's always great to hear the member from Waterloo speak in the House.

I'm with you on the fact that this government has been AWOL, essentially, for five months. We have not been in the chamber. The potential was there for them to come back with a fabulous omnibus bill, if they wanted to do an omnibus one, with great things to address OSAP, health care, education, all the things that are a mess, but they came back with this.

A few of the sections are on landfill sites. We've known for years that the capacity of our landfills will run out in 10 years. Do you not think this government should have been preparing in advance, thinking of every single way they can extend the life of the landfills and work on waste diversion? Do you not think that would have been a smart thing to do?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Yes, I do. I think that if you get into public service and you are duly elected in your riding and then you're held accountable by your constituents—burning more garbage is not something that people are coming into my office talking to me about, I can tell you that much.

Let's also remember, Madam Speaker, that Premier Ford promised communities the final say on new landfills. You'll remember this promise. Now he's breaking that promise. His own government gave towns a veto in 2020, saying landfills should go only where they're welcome, and after Dresden, there's only one more broken promise that leaves families stuck with a dump that they never agreed to.

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

MPP Paul Vickers: This question is for my fellow member from Waterloo.

This bill puts Ontario on the offensive. We are taking the fight to Washington because we will never become the 51st state. If passed, this bill will help businesses get projects under way quicker and easier by reducing unnecessary red tape in our permitting process.

We've seen this from the opposition before. They oppose measures that reduce duplication, streamline approvals and speed up decision-making.

At a time when we are doing everything it takes to protect Ontario, why is the member insisting that businesses

and communities continue to navigate a maze of red tape at the expense of economic growth and job creation?

Ms. Catherine Fife: My colleague, who I quite like, has said that this bill puts us on the offensive. I will just say to you respectfully, I find this bill offensive. It does not address the procurement challenges that we're having.

We've seen the Premier promise his buy Ontario, Captain Canada act, and yet we continue to give major contracts to the United States. Does Bill 140 prevent the Premier from saying he's going to support Ontario and then not? No, it doesn't.

There are so many opportunities here that are win-win-win for our communities, and I go back to the housing. The forestry sector—my colleague has put forward a really strong plan. We need that lumber. The forestry sector wants to build the homes. We want to create the jobs. We need homes. Why couldn't you fast-track a "building Ontario homes faster" plan?

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

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I want to thank my colleague from Waterloo.

The residents in St. Catharines have a simple question for this government: Who is protecting our community when environmental safeguards are being weakened?

The former GM lands are a major concern for the residents. The community deserves accountability for contaminated industrial properties strong environment oversights and a clear pathway forward. But Bill 140 raises serious concerns about weakening the very protections communities rely on to hold decision-makers accountable.

My question to my colleague is this: When it comes to the former GM lands, how can St. Catharines residents have confidence that their health, their neighbourhoods and their futures are being protected when this government is weakening environmental safeguards instead of strengthening them?

1430

Ms. Catherine Fife: This is a really good question. The member from St. Catharines literally has gone through hell this summer, dealing with flooding and infrastructure crisis and not getting any help from this government. And it's not the first time. Our member from Ottawa went through the same thing—silence from the government. And these things are not going to get any easier or any better. Climate change is real. I don't know; do we still have to say that out loud?

Schedule 8 also repeals the EBR requirements for ministry statements on environmental values. So I don't know where that leaves your community, but it doesn't leave them with a transparent and open plan to deal with environmental consequences. In fact, it ensures that the government does not need to be held accountable to your community, and that's the wrong direction.

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

Mr. Adil Shamji: We all listened to the fall economic statement today, which regrettably was after lunch and therefore difficult to keep down. We heard this government speak ad nauseam about protecting Ontario, about building Ontario—in fact, this legislation is called Building Ontario Faster—and yet, when I look at anything, the only thing that they're good at building is the things that we don't want. They're good at building our deficit; it's going to hit $16.9 billion this year. And they're certainly not good at building homes. The fall economic statement again confirmed what we've observed for the last couple of years: that they are not on a track record to deliver the homes that they've promised that they will build.

Yet, we're here to debate a bill that is called Building Ontario Faster. Is there anything in this legislation, or, frankly, in this government's track record, that convinces you that they will be able to live up to this title?

Ms. Catherine Fife: This could be a very short answer. No. This piece of legislation really is about solidifying the government's control over all decision-making processes here and ensuring that they can bypass democratic values, quite honestly. I just say this again: They've shown us who they are. We should believe them, and we should hold them to account as much as we can. It was hard to hold you to account, though, when you shut us out of here for 147 days.

So this bill, if it goes to committee, will have to be dissected, broken down and rebuilt all together again. But really, a good-faith measure would be for the government to pull schedule 4 so that we can all vote to improve Highway 69.

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

M^me^ Dawn Gallagher Murphy: I'm looking at a specific section for Bill 140 as it relates to the streamlining of Ontario Land Tribunal appeals and the planning processes, specifically as it relates to the official plan—the OP—which is a document that sets out policies on how land in a municipality should be used, whereas an official plan amendment, the OPA, is a formal document that makes changes to the OP.

Right now, there is a lack of clarity on whether OPs and OPAs have been referred to the OLT by the minister for a recommendation or decision that may be appealed for a non-decision. So when we think about something like that, what this can do for us, the changes could reduce unnecessary appeals and streamline the planning framework.

So my question to the member opposite is: Does the member oppose these types of reforms that can streamline the process?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I shouldn't have to tell the member from Newmarket–Aurora this, but your government has blown up the official plan process—I mean, completely blown it up. In Waterloo region, out of eight municipalities, instead of having a central planner, you gave all of those municipalities the right to do whatever the hell they want. It is chaos. Your government has created chaos from a planning perspective, and we pay the price for it.

So, no. You can tinker with the OLT, but ironically, it's because of your government that there are so many appeals and processes at the OLT because it's actually just that last line of defence against your government. But then you

continue to appoint people who will do your bidding at that level. It is so—I can't say the word, but you know way want to say. Bill 140 is an abject failure of leadership, not meeting the moment of Ontario. I'm beyond disappointed, a little bit sad, but you know, we are going to fight back.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Just a reminder to all members to direct their comments to and through the Chair.

Further debate?

MPP Andrea Hazell: Good afternoon, everyone. It's my first debate speech in the House since we're back, and so, Madam Speaker, I just want to say that I am exceptionally happy to have an opportunity to debate this bill on behalf of the constituents of my beautiful riding of Scarborough–Guildwood.

As the critic for transportation, speaking to Bill 140, the Building Ontario Faster Act, I would like to share my time. I'm not sure if my colleagues are here or if they're going to be speaking later, but if they are here and they speak, I would share my time with the member for Ajax and the member for Don Valley North.

Bill 140 is not one bill. To me, it should never be one bill. It has 23 schedules, and this passes the heaviness of a phonebook. It reminds me of my encyclopedia that I have at home. It's 200 pages. Just think about that: less than 24 hours to review 200 pages. I love policies, I love bills, but I think when we are having the time on the government side for the whole of the summer, I think it's 127 days, to put this omnibus bill together—127 days, right?

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: It's 147.

MPP Andrea Hazell: Oh, 147; I want to correct that for the record—you have to have at least some type of a respect for us on the other side of the House. What I want to say to you is, the people of Ontario elected you to do a job, to represent them. But also, they have elected us. In this House we are all elected officials. You did not just get elected in the sky and we got elected on the earth. We all did this in Ontario. I really and truly believe that we need more respect than we are given with this bill.

Madam Speaker I also want to stress that in a 24-hour turnaround—think about this. You brought us back on Tuesday. Today is Thursday. You tabled it on Tuesday and we all had tasks and jobs that we had to do as elected officials. I know for us on the other side of the House, we worked around the clock to get some information together. That, to me, again, is totally disrespectful. It did not give me an opportunity to sit down with the people of Scarborough who I come into the House to represent every day. That is my job. That is every member's job in this House.

This is how the government builds its bills. It puts in one good thing, one thing every member wants to support or would like to support, and then it buries all the harmful policies in it and dares us to vote no. This government stands up and announces its bill by saying, "If this bill passes...." I cannot stand it. "If this bill passes"? It will be passed. They have the majority in the House. This government knows it will pass. It knows exactly how the vote will end before the debate even begins. Why go through the motions of consultations when it has already decided it does not care what our communities or our stakeholders have to say about the policies in this House?

1440

Madam Speaker, members on this side of the House, I will say it again because this really hurts: We are all elected officials; this government has treated us as if we were not. It has shown over and over that this government does not have the respect of bringing forward an omnibus bill—less than 24 hours. I have constituents from Scarborough who are listening, but unfortunately I have not had the opportunity to bring their voices into my debate time that I have right now.

In this bill, for schedule 4, we heard about the remaining of the expansion, and it's a good thing that you want to fast-track it five years. Now you want to fast-track it five years? What happened to five years ago? Can you imagine, while people are dying on Highway 69, you let it happen over and over and over again, and now you're saying you have the authority to fast-track this bill, expand Highway 69 by five years?

But I want to give a shout-out to the folks in the north. I came in in 2023, and they have been pounding it in this House about the deaths on Highway 11 and 17 and 69. As a critic for transportation, that's why I brought it up in both my bills, to support the people in the north. Because, Speaker, I drove on Highway 17. Within seven minutes, 15 trucks passed us. I was in good hands because I trusted my driver, but I was screaming because he said, "Do you want me to go as fast as I'm allowed to go while the trucks are passing?"

So just imagine how many deaths that we have on the highway. I spoke to FONOM, I spoke to NOMA, I spoke to ROMA, I spoke to councillors, I spoke to the Premier—they were all bleeding, asking this government for change. That is what got me the most: that you're coming with an omnibus bill with Highway 69 stuck in there. You're not giving us the time when you're going to expand the highway, when you're going to get shovels on the ground. But again, we must vote for an omnibus bill blindly.

And then if I said no to this, it's going to go on record—as their conversation usually is. We hear in the House all the time, "Oh, you voted down my bill. They don't work with us across the aisle." Well, when you come with an omnibus bill and you hide in it like wolves in sheep's clothing, and we've got the time to rip it apart and see all the policies that are hiding in that omnibus bill, that is not going to work for the people of Ontario, that is not going to work for the municipalities in Ontario.

In 2024, I introduced my SMART Ontario Act as Bill 184. The third section of my bill supported Highway 11, 17 and 69, including those highways that only have two lanes. It set clear standards: ice cleared within three hours of becoming aware of it, any pothole bigger than 600 square centimetres and deeper than eight centimetres repaired in four days—the same standard I was asking for that applies to the 400-series highways, instead of a 12-hour window. Ambulances are stuck, police are stuck, people can't move, doctors' appointments get cancelled and kids can't get to go to school. This government voted it down.

But it's not a surprise, because for our bills, the slogan should be, "You bring forward a bill and it is voted down."

Madam Speaker, in 2025, I thought, "I'll try again; maybe I'll have some hope." I tabled my bill again, as Bill 70. I amended it to include even the 2+1 configuration. I said, let me try the 2+1 configuration, a centre passing lane every few kilometres, a design that has been proven to reduce deadly head-on collisions. I amended it because, as I said, I travelled on Highways 11 and 17, and I couldn't understand why this government does not see and feel and read the news of the deaths on Highways 11, 17 and 69.

Speaker, every time there is a death on those highways, that is a chair at the dinner table that is empty. It's not just for the members from the north to feel that. Everybody in this House should feel that. No one wants to lose our loved ones; that, this government has control over. Madam Speaker, it is unacceptable that northerners face such dangerous conditions every single day while the government refuses to respond with urgency—five years faster; I don't know when that is, so this building 69 faster, to me, it is still open. And I hear across, the members here, and I quite agree, because I was thinking about this yesterday too: When will they start? Schedule 4 and Highway 69 should not have been in this bill.

Actually, I was looking at this bill, and I was seeing how many ministries are in the bill. I think it's over 12 ministries stuck in this omnibus bill. Isn't that outrageous? And then you're asking me, with my little time I have, to debate the bill, crack it open, find what's being hidden in this bill, and to deliver it to you. Well, I have not even reached 50 pages. It's 200 pages. I believe it's done on purpose. It's done on purpose because we came back. It's going to make us tired. It's going to make us frustrated. It's going to make us flustered. This is not how I expect legislation to work.

I just want to say I am pleased and happy that I did get this opportunity to debate Bill 140, and I'm asking, and I'm requesting and I'm demanding that this schedule 4, Highway 69, gets taken out of this bill and put forward as a single bill. I'm pretty sure with all the deaths, and the deaths that just happened I think in April and right up to June 2026, that we all can approve on widening Highway 69—not fast-tracking five years from now because we don't know what that is. We've seen again and again and again that this government comes out with bills talking about fast-tracking it. We look at the greenbelt—this is exactly what happened—and then you have to retract, amend and bring it back to the House.

With the little time I have—

Hon. Matthew Rae: You still have six minutes.

MPP Andrea Hazell: —I just want to thank everyone for listening in.

The member across, I know you still have six minutes—well, if you had some respect for me and gave us three weeks to reach out to the communities and reach out to our stakeholders to find out what they want us to talk about in this House—these are the people that voted us in. They also voted all of you in. We're always going to need proper consultation and transparency.

1450

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

Mr. Joseph Racinsky: Thank you to the member for Scarborough–Guildwood for talking about Bill 140—truly transformational legislation, large legislation, that does lots to cut red tape and get Ontario moving, to build Ontario. I'm pleased that she supports the items about Highway 69. To be honest, I listened very carefully to her remarks. That was the only part of the bill that she actually referred to at all, and so I wanted to ask the member if she's going to be voting in favour of all the other fantastic items that she wasn't able to have the time to talk about this afternoon.

MPP Andrea Hazell: I thank the member across from me for the question. I went through the 22 schedules of your bill, but you know what? At 3 a.m. in the morning, I fell asleep with all of it on my stomach, because your government gave us—

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

MPP Andrea Hazell: Through you, Speaker, the government has the audacity to give us less than 24 hours to prepare for a 200-page document. So, as the critic for transportation, I took on schedule 4. I will take on the other schedules. My colleague took a stab at the municipal and the environmental schedules, and it's a load of crap. I will not be voting for this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Stop the clock. The member will withdraw her unparliamentary remark.

MPP Andrea Hazell: I withdraw.

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

M^me^ Dawn Gallagher Murphy: To the member opposite—actually, similar to the question I asked earlier, but that was en français. This time, I'm going to do it in English.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business awarded the last Ontario Liberal government a C+ on red tape reduction before Ontario voters sent them packing. This year, Ontario received an A grade, and this is the highest in their reporting history.

