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Mercredi
6 avril 2022

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CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Wednesday 6 April 2022 / Mercredi 6 avril 2022

Tax Relief at the Pumps Act, 2022, Bill 111, Mr.

Bethlenfalvy / Loi de 2022 sur l'allègement de la taxe à la pompe, projet de loi 111, M. Bethlenfalvy

Hon. Victor Fedeli.....	2983
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong.....	2985
Ms. Laurie Scott.....	2985
Miss Monique Taylor.....	2986
Hon. Doug Downey.....	2986
Mr. Percy Hatfield.....	2986
Mr. Dave Smith.....	2987
Mr. Peter Tabuns.....	2987
Mr. Michael Parsa.....	2989
Ms. Catherine Fife.....	2990
Mr. Randy Pettapiece.....	2990
Miss Monique Taylor.....	2990
Mr. Dave Smith.....	2990
Second reading debate deemed adjourned.....	2991

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS / AFFAIRES D'INTÉRÊT PUBLIC ÉMANANT DES DÉPUTÉES ET DÉPUTÉS

Connected Communities Act, 2022, Bill 104, Ms.

Park / Loi de 2022 pour des collectivités solidaires, projet de loi 104, Mme Park

Ms. Lindsey Park.....	2991
Ms. Laurie Scott.....	2993
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong.....	2993
Mrs. Daisy Wai.....	2994
Miss Monique Taylor.....	2995
Mr. John Fraser.....	2996
Ms. Lindsey Park.....	2996
Second reading agreed to.....	2996

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE / DÉBAT SUR LA MOTION D'AJOURNEMENT

Employment standards

Mr. John Fraser.....	2997
Hon. Paul Calandra.....	2997

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Tax Relief at the Pumps Act, 2022, Bill 111, Mr.

Bethlenfalvy / Loi de 2022 sur l'allègement de la taxe à la pompe, projet de loi 111, M. Bethlenfalvy

Mr. Stephen Blais.....	2998
------------------------	------

Mr. John Fraser.....	2999
Hon. Doug Downey.....	3000
Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell.....	3000
Mr. John Yakabuski.....	3000
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong.....	3001
Mr. Will Bouma.....	3001
Mr. Gilles Bisson.....	3001
Mr. John Yakabuski.....	3001
Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell.....	3004
Mr. Will Bouma.....	3004
Mr. Gilles Bisson.....	3004
Mr. Dave Smith.....	3005
Mr. Michael Mantha.....	3005
Mr. Randy Pettapiece.....	3005
Mr. Gilles Bisson.....	3006
Mr. Lorne Coe.....	3009
Mr. Percy Hatfield.....	3009
Mr. Sam Oosterhoff.....	3009
Mr. Joel Harden.....	3009
Mr. Jim McDonell.....	3009
Ms. Peggy Sattler.....	3010
Mr. John Yakabuski.....	3010
Mr. Mike Schreiner.....	3010
Mr. John Yakabuski.....	3011
Mr. Michael Mantha.....	3011
Mr. Dave Smith.....	3012
Ms. Laurie Scott.....	3012
Mr. Lorne Coe.....	3013
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong.....	3015
Mr. Will Bouma.....	3015
Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell.....	3015
Mr. Robert Bailey.....	3015
Mr. Percy Hatfield.....	3015
Mr. Sam Oosterhoff.....	3016
Mr. Michael Mantha.....	3016
Mr. Dave Smith.....	3016
Mr. Joel Harden.....	3018
Mr. Jim McDonell.....	3019
Ms. Peggy Sattler.....	3019
Mr. Sam Oosterhoff.....	3019
Mr. Percy Hatfield.....	3020
Mr. Michael Parsa.....	3020
Second reading vote deferred.....	3020

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 6 April 2022

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 6 avril 2022

Report continued from volume A.

1700

TAX RELIEF AT THE PUMPS ACT, 2022

LOI DE 2022 SUR L'ALLÈGEMENT
DE LA TAXE À LA POMPE

Continuation of the debate on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 111, An Act to amend the Fuel Tax Act and the Gasoline Tax Act with respect to a temporary reduction to the tax payable on certain clear fuel and on gasoline / Projet de loi 111, Loi modifiant la Loi de la taxe sur les carburants et la Loi de la taxe sur l'essence en ce qui concerne la réduction temporaire de la taxe à payer sur certains types de carburant incolore et sur l'essence.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): Further debate?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Thank you very much, Speaker, for this unexpected pleasure. I want to be able to talk for the next 20 minutes about some of the significant impact that the rising price of gas and fuel prices had on Ontario businesses and about part of our plan for relief.

Certainly we've all heard already that this plan will bring relief of 5.7 cents per litre, and 5.3 cents per litre on fuel. People and businesses in Ontario would see significant direct savings, but it's in addition to the many, many other pieces. When you look at the cumulative effect that all of these savings have, when you think about the elimination of the licence plate renewal fee and households benefiting from an average combined savings—between the gas tax and the licence plate renewals, we're talking \$465 in 2022. You can also talk about other things like the removal of the tolls and all of the long, very successful list of changes our government has made to the cost in Ontario.

I think of all the things that we have done, Speaker, to keep the costs down in Ontario. I think so proudly of the LIFT program, the Low-income Workers Tax Credit. That is \$850 a year in Ontario in personal income tax relief to low-income workers, and that can be used for anything that those families want.

I think of the Seniors' Home Safety Tax Credit. That helps make seniors' homes safer. I know in North Bay I did a mailer a month ago reminding the seniors of the \$2,500 that they can claim. That was one of the more popular mailers that we did because of all of the calls asking us to help: "How can we get assistance in making sure that we get our \$2,500?" So it was a very popular and very successful and very appreciated tax credit that was had.

I also did a mailer on the Ontario Jobs Training Tax Credit, another flyer that we did that was immensely popular because it helps workers get the training that they need, perhaps in a career shift, as we saw, or retraining or even to sharpen their skills. We saw a lot of that. This tax credit provided up to \$2,000 for relief, Speaker. It was also one of those pieces of the puzzle where we're trying to put money back in the pockets of the people.

The Ontario Child Care Tax Credit, the CARE program, puts more money, again, in the pockets of families and provides them the flexibility that they need to choose the kind of child care options that work best for them. That is something that we increased. You saw that in the last budget; a 20% top-up to that tax credit for 2021. That increased the support from \$1,250 to \$1,500, on average.

Again, Speaker, lowering the price of gas; giving money back on the val tag, on the sticker; the Low-income Workers Tax Credit, the LIFT program; the seniors' safety tax credit; the Ontario Jobs Training Tax Credit; the Ontario Child Care Tax Credit—these are all things that we see that are putting money back in the pockets of Ontario families.

The staycation tax credit is yet another one, where they can claim 20% of their 2022 accommodations. We're talking about \$1,000 as an individual, \$2,000 if they have a partner. They can get back \$200; \$400 as a family.

This is the kind of thing that we're talking about, Speaker, when we continue to lower the cost of doing business.

We had a lot of people call us about the removal of the licence plate renewal fees to say thank you, as well. That is exactly the kind of thing—it's not a lot of money. Cumulatively, it's a billion dollars, and it's important that that money is now in the hands of families and circulating within our economies. That's the kind of thing we're talking about, and that's exactly what we did, not only reducing the cost for families of all of those items that we mentioned, but we also took the same approach to reduce the cost of doing business in Ontario.

Now, I've stood in this seat, especially the last 18 months, and talked about the \$12 billion of investment that we've received in Ontario, and a big reason is the fact that we've lowered the cost of doing business in Ontario, just like we're lowering the cost for families by reducing the gas tax, by reducing the val tags. All of these things are putting money back in the pockets of families.

It's on the same model that we used in our Driving Prosperity, which put money back in companies to reinvest. We saw exactly what we said would happen when we lowered the cost of WSIB by 50%, and that was a \$2.5-

billion savings for business. When we put in an accelerated capital cost allowance, that reduced the cost of doing business by another billion dollars. This is annual. This is every year.

We had eight red tape reduction bills that reduced the cost of doing business by another \$400 million. We did not go ahead in January 2019 with all of the tax increases that the Liberals had passed. We did not go ahead with any of those, saving hundreds of millions of dollars for businesses. We reduced the cost of industrial and commercial energy in Ontario for businesses by 15% and 17% respectively, and we lowered the cost of the provincial share of businesses' local property taxes by \$450 million annually.

Put it all together, Speaker, and it is \$7 billion in annual savings. So, as we are saving families the gas tax, the val tags, the child care tax credits, the seniors' tax credits, the staycation, all of the savings we've done for families, we've also done for businesses. In turn, in the life sciences sector, we saw Sanofi, we saw Resilience, we saw Roche invest \$2 billion into Ontario. Just last week in Hamilton, we saw Omnia Bio invest into \$580 million to have a gene and cell therapy facility at McMaster University. This is all because we've created this environment for families and for businesses of a lower-cost jurisdiction. That's what we have done.

The plan is working. Today, there are 500,000 more people working in Ontario than the day we got elected. That's an unbelievable statistic. When you think about it, Speaker, pre-COVID, the province of Ontario saw an increase of 307,000 employees—307,000 men and women who got up to go to work in a job that they did not have before we got elected. When COVID struck, we lost a 1.1 million jobs, but we've gained back more than 1.3 million of that, so 200,000 more jobs since COVID, on top of the 300,000-plus jobs pre-COVID. We're over 500,000 men and women who wake up every morning now, under this government, to go to a job.