So my question: Why would the members opposite oppose reforms that business groups and CFIB have recognized as national-leading?

MPP Andrea Hazell: Actually, I am familiar with CFIB. I know they are there to support the small businesses in Ontario. I actually had lots of opportunity to work with them. I'm not going back on record reading from the Ontario Liberal Party. You have been in government for eight years. I have not seen you with any red tape reduction if it doesn't belong to the donors of the progressive party.

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

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Yes. Thank you very much, and through you, Chair: Bill 140 takes a broad cleaver and literally guts the Environmental Bill of Rights.

What we see is that this bill of rights, that was enshrined in 1994 by the previous NDP government, had for decades protected the public's democratic right to participate in meaningful government decisions that affected the environment.

The government says that the reason they're gutting the Environmental Bill of Rights is because it's a form of eliminating red tape. How would you respond to this government's claim?

MPP Andrea Hazell: Thank you for that question. When I think of the protection of the environment, I think this is where the government has failed.

I'm going to go back to the greenbelt. With the greenbelt scandal, the environmental assessment was never an issue. This government will cut every environmental assessment to make sure that they satisfy their donors, their friends and their insiders. That's what I see. Environmental assessment does not have any points on top of the radar of this government. That is why we have to make sure that we're debating this and we're bringing this forward, because we always need a balance with red tape and our environment.

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

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: To the fine member for Scarborough–Guildwood, who does her community proud every single day when she's in this House: Do you not think that if this government truly cared about the people in the north, that if they would actually put schedule 4 with regards to the highways and keeping people safe in the north, they would have it as a stand-alone bill instead of burying it in this destructive dumpster fire of Bill 140?

MPP Andrea Hazell: To my colleague, thank you, really, for that message. That is why I took schedule 4 and Highway 69 to heart, because I know how many people, how many lives have been lost on this highway. For this government to take this piece of legislation and then add it into the omnibus bill, which is like a phone book—then when I do not approve it, it's going to be, "The members on the other side of the House are not working with us." So Highway 69 was purposely added into that omnibus bill with 200 pages, 23 schedules, just to get under our skin and get to us. They know we're not going to vote for something that ridiculous in all their schedules.

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

MPP Jamie West: Thank you as well to my colleague from Scarborough–Guildwood. I appreciate you talking about Highway 69, schedule 4.

I was recently looking at data last night on the number of collisions, injuries and fatalities that have happened along this highway since the Premier was elected and the Conservative government became the party, Speaker. From 2018 to 2026, there were 820 collisions on that two-lane portion, 125 injuries and, sadly, 18 fatalities.

Do you know how much they have four-laned of that road since they took power? Zero inches—zero. Now we have the nonsense of this bill, where they're pretending that we're not going to support four-laning Highway 69. They're pulling politics into it, and it's shameful.

My question to my colleague is, why would the Conservatives do this? Why would they put this much effort into stalling Highway 69 when people are dying on that road?

MPP Andrea Hazell: I really, really thank you for that question. It is so important. I said before, as a critic for transportation, I really wanted to concentrate on this schedule 4 because up until now, the government has not cared for the people in the north. They said that, but it's all a gimmick.

So talking about fast-tracking Highway 69—they're after something else. They're not there and putting people as their first priority. We're talking about—and I have the numbers here—18 deaths, 125 injuries, 820 collisions on Highway 69 alone since this government takeover.

So I would say, if you are putting the people in the north, if you care about them, give them time. Take this bill out of schedule 4. Let's all approve this, put shovels in the ground now and save the lives of the people in the north.

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

Mr. Adil Shamji: Madam Speaker, to my fabulous colleague from Scarborough–Guildwood, if there's one thing that I've observed when I've assumed this seat on this side of the House, it is that even on the rare occasion when the government tries to do something good, it usually finds the worst possible way to do it.

There is some attention being paid to Highway 69, and one of my colleagues from this side was also speaking about some of the stats associated with mortality on Highway 69. You know, you don't have to look up stats. If you go on Facebook, there are entire Facebook groups devoted to the most recent deaths on Ontario highways. Because I work in the north and I use some of these highways, I follow one that looks at Highway 11 and Highway 17. There are massive accidents all the time, if not deaths, frequently. Is it an oversight that in talking about Highway 69, they're not talking about any of the other highways that need to be improved?

1500

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): A very quick response from the member for Scarborough–Guildwood.

MPP Andrea Hazell: That's a very good question from my member.

As I said before, I think they're only concentrating on Highway 69 now because it's going to be leading to something else. So Highway 11/17 does not matter, and it has a high, high accident rate.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): A quick reminder to all members that we need to be careful about not impugning motive, and we should also only refer to all members by their title or their riding.

Further debate?

Mr. Jeff Beattie: It's truly an honour to stand before you here in this great chamber, representing the riding of

Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, a community that I'm not just proud to represent, but, more realistically and truthfully, a community that is deeply embedded in my DNA.

Those who know me know that I live and breathe my community, and for good reason. Yes, it is the heart of Ontario's steel and manufacturing industries. Yes, we have the beautiful Niagara Escarpment to the south; we have the picturesque Lake Ontario shoreline to the north—and I'll repeat that for anybody watching abroad: the Lake Ontario shoreline to the north; there's a beautiful sign, and you're all welcome to come and view it at Fifty Point Conservation Area—and yes, to the east, our famous vineyards, our cherry and peach orchards in Winona, home to our iconic Winona Peach Festival; to the west, a horizon of steel mills and factories that quite literally built our nation and continue to this day to be leaders in the production of some of the most specialized, high-quality steels and metals in the world, despite the incredible challenges thrust upon them by an unhinged American administration.

Yes, Hamilton East–Stoney Creek has all of those attributes. But it is the people—the people—who are our community's greatest strength. To borrow the well-known catchphrase used for decades by our largest steelmaker, Dofasco, our product is steel, but our strength is people. It is the people who live, work, and play in our great community who fill me with the passion to do what I do—people like Cheryl Cavallaro and Shelley Baker-Gracie, a local mom and entrepreneur and a realtor, who founded an event in our community nearly 20 years ago in Lake Pointe, and the intent was to bring families and neighbours together. From humble origins, with about 50 participants—two weeks ago, at Winona Park, over 2,000 attended this incredible annual event. People like Greg Armstrong from the Stoney Creek Historical Society, working to preserve our community's proud history; people like Kathy Wakeman from the Stoney Creek Chamber of Commerce, which highlights excellence in our community through their annual gala awards every year; or Bob Heil from our local garden club; or Ian Major, who is a Scout leader, a volunteer at our food bank and a volunteer who manages the peach sundae booth at our famous peach festival.

It's not just the volunteers, however, as important as they are—in Hamilton East–Stoney Creek; we punch above our belt weight in terms of the volunteerism that we offer. There are so many more volunteers, and I wish I could thank them all, but I'd need to do a second inaugural speech to have time to pay tribute to all of them in our community. But there are others in our community who pour their blood, sweat and tears into an idea, a concept, a business. It's these entrepreneurs who are the business champions who make our community so dynamic, people like—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I apologize to the member.

Pursuant to standing order 50(c), I am now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there have been six and a half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader directs the debate to continue.

I recognize the deputy government House leader.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: Please continue the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): With that, I return to the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

Mr. Jeff Beattie: I'm happy to continue to proudly speak about the men and women who have built our community and continue to build the community: people like Steve and Lori Popp at Memphis Fire Barbeque, one of the best southern-style barbecue restaurants in Ontario; people like the Di Lillo family from Di-Mond, a third-generation truck trailer and truck body manufacturer in our community; or the Puddicombe family who, for nine generations, have continually adapted the operations of their farm and pivoted to remain a leader in agriculture in these uncertain and challenging times. Because in our community, we don't sit down; we don't throw our hands in the air and give up. We fight back. It is in our blood and it always has been.

Here's a little history lesson for the room: On June 5, 1813, during the War of 1812, an advancing American force pushed their way from the Niagara River and landed themselves on the Gage farm in the heart of Stoney Creek. The Gage family was captured and held hostage in the basement of the farmhouse while the Americans plotted their next move in the living room above.

But in Stoney Creek, we're a tight knit community, and word travels fast. A young farmer by the name of Billy Green travelled through the backwoods of what would later become Hamilton to warn the British forces at Burlington Heights of the American invaders. With Billy's intel, the British forces, with local Canadian militia and members of local First Nations, mounted a surprise attack against a much larger American force. Despite being outnumbered and outgunned, they pushed the Americans back and saved the day. If not for the hard work and determination of a local Stoney Creeker, we'd be standing in western New York right now. The battle was a turning point for the war and, as we all know, our side won.

Today, we're facing a new battle—same foe; different weapons. The American president is using economic warfare against us. He thinks we'll give up. He thinks we will sit down. He thinks we'll throw our hands in the air. We will not. In Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, we've seen this episode before, and we already know how it will end: We will win.

That's one of the reasons why I'm so proud to stand amongst my colleagues with our Premier and do what we've always done in our community: Fight back, stand together and support each other. That's what we've done, and that's what we will continue to do.

Whether it's the Protect Ontario Financing Program, the Ontario Together Trade Fund or the recently announced and locally developed tariff response team in Hamilton, funded by the Trade-Impacted Communities Program, this government is standing with our community

in an unprecedented way. We will weather the storm, and we will be more resilient than we have ever been before.

It is the people. It is the community. It's likely what appealed to my ancestors when they first arrived here, five generations ago. It's why they never left. My great-grandfather purchased our family farm in 1890; my mother still has a copy of the original bill of sale. I won't repeat the purchase price, but it was, at that time, a hefty sum.

Through hard work, the debt was repaid, and the roots were put down. Initially, tree roots—apple, pear and cherry, to be specific. The farm was referred to as Maple Hill as there were two giant maple trees on the front lawn in front of the original farmhouse. The maples are still there. The farmhouse is still there. My family is still there. My grandfather was raised on that farm, as was my mother, as was I, as were my children, and God willing, another generation will follow.

My grandparents were leaders by their nature. My grandfather served on the local water utility board, the parks and cemetery board and the local school board. His name is on the plaque in the lobby of the high school built by that board. It's the high school that I would at one time attend in my teens, Orchard Park, named after the fruit farms that once surrounded it. My brothers and sisters went there. My children went there. I met my wife there. Thank goodness that high school was built, Speaker, or I would never have met my wife.

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But back to leadership: It's that leadership that I think was instilled first in my mother and later married into by my father. My dad's story is a little different. He was the youngest of eight children, and he lost his father at a tender age. My grandmother, a widow with eight children, made the bold decision to leave Northern Ireland and come to Canada, specifically to Hamilton, in search of a better life. They arrived in Hamilton in 1954 with nothing at all, but through hard work and perseverance, built a great life for themselves and for their children.

So it's with great humility, Speaker, that I recognize that I'm standing here as the grandson of an immigrant widow who came to this province in search of a better life—

Interjections.

Mr. Jeff Beattie: I was going to say, and now I'm here as a member of this provincial government.

My dad married a farm girl from Winona, and the values of hard work and giving back became the foundation, the very bedrock, of my childhood. My parents volunteered for everything, and in 1981, following in the footsteps of his father-in-law, my father was elected as a school board trustee. He stayed in that office for 12 years.

A decade later, my mother was elected as a city councillor and proudly represented our community in what was then known as the city of Stoney Creek.

Later, both of my parents would continue in their leadership roles, with my mother serving as one of the longest-serving commissioners of the Niagara Escarpment Commission in the province's history, and my father also proudly serving as a member of the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority board of directors for over a decade. This was my foundation.

My parents and grandparents didn't choose service to the community for their own benefit, Speaker. They always did it in service of others. My grandfather said, "Leave it better than you found it," and we've held true to those words for generations since.

And so, in 2014, I was a little bit discouraged with my local school board, and I think that's where the spark of wanting to make things just a little better began. So I ran to become a school board trustee—the third person in my family in successive generations to do so. I was successful. I had already built out a résumé as a business owner and as a volunteer, being involved in many local events, including our peach festival, the Halloween event that I mentioned earlier and the local Easter egg hunt. I volunteered at our family church. I was a Scout leader. I showed up, I rolled up my sleeves and I did what needed to be done, just like my parents and grandparents had done before.

It hadn't always been that way. When I was younger, believe it or not, I was a little shy. I started to come out of my shell in my early teens. People, I would suggest, started to see in me perhaps something that I didn't necessarily see in myself.

My grade 8 teacher, Mrs. Bailey, who still to this day lives in Stoney Creek and shops at my local garden centre, told me, "You're such a diplomat." I didn't know what it meant at the time, but I'm starting to learn that maybe I know what that means now.

In high school, my music teacher, Mrs. Young, who also still lives in Stoney Creek and also still comes to shop for flowers, could see that I was not a very talented musician. I wasn't very good at playing the trumpet, but for some reason, she thought I'd make an excellent master of ceremonies. And so, by the time I was 16, with a little training, I was comfortable public speaking in front of complete strangers. I got to introduce the next act in the band.

When I was 17, I shadowed a city councillor for the day. It was a life-changing event. He must have seen something in me too because after the day was over, he asked if I wanted to go meet someone, or see someone. He had a feeling that they might be the next Prime Minister of Canada. So there I was, Speaker, a nervous 17-year-old at the Hamilton Convention Centre, and into the room comes Jean Chrétien. He shook the hand to the left of me, he shook the hand to the right of me and skipped me completely. I guess he saw something in me that I didn't see in myself. I think it was blue.

That city councillor, by the way—30 years later I'd be sitting next to him at the horseshoe at Hamilton city hall. Councillor Tom Jackson, who, again, just won his seat, has served his community proudly since 1988.

It is the people. I've always been inspired by people. I've always tried to inspire others. That's why I started the community's first and only youth council. That's why I worked so hard as an elected official to support endeavours like our local food bank, our local community garden

and our seniors outreach program. In this new role I hope, Speaker, to be able to accomplish even more. That's why supporting our critical advanced-manufacturing sector, our vital steel sector, our emerging research economy, our auto parts manufacturers, our farms and our food processors with the support of this government is so important to me. It's our workers. It's our communities. We need to help them; we need to protect them; we need to encourage them to grow and thrive, and I cannot wait to get to work on that.

Two days ago, I walked through the doors right there for the very first time. I want to make it count. I want to make it count for Cheryl and Shelley, for Steve and Lori, for Kathy, for Mrs. Bailey, for Mrs. Young, for Councillor Tom Jackson. I want to make it count for my grandfather; I want to make it count for my grandmother. I want to make it count for my parents and for my four incredible children, for my wife, for my community, for the people of Ontario. And as part of this government, this 44th Parliament, I know that I will.

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

MPP Jamie West: Congratulations to my colleague from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek. We had the opportunity to congratulate him in person when we came for estimates and he was in the chamber.

I appreciate these inaugural speeches. They're great because you have that opportunity to get to know each other. In debate you just get sections, but here you get to know the whole person.

Thank you very much for sharing so much of your life and your family. A couple of things we share in common: I was a Scout leader as well. You have those connections that are built over time, and you can start to see each other as people.

I was just wondering if you had any interesting Scouting stories. I know we all do. I don't know if there's anything you can share with the chamber.

Mr. Jeff Beattie: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. My Scouting stories probably go back to when I was a Scout. We participated in an Olympics-like spectacle. There's no other word for it. It was held at Byng Island in, I believe, Haldimand county at the time, at the conservation area there. I'm not a very sporty person, but, as I mentioned, I've got Irish roots, so I've got some Celtic DNA. And I learned that I'm really darn good—at least the 12- or 13-year-old version of me is really, really good—at the caber toss. It's never happened again, but perhaps some day, if I need to, I'll be throwing a 10-foot pole somewhere, I don't know.

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

Mr. Rob Cerjanec: Thank you to the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek for that inaugural address. I was going to ask what the address of that southern barbecue place is, but I'll just Google that later, and we'll chat about it.

I did note that you served on the school board and that three generations have. I'm just curious, from your time on the school board, what was your most fondest or favourite memory sitting on the school board?

Mr. Jeff Beattie: Thank you for the question.

I had the great privilege of serving during a time when our board was very focused on creating the physical environment that would support learning, and I championed a lot of investment in the community in that time.

I'm looking forward to continuing to do that in this new role because I think that the facilities that students need and want are very important. I know that this government is committed to doing so, so I'll continue to work down that vein in support of the physical environment that our students depend on.

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

Mr. Joseph Racinsky: Thank you to my new seatmate, the member from Hamilton, for his remarks this afternoon.

You mentioned how your family has been involved in politics for many years, and I know they've been involved in Conservative politics for many years. I was wondering if there was a political figure that's an inspiration to you, somebody that you look up to, either that you know personally or in history, someone other than Prime Minister Jean Chrétien.

Mr. Jeff Beattie: Thank you to my colleague for the question.

In the 1980s, my father helped with the campaign for a guy by the name of Gordon Howlett Dean. His name is carved in marble on the staircase on the way down to the north entrance.

Gordon was probably one of the most respected politicians to ever come from our community and, I think, perhaps, the last member of provincial Parliament for our area that was actually born and raised there. So to follow in those footsteps is a tremendous honour.

There's a street soon to be named after him, and I can tell you, I had the great privilege of naming the cross street sort of in his honour. You see, he was the last member of the Saltfleet township, and so we have made the intersection of Gordon Dean Avenue and Saltfleet Avenue as very, very meaningful.

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

MPP Robin Lennox: It's so nice to get to hear from you, and it's always welcome to meet the other Hamilton members. I hope that we have lots of opportunities to collaborate together in the coming years when we serve together.

One thing that I would love to be able to collaborate on is Hamilton's air quality and the black soot. I know that your constituents and mine—we have heard so many reports about people's homes, their kids and their own health.

I would love to sit down together and make a plan to take action on this issue. Is that something that is a priority for you, and can I count on us working together as Hamilton representatives to try to move that forward?

Mr. Jeff Beattie: Thank you to my friend from Hamilton Centre for the important question.

It was something that was part of the discussion during the by-election, and I can say that I'm absolutely committed to continuing to work with the minister. I've made introductions and conversations there, and we'll continue to work together. I always want to put a team Hamilton approach to all things that we're working on, so we'll continue to do that.

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

Mr. Jonathan Tsao: Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague here on his election, and welcome to the House. I listened intently to his inaugural address, and you can hear in his speech the passion he has for his community in Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

So I wanted to ask him, if I were to come visit Hamilton East–Stoney Creek—let's say on a weekend—what highlights would he like to share with me or anyone visiting his community, some things that he's most proud of that he would like to show off?

Mr. Jeff Beattie: Thank you to my friend from across the aisle for that question, similar to the question that was asked of my colleague from York–Simcoe.

There's a lot happening. It would be difficult to narrow it down, but as I said in the opening, depending on your interest—and you're welcome to come to Stoney Creek and east Hamilton at any time—if you're into history, we can obviously go to the Gage House, which is now a national historic site, to look at where the Battle of Stoney Creek took place in 1813.

If you're into agriculture, we've still got many, many farms that you'd be invited and welcome to come join.

If you'd like to go and visit the beautiful shore of Lake Ontario—and I'll say it again, Lake Ontario—you'd always be welcome to see that.

Lots of attributes within our community, and I'd be happy to share them.

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

M^me^ Dawn Gallagher Murphy: Thank you very much to the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek. As a fellow Hamiltonian, born, high-schooled and bred from Hamilton, I always remember Stoney Creek ice cream, which would have been in your riding. I don't think it's there anymore, but it was the best ice cream.

When I was there back in, I guess, August—and I visited my brother, from your riding, and his family, they were going to be going to the Winona Peach Festival. They raved about the peach ice cream. So I think that must be something infamous there. I'm wondering: What can you tell us about what's so special about the Winona Peach Festival?

Mr. Jeff Beattie: Thank you so much for the question, and thank you for coming out and assisting during the by-election. It was a real treat to get to know you. I'm really excited to be here now working with you in this capacity.

What makes the festival special, in particular, is that it's all volunteer-run. There's no profit to be made. It's just for the enjoyment of the community and it acts as a fundraiser for local groups.

When you're talking about the peach ice cream, I think you're thinking about the peach sundaes and I think it's just the love, that care that goes into the preparation. Each peach is hand-cut and preserved a week before the festival in church basements across our community. I think you can really taste the love when you bite into one of those peach sundaes. I encourage you to come, and we'll buy you one next season.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, there are bills that I like to talk to and there are bills that I think, good God, how is it that we're spending our time doing all this destructive work? Some bills have the occasional poison pill in them, and some bills are just a veritable drugstore full of poison pills. This is one of those bills.

I know that a number of colleagues have had an opportunity to speak to it. I'll do the best I can. I'll try not to duplicate work that's already been done.

I have to say, right off the top, that Doug Ford says this bill is about building faster. But really, there are very few changes in here that will allow the economy to grow more quickly than it otherwise would grow, but it will effectively shut people out from decision-making, will effectively make it much more difficult for communities to ensure that their interests are looked after. It's a massive omnibus bill, stuffed with poison pills, that guts environmental rights and forces landfills and garbage incinerators onto communities that don't want them.

Over 30 years ago, New Democrats gave Ontarians the right to a say on their environment and Ford—sorry, the Premier—has finally decided it's time to roll all that back. For over 30 years, the Environmental Bill of Rights has let people weigh in on decisions that affect their air, their water and their land—fundamental to their health and, frankly, fundamental to a good, functioning economy.

Scrapping public notice and consultation—that is inherent in what's being brought forward; it won't speed up a single permit. It just lets this government make decisions behind closed doors. We know very well, Speaker, the kinds of decisions that are made: the assault on the greenbelt, the attack on the Toronto waterfront with the proposal for jets, the surprise announcement of the private luxury jet that was purchased by the Premier for his delight. What is being brought forward is consistent with the worst of this government.

1530

I want to note that the Premier had promised communities final say on new landfills, and we'll remember how that played out in a by-election in southwestern Ontario, where people felt that they were going to be protected from the reopening of a landfill in Dresden, only to find after the election that, in fact, that promise was not worth the flyer that it was printed on. We're in a situation here where the government has decided to throw out the window promises it's made before around landfills and just roll on in a way they've always wanted to roll on.

The government is fast-tracking garbage incinerators while letting recycling fall apart. In an extraordinary Orwellian approach, the bill opens the door to calling garbage "renewable" so incinerators can jump the line while blue box service gets worse and less gets recycled.

Speaker, this bill has got a lot of bad news in it, and I'll tell you the good news it doesn't have: It's not actually going to result in more affordable homes for Ontarians. It's not going to actually result in the construction of the infrastructure that we need to carry on today, let alone to deal with the challenges that a warming world are bringing to us. This is a bill that undermines the security and stability of the environment and the well-being of people in this province.

I want to go first to schedule 7. That's a change to the Environmental Assessment Act that repeals the municipal veto on new landfill sites requiring a comprehensive environmental assessment. That veto was introduced by this government in 2020 with Bill 197, and the minister at the time, Jeff Yurek, stated, "We recognize the importance of autonomy in local decision-making and agree that a landfill should only be located in communities that are a willing host."

I read that; I looked at the bill, and then I listened to the minister the other day saying, "Oh, no, no, no, it's all optional." So the question I have to ask is: Is schedule 7 actually going to continue on in this bill? Because there's a big contradiction between what the government has in print, in black and white, and what the minister had to say the other day. And it's interesting that the Toronto Star did a fairly lengthy article about all this, noting how the environment minister had rolled back what was posted in the bill and the minister talking about the need for "many more" landfills and many more incinerators.

Well, I'll expand on that further later, but this is a government that has been in power since 2018 and in which action on recycling has simply suffered, has been weakened, has been undermined. It isn't as though the government didn't know in 2018 that there would be long-term problems with disposing of waste, dealing with waste. It certainly knew about it but didn't act. And now, it's saying, "Oh, Trump made me do it. I'm going to have to change the law so that the promises I made in the past are going to get trashed." It's an extraordinary thing, Speaker, for the government to go back on that particular bill.

And I have to say, a member of this Legislature has pointed out that, contrary to comments made by the Minister of the Environment, there are not a whole bunch of communities out there putting up their hands and saying, "I want a landfill" or "I want a garbage incinerator." In fact, I'd be very surprised if there were any. Maybe there are one or two. Maybe I'm wrong; I could have misread the province. But I don't think there's a whole bunch. That is a profound problem.

The next thing I want to touch on is the Environmental Bill of Rights and its gutting. This bill, schedule 8, scraps public notice and consultation requirements for draft bills, regulations and policies and replaces them with the far weaker provisions of the as-yet-unproclaimed Modernizing Ontario for People and Businesses Act, 2020.

I didn't have the time to do the research, but 2020 to 2026—that's six years. It was their bill. They got it passed, and they've never proclaimed it. You have got to ask questions as to, how bad was the bill? What sort of problems did they see that they didn't do it? But they're saying now they will take this unproclaimed bill and provide it as the protection for the people of Ontario against surprise changes to their environment. That Modernizing Ontario for People and Businesses Act doesn't include statutory requirements for public notice, and no requirements at all for public consultation. It also focuses on regulatory burden with no specific regard for environmental impact.

Well, there's a reason that, over time, we passed and put in place environmental laws. In my riding, at one point there was a battery recycling plant—lead-acid batteries—and the contamination in my community was so substantial that hundreds of children had lead in their blood. There's a street in my riding that I visited recently, and I talked to one of the people who had been part of that fight to stop that plant from contaminating the neighbourhood—and getting investment to clean up the neighbourhood, because there was an area about one to one and a half kilometres around the plant where all the soil had to be replaced to a depth of about a metre, where people in hazmat suits went into people's homes, vacuumed and cleaned them. This guy who had been one of the people who fought against that contamination said that he was just outside the zone. His was the only child that far south on the street that wasn't in special education. Every other child south of him, closer to the plant, had substantial learning problems. Why? Because lead causes nerve damage.

So you actually do need regulation and protection because we engage in industrial activities which, in many cases, when properly run, can be run without hurting people, but when not properly run can damage the lives of children and thus adults for the rest of their lives. To actually, in this case, decide that rolling back environmental protection is what you need to make the economy grow just says you're going to get an awful lot more people who will be sickened and hurt by what this government is allowing.

The change in this bill repeals the Environmental Bill of Rights requirements for ministry statements of environmental values. Why do you require something like that? So that when ministers and their senior staff are thinking about a proposal, hopefully they will be thinking about, how is this going to affect the larger community? How is this going to affect the health of the women, children and men in the communities affected by this project? How is this going to affect the long-term viability of this society?

Not having a structure in place—and I have to say, this government has largely ignored this structure, but one can always hope that future governments will actually pay attention—that pushes government to incorporate environmental thinking and thus public health thinking in all

their decisions is a value. The Environmental Bill of Rights requirements for public notice and consultation have nothing to do with permitting or approvals; scrapping them won't speed anything up or make anything cheaper.

The Environmental Bill of Rights is about transparency, accountability and public participation in government decision-making. This is what the government is cutting here, not red tape, not unnecessary regulation or unnecessary paper filing. Are you actually going to make people aware of changes that are coming in their community so that if there are problems, they have a right in a democratic society to speak up and act? That is something this government is going to be cutting, something the Auditor General has repeatedly flagged—that the Ford government, this present government, has had disregard for the Environmental Bill of Rights and thus for the health and well-being of people in this province.

1540

I want to note as well that there are real implications for Ontario's First Nations. By dismantling applications for review and investigation, for third-party appeals of decisions that have environmental implications, the proposal strips away accessible administrative mechanisms that First Nations communities, tribal councils and individual members can use to challenge or halt environmentally risky developments. Why would you do that? Why, having poisoned the people of Grassy Narrows for decades, would you decide, "Hey, everything is fine now. We don't have to worry about them. It's all going to be taken care of"? We all know that is just smoke. There will be—and this will have a greater impact on First Nations—reduced transparency on decisions. Allowing certain policy and legislative proposals to bypass the Environmental Registry of Ontario in favour of the Ontario Regulatory Registry, which I referenced earlier, risks fragmenting where information is housed. That can obscure cumulative environmental impacts and make it much harder for First Nations land use departments to track provincial proposals affecting their treaty and traditional lands.

And there's an erosion of environmental accountability. Again, the elimination of the statements of environmental values removes mandatory guiding principles that could force prescribed ministries to explicitly consider environmental protection, sustainability and ecosystem health in their everyday governance and decision-making.

This attack on the Environmental Bill of Rights is going to set us back.

It's a shame that I only have a few minutes left, because there's an awful lot to talk about here.

I want to talk briefly about this whole proposal to proceed with fast-tracking garbage incinerators.

If you're not concerned about climate change, then you're not following what's going on in the larger world. Climate change is affecting our standard of living. It's affecting the cost of groceries. It's affecting the health of workers.

And this is a government that is very much committed to making sure that the world gets hotter, faster. There's no two ways about it.

I'll just note that this year, 2026, international health authorities estimated that 32,000 people died from the heat waves in Europe, and those deaths were linked to climate change; they would not have occurred if we were not heating up the world. Speaker, 32,000 people—that's a fair number of people to write off.