The cost of business is lowered in their companies, and we continue to offer things that I mentioned, like the low-income tax credit, the Seniors' Home Safety Tax Credit, the Ontario Jobs Training Tax Credit and the Ontario Childcare Tax Credit. That's all on top of the exceptionally well-negotiated \$10-a-day child care deal that was done, where I know the opposition kept pushing and rushing to take anything: "Take a deal before you lose it." We held out, we negotiated properly, and got a \$13.2-billion deal instead of the \$10.2-billion deal that was expected. Thank heavens we had a great team under the leadership of Premier Ford to be able to lead those negotiations and hold out for a better deal, just like we said we would. By the way, we got an extra year on the deal as well.

That's what negotiating is all about. That's the kind of negotiating that we did with Stellantis and Ford and General Motors and Honda and Toyota and all of the companies that have continued to invest in the province of Ontario. They're here, and they've said to us—the Premier and I have sat across the table from them—"You've done what you said you would do. We asked you to lower the cost of doing business four years ago. You did that. You lowered

the cost of doing business. So Ontario's auto is back, and it's all because of those changes."

1710

Speaker, we're continuing to lower the costs for families. We're continuing to lower the costs for business. That's why these things are so important: because they work. Now, look, we know there's more to be done. There's always more that can be done. But it's that wind behind our sails that we're seeing today.

I know that one of the members across the aisle spoke about the amount of unemployment. I can tell you that in my hometown of North Bay, we have a labour market group. It's one of the agencies that the government continues to fund. They came out with their labour market group statistics last week, and it was really quite interesting. There are 500 unfilled jobs in North Bay. They listed every single company, in their newsletter and on their website, that is looking for people. The average salary of those 500 jobs is over \$55,000. The average hourly wage is over \$20. It's fascinating to know that in North Bay we have 500 well-paying, unfilled jobs. The Premier told us the other day that in Ontario, there are 338,000 unfilled jobs.

We know that we need more people. We know that we need more immigration. I was so honoured to be part of this government today that launched our Ukraine program. We're really looking forward to the opportunity to help people from Ukraine make a new life here, if that's what they choose. We're really excited for them to find a job in Ontario, because we have 338,000 unfilled jobs. We know that that is going to be a genuine opportunity. I can tell you that being part of this government is one of the proudest things, in my business career, that I've ever had the opportunity to do.

When I talked with Minister Tibollo and he explained how he was coming to North Bay to announce a brand new mental health and addiction facility in the city of North Bay, with Canadore College, it just really made me proud of Canadore that they are looking for all the opportunities of where they can help in the community. Whether it's families or businesses, they are there to help.

We just saw—again, Canadore College—a 160-bed long-term-care facility. Now, you could imagine: This is a long-term-care facility that is being built at Canadore College in North Bay. The residents will be able to take courses. They'll be able to use the library. They'll be able to eat in the cafeteria, go to the restaurant if they want, walk the grounds—a beautiful 720-acre campus. This is the kind of really creative thinking that our government is using and the kind of creative thinking that we're seeing coming out of the college, to be able to put people to work, build part of the 30,000 beds that the Minister of Long-Term Care talks about, and upgrade the 28,000.

The one at Canadore College, Speaker, the 160 brand new beds, is in addition to Cassellholme, where we turned the sod—actually, we turned the snow, a couple of weeks ago, because there's still quite a bit of snow at home. It is a 264-bed long-term-care facility, brand new beds. In fact, there are 24 new beds on top of the 240 existing beds.

These are the kind of things that this government has been implementing to bring relief to families, to help lower the costs for families, to help lower the costs of doing business.

Really, I have to say, Speaker, that the four years here have been unbelievably rewarding, knowing that we have continued to provide answers and solutions for these families who are looking for relief and who are looking for help. So not only have we made Ontario a low-cost jurisdiction for business, which is why we've seen so many businesses come here, why 500,000 jobs have been created, but it's only the beginning.

I'm going to take a couple of minutes to talk about the beloved north, where I live. When we unleash the power and the might of northern Ontario in the critical minerals sector, it is going to be like something that we just have never seen before. When you calculate the amount of minerals that are required to make electric vehicles worldwide, to know that Canada is the only jurisdiction in the western hemisphere that has every single mineral that's needed to make an electric vehicle battery—think about that, Speaker. We've got all of that buried in the ground. We're working with our Indigenous partners, we're working with the mining companies, we're working with all of the communities to be able to get in and extract those minerals in the safest manner possible, get them not only out of the ground but processed in northern Ontario.

This is the first time in 120 years that the north will be part of the auto sector. The first time. We know that there are 100,000 men and women working in the auto sector, and we're going to be part of that for the first time. That's something that we in the north really are looking forward to and are celebrating.

Interjections.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Yes, thank you.

When I'm home on Friday afternoons, I visit another mining company and I tell them, "Get ready to expand. You should start looking at bigger buildings, start looking at more people. Start getting ready for this." Because the Critical Minerals Strategy that the Premier, Minister Rickford and myself announced just a couple of weeks ago at a palladium mine outside of Thunder Bay, this is happening.

This isn't being talked about, it's real. Seize the moment. Grab onto this with both hands and come for the ride with us. It is going to be a spectacular opportunity for all of us in the north. Whether it's processing cobalt in the aptly named town of Cobalt or looking for and processing lithium in northwestern Ontario, north of Red Lake where there's lithium, the Thunder Bay area where there's lithium—there's graphite in Hearst and, of course, there's nickel in Sudbury. But it's really exciting to hear of two other nickel finds, one north of Timmins and one south of Timmins. I'm really looking forward to getting up there in the next few days and seeing some of this for myself.

I've said this many times in this Legislature: I have had a prospector's licence since 1978, and I still pan for gold every once in a while, John, up in Temagami at the Little Dan Mine, a mine that was opened and closed in 1927. The crash of 1929 brought the mine down. But there's still gold

in the ground, and every once in a while when I get up there, I take a little piece of that home with me.

I tell you, Speaker, these are genuine opportunities for families, to think about coming north and joining MPP Vanthof and me in the middle of the mining territory that we love so much—he and his beloved Cobalt area. It is truly a spectacular opportunity that is not just being talked about but is real and is happening. That's the kind of thing that is going to bring relief to families, bring families up to the north. They'll all be able to share in the things that I talked about: the seniors' tax credit, especially the jobs training tax credit, the Ontario Childcare Tax Credit, the staycation tax credit. All of these things are things that we are bringing—like this gas tax—to lower the costs for families, because they all need the kind of relief that we're providing.

Thank you for this opportunity to spend a few minutes.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): Questions and responses?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I want to thank the member for raising the recent announcement the government made for the Ukrainian refugees who are coming here to Ontario and offering them assistance, especially free education. I want to also acknowledge that I worked with the member from Mississauga Centre to ensure that supplies were transported through a container to Ukraine, with the London Ukrainian Centre in my riding. What has happened recently, Fanshawe students, international Ukrainian students—I've been approached, asking for relief. They don't have a home to go to, Speaker. They've lost relatives. They haven't even heard from their relatives for so long. Will the minister petition the government to extend that education relief to Ukrainian international students who are here in Ontario and looking for that help?

1720

Hon. Victor Fedeli: I want to say thank you to the member from London–Fanshawe for her thoughtful comments, especially the comments about Ukraine. Certainly, all of us on this side and all of us in this entire House acknowledge and recognize the importance of getting this done, but getting it done right. So I will take your comments to the minister. I guarantee it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): I recognize the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I thank the member from North Bay for his great comments and the super support that he's given his communities in representing them over a decade, I believe, in the Legislature, for us. A shout-out to all those looking for a job in North Bay—there was an advertisement within those remarks. We're building up our economy. We are building back. We are building back in North Bay as well as the province of Ontario.

I wondered if the member could explain—because there's been quite a bit of discussion here in the Legislature today—why a direct tax cut is the best option to help cut costs at the pump for Ontarians.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Thank you to the member from—I'm going to get it wrong.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock. Like the ice cream.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock. Thank you. All I know is that she gave me some Kawartha ice cream about an hour ago, so I'm still trembling from that, Speaker. In the middle of the afternoon, all that sugar—I've got to tell you.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Where is that?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: It's in the lounge, John. Come on. Now they want more.

Miss Monique Taylor: Can we have some?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: You can all have it, as long as you don't touch the mint. The mint chocolate chip one is—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Salted caramel?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: I do know that Ontarians work hard, and the government here understands that we're all under pressure. That's why we're addressing the impact of rising costs of gasoline by going right to the source, Speaker, so that Ontarians are paying less right at the pump.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): I recognize the member from Hamilton Mountain.

Miss Monique Taylor: As my office and myself were preparing for this bill coming forward, we found some really interesting information. January 21, 2022: This is from the government's website. It says, "To make up for reduced gas sales due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this year's gas tax ... funding includes one-time additional funding of \$120.4 million to ensure municipalities can ... support their transit systems," and so on.