Closer to home, people have noticed that the price of beef has been climbing. You'll remember that Donald Trump imported odds and sods of meat discards from Latin America to the United States to try to drive down the price of hamburger, because beef is really expensive. If you look at what has been happening with beef prices in the United States, they're up 62% over the period of 2021 to 2026, because climate change is drying out the interior of North America and causing more extreme weather. Beef cattle herds have been reduced, and that means fewer cows on the hoof, less beef available in marketplaces, higher prices. That is consequential.

There is a lot more to speak to on that, but those are two examples of higher prices and human lives that climate change affects.

This government is making sure that things will get worse, because when you burn garbage, you produce more carbon dioxide—the heat-trapping gas that's heating up the world—than if you burn coal. And that is consequential.

In the region of Peel, the public health department has serious concerns about the expansion of the energy-from-waste plant that is suggested there. In their recommendations to the Peel regional council, they request that there be consideration in looking at this issue of the "long-term impact associated with the sixfold increase in greenhouse gas emissions and climate change, including the potential adverse health impacts."

They note, and their report highlights, that the community near that plant "expressed concerns related to air quality (in particular, dioxins and furans) and environmental justice issues."

We don't deal with exotic chemicals very much around here. I mean, exotic ideas—tons. But exotic chemicals, dioxins and furans—cancer-causing. Bad news; you don't want them anywhere near you. And frankly, in my community, when we were host to the city's garbage incinerator, the Commissioners Street incinerator, they found dioxins and furans in the dust, in the sweepings on the streets at Gerrard and Broadview. That is one of the things that got me involved in municipal politics, was dealing with the fact that cancer-causing chemicals were raining down on my community, along with heavy metals like lead and cadmium.

Their health department goes on to say, "When emissions from" the energy-from-waste "project are combined with industrial and transportation sources emissions in the surrounding area, there is a potential for health benchmarks to be exceeded and for an increased risk for negative health outcomes including heart and lung impacts."

They also note, "Residents living closest" to this incinerator "have higher rates of certain health conditions (e.g., COPD, ischemic heart disease and diabetes) that may be

worsened by exposure to increased air pollution. These areas also have a greater risk of poor health outcomes due to social determinants....”

They note, “Emissions for many air pollutants are estimated to increase substantially with the expansion project. Many of them will be within pollutant limits, however, some will exceed those limits and some of the pollutants are persistent and bioaccumulative,” like lead.

When you take lead into your system, it builds; you don’t flush it out the next day. It’s there and that’s why you get brain damage. That’s why children have their potential for living a full life damaged. That’s what this government is going to be doing. That is their plan.

“Peel Health is concerned about the potential for health impacts associated with air pollutants that exceed limits and health effect benchmarks and/or persistent in the environment.”

In fact, one of the things that’s being done is reducing the temperature of burning material, which increases the level of toxic chemicals—dioxins and furans—that will come out of that plant.

So this is the playground that this government is opening up. It wants to make sure that those who run garbage incineration plants have a free hand, and it wants to make sure that people have worse health outcomes.

I’m happy to talk more about this. I look forward to the questions.

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

Mr. Anthony Leardi: In the riding of Essex, we have some really important small businesses. These businesses are apiaries—those are people who keep bees—and they are Hawksview Honey in Harrow, which is one, and Anderdon Bee Co. in Anderdon township, which is another. Not only do they produce honey, but of course, bees are pollinators—very, very important to the production of food in the province of Ontario, not only in fields but also in greenhouses, in particular. I think that it’s very important that these businesses exist and continue.

The bill before us today has a schedule in it that deals with this type of business. It’s schedule 3, and I invite the member to provide any observations he wishes to make about schedule 3.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Well, I appreciate the question, and I was actually interested when I saw the schedule. What I don’t understand, and I didn’t have the time to research it, is why it seems to eliminate the need for action dealing with quarantine, because—as you are well aware because you have an area that deals with bees—there have been some substantial problems with bee death in North America. Some of it is disease-related; some of it is parasite-related.

So I guess I would ask, what’s the government’s logic in saying, “We don’t care about quarantine areas”? If there’s an outbreak of a parasite, do you want it moving over to another area where you might contaminate the local apiaries?

Other than posing that question, I am afraid I don’t have enough knowledge to give you a useful answer.

1550

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

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I’d like to start by saying to the member, thank you for sharing your knowledge, your experience. I learn so much from you every time I hear you speak on the environment. Thank you for that.

I want to talk about Hamilton. Some of the things that you said ring true about Hamilton. We have, as you know, an industrial north end in Hamilton. People that live there describe living in a sacrifice zone because they have increased deaths related to the pollution in that area.

ArcelorMittal Dofasco received from this government a permit to continue to emit things like sulphur dioxide, benzopyrene and particulate matter. This expired in 2023; they still continue to be allowed to emit this. The government says they’re waiting for a technical report, but, in the meantime, the people in Hamilton are suffering.

Why do you think that this government, with this bill, shows that they continue to disregard the health and the lives of Hamiltonians and all Ontarians that live in a sector such as this?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Well, my experience with this government so far is that environment and health are not particularly a concern for them.

I should note that I grew up in the east end of Hamilton, and I went to Delta high school. I had a very good friend who lived literally across the street from Stelco, and I would visit him. In my area, when the wind was blowing in the wrong direction, it was a very unhappy day.

My father, who was not particularly concerned about pollution—my dad was an auto mechanic. He worked in a shop with a lot of carbon monoxide and a lot of Varsol, but even he said, “This is too much,” and we moved up onto the mountain.

For a government to ignore a problem like that where people’s lives and health are put at risk is—

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Criminal?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Criminal, I think, is fair.

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

Mr. Anthony Leardi: Also included in this bill is schedule number 10, which deals with the family members’ authority to act on behalf of the disability savings plan. In certain situations, people want to set up a savings plan, and the beneficiary is a disabled person. Since the disabled person doesn’t have capacity to act, they can’t set the plan up for themselves; they need somebody else to set the plan up for them.

Schedule 10 of this particular bill will allow that to happen, and perhaps even more easily. I think that’s a good thing because this is a savings plan that’s set up for people with disabilities. They might have intellectual disabilities and might not be able to set up the plan for themselves because they don’t have legal capacity to sign a legal document. So I think this is a good thing.

I again offer the member an opportunity to take a look at schedule 10 and offer whatever observations he would like to offer.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate the member directing me to look at this. Certainly, enhancing the powers of family members who are dealing with a family member who is not mentally competent to look after themselves is a good thing. I don't know whether the way it's executed in this bill is a good thing.

His questions remind me of a debate I was in once with a person who was defending the federal Liberal environmental record. There was nothing to defend—their record was atrocious—but he was able to focus on one little bit and spend most of his time on that as a way of avoiding dealing with the rest of the utterly irresponsible, reckless and atrocious record under Jean Chrétien.

I appreciate the skill of the member, and I have over time said to him, "You're good at what you do." But in this case, the diversion is not really advancing the debate on what I see as the most problematic parts of the bill.

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

Mr. Chris Glover: I want to thank the member for his comments today. Again, like the member from—Hamilton West-Stoney Creek?—

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Yes.

Mr. Chris Glover: —was saying, we learn something every time you speak.

We were talking about the garbage incineration and how the Ontario NDP actually created the Environmental Bill of Rights. I think we're a similar vintage—

Interjection.

Mr. Chris Glover: I remember growing up when, in the 1970s, detergent companies decided phosphates are really good because they make our white clothes whiter and our coloured clothes brighter, and so they put phosphates in all the laundry detergent. Then, the next year, half the fish in Lake Ontario washed up dead on shore.

Then, they decided that DDT was a really good pesticide, and then they discovered that, actually, it's going to make almost every bird species on the planet go extinct if they keep using this stuff.

Then they decided that lead in gasoline, it stopped the backfiring, and then they discovered years later that, actually, a rise is violent crime can be associated with the amount of lead that was in people's brains.

My question to you is: Is this government, in gutting the Environmental Bill of Rights in order to allow the incineration of garbage, exposing us, potentially, to toxic—

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate the question and I appreciate the tour of the environmental landscape, because it was well done, sir. Very well done.

I don't think it's "possible" that they will be exposing us to more toxic chemicals—I think you understated there. I think it's certain that they will. If you are burning an awful lot of waste, you are you going to have plastics mixed in with that. If you have vinyl chloride mixed in with that—the chloride is critical in things like PCBs, polychlorinated biphenyls.

So I don't have any doubt that we will see greater toxic impact from what's being proposed when, on the other hand, this government could take action on industrial, commercial and institutional waste to dramatically reduce the waste that's going to landfills now.

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

Mr. Anthony Leardi: At the risk of being accused of doing my job very well again, I'm going to ask a question about schedule 6. In the courts, you can start a civil proceeding by way of statement of claim or by way of application. It's a redundant thing to have two processes to start a civil claim. It's nice that we're going to blend those together and make one process to create a civil claim.

Once again, I simply invite the member to provide whatever observations he would like to do about that.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: The member is consistent and focused on his plan, and he delivers.

I don't know enough about this section, but I will say what's interesting is, often, we'll have bills come forward from this government that have one or two poison pills in them with other things that are useful. What we have now is a bill that is a poison pill with a number of things in it that might be useful. It's the reverse proportions which are most striking.

I appreciate his efforts on his government's behalf.

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

Mr. Jonathan Tsao: I'm pleased today to rise to speak to Bill 140, the Building Ontario Faster Act, and what some of the changes in this bill could mean for the people of Don Valley North.

Speaker, I think we can all agree that we need to build things faster in Ontario. We need more homes, we need better public transit, we need to make sure our infrastructure can support our growing communities, and, if there are unnecessary regulations standing in the way of getting those things built, we of course need to consider them.

But as I was going through this bill, my mind kept returning back to my own community in Don Valley North, because in Don Valley North, we've seen an incredible amount of growth over the past few years. And while we welcome that growth, I think the people of Don Valley North would have loved the ability and opportunity to voice their opinions directly on this bill through committee. I think we also have to ask ourselves whether we're doing enough to support the people who are moving into communities like Don Valley North—our continuing rapid growth—as well as the people who have called it home for decades.

I first want to look at schedule 14. This is looking at changes to the Metrolinx Act. Under this schedule, responsibility for the regional transportation plan would move from Metrolinx directly to the Minister of Transportation.

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So I do, necessarily, have a question about what this means for our community in Don Valley North, and more

specifically, what does this mean for the Sheppard subway extension?

Speaker, I've raised this languishing project time and time again in this House, and I promise everyone in here: I will continue doing so until shovels are in the ground.

The people of Don Valley North have been waiting years, if not decades, for this project to begin, and still silence from this government. Anyone who has travelled along the Sheppard Avenue corridor during rush hour knows exactly why I'm talking about this issue. You get off the subway at Don Mills station beside Fairview Mall, and if you're travelling east, you have to get on a bus, and then you have to sit in traffic. Meanwhile, you look around and you see all the new condominium towers going up all along Sheppard. We're adding thousands of new residents to this corridor, but the transit infrastructure remains the same. It remains stagnant, and the people of Don Valley North are being left behind by this government.

Speaker, I want to say something very directly now to the government on this issue. The government calls this the Building Ontario Faster Act. Well, I've got a suggestion to the minister and for the Premier: How about we start building the Sheppard subway faster? My constituents have been waiting decades. Every morning, people get off the subway at Don Mills station, get on a bus and sit in traffic along Sheppard Avenue. They don't need another study telling them that there's traffic on Sheppard. They know it; they live it every single day. What they need is a subway.

So my question is simple, to the minister and to the Premier: Where and when are you actually going to build it?

Speaker, this isn't just about making somebody's commute just a little bit easier. This is about how we plan for the future of our communities—how we care about the people in our communities. We have families moving into these brand new buildings, seniors who depend on public transit, and people are spending more and more time trying to get to work and back home again to see their families. I think about the parents who are spending an extra hour travelling to work every day instead of being at home with their children.

If the government is going to give the minister more responsibility for planning our transit system, then let's make sure that responsibility actually comes with results. The people of Don Valley North have been patient, but they're fed up. They deserve to see progress, and they deserve to see it now.

Speaker, I also want to talk about schedule 8. Schedule 8 makes some significant changes to the Environmental Bill of Rights, and I want to explain why this matters to me and to the people of Don Valley North.

One of the wonderful parts about our riding is that we have an incredible ravine system running right through the heart of our community—the east Don River, our parks, our mature tree canopy, and all the green spaces that people enjoy every single day. And I think sometimes, living in a big city like Toronto, we forget about how fortunate we are that we have these green spaces right in our backyard. They're places where seniors go for walks, where families take their children and where people can get away from the noise of the city. They're also important natural habitats.

I want to tell the House about a group of volunteers in my community who are doing some really remarkable work, and they're called the Bayview Village Turtle Stewards. This is a group of local residents who have taken it upon themselves to help protect turtles and their habitats in the east Don River area. Every day, they go out and monitor nesting areas. They help protect turtle eggs, and when the little hatchlings emerge, they help them make their way safely to water.

And, Speaker, this is why I love this story, because here's a group of people who aren't being paid to do this; this is not a profession for them. Nobody is asking them to go out and spend their time protecting these turtle eggs. They're doing it because they care about our community, they care about the environment, and they understand that even something as small as helping a baby turtle make it safely to a river can make a difference.

I think there's something really, really special about that, Speaker. These are the kinds of people who make our communities great. When I think about the work that they're doing, I also think about how important it is to protect the natural spaces that these creatures depend on: our ravines, our forests, our mature trees. These aren't things we can just replace overnight. A tree that has taken 80 or 100 years to grow can be cut down in a matter of hours, and once we lose these natural habitats, sometimes we can never fully get them back.

That brings me back to schedule 8, because this bill proposes to remove a number of existing mechanisms under the Environmental Bill of Rights. It would eliminate the application-for-review and application-for-investigation processes, certain environmental appeal rights and the right-to-sue provision under the act. Frankly, I have a problem with that.

I understand that the government wants to reduce delays. I understand that there are projects that need to get moving, but why does this require taking away these avenues for the public to hold this government to account? Surely there's a way to make the system more efficient while still making sure that people, the people we represent, have an opportunity to raise concerns when something is going wrong.

That's what worries me about these changes, Speaker, because when I think about the turtle stewards out in Bayview Village, out there, doing their part to protect our natural environment, I think government also has a responsibility to do its part as well. We shouldn't be making it harder for people who care about protecting our environment to have their concerns heard; we should be making it easier. So, I hope the government will reconsider these provisions as I highlighted.

Speaker, I also want to briefly mention schedule 16, which deals with the Ontario Energy Board Act. This is particularly relevant to my riding because Don Valley North is home to thousands of condominium residents. In

communities like Henry Farm, Parkway Forest and Bayview Village, many families live in condominium buildings where their electricity is individually sub-metered. And one thing I hear from people all the time is how expensive everything is becoming. Whether it's their mortgage, their rent, their groceries or their monthly utility bill, people are feeling the squeeze.

This schedule would allow the minister to direct the Ontario Energy Board to take steps to protect consumers when it comes to things like billing practices, consumer service standards and non-payment charges. And I think, Speaker, that's in the positive direction. Because for a senior living on a fixed income, even an unexpected fee on an electricity bill can mean hardship.

I would encourage the government to use these powers to make sure that people are being treated fairly, but I also want to emphasize that having the power to do something and actually doing it are two different things. What I would like to see is how these changes will actually make a difference in the lives of condominium residents, because that's ultimately what matters. Thank you.

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

M^me^ Dawn Gallagher Murphy: Thank you to the member opposite for his remarks today.

Speaker, specifically the Toronto Region Board of Trade has repeatedly called for permit and approval reforms, stating, "The fastest approval is the one you do not need to apply for."

The question is simple: Do the Liberal leadership candidates from Toronto stand with the Toronto Region Board of Trade's call to modernize approvals, or do they want the same lacklustre Liberal leadership that gave Ontario failing grades for red tape?

Mr. Jonathan Tsao: I thank my honourable colleague for the question. I am not running for leader. I am not in the leadership race. Unfortunately, I don't have an announcement to make today, so I cannot speak as a leadership candidate on this issue.

But what I can speak about is the Sheppard subway. Now, the Sheppard subway is something that we've been waiting for in our riding for decades, and I thank the honourable member for giving me an opportunity to speak on this issue, because that's what leadership is. Leadership is getting up every single day and representing your community on the issues that matter the most to them.

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I know for a fact, Speaker, this morning, in my community, people had to get on a bus and get to the end of a subway system and restart their journey all over. And tonight, to get home, they're going to be leaving work, they're going to get to the end of a subway, they're going to get back on a bus and sit in traffic for another half an hour. That's unacceptable. This government has promised subways, subways, subways, and you know what I want to see? Build, build, build.

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

MPP Jamie West: Thank you to my colleague from Don Valley North. During his debate, he talked about the amazing volunteers, the turtle stewards from his area. Recently, we had our caucus retreat in Peterborough, and one of the area organizations I got to see during that week was the turtle sanctuary in Peterborough and the amazing work they do. I didn't know this, but there's a turtle taxi everywhere in Ontario, where people can bring injured turtles to be recovered.

This bill has a bunch of really troubling environmental legislation in here. What does that mean for organizations that are trying to preserve our environment, and what does it mean to know the Conservative government doesn't have their back?

Mr. Jonathan Tsao: I want to thank our honourable colleague for the question.

During committee estimates, there was a phrase I often used and reused when addressing the minister, and that was: Show me your budget and I will show you your priorities. When we look at what the priorities of this government are, it's clearly not the environment—read this bill. We all agree that we want to build more, we want to move faster, but it cannot be at the detriment of our environment.

In Don Valley North, we're lucky to have the turtle stewards out there every single day protecting the natural habitat of turtles, but they're doing it alone. They're not doing it with great funding from this government that's pouring dollars all over them to do this wonderful work. They're taking it upon themselves because, in the absence of a government that cares about the environment, individuals have had to stand up and do the work themselves.

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

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: I want to thank my honourable colleague from Don Valley North for his great remarks and for standing up for his constituents on the Sheppard subway line. We know that this government has a big problem getting projects done on time and on budget. We have, of course, Line 5, and we've now got the hospital in Ottawa being proposed to go up to $10 billion.

I wonder if he could just talk a little bit about why this government can't seem to get projects delivered on time and on budget.

Mr. Jonathan Tsao: I thank my honourable colleague for that question. That's a million-dollar question. If we could truly understand what the priorities of this government were, maybe we would understand why they do what they do. But to be quite frank, sometimes we may not want to know how the sausage is made because it's too scary.

What I do know is that they need to be prioritizing the Sheppard subway extension. We can see when we work together with all levels of government what we can accomplish, so I want to call upon this government here at Queen's Park to work with the city of Toronto, to work with our local representatives and get it done.

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

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: I'm pleased to rise today in support of the proposed Building Ontario Faster Act, 2026. This legislation is about ensuring Ontario remains the most competitive place in the G7 to invest, build, create jobs and grow a business.

Today's economy moves quickly, technology advances rapidly, supply chains change and trade agreements evolve. Important investment decisions are being made every day, Madam Speaker. Government processes must keep pace.

At a time when jurisdictions around the world are competing for investment, talent and economic opportunity, Ontario cannot afford to let outdated processes stand in the way of progress. Companies considering where to invest have choices: They can build in Ontario, or they can build somewhere else. And while many factors influence those decisions, one thing we hear consistently is that certainty matters, timeliness, efficiency and economic stability matter. They matter for businesses and for Ontario communities, families and individuals. Speaker, that's why we are making sure government processes work as efficiently as the people and businesses we serve.

Reducing red tape is one way we are helping Ontario's economy grow and attract new businesses. This work is not just about reducing paperwork; it is about building competitiveness. This bill helps create processes that are predictable, modern and responsive.

Permitting has long been an area that slows down growth and delays projects, Madam Speaker. For too long, businesses and job creators have faced approvals that are difficult to navigate, duplicative requirements and processes that have evolved over decades without being reconsidered.

This is why the Ministry of Red Tape Reduction has been leading the largest review of business-facing permits in Ontario's history. We should always be willing to remove barriers that no longer serve a useful purpose. We have rolled up our sleeves to do the hard work and are leading a government-wide review of all business-facing permits, with the goal of transforming or eliminating 35% to 50% of them by the end of 2028.

Speaker, I'm pleased to report we are ahead of schedule on the review and have reviewed more than half of the 375 business-facing permits. When all the identified permit transformations are implemented, permit processing times are expected to be reduced by nearly 220,000 days. Think about what that means: It means businesses can move forward faster, infrastructure projects can break ground sooner and investors will have greater certainty. Every unnecessary form that's removed, every duplicate review that is eliminated and every approval that becomes easier to navigate helps strengthen Ontario's competitiveness.

If passed, this bill, the Building Ontario Faster Act, 2026, would mean economic opportunities arrive sooner in communities across Ontario. Ontarians expect strong standards, and our government remains committed to maintaining them. The question before us is whether those standards can be delivered more effectively and whether approvals can be administered more efficiently. We should always be willing to examine whether processes are working as intended.

Speaker, the permit review has revealed opportunities across government to simplify processes, eliminate duplication and modernize approval while maintaining strong safeguards and improving the way government delivers approvals and services. We will continue to maintain the health, safety and environmental protections that Ontarians expect, and we will continue to respect the crown's duty to consult. Our government recognizes that strong oversight and efficient services are not mutually exclusive.

Speaker, this bill contains proposals to eliminate and transform permits identified through that review. It also introduces targeted measures to create a more efficient and predictable regulatory environment that supports economic growth and investment across Ontario. If passed, the legislation would improve the efficiency and predictability of heritage processes. It would modernize environmental approvals and oversight while continuing to maintain strong environmental protections. It would help ensure Ontario has the reliable electricity system needed to power growing communities, expanding businesses and major new businesses and major investments as well.

This bill would also support critical transportation infrastructure by helping reduce construction timelines for the Highway 69 expansion project in northern Ontario. And it would help qualified workers bring their skills to Ontario more easily by reducing unnecessary barriers.

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Speaker, our government has made competitiveness a priority because we understand what is at stake. Families want good-paying jobs. Businesses want certainty. Communities want growth. All those objectives depend on having a regulatory system that works efficiently.

This bill, if passed, supports a stronger economy that allows us to continue investing in the services families depend on. But those benefits can only be realized when projects move from the drawing board to reality, Madam Speaker. What creates prosperity is getting qualified projects moving while maintaining the safeguards Ontarians expect. When governments provide greater certainty, opportunity can be realized sooner. When approval processes become unnecessarily complex, expensive or slow, investment doesn't wait indefinitely; it goes elsewhere.

Ontario's future depends on our ability to attract investment, support innovation and create opportunity. If we want Ontario to continue leading in advanced manufacturing, critical minerals, agriculture, construction, technology and energy, we need a regulatory system that supports growth rather than one that slows it down. That's why the Ministry of Red Tape Reduction is leading a government-wide permit review in collaboration with the ministries to focus on improving outcomes by modernizing regulation and transformation of permit approval.

Our approach is already delivering results. Ontario recently received its first-ever A grade from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business for regulatory reform, recognizing that Ontario has the lowest regulatory burden per capita in Canada.

Speaker, we have a little time left. We could talk about more; it's an amazing bill.

The proposed Building Ontario Faster Act, 2026, supports those goals. It helps create the conditions for long-term economic growth. It helps support the homes, roads, transit systems, energy infrastructure and public services that Ontarians rely on every day. And it helps ensure Ontario remains the best place in the G7 nations to live, work, invest and do business.

Speaker, this legislation represents another step toward building a stronger, more competitive and more resilient Ontario. I encourage all the members from the other aisle as well to support this important bill we are proposing today.

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

Ms. Jessica Bell: My question is to the member for Markham–Thornhill. I see in the title this bill is the Building Ontario Faster Act, and that is very interesting because I also care about building high quality and building with the goal of getting good value for money. And that's really important because when I look at what the government is spending on infrastructure, it's a lot, but the actual costs, what we're getting for the amount of money we're spending, is not very good. We've got some of the highest infrastructure costs in the Western world.

What is your government's plan to ensure we can lower infrastructure costs and get a better, higher-quality product?

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: Thank you to the member for that good question and thank you for your passion, for bringing different perspectives to this House.

Madam Speaker, fundamentally, cutting red tape is about making Ontario the most competitive place to invest, build and create good-paying jobs. Since 2018, our government has been focused on creating the regulatory environment that works better for people and smarter for businesses, to support economic growth and innovation while protecting the highest standard we all expect for health care, safety and environmental stewardship.

Madam Speaker, so far we have saved people and businesses—that's a proven track record—nearly 1.9 million hours. That is less time navigating forms and approval processes and more time investing in workers, expanding operations and bringing new ideas to market. That's what this bill does. It's cutting red tape to unlock Ontario's full economic potential so we can grow and build bigger and better than ever before.

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

Mr. Aris Babikian: Last year, the people of Ontario elected Premier Ford and our government to a third successive majority to protect Ontario. With the chaos and instability that President Trump has created, people knew we had the right plan to defend Ontario and Ontarians, to defend our sovereignty, to fortify our critical supply chains and strengthen our economic resiliency

How will this bill, if passed, support our mandate to protect Ontario's future?

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: Thank you to my colleague the hard-working MPP from Scarborough–Agincourt. I know—I can see your social media—you've been travelling and visiting and attending so many events. Thank you for your hard work and bringing perspective to this wonderful House.

Madam Speaker, this bill puts Ontario in a strong position. We are taking the fight to Washington, because we will never become the 51st state. If passed, this bill will help businesses get projects under way quickly and more easily by reducing unnecessary red tape in our permitting process, creating more certainty with the approvals in our heritage and archaeology sector, and improving planning and delivery to support critical infrastructure across the province.

This is how we protect Ontario, so we can compete and win against anyone, anywhere in the world.

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

Ms. Sandy Shaw: This government purports this bill to be about building faster, but we've seen this movie before. This bill is about nothing but shutting out the people of the province of Ontario. It takes away their environmental rights to be consulted on impacts that happen on the environment. And it will more than likely force landfills and garbage incinerators on communities that don't want them. We've seen it before. We've seen it in Hamilton. We saw it in Dresden.

So, despite what anybody tells you about this bill, it is a bad bill. When it comes to our environment, when it comes to our air quality, when it comes to the health of our children, when it comes to Ontarians dying premature deaths from exposure to toxins, this bill will only exacerbate that fact.

You know, the minister said, "The key is to have conversations. The key is to educate," so I hope that I can take him at his word and that conversations will include a robust opportunity for the people of the province of Ontario to come to committee, to weigh in on this omnibus bill that is a thinly veiled attempt of this government to ram through 21 weeks' worth of thinking in less than a week.

I mean, let's be clear: We've had less than—what is it, 48 hours now?—to consult this bill that has 23 schedules, anywhere from bees to highways. This is a massive bill, and this is the government's MO time and time and time again: They dump it on the opposition, they dump it on this Legislature, and now it's all about dumps in this bill. I want to go on about this, because we have had a terrible experience in Hamilton of our environment being compromised, and we have had a terrible experience of this government abandoning the people of Hamilton, especially the people in the north end, Hamilton East–Stoney Creek. They have been failed by this government time and time again.

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People living in this area in Hamilton call it the sacrifice zone because they know—and scientific evidence shows—that if you live in the area around these industrial sites, you

experience heightened respiratory illnesses, your kids are more likely to have asthma. There are premature deaths in this area. McMaster researchers and all kinds of research have shown this. There is rock-solid evidence that this is having an impact on the health and the well-being and the lives of people that live near these industrial sites and dumps and these garbage-burning incinerators that the government is trying to fast-track.

Let me start by saying that we understand that landfills are a problem that need to be addressed in this province, but we also understand that this government sat on their hands, knowing this problem was coming, for years and years and years.

The second thing this government did is basically blow up the recycling plan that we had in Ontario. People don't even know how to recycle now because they don't know if it's going to get picked up, they don't know what goes in the box, and they don't know where it goes. We had a very robust recycling program, including a bottle return program, but now that the government, in the way that they manage to do, has just ruined it, destroyed it for whatever reason, we have more garbage. It's already more garbage. Rather than being diverted to recycling, it's ending up as garbage in landfills.

What's the province's response to that? "Well, hey, let's burn it." Believe me, Hamilton has experience. We had Plastimet. We have had all kinds of horrible incidents in Hamilton. So the last thing we need to see is that the province's big idea is to burn garbage.

And they're saying that we're going to burn garbage and turn it into energy? I can assure you that came to Hamilton as a gasification plant and Hamilton said, "No way," and sent the proponent packing when it came to gasification, which was an unproven, untested technology that they wanted to try out on the people of Hamilton. They wised up and said, "No way, no how."

In Hamilton, on Hamilton East–Stoney Creek mountain, there is a dump—the GFL dump—and that dump, in 2019, was supposed to have reached capacity. There was a big survey—housing development around there; people bought homes there with the understanding that the dump was capped. But guess what? Along comes Doug Ford, and he says, "Hey, no, GFL, you guys are my buds. Let's just double the capacity. We'll open it up again."