And then the exact same statement came out just the other day regarding this gas tax. Can the minister please explain if there is going to be two \$120.4-million allocations to municipalities or if it is the same announcement, one for COVID relief and one for the missing money that's going to be happening on the gas tax this time around?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: I want to thank the member from Hamilton Mountain. I know that Minister Bethlenfalvy has announced that there is no change in the gas tax between the amount that they received last year and the amount that's coming this year. I believe I'm correct in that assumption.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Absolutely.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Yeah. So I can tell you that families are going to continue to appreciate all of the savings that they're finding from this government, Speaker, including the 5.7. I'm more curious to ask a question than answer it. I'm interested to see if they're going to be supporting this relief for families.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): I recognize the Attorney General.

Hon. Doug Downey: I'd like to ask the minister what he hears when he goes to places like Honda. I drove my CR-V that was made in Simcoe county by people that live in Simcoe county to the announcement that the minister gave for the \$1.4 billion reinvestment by Honda in Ontario. I'd like to hear what the workers at that plant were telling you

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Thank you for the question. I can tell you, they weren't talking to me as much as they were

talking to the Premier, because they swarmed around him, looking for selfies with Premier Ford. He is unbelievably popular wherever he goes. I certainly looked for the opportunity to speak to them, and what they told me is they're relieved and grateful.

Speaker, when you think about the fact that there's 100,000 men and women working in the auto sector, and under the previous government, backed up by the NDP for all those years, we saw a declining auto sector, companies that were ready to leave—a lot of companies were on pins and needles. Some left. Some were waiting to leave. We've turned that around by lowering the cost of doing business by \$7 billion a year. Of those people who are working in these companies, they're grateful, they're hard-working and they're really, really thrilled to be part of this new revolution.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): I recognize the member from Windsor–Tecumseh.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: When I thought I'd have a chance to put a question to the minister, I looked up a little poem called So Expensive.

Gasoline is so
expensive, they say,
as they fire up the
SUV with the huge
V-8 that gets such
low gas mileage.

I can tell you how
to fix the problem.

If each of us would
use just a little less
each day, the price
would fall.

We could generate
a glut on the market
so quickly that
Big Oil would never
know what hit them.

We won't, of course.

We might be inconvenienced.

But we could.

My question is: Is advocating for a reduction in the consumption of gasoline any part of the government's long-term energy plan for Ontario?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: I can tell you that we are all in, from this side of the government. All our chips are in. Billions of dollars from our side are being invested in the design, the manufacture, the production of electric vehicles; electric vehicle batteries; parts for electric vehicles; the autonomous and connected vehicles, the technology that's going into them; the critical minerals that are going to be

mined, processed and put in the electric vehicle batteries that are being built in Windsor for electric vehicles that are being built in Windsor and all through Ontario—General Motors in Oshawa and all of the other plants, including the hybrids up at Honda in Alliston. I can tell the member, we are all in. All the chips are on the table here. We are backing the workers of Ontario, the hundred thousand men and women who are working. We have their back.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): I recognize the member from Peterborough—Kawartha.

Mr. Dave Smith: I was inspired by the question from the member from Windsor—the Essex. To Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade: I'm confused. We have all of the critical minerals in Ontario that we need to create the electric vehicle batteries, all of the process on it. We're building the supply chain for it. We're doing the value-added processing; we're bringing that in. Now, we've got GM, Ford, Chrysler—you name it—doing electric vehicle production in Ontario and we have a battery plant in Ontario. I'm confused, then, why the NDP would think that this is something that is bad for Ontario. Could you explain how it's actually good for our economy to have from start to finish right here?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: I appreciate the question from the member from Peterborough—Kawartha. Speaker, I can tell you that this is a spectacular opportunity for the economy. Think about the 2,500 brand-new jobs in Windsor at that electric vehicle battery manufacturing facility. That's on top of the \$5 billion that is being spent there to build the building. It's 4.5 million square feet; the size of 112 hockey arenas is being built. Think of the thousands of employees that will be there. I think of those men and women going there. When they're all done with that shiny new building in two years from now, think of the 2,500 men and women who are going to go and work in there for the very first time and how spectacular that is.

I think about the GM plant the Premier and I visited just a couple of weeks ago, the 1,800 men and women who work there today. They announced a third shift to make a lightweight Silverado—another 800 employees.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): I recognize the member from Windsor—Tecumseh on a point of order.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Yes, I'd like to raise a point of order. I'd like to add to my record as opposed to correct it. I forgot to give the name of the poet whose poem I just read. His name is Steven Cowling.

To add to what the minister just said, that new plant will be two kilometres from my home. Thank you very much.

1730

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): I'm not certain that is a point of order, but we'll take it as a correction, and that way you will get your record corrected.

Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate the opportunity to speak in the House today. I have to say this is quite an extraordinary bill, an extraordinary range of claims that are being made by the government as to its value and as to their commitment to the well-being of working people in this province.

There's no question that \$8 a month, this gimmick that's been put forward to us, is not going to actually solve the problem that people are facing. In fact, I would say people may not see any savings after the first few weeks of a change in the posted price out front of their gas station. Let's face it: Under this government, prices have been rising sharply in this province. I'll just note a few, Speaker, because I want to talk about, again, the underlying lack of commitment to making life better for working people.

People who rent housing in this province are facing a crisis. You know as well as I do that when a person moves out of a rented apartment, a rented condo, a rented house, the landlord can reset that price at whatever they can get away with. In my riding, I talk to people who are told that if they want to move, a unit comparable to the one they're paying \$1,000 or 1,200 a month for now will be \$1,800 or \$2,000 a month. People are seeing these huge rises in the cost of housing which, in many cases, they're forced to pay because there is nothing else out there.

If this government actually cared about the affordability of housing, of rental housing—and about half the people in Toronto are tenants—then it would bring in a system that would not allow landlords to gouge incoming tenants when a unit is vacated. But that hasn't been the government's policy, and so we're seeing increases in rent of 12% a year, 10% a year, year after year. That means that eight bucks a month, which is what the government has on the table, just disappears as a speck compared to \$400 or \$500 a month. That's a substantial problem for people.

Speaker, as you're well aware, this government was one of the last in Canada, if not the last in Canada, to sign onto \$10-a-day child care. We won't get \$10-a-day child care immediately, but the expectation is that by the end of this year people will see their child care bills in this province cut roughly in half. Well, I'll tell you, Speaker, my constituents are paying \$1,600, \$1,800, where they have two kids, 3,000 bucks a month. We're talking \$1,000, \$1,500 a month that they are carrying as a burden to try to keep their families together, try to keep them housed, try to keep everyone at work. This government could have signed on nine months ago for essentially the same conditions they got when they signed on recently. People could have been saving thousands per month, and this government is offering \$8 per month. That is not a good deal for the people, the families of Ontario.

This is a situation in which you have something that's bright and shiny and in the headlines but, frankly, is not going to deal with the fundamental problems people are facing to keep a roof over their heads, keep food on the table and keep their kids in daycare or in school—not going to happen.

Speaker, this government, before the last election, promised to reduce hydro bills by 12%. As you're well aware, they weren't cut by 12%. In fact, they have gone up by 4% since the last election. That is not exactly a reduction in cost.

We're seeing increases in the price of food, and I want to speak about that more because it also relates to another area, where this government has effectively abandoned the

people of this province around climate policy. Increasingly, we are seeing the increase in the price of food driven by drought, by flood, by heat waves that are destroying crops or making it impossible to either get them seeded or taken off the land. That process is going to continue. We are going to lose more and more of our ability to grow food as the climate crisis deepens.

And this government's so-called climate plan is ignored by its own ministries. That came out in the Auditor General's report. That came out in discussion at the public accounts committee. The Auditor General showed that this government has no conceivable path of meeting the targets that it said it's going to meet, and those targets, as proclaimed, were inadequate.

The cost to us here in Ontario is going to mean higher grocery bills. It's going to mean more money for bread. It's going to mean more money for milk, for meat. Name the grocery category, they're being hit hard. And so when people say, "These prices are rising," they're right. But look at the causes. When you set in motion a machine that undermines your ability to produce food, you're going to have higher prices and people are going to suffer. They will eat less. They will eat food of lower quality. They will have a tough time. And what this government is offering is \$8 a month, which, as I said, will disappear very quickly, not just because you can spend \$8 pretty quickly these days, but because with no regulation, the retailers, the oil companies, can charge whatever they want. They can say, "Oh, yeah, the price just went up. Sorry, it was five cents a litre last week, but the price went up. You aren't getting a break anymore."

I think that's one of the things that's most frustrating about this: that because there is no system of regulation, there is every opportunity—in fact, huge incentive—to play games with that price and simply ensure that the oil companies will be able to grab that five cents in tax money, the hundreds of millions of dollars in subsidy that the government says it's trying to give to families in Ontario. Well, don't believe it. The day that it comes into effect, I have no doubt that the posted price in front of gas stations will be reduced by whatever amount is allowed in law, and within a week the price will fluctuate. It may go up, it may go down, but that five cents will disappear into the pockets of the oil companies and not stay in the pockets or wallets of Ontario consumers. That is simply the reality.

I wanted to talk a bit about, what are the long-term solutions here? My colleague from Timmins has brought forward a bill for regulation of gas prices. It makes sense to me. We regulate natural gas. It seems to be a system not without its flaws, but one that at least makes sure that everyone knows what the price is and there isn't the potential for the gas companies to pump the price up every week or every weekend to whatever suits them or whatever they think they can get away with. So, you need gas price regulation, and that is not addressed in any way, shape or form in this bill or any other initiative on the part of this government.