Since that time in 2019, the people of this area have been struggling with a putrid stench that cannot be described. It's been described as—well, I can't even say what it's been described as, but people can smell it coming up—

Mr. Chris Glover: Does it start with "S"?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Yes, it does, and it ends with "H-I-T." It comes up through their drains. They can't put their kids in the backyard. I've been there many times; it burns your eyes.

It's so bad that there was a school planned to be built there to accommodate all of these people that bought homes in this area, and the board of education and the ministry said, "We can't build a school in here. The conditions are just so deplorable that we can't educate kids in this school."

The ministry was contacted time and time and time again—4,000, 5,000 complaints from citizens. The government levied a few, I would just say, lacklustre fines against GFL that they didn't enforce. And the city of Hamilton again tried to intervene and wanted to have a veto over this dump or any future dumps.

Now we have a minister that says, "Oh, no worry. We would always prefer a host community that's willing to make incineration a core part of a waste management system." But I can tell you, Hamilton's had it up to here with you polluting our air and polluting our land and our water. The citizens are organizing. They're angry, and they've got their eyes on this bill because they know what's coming down because they've had experience of it.

I just want to say that when it comes to air quality, this government, again, has failed. My point in all this is that this is not a government that can be trusted. When they say, "Trust us; we're going to make sure there's environmental protections"—since day one you got elected, the only thing you wanted to do was dismantle any environmental protections in this province. There are very few left, actually. I'm surprised that the ERO is still standing. Possibly, they've managed to neuter it, or will manage to neuter it even further with this bill.

When it comes to air in Hamilton, it's not only the ERO and the environmental regulations at a high level; it's the small, continual exemptions that this government gives to industry. An example of this is that ArcelorMittal Dofasco was given an exemption from this government to continue to emit toxins in the air—benzopyrene, SO_2 and particulate matter. Those are the heavy metals that are in the air. And this government does not track the cumulative amount of particulate matter. They'll give a permit to a company to emit a certain amount of particulate matter, and then they'll give one to the company next door, but they don't at any point say, "Hey, this is just too much in the air for Hamilton." They do it site by site, and what we end up with in Hamilton are the kinds of heavy metals in the air that cause disease, make our kids sick and, in fact, are responsible for premature deaths.

The member from Hamilton Centre and I spent the summer helping residents deal with soot fallout; a grimy, oily soot that got on the paws of dogs, that got on cars and, most tragically, got on kids—on their hands, on their feet, on their clothing—when they tried to access the playground.

The ministry knew about this. This is not the first time it happened. In fact, I remember our previous leader, Andrea Horwath, standing in this House to talk about this soot fallout. This government knows about it and has known about it. And the only reason that there's any response is because citizens mobilized; because the MPPs helped try and force the government to act. And it's still not clear whether there's any enforcement in place so that it will not happen again.

So when it comes to a bill like this that has schedules in here—we call it an omnibus bill. This is an ominous bill,

let's just say that, because some of these schedules will mean true and real harm to the people of the province of Ontario, and I can assure you we'll be speaking about this any time we get—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Aris Babikian): Thank you to the member for Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas.

Questions?

Mr. Jonathan Tsao: I would like to thank the honourable member for her presentation today. I was wondering, what do you find is the most egregious part of this legislation that you would like to highlight for us?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: How much time do I have, Speaker?

I would just say it's not even so much the bill; it's the hypocrisy that this government thinks people don't understand what they're doing to them. It's the fact that they are saying—

Interjection.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I withdraw, Speaker.

It's the fact that they're saying, "This bill is going to be good for you," and they know it's not. A continual dismantling of the Environmental Bill of Rights, when they're saying, "It's going to be okay" in the face of everything they've done—it's why people are so cynical. It's why people are so turned off of politics, because they hear the government saying one thing, and they know straight up that they are being manipulated and they're not being told exactly how this is going to make their lives worse.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Aris Babikian): I would ask the member to withdraw.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I already said it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Aris Babikian): The member from Newmarket–Aurora.

M^me^ Dawn Gallagher Murphy: Something that I think is important in this Bill 140 is the Registered Disability Savings Plan. Currently, special provisions in the federal Income Tax Act do allow spouses, common-law partners, parents and adult siblings to open and hold an RDSP on behalf of adults who lack the capacity to enter into contracts. The problem is, these provisions are set to expire on December 31, 2026. So this is why our government has introduced legislation that, if passed, would allow family members to continue opening and holding these RDSPs on behalf of eligible individuals.

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My question to the member opposite: Will you support this bill and allow for an alternative for families to continue supporting their loved—

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

Ms. Sandy Shaw: In case the government hasn't noticed, the people of the province of Ontario are struggling with an affordability crisis. People can't afford their rent. They can't afford groceries. They can't afford to put their kids in any kind of extracurricular activities or clothe them when it comes to going back to school.

So while I appreciate that the government thinks that they're doing something great with this little schedule that they have in this bill—guess what you could have done? You could have taken the tax off groceries. That would have helped the people in the province of Ontario. You could have brought in real rent control. That would have ensured that people can stay in homes or afford homes. So this is such a—I don't know how to describe it. It's just so small compared to the struggles of the people of the province of Ontario, who may not even be able to save for RESPs or RRSPs. I know a lot of people in my riding are not able to do that. So I don't know who you're—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Thank you. A reminder to put all comments to the Chair or through the Chair.

Question?

MPP Robin Lennox: This is a bill that we only received two days ago, after a long session away, and it's got 23 schedules; it is numerous pages. Could you speak a little bit about the democratic process and whether or not, by presenting this kind of an omnibus bill, with such a limited amount of time for review and debate—how do you feel the democratic process is being respected?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I want to say thank you to my colleague from Hamilton Centre. She's got, literally, my back. We work so well in Hamilton, trying to right a lot of the shortcomings of this government. I'm also pretty happy to see that we have the new MPP from Scarborough Southwest. That's a good couple of women to have at your back, I will say.

Is there a democratic process left in the province of Ontario? I think we could have, really, a good debate on whether it exists or not. I think we could, with this government, track, honestly, the slow decline of anything that is remaining of what we used to be very proud of in this province, which was our Westminster parliamentary democracy.

Bit by bit by bit, drip by drip by drip, this government has used their super-majority to make sure that no people have any influence on them—except in the Premier's back office. Time and time again, they skip committee and drop bills like this that do a disservice not to the opposition, but a disservice to the people of the province of Ontario, who expect us to be able to be working on their behalf. When the government sneaks in a bill like this, it certainly does not serve the people of Ontario or democracy.

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

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I'll invite the member to turn her attention to schedule 11 of the bill. I'm going to ask her a question about schedule 11.

In my riding of Essex, I have some great farm equipment dealers. One of those great farm equipment dealers is Vollans. It's located on County Road 20 in the town of Kingsville. It's a family-owned business. It was founded by Bill Vollans in 1961. They deal with farm equipment and outdoor machinery. As I said, it's a great family-owned business dealing with all sorts of things that are vital for production in Essex county. They're great people to deal with and vital to what we do in Essex county.

I simply invite the member, if she would turn her attention to that portion of this bill, and invite her to make

whatever observations she would like about schedule 7 in this act—pardon me; schedule 11.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you for asking me about schedule 7, because that's another attack on our Environmental Assessment Act. But I would ask the member, why would you not want to ask about schedule 4? And ask the members here from northern Ontario, who have fought so hard to protect the lives of the people in northern Ontario—the families that have been killed on this dangerous highway.

Your government says that you're going to fast-track building Highway 69 with schedule 4. So I don't know why the member wouldn't have asked me if I would agree with my colleagues in our suggestion that this government take this schedule and make it a stand-alone bill or take this schedule and pass it this afternoon so we can get going right now—right now—building and repairing a highway that is the cause of so much tragedy in the province of Ontario. That's the schedule we should be talking about.

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

MPP Jamie West: Thank you to my colleague from the New Democratic Party. I appreciate her debate today.

It's interesting: You mentioned us not sitting for an incredibly long amount of time—147 days—and then, on day one, they table a bill that's over 200 pages long, with 23 schedules. I thought it was interesting; yesterday, someone brought up that there's one schedule for each day that we're going to sit in the calendar year.

I'm just wondering, for a government that prides themselves on working hard and helping people, why is it that they don't seem to show up for work as often as the hard-working people of Hamilton?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Believe me, this is a question that the people of the city of Hamilton want to know: Why does this government get to take an extended break? What did you say—it was how long?

MPP Jamie West: It was 147.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Yes, 147 days. It's insane.

In 147 days, the people of Hamilton—the people of all of Ontario—didn't have these kinds of—they'd be lucky if they had a week or two weeks' vacation to maybe spend some time with their family. But this government, in its sense of entitlement—that lives in a world where people don't have to struggle to pay the bills—think that that's acceptable. People are so angry with this government for taking so much time off. And then to see, when they come back, they dump a bill like this—that is going to hurt them. It's like they took all that time that they were off—141 days—and spent the time coming up with a bill that would most hurt and harm the people of Ontario instead of helping them. And that's how they feel in Hamilton and, I'm sure, in all of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): There is not enough time for another question.

Further debate?

Mr. Rob Cerjanec: Thank you, Speaker, and good afternoon, colleagues.

We've been away from the Legislature for about five months now. So, with this bill, the government had five months to develop the legislation. Maybe they were thinking about items before, even. And then they dropped it on us to debate in about 24 hours, implicating about 10 ministries and dealing with things like highways, landfills, environmental rights, courts, utilities and public transit, so amending a ton of different acts and creating some new acts as well with potential consequential amendments to other legislation.

So, when I sit in the House as the Ontario Liberal critic for economic development, I hear and I definitely recognize the minister when he talks about—we're in a war with the United States; an economic war, a trade war—and that we need to be all hands on deck, 110%. And I know we will get through that dispute, hopefully one way or another, and hopefully very, very soon. But when I see a government running around the province with these really nice signs that say, "Protect Ontario," with some really—trying to be—convincing language around protecting Ontario—"We're protecting Ontario"—well, this government has had eight years to protect Ontario. So when I look at this bill, I see a government trying to play catch-up for eight long years of inaction on certain files, or, quite frankly, Speaker, doing a 180-degree turn on issues that they previously championed.

Moving quickly, though, doesn't remove the government's responsibility to explain what it's doing. Otherwise, we're going to continue to erode public trust in government, public trust in our institutions. When the Premier says, in reference to the point of order and debate that the member from Kingston and the Islands raised about, "Oh, call me on my cellphone," and, "The Legislature isn't relevant" and, "We don't need to sit to do all of these things," but now we have a bill in front of us that the government's worked on for about five months or so to try and fix the things that this government hasn't done over the last eight years.

1650

We see too often this current government acting first and then working through those consequences later, and we see it in the bill. Just after this bill was introduced, we saw the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks already walk back the government's intention on landfills, now saying that, oh, no, they won't be imposed on communities. That was right after this bill was introduced. As different stakeholder groups and advocacy groups and folks really dig down on what is the meaning and what is the intention of this bill, what are the impacts of this bill, I wouldn't be surprised if we see more walkbacks from ministers on this.

On Highway 69, 110% it needs to be completed. Northern residents deserve safe and reliable highways, something that I've long advocated for. And the need for better northern highways existed long before, again, this tariff dispute that we have with the United States. This government's been in office since 2018. It's once again playing catch-up for its own record because people in northern Ontario are fed up and frustrated.

And it's ironic because the last expansion of Highway 69 was completed in 2021, which was actually initiated by the previous Liberal government at that time. Now we're in 2026. If we look at just last week's press release from the government, it says, "If passed, the Building Highway 69 Faster Act will enable the province to complete the widening project up to five years ahead of schedule by streamlining the environmental assessment process." No announcement of when this is going to be done. It might be able to shorten it by up to five years.

And the Minister of Transportation was also quoted in that release saying, "People in northern Ontario have waited long enough for a safer, more reliable Highway 69, and our government is taking action to get it built faster." Yes, colleagues, this is the same government that's been in office for the last eight years. If that isn't a stinging rebuke of, frankly, the government's lack of action on this, I don't really know what else is. It's from the minister's own mouth, pretty much.

Around landfills and waste diversion, which I believe is in schedule 7 of the bill, once again, it's a government trying to fix a problem that it helped create. Municipalities—I think it's really important, and we're hearing this—need predictable rules. And when we talk to our mayors and council colleagues at AMO, one of their concerns is the ever-changing rules. As opposed to sitting down and let's get this right from the start, it's year after year of a tinker here, a tweak there, and municipalities, I would say rightfully so, are frustrated.

Municipalities need predictable rules, and communities, especially with projects of this nature, really deserve a meaningful say. I agree with folks that it shouldn't take 20 years to get a landfill created. But I see, once again, there's a game of whack-a-mole being played without that long-term plan.

We know, just again, right after this bill was introduced, the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks walked it back. It made a headline. But the legislation then before us still removes what that local support requirement would be. It's government saying, "Trust us."

Folks are asking where our garbage will go, and there need to be solutions for this. I 110% agree. I wish government was working on this about eight years ago. Once again, this is a problem that this government created, and now communities are rightfully concerned that this government is going to run them over. We saw the backlash that, I believe, was in Lambton–Kent–Middlesex around the Dresden landfill that is still, I think, being proposed over there.

But the question that I have is, is this government—this Premier Ford's protect Ontario government—doing enough to keep waste out of these landfills? I would argue it's not. We see diversion rates are flat, in some ways, declining, as well. That's not a good sign. We see an increase in business and institutional waste being disposed of. And we're seeing increases to several of the blue box recovery targets being proposed until 2032, alongside delays to some collection expansions.

When the province moved over to the producer recovery system that now is in effect, I can tell you, speaking to businesses and some main streets in my riding, they're actually left out of that program and are now forced to pay higher costs and fees to arrange for private pickup and private transport of their waste material, whether it's garbage, whether it's recycling. They've now got to pay more for that on the recycling side of things. So if recycling becomes harder or more expensive, well, more recyclable material could end up in the garbage. And that means we need everyone involved in waste diversion—households, businesses, municipalities.

I look at schedule 14 around the regional transportation plan, and I can understand, in some ways, there's a reasonable case for making the minister responsible for it. Clearer responsibility, I think, would probably help conflicting directions. There are approximately 125 vice-presidents at Metrolinx. We saw what happened with the failed Deutsche Bahn contract; now we know that different people at Metrolinx were fighting with each other about what GO expansion was really supposed to mean. So having direct direction around that, I think, probably is a good thing.