But the other thing is the move to electric vehicles. As you are well aware, when this government came into

power it immediately abolished the subsidy for lower-cost electric vehicles, which would have dramatically increased or helped increase the market for electric vehicles in Ontario. In Quebec, there are far more electric vehicles per person than there are in Ontario and the same in British Columbia, because they support the buyers of those vehicles.

Many of you are businesspeople. You know that if there's a market, the potential to draw in investment and to get more people into that area in a business sense is much greater. When you destroy the market by undermining the mechanisms that get those cars into people's garages, you undermine the incentive to invest. When you change the building code so that the requirement that each new house have the structure roughed in so that cars can be charged in that house—then you undermine the market. When you rip out the charging stations at GO terminals, you undermine the market.

Now, I don't know all of the background as to the recent investment in electric vehicles in Ontario. My guess is there was a chunk of federal money. My guess is there was a lot of push from auto workers. My guess is there was local management in Ontario and the Big Three who said, "If we don't get the investment here in these plants, our jobs are over." So, there was a confluence of interest.

1740

This government has shown no interest in electric vehicles until very recently—until very recently—when in fact we had the potential four years ago to substantially ramp up demand and ramp up the argument that companies should invest in Ontario for the vehicles of the 21st century. Didn't happen.

I want to talk about one other item before I go further into this bill, and that's minimum wages. Man, eight bucks a month—eight bucks a month—is what this government is offering. When the increase in the minimum wage was blocked at the beginning of this government's tenure, the calculation was that minimum-wage workers working full-time lost about 2,000 bucks a year—2,000.

Now, my guess is everyone in this chamber has constituents who work for minimum wage. I'll tell you, it's tough for them. That's not a lot of money—it just is not—and when you come into power and the first thing you do is deal a hammer blow to their household income, you can't claim that you're concerned about the incomes of working families. You can't say that you care about their households, because you just beat them up. You took money out of their pockets. You took food out of their mouths. That's the record of this government when it comes to helping people.

Now, when we look at what's on offer, there's nothing there. The "there" is empty. The "there" is not there. It's gone. And I have to say, if you want to look after oil and gas companies, you've done a fabulous job. You deserve kudos. They should be sending you love letters every day, because you're their kind of folks. But when it comes to working people who are trying to balance budgets that don't work, you're not being helpful.

Speaker, I'm just going to go through some of the numbers on this. This temporary cut—by the way, if you'll

remember, the government promised to cut gas taxes by what, 10 cents a litre?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Yes, four years ago.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Four years ago. I appreciate the advice from my colleague. It's almost four years—and the best part, Speaker, is that it doesn't even come into effect until after the coming election. So it's not even done within the term of the government that promised to bring that in, and it isn't even 10 cents.

I understand that the Premier has said, "Well, you know, we cut cap-and-trade." And, as everyone knew at the time, the moment it was cut the federal government's carbon tax came into effect. There was no reduction. There was a lot of shells being moved around on a table, but the peanut had been taken out, so people didn't get a reduction there. They're being told they'll get a reduction after the election. The old term, "Pie in the sky when you die," comes to mind, because you won't actually get anything until after the election.

The amount that's on the table—the calculation is \$645 million in government revenue. It's a fair chunk of change, particularly since it's going to be going to the fossil fuel sector and not to people. The calculation of savings per person: \$45 directly at the gas pumps over, what, six months? Fifteen dollars indirect from lower consumer prices. Well, maybe, maybe. I don't know why they would pass on those savings. I mean, it's a huge leap of faith to think that companies which really are by necessity driven to maximize their profits are going to cut their costs. Why would they? What's going to compel them to do that? I don't see it happening. Five dollars in reduced takings from the HST. Well, again assuming that the oil companies actually continue to pass on the reduction that's being promised. But you can't assume that—again, a huge leap of faith.

So you've got this mirage out there that may appear for a month—may, I'm being very generous—and I think we can reasonably assume could disappear quite quickly, as companies say, "Hey, there's room for us to move in and take more revenue." Because you don't regulate the price, do you? This government doesn't regulate the price, and so anything goes. Anything that can be gotten away with will be gotten away with. That's all there is to it.

I referenced this about a week ago, I think. There's a book about Uber called *Super Pumped*. It's a really good book, and I urge everyone to read it. They're not quite pirates, but boy, they do fly a Jolly Roger. The founder of Uber was quoted as saying what's the law is not what's on the books; it's what's enforced. And if you're not enforcing that reduction, then, boy, there are a whole bunch of people who understand very quickly that it's not being enforced and there's an opportunity for them to scoop up literally hundreds of millions of dollars.

If you want to help people, there are a variety of policy areas that I've just touched on. You could actually bring in a housing bill to end vacancy decontrol so that landlords—and I'm particularly talking real estate income trusts and major corporations that know that they can make a fortune; mom-and-pop operations, not so much, but the big players

know the huge volumes of cash that can be extracted from people who must have a house or a home to live in. You could do that and you could make a huge difference in people's lives.

Speaker, I'm in a riding—and I hope this isn't the case in yours—where speculators buy older apartment buildings and they evict everybody: 20 or 30 households, they evict them. It's called renovictions: "We're going to do a renovation. You've got to go. Too bad, so sad." They throw them out, they double the rent, triple the rent. The revenue streams are extraordinary because of the law that's in place now. Scrap that law, make life far less expensive for renters and eliminate the incentive to throw people out. That would actually make a big difference in people's lives in a way that this ephemeral, this fleeting "gift" would make.

If you actually want to do this without bringing in regulation—and I think regulation should be the foundation of anything regarding prices in the energy sector—then give people a credit. Send them a cheque. Keep the prices the same at the pump and say, "Okay, we're going to send you a cheque." I'm not sure people would dance in the streets at their \$45 cheque. They might think it was rather small, and it might crystalize their understanding of how little is actually coming to them, but at least the money would go to them and not to Chevron or to Shell or to Exxon—take your pick—so many companies, so much money. Put the money in people's pockets, not in their pockets.

Speaker, if this government is going to look after the people in this province, then it has to change its understanding of who is important. The majority of people in this province—the vast majority—work for a living. It is not easy. It is tough. There are very difficult jobs. We have jobs where, as my old friend Peter Kormos used to say, the big risk is getting a paper cut, and he had a point. But there are a lot of people who work in tough, dirty, dangerous, risky jobs—people who have been stocking those grocery shelves through the pandemic, people who have been looking after patients in hospitals: nurses, registered practical nurses, PSWs. They've risked their lives—quite a few of them have died, as you're well aware—and they aren't getting the respect or support that they need. If you want to actually look after working people, end things like Bill 124 so that we get decent pay in the health care sector, in the education sector, in the public sector. I'm not saying give people 20% increases. I'm saying don't cap them at 1% and then beat them up when they try and make sure they have enough coming in so they can pay the rent, their mortgage, their grocery bills and their utility bills.

1750

This, Speaker, is an interesting gimmick, but not a fair treatment of the people of this province—not a fair treatment at all.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): Question or comment?

Mr. Michael Parsa: I thank my honourable colleague for the presentation.

Through the 4.3 cents of the price that was eliminated when we got rid of the cap-and-trade system and the 5.7 cents that's going to be reduced through this bill, coupled

with the recently announced elimination of the licence plate renewal fees, it means that Ontario households are going to see an average savings of \$465 in 2022. So, my question to my honourable colleague is, will he be supporting this legislation?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate the question from my colleague from Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill, and I look forward to letting you know that at another point.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): I recognize the member from Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: You know, the member from Toronto–Danforth really highlighted the importance of affordability. He touched on the child care piece, and what this government has said is that they've gotten this great deal, when really we know that the \$13.2 billion over six years is the same per-year funding as the \$10.2 billion over five years. So, there's no extra money. This is the same deal that was on the table, add another year—and the feds had already indicated that the plan is going to continue after five years. But the important piece that you touched on is the nine-month delay. How can you account for this? Can you speak to the impact that that has on people, real people, who have been struggling to pay for child care in your riding and across the province?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thank you. I appreciate the question from my colleague. There are two parts. Why was it delayed nine months? Well, as I sometimes say to people, elections do strange things. You sometimes see things being moved so that the visibility of government action is higher at some point than it is at others. There may be other obscure underlying financial reasons that I am not aware of, but I would say that nine out of 10, it's a question of making sure that the election timing is good.

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: Point of order, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): Point of order.

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: Speaker, I believe the member opposite is imputing motive, which is not appropriate in this chamber.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): I did not hear that but I will pay attention for it in the future.

Please continue, member from Toronto–Danforth.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thank you.

So, the other part of your question—which I really appreciate—is, what's been the impact on families? Well, if you're paying 3,000 bucks a month and you have an opportunity to actually be paying \$1,500 or \$1,000 or \$500 a month instead of that \$3,000, it has a huge impact on people's ability to hold things together. I think all of us here, in dealing with our constituents over the last two years, know the stress and the strain that people have been under. There's just no doubt about it. When we talk to people who phone our office—I'm sure that my member opposite, my colleague opposite has had the same thing. People are just pushed to their limit. And when they're in a situation where their finances just don't quite cover, then it makes life extraordinarily hard. That's what has happened.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): I recognize the member from Perth–Wellington.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Thank you to the member opposite for his last 20-minute commentary. But I wonder if you could explain to all of us here and those watching why you don't support keeping costs down for drivers in all households through savings on prices paid through things like taxis, food delivery and consumer products that the gas tax cut in Bill 111 would deliver.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: First of all, Speaker, I want to thank the member for Perth–Wellington, who I think has done a really good job. I have appreciated being in the chamber with him over the years.

And now the love's over. I actually do think it makes sense to help people in their daily lives deal with their bills, which is why I have for years advocated substantial investment in the spread of or the diffusion of electric vehicles to get people out of the clutches of the price setters in the oil and gas sector. I think this government made a big mistake when it pulled back. The more people who are in electric vehicles, the fewer people who are going to get gouged. I think that's really important.

I think regulating gas prices would be really important. It would help people a lot because gouging is a reality in this sector. Talk to your constituents. You're in a riding with a large rural population. They pay a lot. They get gouged.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): I recognize the member for Hamilton Mountain.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you to the member from Toronto–Danforth for his time on this debate. I would like to know his thoughts on the impacts that municipalities would feel if this was to actually move through.

We've found some information that says on January 21 of this year the government told the municipalities that they were going to give them \$120.4 million to help them with COVID relief that they lost through tax dollars during COVID. And then, yet again, in April, through this bill, the same minister has promised \$120.4 million—the exact same number—for this tax relief that municipalities would lose if they were not to gain this money at the gas pumps. How do you think that will affect municipalities and the transit system that rely on those tax dollars?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate the question. Interestingly, I was out knocking on doors on Sunday afternoon, as is my habit. I was on a porch, and someone pointed to the road in front of them, which was in pretty bad shape. They said, "Look, I keep paying property taxes and there are times when I'm worried that I'm going to lose my axle on this roadway." I looked at the road. They weren't kidding; it was bad. I was glad I was walking.

I think you're going to see continued strain on municipal budgets. You're going to see a failure to keep up with infrastructure demands. You're going to see a failure to deal with social issues. You're going to see municipalities that will have a hard time supporting transit at a cost that's affordable to people, and so a cut to the municipalities means hardship in people's lives. That's the reality.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): I recognize the member for Peterborough–Kawartha.

Mr. Dave Smith: I recall back in 2016, the member from Don Valley West was at a press conference and said

that it was only going to cost \$5 more per month for people. Prior to getting into politics, I looked at—it was \$5 here, \$7 there, \$6 here, \$15 there. It all started to add up.

What we're doing is we're reducing those costs. Licence plate stickers: \$10 a month we're reducing the cost on. The gas tax that we're talking about removing here is going to reduce the cost by somewhere between \$5 and \$8 a month. All of those things start to add up, and you end up with more money in your pocket to spend on things that you want to.

If we continue having the gas continue going up the way it is, if we continue having diesel fuel go up the way it is, everything is going to be more expensive. So can you not agree that by reducing the cost for individuals, it actually makes life more affordable for them?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: A very interesting question, and I appreciate you asking it. First of all, I'll say that I think that things do add up. If you're talking a thousand bucks or a thousand-and-a-half bucks a month for child care for the last nine months that people could have gotten relief from, that adds up. If we talk \$500, \$600 or \$800 a month for rent, that adds up. If you talk about the failure to keep minimum wage rising—and I'm talking 2,000 bucks a year—suddenly you're talking a lot of money.

If, in fact, we brought in regulation of gas prices in Ontario, yes, that would make a difference. More money would stay in Ontario and less would go to oil companies. I hope that you will support that. My colleague from Timmins has been right about this all along: Regulate gas prices. Why are you giving them a free ride? Why don't you regulate them? You're willing to do it with the natural gas companies, why not the gasoline companies?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): We do not have enough time for another question. It is now time for private members' public business.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

CONNECTED COMMUNITIES ACT, 2022

LOI DE 2022

POUR DES COLLECTIVITÉS SOLIDAIRES

Ms. Park moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 104, An Act to enact the Connected Communities Act, 2022 / Projet de loi 104, Loi édictant la Loi de 2022 pour des collectivités solidaires.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): Pursuant to standing order 101, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

1800

Ms. Lindsey Park: It's a pleasure to rise to debate what will be the final private member's bill I present in my term as the member of provincial Parliament for Durham; that is, Bill 104, the Connected Communities Act, 2022. If passed, the Connected Communities Act would require the

government to develop a strategy to reduce loneliness and social isolation and support Ontarians who may be struggling with loneliness or social isolation.

During the pandemic, there were signs that many people in Ontario, young and old, were feeling less connected than they did in previous generations: spending more time online, seeing friends less, volunteering less time in the community—these all have an impact on our productivity, our health and our well-being.

The pandemic only exacerbated this serious public health problem that is loneliness and social isolation. Being disconnected is just as dangerous to good health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day, according to often-cited research. The young are also lonelier than the elderly. A recent Statistics Canada study notes that young people in Canada expressed experiencing loneliness more frequently than older people. Among youth aged 15 to 24, nearly one in four said they always or often felt lonely.

Loneliness and social isolation are major risk factors for abuse and neglect. Now is the time for us to work in this House across partisan lines to develop a comprehensive province-wide strategy to help those struggling with loneliness and social isolation. Now is the time for government action.

So what exactly will Bill 104, the Connected Communities Act, 2022, require the government to do? If passed, the Connected Communities Act provides one year for the development of an initial strategy, and requires the government to subsequently review the strategy at least once every five years. It also requires that the strategy be published. Recognizing that we're days away from the next provincial election, the bill aims to provide a timeline and framework that would allow the next government time following the election to get sworn in and hold consultations before the initial strategy would be due to be published.

One final point on the contents of the bill: The bill intentionally uses two different words: "loneliness" and "social isolation." The words "loneliness" and "social isolation" are often used interchangeably, but loneliness is not the same as social isolation. Loneliness is something that people can feel even when they're surrounded by people, whereas people can be isolated yet not feel lonely. The difference between these two concepts is important for the design of services and support.

Now let me give you some context for how this bill came about. Loneliness and social isolation is an issue I've been thinking long and hard about since my first private member's bill in the Legislature, the Golden Girls Act, 2019. That bill was to fight discrimination against unrelated people, specifically seniors, who wanted to live together and share a home. The connection is that the Golden Girls Port Perry—the seniors who inspired that bill—found that living together and sharing a home had not only benefits from a cost-savings perspective but also had many social benefits. This is one type of solution to reducing loneliness and social isolation, but we need many more. This is an area we need policy innovation in over the next decade. A government strategy would encourage that policy innovation.

This is also an issue other governments around the world have recognized it's time to lead on. It was former UK Prime Minister Theresa May who grabbed headlines for creating the first-ever Minister for Loneliness. The Time magazine article outlines her connection to the issue, the minister she appointed, and says:

"Tracey Crouch knows what it's like to feel frighteningly alone. After giving birth to her first child, Freddie, in 2016, the British lawmaker says that despite having a 'network of friends, family and a wonderful partner,' she began feeling cut off from the world. It wasn't a new sensation; Crouch says she also suffered from depression six years earlier, when she first became a member of Parliament. It felt like she was 'in a very dark place, a very lonely place' she recalls."

Data shows that in Britain and the US, poor, unemployed, disabled and migrant populations tend to suffer most from loneliness and isolation, and typically struggle to access adequate support. During the pandemic, Japan also created a Minister of Loneliness in response to rising suicide rates.

Closer to home, I'll note that the previous Chief Medical Officer of Health, Dr. David Williams, recognized this as a serious public health issue before the pandemic in one of his annual reports, titled Connected Communities: Healthier Together. In that report he concludes: "It's time to make social connection and sense of community as important a measure of our health and well-being as blood pressure and economic output."

He also says: "Helping people and communities (re)connect is everyone's business. To (re)build a sense of belonging—create connected communities—individuals, organizations, businesses, communities and governments must work together to foster a society that values social connection."

Dr. Williams's report has some great research and is a helpful starting point for the government. One additional point from the report that I want to emphasize is a section titled The Impact of Screen Time on Youth. He cites studies showing that "the more time teens spend looking at screens, the more likely they are to report symptoms of depression." This is a growing issue affecting our young people in this province.

So what has the feedback on the bill been since I introduced it a couple of weeks ago? It has been positive and only reinforced the need for the government to bring experts around the table to develop a strategy.

A press release from CanAge read:

"We are delighted to see MPP Lindsey Park's private member's bill," says Laura Tamblyn Watts, CEO of CanAge. "Loneliness and social isolation are two of the most profound issues we are facing today. It's really a parallel pandemic."

"CanAge has been calling for this type of legislation for a long time.

"Loneliness is as bad for you as smoking 15 cigarettes a day and can take up to eight years off your life," notes Watts. "COVID-19 has given all of us, regardless of age

or health condition, a sense of how difficult these issues are. Now is the time to make a much needed change."

CARP, well known to us all in this House, also commented on the bill, saying:

"CARP is very supportive of such legislation that, as in this case, seeks immediate action (within one year). Loneliness and isolation among seniors has been greatly exacerbated by the COVID pandemic; especially among older Ontarians.