But we also know that municipalities need timely information to plan for housing, development and local transit, and the public needs to be involved as part of that conversation. What we're seeing even more so now is the public being removed from that conversation.

So removing the specific requirements, for example, of open board meetings when a transportation plan is deliberated, like it is at Metrolinx right now, and when that annual report is presented, means transit riders, the people who take the GO train every day, are not going to be able to view and have that kind of conversation and even insight and awareness—because, once again, in some ways, it's government saying, "Trust us." They're really good at drawing lines on a map and really bad at actually delivering those lines or increasing and enhancing current service, as we're seeing right now in Durham region on the Lakeshore East.

Communities are fighting. Thousands of petitions have been signed to bring back the Lakeshore East express train. Well, we don't see that yet. We see the timelines and electrification being delayed, delayed and delayed, which means, again, people, existing GO train riders, people who take the GO train every day to get to home and work—well, guess what? They are not able to get to home and work faster.

Speaker, I'll leave it there.

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

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I'm going to return back to schedule 11 and invite the member to turn his attention to schedule 11 of the bill that's before us. It's about the Farm Implements Act. I'm going to ask the same question I asked before; I asked it of the member from Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas. She chose not to deal with that topic. That's her prerogative. I'll ask this member whether he wants to deal with the topic.

It's a topic that's important to me because in my riding of Essex I have families who engage in this type of business, the sale of farm implements. It's very important in the riding of Essex. For example, there's the farm implement business located on County Road 20 of Kingsville. It's run by the Vollans family. It was founded by Bill Vollans in 1961. It's a very viable business, very important in our area.

This particular bill deals with the Farm Implements Act. It's important to Essex county and to families like the Vollans family, and I invite the member to make whatever observations the member would like to make about that.

Mr. Rob Cerjanec: I thank my colleague from Essex. I will say, his passion for the farming sector and community within his riding—I'm not an expert on the Farm Implements Act, quite frankly. I'm not our party's agriculture critic.

But when I do look at what some of the summary of the changes are, I think—again, without my detailed analysis of it—some of it does seem to make some sense in order to help farmers be able to purchase equipment and purchase materials quicker. In many cases, that can be very much a good thing. But not being an expert on that area itself, I wouldn't be able to give the member a definitive response on that.

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

1700

Ms. Jessica Bell: My question is to the member for Ajax. I am also intrigued by Schedule 14, the Metrolinx Act, which makes the Minister of Transportation responsible for regional transportation planning instead of Metrolinx.

Metrolinx is one of the most troubled and incompetent agencies that Ontario has right now, and has a long history of making transit planning decisions that benefit the government of the day or Conservative MPPs over the very real interests of getting people from A to B really quickly and cheaply.

But my question to you is: What issues do you foresee with moving transportation planning over from Metrolinx to the Minister of Transportation?

Mr. Rob Cerjanec: When I look at it, the current approach, quite frankly, isn't working at the end of the day, because we are not able to see a very coherent vision and plan, because we have the government announcing one thing and Metrolinx saying they're working on projects, and we're seeing projects being delayed and delayed and delayed, as folks in my community, in Ajax and Durham region, are experiencing.

But what I can foresee with what is being proposed here is that I think there will be less transparency, and that isn't necessarily just based on the legislation, but it's how this government has operated around the planning of transit projects.

We need to have an integrated system throughout the greater Toronto-Hamilton area, and really throughout the province as well. All the different pieces need to work together. So when I noted earlier the Minister of Finance talking about One Fare, for example—okay, well One Fare is good, but it's not actually in permanence, and that's something that I think, again, we need to change.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): A quick question from the member for Don Valley North.

Mr. Jonathan Tsao: The member earlier referenced the fact of a lack of a coherent plan, and I think that's what we see when we have an omnibus bill that touches so many different pieces without a single coherent thought.

I wonder if the member would like to highlight anything in particular in this bill that he finds concerning for his community in Ajax.

Mr. Rob Cerjanec: I referred to it earlier in my remarks: Waste diversion is a really, really big challenge, and I've got businesses on main streets that, again, are paying more out of their own pocket and making decisions based on that. Some have even said they're going to take the trash home and put it in their home recycling. That's where we've gotten to, so that would have been something really great to fix in this act.

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

Further debate?

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: I'm pleased to rise today in support of the Building Ontario Faster Act, 2026. This legislation is about protecting workers from the United States' tariffs, reduced delays for businesses looking to invest and create jobs in Ontario, and delivering on our government's commitment to build the most competitive economy in the G7. It is about building homes, strengthening infrastructure, supporting investment and creating the conditions for long-term economic success.

But, Speaker, before we can build anything, we need people. Every highway extension begins with workers. Every new housing development depends on workers. Every infrastructure project, every business investment and every economic opportunity depends on workers. The truth is simple: We can't build Ontario faster if we cannot get skilled workers where they are needed most.

That's why I am proud to speak today about our proposed amendments to the Ontario Labour Mobility Act, 2009, contained in this legislation. These amendments are targeted and specific, but they address an important challenge facing employers, workers and communities across Ontario. If passed, they will help qualified workers put their skills to work faster, help employers to access talent they need, and help ensure Ontario has the workforce required to stay competitive in the face of unjustified tariffs.

Speaker, Ontario's economy continues to grow and evolve. Across the province, employers are looking for workers with the skills, training and experience needed to help move projects forward and support economic growth. Whether it is construction, engineering, technical professionals or other regulated occupations, one message comes through time and time again: Employers need talent; they need qualified people; and they need them now.

At the same time, skilled workers across Canada are looking for opportunities. Many have the qualifications needed to succeed in Ontario. Many have already met the

standards required to practise their profession in another province or territory. Many are ready to contribute their expertise to our economy. Yet, too often, workers who are already qualified can face delays and administrative hurdles before they are able to continue their careers in new jurisdictions, and when this happens, nobody benefits. Workers face uncertainty; employers struggle to fill important positions; projects take longer to move forward; and communities lose out on valuable skills and expertise. Speaker, our government believes that when a qualified Canadian worker is ready to work, unnecessary barriers should not stand in the way.

The amendments before this House are rooted in a simple principle: Skills are valuable; experience matters; and the qualified workers should have a fair and effective pathway to continue their careers, whether they move where opportunity is available or they decide to move within Canada.

The Canadian Free Trade Agreement—the CFTA—includes important commitments related to labour mobility. Ontario is a proud participant in this agreement. Recent changes to the CFTA—supported by governments across the country—were designed to make labour mobility more consistent, transparent and predictable for qualified workers moving between jurisdictions. Through this legislation, we are proposing to update the Ontario Labour Mobility Act—OLMA—to reflect the CFTA changes. The proposal would incorporate into OLMA the CFTA's new standardized list of requirements that Ontario regulators can request from workers who are already certified in another province or territory. This would ensure workers and regulators have a clear and consistent process to follow here in Ontario. In practical terms, this means a clearer and more consistent process for workers seeking certification in Ontario. It means reduced duplications; it means fewer unnecessary administrative obstacles; and it means helping qualified workers navigate the process more efficiently.

These amendments are about reducing duplication, improving consistency and provide greater certainty for both workers and regulators. They will help create a more efficient and predictable certification process for workers seeking recognition of their credentials in Ontario. Speaker, these changes are not about creating shortcuts; they are about creating clarity. They are about recognizing that workers who have already demonstrated their qualifications should be able to move through the process with greater certainty and greater efficiency. Most importantly, these changes help remove barriers so workers can get to work where their skills are needed most.

Speaker, workforce challenges are not just a worker issue; they are also an employer issue. Across Ontario, businesses are competing for talent. Many employers have jobs available today. Many are ready to expand. Many are investing in their communities and creating new opportunities. But growth depends on people. An employer cannot fill a vacancy without a qualified worker. A project cannot move forward without the right expertise. And an economy cannot reach its full potential if skilled people are being held back by unnecessary barriers.

1710

That's why these amendments matter. When employers can access qualified talent more quickly, everyone benefits. Businesses can grow. Projects can move forward. Communities can thrive. And workers can connect with meaningful employment opportunities.

This is especially important at a time when our government is making historic investments in housing, infrastructure and economic development. Those investments require a strong workforce.

The labour mobility changes proposed in this legislation support the seamless movement of skilled labour across provinces and territories. If passed, they will help ensure that talent can move where it's needed and contribute to Ontario's continued growth.

Speaker, whenever governments take steps to simplify processes, some people ask an important question: Will standards be maintained? The answer is yes.

Let me be clear: These amendments don't lower standards. They don't weaken public protections. And they don't compromise professional oversight.

Ontario's regulatory requirements exist for a reason. They help protect the public. They help maintain confidence in regulated professions.

Speaker, every day, qualified workers help build the Ontario we're proud to call home. They build our communities. They strengthen our economy. And they create opportunities for future generations. Our responsibility as legislators is to make sure those workers have the opportunity to put their skills to use. The proposed amendments to the Ontario Labour Mobility Act will help us do exactly that. They will, if passed, support a clearer and more efficient certification process. They will reduce administrative burden. They will help qualified workers get to work faster. They will help employers access the skilled talent they need. They will reduce unnecessary barriers for qualified workers moving within Canada. And, most importantly, they will help ensure Ontario has the workforce needed to build—to build homes, to build infrastructure, to build opportunity, and to build a stronger Ontario.

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

Ms. Jessica Bell: I was very concerned when I was listening to the MPPs from the Hamilton area talk about the impact of landfills and dumps in Stoney Creek, in the area, and hearing stories about the school board not feeling that it is appropriate or safe to build a school in some areas because of the impacts of smog and air pollution on kids' health quality.

The government opposite has said that they would ideally like to find a willing host for these landfills. However, we have a lot of concerns that you're going to have a bit of difficulty finding some willing hosts. And this bill, from our read, indicates that you could just go ahead and decide where a landfill is going to be.

So what assurances do you have for these communities that might be understandably a little bit worried about

what you're planning? What assurances do you have, to make sure that our kids—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): Thank you.

I recognize the member from Mississauga–Erin Mills.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Thank you to the member for the question. I think the minister already spoke about that and said, absolutely, the local communities will be having their say—there will be consultation, and it will be with the agreement of the local authorities.

There were two decades when no new landfills were built in Ontario.

Close to my riding, on Terry Fox, there was a landfill. After, I think, 20 years of landfilling, it's now one of the best golf courses in the area. We still go there; we still use it as a community. When the time comes, it is still usable.

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

Mr. Rob Cerjanec: My question to the member from Mississauga–Erin Mills is whether he thinks the changes to the regional transportation plan and putting that in the minister's hands is going to electrify the GO train lines that run through Mississauga faster.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: I would like to thank the member for the question. Yes, we are looking forward to electrifying the GO trains. We are looking forward to the two-way, 24-hour GO train for the Milton line. I have been taking that train since 1995, and it has been a dream since then. Everybody was talking about it, but no government dared to do it. This government is the one that's going to do it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I recognize the member for Mississauga–Lakeshore.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I want to thank the member from Mississauga–Erin Mills for that great debate here today.

We're expanding our nuclear fleet. We're building four small modular reactors. We're refurbishing Pickering, whereas the previous Liberal government wanted to close Pickering down and take 2,000 megawatts off our grid, which would now be causing us brownouts or blackouts in the province of Ontario.

We're going to need approximately 150,000 new skilled workers in this field. What is this bill going to do to help attract more workers in the nuclear field?

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Thank you very much to the member from Mississauga–Lakeshore. I really appreciate the question, and I would like to take this opportunity to talk about the ambitious plans this government has for nuclear energy.

One of the projects is the Pickering reactor refurbishing, which the last government was planning to demolish in total. We have been putting in $27 billion to refurbish the four nuclear generation stations for about 2,000 megawatts of clean, green energy. In fact, more than 30,000 people will work as electricians, millwrights, pipefitters, boilermakers, ironworkers, engineers, technicians and many other occupations to refurbish the nuclear stations.

Our government's nuclear build-out—

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

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I invite the government to show me where in this bill, where in this schedule do municipalities have a veto power over dumps being put into their communities. It's not there, and I can assure the member that the dump in Hamilton East–Stoney Creek—the GFL dump—will never be a golf course. It won't be a golf course, I can assure you that.

What we have before us is a bill that is fast-tracking garbage incineration—you're going to burn garbage, calling it energy from waste—after you have let recycling fall apart in this community. The city of Hamilton tried to get veto power from this government for the dump in Stoney Creek, and they were denied.

So, please, can you tell me why we should trust this government, this minister to say no municipality will be forced to accept a dump or a garbage-burning incinerator against their will? It's not in the bill.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: I'm not sure why you are saying it's not in the bill when it's clearly saying that there would be consultation with the local municipalities. You are assuming that there will be enforcement of landfills. I think this is not true, and it was clear in the bill, it was clear from the minister.

Your riding itself or the city where your riding is will need a landfill. Where are they going to send their garbage if the States are already putting all those restrictions?

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

Mr. Rob Cerjanec: In schedule 8, addressing the Environmental Bill of Rights—we know that in the 2025 annual report of the Auditor General on the operation of the Environmental Bill of Rights, the Auditor General found numerous concerns regarding the government's record of compliance with the act. So we see in this legislation now that the amendments would remove many of the obligations that the Auditor General required. We're seeing a dismantling, really, of the Environmental Bill of Rights.

1720

So my question to the member from Mississauga–Erin Mills is whether the member thinks that the government should engage with the public regarding policy that impacts the environment and give the opportunity for the public to comment on proposals and avenues associated with it.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Again, we already talked about that before and we said that there would be some consultations around that.

I think the member is looking for a specific insurance to maintain, and within the bill, as you can see—this is the bill—if you are looking for every word you are looking for, I don't think there will be enough papers to cover all that with all the details of this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): I recognize the member from Newmarket–Aurora.

M^me^ Dawn Gallagher Murphy: As Ontario faces global economic uncertainty, our businesses, our entrepre-

neurs, our farmers and other job creators worry about the lengthy approval timelines, duplicative requirements and outdated processes as barriers to growth and investment.

My question to the member—and thank you very much for your remarks today—why is reducing red tape such an important part of our plan to protect Ontario, and what is our government doing to create a better regulatory environment that helps drive investment, innovation and job creation across this great province?

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Thank you very much to the member from Newmarket.

Fundamentally, cutting red tape is about making Ontario a more competitive place to invest, build and create good-paying jobs.

Since 2018, our government has been focusing on creating a regulatory environment that works better for people and smarter for businesses to support economic growth and innovation while protecting the high standards we all expect for health, safety and environmental stewardship.