"They urgently need social interaction and social support networks", says Bill VanGorder, CARP's chief operations and policy officer. "It's a widespread need," VanGorder points out. "Although most of the focus has been on the crisis in nursing homes, less than 10% of seniors live in long-term care homes. The rest also deserve attention and resources."

The Canadian Mental Health Association provided the following insights in commenting on the bill: "The current body of research on the risks of loneliness and social isolation is similar to obesity three decades ago. Research has predicted that loneliness will reach epidemic proportions by 2030 unless action is taken."

I also want to share some comments from a few constituents, while I have time. David, highlighted—and this one really touched me, Speaker:

"Kids who receive home nursing support currently are not allowed to use those allotted hours anywhere but in the home or at school. That means no support to attend summer programs and activities. So an 11-year-old can only get the life-saving support they need if they spend their summer sitting at home with a nurse. The child spends no time socializing with other kids, and misses out on experiences that all kids should be able to enjoy."

1810

Another constituent, Kris, commented, "What about our seniors in long-term care who have many restrictions, not enough staff support, no activity options, no support to access programs in their communities" etc.?

The point is, this issue is an underlying theme in many of the conversations we have as MPPs with our constituents. It cuts across many policy areas and ministries in government. In some instances, governments just need to get out of the way or, as we call it in Legislative lingo, reduce red tape. In other instances, we may need new initiatives and funding to confront new realities.

I want to be clear that a government strategy doesn't mean a government-only strategy. This is clearly an issue where government can act as facilitator of this important conversation and leverage the thought leaders and innovators in our communities.

What should a government strategy look like? The possibilities are endless, and I'm not here to answer that question today. I'm here to say that it's time to bring experts around the table who know these issues and how they are affecting the people in Ontario best. Recognizing the need for a strategy is not going to solve this issue, but it's an important start.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): I recognize the member for Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I thank the member from Durham for bringing this bill forward, Bill 104, the Connected Communities Act, 2022. It is an important bill and it's an important discussion to have. I think we can all share stories from our ridings of maybe the time before the pandemic, when we saw our communities start to have more single seniors. We saw the rise in mental health with our youth and the decisions by governments, really of all levels, to try and address it through some community organizations. You saw the federal and the provincial governments make initiatives like the \$3.8 billion and \$1.9 billion we are contributing to over 10 years.

When the member from Durham said the "minister of loneliness," I can't say I'd heard that before. I was kind of struck by that term, to say: Where have we gone?

Speaker, I remember a time when our small communities were—I know they've increased in population at the moment because of the pandemic, but before, there were a lot more people around, there was a lot more engagement. And it depends where you were in Ontario. It could be church groups; I have four active churches in a town of 200 people. But we had more community togetherness and you knew who was in trouble. You went and knocked on their doors. There was more time to cook meals or take them over. I've noticed a stark change in the last 20 or 30 years on that.

I am hoping that, with the pandemic—I always love optimism and hope—that we swing the other way. We know what it's like to be in the communities, to help each other, to watch for each other. So I'm hoping, through the horrible pandemic and the creation of the loneliness, the mental health supports that we need—we're talking everything.

I get it from truck drivers, from young people, from older people and, of course, the people in long-term care who didn't have—I mean, my sister-in-law's mother, she basically died of loneliness. It was a terrible time to go through and tough decisions had to be made in government to protect the priority, which was your physical health, to keep you alive. I know that the nurse in me comes out and Maslow's hierarchy of needs, but it was tough. There were just no visitors. It was tough. Thank God, my mother had passed on just before the pandemic hit, because that would make me go crazy, not being able to go in there.

So I think that this is important, and I want to say that the Associate Minister of Mental Health has done a tremendous job. He has travelled the province—dedication, incredible—to talk to the northern communities and how we can help and what programs work. I know we've rolled out many programs—and more to come—but I think we'll be able to see the feedback to listen to from those programs that have started in our communities. My Ross Memorial Hospital in Lindsay does deliver mental health services. They go with the police on certain calls—not full-time, but quite a few days of the week—and see how that has helped in getting people into more programs and that connectedness.

The Roadmap to Wellness that has been laid forward—and I know the Minister of Health was involved when she

was in opposition, and some of the members across the way will remember when Minister Elliott and Minister Jones were on the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. Using that background and bringing it forward, I know years have passed, but when we're in government and trying to make that happen, I don't think anyone has a super answer, for sure, but the conversation, which we all hear, needs to take place. I think it's important to let our children see that: Bring back the caring and compassion in community; check on your neighbour; remember the seniors in your family.

As for investments that our government has made—I know that Minister Tibollo travelled the north and a lot of our Indigenous communities too, and working with them. Many in the House know that I have worked with human trafficking, working with the Indigenous communities and the Ontario Native Women's Association, and the great work that they have done. And I know the MPP from London—I'm not going to get it right, Peggy, but—we had gone and listened to Indigenous members in her community, and what worked and didn't work, being culturally sensitive.

I think there has been a great deal of thoughtfulness. It's hard to get everything rolled out and it's never fast enough, but I think if we all take this holistic, collective approach of what works in our communities, what we hear back, what input can we give to the ministers—delivering the feedback that we get from our associations, but, collectively, it's what we need to be doing.

There have been reports written, as the member from Durham said—I believe you said Dr. Williams in the report. I want to assure you that the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions—we chat a lot and we see data coming in and we have conversations of what we hear is working and what's not working in our communities.

Some supports have to be virtual, which I know the member mentioned screen time for youth. In some ways, that has helped in my communities. They couldn't go out. They had an option—I know not all were connected but we're working on that, for virtual connections—but at least there were some more options.

I know that my colleague is going to say some words on this too so I just thank the member for bringing this discussion forward and look forward to the debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): I recognize the member for London–Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: First, I want to congratulate the member from Durham for bringing this forward. Bill 104 is the Connected Communities Act. It's pretty straightforward because it's basically describing that the government develop a strategy to reduce loneliness and social isolation in Ontario, and support persons who may be struggling with loneliness or social isolation. It's a very straightforward ask and it's very important.

I want to take my debate time to focus on seniors and what they had gone through. I say that because the Auditor General's report into the province's long-term care during the pandemic response found that restricting families from visiting homes took an emotional and physical toll on

residents and their families. That's something I think we probably all think is just common sense, but it was in the Auditor General's report.

The other thing: Why I say looking at older adults and seniors is because older adults are at increased risk for loneliness and social isolation because they are more likely to face factors such as living alone, the loss of family or friends, chronic illness and hearing loss—it doesn't say vision impairment, but I put that in because when you do lose your senses, it does limit your ability to communicate, and that can be somewhat of a lonely world, when you don't have communication.

Speaker, throughout the pandemic, we've all heard first-hand from residents in long-term-care homes, home care clients, front-line staff and family members who were growing increasingly worried about the long-term-care impacts of isolation. I do think a strategy is important and I'm glad the member has brought it forward. It's needed to make sure that there are studies on prolonged isolation so that it's prevented and it doesn't happen again.

It also should include experts, as the member said, but also making sure that we have families contribute to these conversations and these consultations because it's very important. They have a very high stake in their loved ones and they represent their interests, and we want to make sure that consultation incorporates people that it affects. It's not just the experts studying, but let's hear from people that live those experiences, that have that feedback so we can actually make sure those strategies help the people that it's intended to.

1820

We heard from constituents over those two tough years—phone calls I took basically ending in tears. People were just devastated. During one of the many lockdowns, I spoke with the administrator of McGarrell Place, a long-term-care home in London, and she mentioned that incontinence was increasing among residents because they just stopped caring. They lost hope. There's that physical reaction to the depression and the loneliness that they were feeling.

During the summer of 2020 I held a series of round tables with local family councils. At that time, if my memory serves correctly, after months of window visits, finally short outdoor visits were allowed. Many told me that their parents were left more upset, at times, having their child so close but yet so far, because they couldn't reach out to them and touch them. Others said their parents felt relief at finally being able to be outside with someone familiar. But most of all, they felt the sadness of the months of the precious time they lost together. They told me that they found their loved ones unrecognizable. Many of the people in long-term care, if you weren't able to visit them, they lost so much weight. They aged terribly and they were unrecognizable to loved ones. The sadness and isolation had taken such an immense toll on them.

When we talked about solutions, they all told me the same thing: They wished staff had more time to spend with their loved ones in the home. Every staffer I've spoken to has told me the same thing as well. I received phone call

after phone call from staff who said that their cries for more help had gone unheeded. They called and they cried because they saw residents hadn't been bathed, hadn't been fed and hadn't been attended to, not because they didn't want to but because they didn't have the time or the resources to.

This is the frustrating thing, Speaker: Through the Legislature, we had the ability to make time and resources more available to them, and we have witnessed as successive governments fail to do it over and over again, and this government especially, to the point where, at times, I wondered why they didn't pass certain legislation.

Here are some of the acts this government could have passed so easily to ease the social isolation that seniors were experiencing. My NDP colleagues here on this side of the House—the member for Windsor West had the More Than a Visitor Act that enshrined family caregivers' rights.

The member from Kitchener-Waterloo presented the bill Till Death Do Us Part to ensure that spouses can live together in their twilight years jointly. If you can imagine losing your partner after 60 years when you're not together, and then you had the pandemic on top of that, it's just devastating.

The member from Kitchener Centre proposed a bill, the Seniors' Advocate Act, which would allow us to commit to having a seniors' permanent voice in this province.

Finally, my act: the Time to Care Act, which would legislate a standard of care in this province, which would allow four hours of hands-on care for every resident in every home. That would mean long-term-care staff would actually have the time that they talked about to lovingly comb someone's hair, listen to their stories, sit down and have a cup of tea, reminisce about their families and their grandchildren, play a game of chess, play some cards.

But those things weren't done. So I commend the member for bringing this forward, but there are other ways, as well, that we can incorporate to make sure that seniors and elderly people—and children as well. We can't forget that there are so many kids who also experience that loneliness.

As the NDP government, when we win government in 2022—I'll be optimistic. We proposed just this Sunday a universal, publicly funded mental health care system so that everyone has access to that health care when they experience that loneliness that does cause anxiety, depression and a lot of mental health issues.

With that, Speaker, I look forward to the rest of the debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): I recognize the member from Richmond Hill.

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Thank you to the member from Durham for introducing and bringing up this bill for debate. Of course, I'm pleased to stand here and talk about Bill 104, An Act to enact the Connected Communities Act, 2022.

One element Bill 104 speaks about is the importance of a sense of community through building a system that commits to reducing loneliness and isolation. That is why I'm happy to stand here and support this bill.

One such demographic the government has heard from is seniors, who face more challenges staying connected and social in their communities. Our government is committed to helping older adults stay active, connected and socially responsible, working together with their communities. Older adults are the fastest-growing segment of our population. That's why we need to do a lot more for them. We should support them and let them stay active and socially connected. That is why we're providing older adults with access to appropriate programs, services and information that can contribute to their overall health and well-being.

Our government, through the Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility, offers many community supports and tools to help seniors stay socially and physically active and participate in their communities; for example, the Seniors Active Living Centres Program, Seniors' Centre Without Walls training, Seniors Community Grant Program and the Inclusive Community Grants Program.

Let me begin with the Seniors Active Living Centres Program. These programs are community-based, non-residential programs. They promote wellness, social interaction and education to help seniors stay active, independent and engaged. There are almost 300 programs available in Ontario, and each of them are key initiatives for the province in support of active living for seniors.

Another program that our government introduced to help seniors struggling with loneliness and social isolation is the Seniors' Centre Without Walls. This is brilliant, especially during the time of the pandemic. In 2021-22, under the leadership of Premier Ford, the Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility provided the Older Adult Centres' Association of Ontario with up to \$370,000 to help seniors' centres build their operational capacities.

The Seniors Community Grant Program supports organizations that encourage older adults to remain active and engaged in their communities and to continue learning. In 2021-22, the SCG program investment of \$5 million will provide grants of up to \$25,000 to over 250 organizations. They are really helping the organizations right in the community to serve seniors right next door to them.

We have different kinds of programs that focus on enabling aging at home and in communities; combatting social isolation; strengthening seniors' safety and well-being; and promoting safe opportunities for older adults and seniors to network in the labour market. This allows the province to help more grassroots organizations positively impact the lives of older adults.

Another program I would like to talk about that aligns with the bill presently being debated is the Inclusive Community Grants Program. In 2020, the government launched a new two-year Inclusive Community Grants Program. This program provides grants of up to \$60,000 to local governments, Indigenous groups and non-profit community organizations. This \$2.9-million investment is supporting 55 diverse community projects across Ontario. This will help ensure that Ontarians of all ages and abilities in these regions are considered at every stage of community planning and development.

1830

Projects being supported by this year's program include:

- making public buildings and outdoor spaces more accessible in rural communities;
- establishing an age-friendly francophone community;
- wellness outreach and service referrals for rural seniors; and
- developing culturally appropriate resources that will help the elders in the Indigenous community.

We are continuing to work on different programs to support what you laid out this bill for. And we agree with you. We have already done a lot of programs, but reviewing them and also having a five-year plan for that is great.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): Further debate?

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm really pleased to be able to speak to Bill 104 today, An Act to enact the Connected Communities Act, brought forward by the member from Durham.

My first thought, reading over the bill talking about social isolation and loneliness—my mind directly went to seniors, right? We've heard from members who highlighted the issues with seniors, great issues that we've seen with seniors, particularly through COVID and many seniors not being able to see their families. We've all visited someone through a window; watched many see loved ones through a window, and the great impact that had on them; long-term-care homes not being able to get the visits; people dying alone, quite frankly. That had a whole slew of issues with folks who made it through and really suffered through that isolation and loneliness.

But as I continue to think about the bill and listen to debate today, it also made me think about other age groups. How many children are suffering from loneliness? We've seen them go through not being in school, not being able to play with their friends. Maybe they're starting to integrate back into communities now, but the effects that we have seen on our young people are effects that are going to be lasting for years to come.

How many adults have we seen finding themselves isolated and lonely, turning to drugs? We've seen the opioid crisis definitely increase. We've seen suicides increase and the wait-lists for mental health increase—not just because the services aren't available there, but because the number of people who need those services has truly increased.

So I think this is definitely something that we should be looking at. We should be coming together to form a committee to talk about these issues, to figure out strategies, moving forward, and working together, like we should be doing as legislators, to tackle these problems that are not political; they're not something that is a "gotcha." It's something that affects all of our communities in the most sincere way, the most personal way, of mental health, which we know is a growing issue.

There was also a bill put forward by the member from Davenport, centering children and youth in Ontario, post pandemic. This is something, again, that would be a great idea to help youth through that portion of COVID, because a lot of that was social isolation and loneliness and not being able to be with their friends and their peers, and be in communities. So there is a whole slew of things that we can be doing, working together.

New Democrats are so proud to have put out our platform piece, just the other day, on mental health and bringing mental health under OHIP and the importance that that would have so that people have access to cognitive behavioural therapy, counselling, psychotherapy—so many things that truly could help our communities, making sure that people don't have to use a credit card to get that mental health support they need but that it's covered under OHIP, as any other illness they may feel. So this is a great step in making sure that we have the ability to have those discussions and to review them. I believe the bill has us reviewing it every five years and amending it as necessary. We've seen that we have changing demographics. We have changing communities. We have changing needs. Just think about today in technology compared to five years ago, and how far we've come in those five years. Five years would make a world of a difference in reviewing policies and making amendments to have changes go through.

I think it's a great bill. I think it's something that we should all be getting behind, working together toward bringing healthier communities for all of us. For that, mental health has to be a number one issue when we're talking about anything for people these days, making sure that we're thoughtful of a person's mind process, of where they're at and what supports they need, and how to ensure that we're getting them those supports when they need them.

So I'm happy to support this bill. I congratulate the member from Durham. She will be missed. I know that she's done a lot of good work in this House for several bills that I've worked with her on. I wish her well in her future endeavours, in not running again. All the very best. Thanks.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): Further debate?

Mr. John Fraser: I'm pleased to speak to Bill 104, An Act to enact the Connected Communities Act. I want to congratulate and thank the member from Durham for bringing it forward. It's very consistent with her legislative record. I remember the Golden Girls Act, which talks about enabling people to live together in communities.

Isolation and loneliness are the greatest underdiagnosed underlying conditions that affect people's health. To be acknowledged, to know that people know that you're there and that it matters, is a basic, essential need of human life. Even people who really don't like other people need other people.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Why are you looking at me?

Mr. John Fraser: I need you. I need the member from Renfrew. It's true. We need others. We need to be

connected. We need to know that we're here and that it matters. And this is what this bill talks about.

One of the things, I think, should this bill pass—and it sounds like it's going to pass, and it should get to third reading and get done so this can be something that the member leaves in this Legislature. I know she'll be making her speech tomorrow. It's an important mark of her work, and I think that would be something that we could all do for our communities, but also for the member.

One thing I would like to suggest when it does pass—because now I'm feeling good, like that's going to happen and we'll do the right thing—is that we really should have not a standing committee, but a travelling committee, a committee that looks at this. It doesn't have to go on for a long time. I think it's something that we should all work on to inform what the government is going to do, just like we've done with mental health, just like we've done with developmental disabilities—a select committee; that's the word I'm looking for. I think that would be a really good idea. I think that would be something that the government could adopt.

Look, it's not just people who are aging who are at risk of isolation, but they're really at risk of isolation. The number of people who are aging, or getting to their golden years—some of us are there already. I was just going to mention the member from Renfrew again. We have to address this. It's a problem that's going to grow. I'm very happy to support this bill and look forward to it passing this reading and, as I said before, Speaker, hopefully, actually making it a law before this Legislature rises before the election. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): Further debate? I return to the member from Durham for her two-minute reply.

Ms. Lindsey Park: I want to thank the member for Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, the member for London–Fanshawe, the member for Richmond Hill, the member for Hamilton Mountain and, of course, the member for Ottawa South.

I'll keep it brief, but I will say this: There are special moments in this place when we can all work across partisan lines to sow seeds into the future of all of our constituents. I just want to thank you all, all the members in this place who contributed to the debate today, for making today one of those special moments.

1840

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

Ms. Park moved second reading of Bill 104, An Act to enact the Connected Communities Act, 2022. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): Pursuant to standing order 101(h), the bill is referred to the Committee of the Whole House. I look to the member to see if she wishes to refer the bill to a standing committee. If so, please state which committee.