So far, we have saved people and businesses nearly 1.9 million hours. That's less time navigating a form or approval process and more time investing in workers, expanding operations and bringing new ideas to market. That's what the bill does: It cuts red tape to unlock Ontario's full economic potential so we can grow and build bigger and better than ever before.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ric Bresee): There's no time for further questions. I'll go to further debate.

Mr. Chris Glover: This is the first time I've gotten to rise and speak on a debate since we got back after the five-month break, and you've got to wonder what the government was doing during those five months. Apparently, what they were doing was putting together this bill and probably some other bills that are going to come through.

This bill is 263 pages long and has 23 schedules. It affects at least—that I've counted—15 different acts. The question is, why is the government cramming all of this stuff into one bill? I'll ask my colleagues: Do you think maybe that they are trying to get things through so that people don't know what's actually in the bill? Do you think they might be trying to slide some things through? I don't know that there's anything that controversial in here, except that they're going to incinerate garbage and release PCBs into the environment, and they're going to impose some landfills on communities without any public consultation.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: What could go wrong?

Mr. Chris Glover: I can't imagine what would go wrong with that.

So, 147 days of recess—why didn't they bring us back a month ago, break this bill up into several different pieces so that we could actually have a proper debate, public consultations and everything? This is a Parliament where we're supposed to have an exchange of ideas, where we're supposed to be transparent to the people about the laws that are going to affect their lives. But instead, this government's got this omnibus bill.

I will say that this government has a terrible track record in terms of disrespecting this Legislature and ramming legislation through like this, but also in disrespecting the democratic rights of Ontarians, including our right to have an open and transparent debate about bills that are going to affect their lives, like this bill here today. And I'll just go through some of the things that they're doing.

We just had municipal elections. I want to congratulate Mayor Olivia Chow—

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Woo!

Mr. Chris Glover: Yes—for being in there for another four years, and a very progressive council here in the city of Toronto. And there were lots of great mayors elected across this province.

What didn't people vote for in this municipal election? People did not get to vote for their regional chairs in the regions of Durham, Halton, Muskoka, Niagara, Peel, Waterloo and York. This government didn't trust the people of those regions to actually elect somebody who would implement this government's agenda, so they're going to be appointing the chairs there. They stripped those Ontarians and all those regions of the right to democratically elect a regional chair, and instead, they're going to appoint that person. And the chairs they appoint will not have to get a majority of votes on the councils—they will be able to govern with just one third of the votes of the elected councillors. So they're going to be appointing these chairs, and these chairs are going to be able to pass resolutions and motions with only one third of the votes, overruling a majority vote by two thirds of the elected councillors. It's a fundamental attack on our democratic right to majority-vote decision-making.

There are also strong-mayor powers that many of the conservative mayors across Ontario will be using in order to also override our right to majority-vote decision-making, because they'll also—those strong mayors will be able to override a vote by two thirds of city councillors.

The other thing this government is doing—the Minister of Education, yesterday, said that he wasn't going to swear in the trustees we just elected in Monday's election. He said, "I don't trust the people of Ontario. I don't trust their votes. I don't trust them to actually elect trustees who will follow my agenda." So he wasn't going to swear them in. Now he says that he'll swear them in, but he won't let them assume office—so, again, another attack on our democratic right to have our votes respected. When we go to the ballot box and we cast a ballot for a trustee, we assume that that person will be able to assume the office that we've elected them for. But this government says, "No, we're not going to allow you to do that. We're not going to respect the democratic rights of the people of Ontario."

Other things that this government has done—they've stripped us of our charter rights, with Bills 28, 30 and 195; those include our fundamental freedoms and rights, including freedom of speech. They've passed three bills that strip us of our freedom of speech.

They've stripped us of our right to rule by law—another charter right—with Bill 5. Bill 5 allows the government to declare any part of the province a special economic zone

where they can override any law and break any law that they want.

They also are stripping us of our right to an independent judiciary. The Premier has actually boasted that he is appointing partisan Conservative judges, when judges are supposed to be impartial and non-partisan. It's an absolute attack on our democratic rights.

The bill that's before us, this omnibus bill that I was talking about, has 23 schedules, 263 pages, and it's entitled—let me just get the title right here.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: It's called the phone book act—

Mr. Chris Glover: Yes, the phone book act—what is it?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Burning Ontario faster—

Mr. Chris Glover: Burning Ontario faster—okay, yes.

It's actually called the Building Ontario Faster Act. This government has passed several other bills in the same vein: Bill 17, Protect Ontario by Building Faster and Smarter Act; Bill 60, Fighting Delays, Building Faster Act; Bill 98, Building Homes and Improving Transportation Infrastructure Act—so all those bills to get building done faster. You would think that housing is going up lickety-split in this province after all these acts that they've passed. But you know what? The numbers don't tell that story. The numbers actually say that this province has the second-worst record in building homes per capita of any province in Canada.

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Alberta is building 11 homes per thousand people in their province. The average province in Canada is building 6.3 homes per thousand per year. How many do you think we are building in Ontario? How many homes per thousand people do you think we're building in Ontario? Remember: 11 for Alberta; 6.3 is the average. We're second lowest. Give me a guess.

MPP Robin Lennox: Two.

Mr. Chris Glover: No, you underestimated. They're actually building three. They're building three per thousand, yes, yet they're only half of the average.

So all those acts that this government has passed to speed up legislation—they've done all kinds of things. They've gutted the Environmental Protection Act. They've gutted the Environmental Bill of Rights. They've gutted the Endangered Species Act. They've gutted the Ontario Heritage Act. They've passed out a billion dollars a year to developers through development levies that they've waived. All those bills and all of that handout of our taxpayer dollars to those developers, and they have the second-worst record of building housing of any province in Canada.

They were supposed to build 1.5 million homes by 2030. At the rate they're going, do you know when they will achieve that goal of building 1.5 million homes? One of my colleagues, take a guess. When will they achieve the goal of building 1.5 million homes? It was supposed to be by 2030. When do you think?

MPP Robin Lennox: By 2040?

Mr. Chris Glover: No, keep going.

MPP Robin Lennox: By 2050?

Mr. Chris Glover: Yes, 2050, so just a 20-year delay in getting to the 1.5 million homes.

So what is going wrong? I've only got a minute left.

I will say, I mentioned at the beginning of this speech that Olivia Chow just got re-elected. Can the government please take some lessons from Olivia Chow, the mayor of Toronto, because she has got—just in the city of Toronto, they've got 15,000 homes being built. Almost 5,000 of those are affordable homes, and she is doing it by partnering with the federal government. She's doing it by making deals with developers. They will take a city parking lot and give it to the developer. In exchange, the developer provides one third of the homes that are built as affordable units.

This is a way to get affordable housing built, and it doesn't even raise our taxes. It doesn't mean we have to pay for it. We just lose the value of the parking lot.

The government has Metrolinx stations, Ontario Line stations, right through all of Toronto. We've asked the government, "Hey, if you're going to be giving those properties to developers to allow them to build high-rises over those stations, can you at least mandate that one third of the homes over those stations be affordable housing?" And the government refuses to do it.

So building homes faster—that's not really the goal of this bill.

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

MPP Paul Vickers: The Hamilton Chamber of Commerce is asking for less red tape and faster approvals. The Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce wants digital permitting, a single point of contact and same-day permits. Ottawa home builders say approval timelines increase costs, and they support streamlined processes.

If local employers and business organizations all agree that approvals need modernization, why is the NDP opposing reforms called for by their own constituents that will help build homes, hospitals and infrastructure faster?

Mr. Chris Glover: I mentioned five different bills that this government has passed that they claimed and that had in their title that it was going to build homes faster, and yet you've got the second-worst record for building housing of any province in Canada.

So why would the people of Ontario believe that this legislation, which guts the Environmental Protection Act, guts the Environmental Bill of Rights, is actually going to build homes faster? Is it not just a gift to some developers without any quid pro quo, without any commitment to actually building the homes that we need?

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question to the member—and I know this is a tough one; it's sort of like being asked which of your kids do you like the least. But in this bill, which schedule do you like the least, and can you expand on why that's the case?

Mr. Chris Glover: Let's see. Of all the schedules on this bill, I hate schedule 8 because it guts the Environmental Bill of Rights.

The Environmental Bill of Rights was introduced by the Ontario NDP because, through the 1970s and 1980s, we had all of these toxic chemicals that were killing people in our environments and in our workplaces. I've mentioned some of them: asbestos, PCBs—let's see; I've got a list here.

Interjection.

Mr. Chris Glover: In the 1970s and 1980s they were around, for sure.

I forgot my list. Asbestos, PCBs—

Interjection: Think about it. Think about it.

Mr. Chris Glover: Yes, I'm thinking about it.

Anyway, all these toxic chemicals were put into our workplaces and into the environment—lead in gasoline was another one—and there was no Environmental Protection Act, there was no Environmental Bill of Rights, so the Ontario NDP passed an Environmental Bill of Rights.

This government is gutting it, and the reason that they're gutting it is because they want to be able to incinerate garbage—will, again, release PCBs into the environment.

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

Mr. Rob Cerjanec: I'm just looking at schedule 4, the Building Highway 69 Faster Act. I'm not sure if you've looked at that section of the bill itself.

Right now, it looks like it's looking to strip the environmental processes of pretty much all public accountability and rigour. The only check on this is considered to be Indigenous consultation.

What approach do you think the government of Ontario should be taking when it does come to highway expansion?

Mr. Chris Glover: First of all, I think the government should have started the highway expansion a long time ago. People in northern Ontario have been asking for Highway 69 to be expanded for 35 years. The member from Sudbury was talking about it yesterday, and he actually talked about a number of friends and family members who have been killed on that highway in those intervening 35 years.

So one of the things the government should have done is started expanding that highway and also expanding and twinning Highways 11 and 17 in the north, because those are really vital arteries, and they are constantly closed down because of accidents. They need to expand those highways to make them safe for everybody that uses them. They should have started a long time ago. They need to accelerate this process, but they also can do it in a way that respects the local communities and provides the opportunity to consult, because local communities have specific knowledge that will help prevent them from making mistakes.

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

M^me^ Dawn Gallagher Murphy: The Hamilton Chamber of Commerce is asking for less red tape, and they're asking for faster approvals.

The Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce wants a digital permitting system, a single point of contact and same-day permits.

Ottawa home builders say approval timelines increase costs and support streamlined processes.

If local employers and business organizations all agree that approvals need modernization, why is the NDP opposing reforms called for by their own constituents? Because they know it will help build homes, hospitals and infrastructure.

Mr. Chris Glover: First of all, the Conservatives always play this rhetorical game where they say, "Why is the NDP opposing this?" Of course, if there's unnecessary red tape that is slowing down the development of housing, then we should cut that. But this government's approach has been to gut the Environmental Protection Act, the Environmental Bill of Rights, the conservation act and the Endangered Species Act. They're causing all of this environmental harm, and the result has been that we have the second-lowest number of housing starts per capita of any province in Canada.

It's not just a matter of cutting red tape; you actually have to look at what you are doing wrong that is preventing housing from being built in Ontario.

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

Ms. Fatima Shaban: In my riding of Scarborough Southwest, we are fortunate to have Scarborough Bluffs and beautiful waterfront green spaces that residents deeply value.

Bill 140 proposes changes to the Environmental Bill of Rights, including removing certain mechanisms that allow residents to request environmental reviews and investigations. Could the member for Spadina–Fort York elaborate on what these changes could mean for communities like mine, where protecting our natural environment is so important?

Mr. Chris Glover: I will just say that I'm deeply honoured that the brand new member from Scarborough Southwest just asked her first question, and I get to answer. Can we give her a big round of applause?

Interjections.

Mr. Chris Glover: Welcome to the Legislature.

I will say that the problem with this legislation is, it guts the Environmental Bill of Rights and the Environmental Protection Act so that this government can do things like build incinerators for garbage, which will release PCBs into the environment. They can put landfill sites without consultation, without transparency to the local community, so these could be going into your community, and you will not know about it until they're already there. That is absolutely shameful, and it's taking us backwards; it's taking us backwards to the days when the companies used to release all kinds of toxic chemicals into our environment, and then we didn't find out about it until we were already experiencing the health impacts.

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

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I've been listening to the member across very attentively, and he's talking about Highway 69, that he agrees on expanding it, correct? But it's funny that you agree on expanding Highway 69, which will take up farmland, but you're against developing Highway 413, that takes up farmland. So why are you on both sides of the fence on this issue?

Mr. Chris Glover: I don't think the member has driven up Highway 69, because when you get north to a certain point the farmland disappears, and it just becomes bush because you're on the Canadian Shield. The eastern shore of Georgian Bay is just not that good farmland. There are a few pockets of farmland around the French River and stuff, but there's not a lot of farmland there. I'll leave it at that.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): We have time for another quick question.

MPP Jamie West: Speaker, a really quick question: Would you say, on the whole, that it would be better if we had bills that didn't have these unnecessary poison pills in them?

Mr. Chris Glover: One of the rhetorical games that this government plays in here is they always say, "Oh, the NDP voted against this; they voted against that, and they voted against that," and those things were buried in an omnibus bill that had these poison pills. So of course, we're going to be voting against this bill because we're not going to vote to gut the Environmental Protection Act or the Environmental Bill of Rights.

We vote against the budget because the budgets that this government designs are bankrupting our hospitals, our schools, our colleges and universities. But they will say something else in the budget and say, "Oh, they voted against this thing that was in the budget." Well, of course we did, because we want to protect our schools, our hospitals, our colleges, universities and our environment.

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

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm pleased to have a few comments about Bill 140, our Building Ontario Faster Act.

The Ministry of Red Tape Reduction is a very integral part of our government. We committed to the people of Ontario in the 2018, 2022 and 2025 elections that we would have these regular bills, and I think members can agree that after we had the fall economic statement today, we have to do everything we can to speed up approvals and ensure that we fight President Trump's tariffs. We're going to continue to have Minister Khanjin travel across the province and create more opportunities.

I think this bill has been debated all week. It needs to get to committee, and I move that the question now be put.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Mr. Clark has moved that the question be now put. There has been over nine hours of debate. I am satisfied that there has been sufficient debate to allow this question to be put to the House.

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

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

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

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

Vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Orders of the day?

Hon. Steve Clark: If you seek it, you'll find unanimous consent to see the clock at 6.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to see the clock at 6. Is it agreed? Agreed.

Report continues in volume B.

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Glover, Chris (NDP)	Spadina—Fort York	
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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
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Scott, Hon. / L'hon. Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	
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Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Tangri, Hon. / L'hon. Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	Associate Minister of Small Business / Ministre associée des Petites Entreprises

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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	
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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	