Ms. Lindsey Park: I wish to refer it to the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): Is the majority in favour of this bill being referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy? Agreed. The bill is referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): The member for Ottawa South has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given by the government House leader. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the minister or parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes.

I recognize the member for Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: I would normally start the evening by thanking the Clerks and yourself and the government House leader for staying later, but because the government House leader is making everyone else stay later, I'll let him do that after I'm done.

Look, here's the bottom line, here's why I'm here tonight: I know we disagree on Bill 88. I don't believe it's working for workers. It actually creates a second class of workers in Ontario who are not going to get things like workplace health and safety protections, a fair living wage, vacation pay, the right to severance when you're dismissed without cause. Those are all basic rights. And the right to a pay stub is not one that I think anybody should have ever had to fight for that we should have had to correct here. I'm not trying to diminish it. I just don't think it's enough and I don't think workers think that's enough. They want more protection than that.

But here's the real reason why we're here tonight: In his response, the member said that I voted against the Ottawa Hospital, and that's not true. Let me go back to something called the Ontario Health Services Restructuring Commission and Duncan Sinclair. That's before I started working in politics. What that commission did was it closed two hospitals in Ottawa—the Riverside and the Grace—and 24 other hospitals in Ontario. Those two hospitals were the highest accredited hospitals.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Don't forget the Montfort.

Mr. John Fraser: I'm getting there.

They also were going to turn the Ottawa Civic into something much less than it is: a community hospital. Now, Garry Guzzo, who was from another riding, Ottawa-Rideau, who was in the government at the time, didn't let that happen. That was a good thing to do in local politics. I totally supported him on that.

They tried to close the Montfort. They took the Montfort to court, and the Montfort won. That's why I started working for Premier McGuinty, who wasn't Premier at the time, in 1999.

For almost 23 years I've been working with local health care leaders and communities to build up health care in Ottawa and Ottawa South. It's one of the reasons that I ran in 2013 when Premier McGuinty resigned. Here is what's happened in Ottawa in that time: We doubled the size of the Montfort. We built a new critical care wing at the Ottawa Hospital. We built a new regional cancer centre at the Ottawa Hospital and the Queensway Carleton Hospital. We built a brand new University of Ottawa Heart Institute. We built a new Royal Ottawa Hospital, which the government on the other side—of the day—brought forward, and that was a good thing. We supported it. We finished it. We did it a different way than what the Harris government of the day wanted to do, which was to make it a P3 and lose community ownership and community governance. We did an AFP—we can debate about that later. But it got done—Roger's House.

I just wanted to make sure that the member across understood that. I took particular offence because that is really important work to me. Two things that are really important to me are to be able to help people in my community and to build up health care, not just in my community in Ottawa, but across the province. Is there a lot more work to do? Are there things that didn't get done that I wanted to get done? One hundred per cent.

But here's the other thing I know. The Premier has been going around the province, announcing planning grants. That's a good thing. I said that the one in Ottawa was a good thing. But you know what? You can only do so many planning grants, because it has to fit your capital plan. I'm watching the Premier go along and I'm wondering if those things are in the capital plan. I know how it works. The planning money, that's the easy stuff.

You know the Mackenzie hospital they just cut the ribbon on and the Premier took full credit for? It started years before he got here. Actually, it was being built years before he got here. The thing is: Here, on either side, we continue the work of the other. It's really important to remember that.

I want to thank you for your time, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): Thank you. I recognize the government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to get up and respond to the member opposite. I guess I don't quite remember the answer to the question the same way the member does, but I can appreciate that the member wanted to get up and talk about his record in his community.

This is supposed to be a debate, with us going back and forth, me telling him why everything he just said is wrong—and I can do that, Mr. Speaker, but it is also my understanding that it's his mother's birthday today. It's Mary's birthday. As opposed to responding and criticizing what the member just said, let me speak very directly to Mary and wish her a happy 90th birthday, and to tell Mary that if the worst thing that we could say about the member opposite is that we disagree on a question and an answer in this place, then she has done a very good job in raising a very fine individual who, I fully know, works very hard

for his community. Now, I might disagree with just about everything that he talks about—and that’s the whole purpose of why we’re here, because he has a set of beliefs that he works hard for and I have a different set of beliefs that I work hard for—but I’ll say this: Mary, happy birthday from the entire Progressive Conservative caucus, on behalf of Premier Doug Ford. Happy 90th birthday to you. Thank you so much for sending us your fine son, who I disagree with tonight. I thought I gave him, really, just a wonderful answer. I feel that it generated a standing ovation—

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Two.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Two standing ovations, Mr. Speaker. But I can appreciate that the member opposite looked at it differently, and that’s fine. Again, I certainly respect that the member opposite works very hard for his community.

Look, if sometimes the government of the day—that being us—has to get it done and has to continue the work that was started by other governments, I think the people of Ontario should have full confidence and, at least, pride in the fact that on many occasions we work together to get the job done for the people of the province of Ontario.

Happy birthday, Mary. And again, thank you—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): Thank you. I, too, wish mom Mary a happy birthday.

There being no further matters to debate, pursuant to standing order 36(c), I will now call for orders of the day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TAX RELIEF AT THE PUMPS ACT, 2022

LOI DE 2022 SUR L’ALLÈGEMENT DE LA TAXE À LA POMPE

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 6, 2022, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 111, An Act to amend the Fuel Tax Act and the Gasoline Tax Act with respect to a temporary reduction to the tax payable on certain clear fuel and on gasoline / *Projet de loi 111, Loi modifiant la Loi de la taxe sur les carburants et la Loi de la taxe sur l’essence en ce qui concerne la réduction temporaire de la taxe à payer sur certains types de carburant incolore et sur l’essence.*

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): Further debate?

Mr. Stephen Blais: I’m going to share my time with the member for Ottawa South this evening.

I’m glad to have the opportunity to speak this evening on this particular piece of legislation. Now, I remember when the government committed to reducing the cost of gas by 10 cents in 2018. Of course, as we all know, that never happened. So we find ourselves here debating this bill that we have before us tonight that, after four years, will come halfway to fulfilling the Premier’s 2018 election

promise, but only after he’s re-elected, and not permanently, but a short little holiday until the end of the year. So really, Mr. Speaker, it’s the government promising to half-heartedly keep a campaign promise from the last election but only after the next election.

1850

That’s the kind of communications and political witchcraft that this government is sadly too well known for. It’s the kind of misdirection and distraction that the world’s greatest magicians would be proud of. Since the government announced this bill, they’ve actually been trying to convince Ontarians that they’ve lowered the gas price already, but anyone who’s gone to the pumps, anyone who actually fills up their car with gas every week or every couple of weeks knows better. They know that gas prices never went down; they’ve only been going up and up and up.

Residents in Ontario aren’t fooled by that little sticker that the government forced gas station owners to put on the pumps either. They know that despite what the government is saying, despite their promise from the 2018 election and their promise for this next upcoming election, they’re paying higher and higher gas prices these last four years. They’re paying higher gas prices today, they’ll be paying higher gas prices tomorrow, and in fact, even once this bill passes, they’ll be paying higher gas prices until well after the next election.

It’s hard to determine with certainty how much this proposal might save Ontario families. In fact, in the government’s news release, they use two different numbers. They use \$465 for an average family. They use \$815 minus \$240 for the stickers, which brings it to \$575. The CTF, the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, says that it’s about 190 bucks for a sedan or a minivan. For the sake of tonight’s discussion, I’m going to call it 500 bucks for the six months or 1,000 bucks for the year. Of course, residents aren’t getting it for the year, they’re only getting it for six months, and they’re only getting it for six months if the government wins the election again.

That’s half of what Ontarians have signed up for, and it’s none of what they’ve actually got so far. In fact, the Premier’s broken promises, not just this one on the gas tax but all of his broken promises, are costing Ontarians more and more and more each and every day. It’s why they like to distract, because if Ontarians are paying too close attention, they’ll realize, and so the government continues to try to distract them.

Not only does this bill come into effect nearly a month after the next election, it only lasts for six months and it’s a far cry from the gas tax relief the government promised before the last election. It’s proof that everything this government is doing these last number of weeks, and for the next couple of weeks, I presume, as well, is only trying to set up for the next election. They don’t actually have an economic plan to bring relief for Ontarians. It’s just more and more fake and empty promises.

In that way, Mr. Speaker, it’s a lot like the buck-a-beer promise, which, of course, is another broken promise. Beer isn’t a buck, it never was a buck, and if it was, it

didn't last for very long. I took the opportunity to look at how much beer costs here in Toronto tonight, and according to the Beer Store, a case of Blue costs 39.95. That's \$1.66 a beer. Sixty-six cents isn't a heck of a lot of money, but across a case, across a two-four, that's 16 bucks. In 2020, it was estimated that the average Canadian drank 69 litres of beer, which is about eight two-fours. That's a broken promise of \$128 a year. So every Saturday night, every Sunday afternoon, as you're enjoying the Leafs or the Bills or, in my case, the Senators and the Colts, that's Doug Ford, the Premier, and his government costing you 128 bucks more each and every year. But we're talking about the gas tax, so let's get back there.

As I've already mentioned, I am a football fan. I think the Premier's a football fan, too. This bill tonight seems a lot like a Hail Mary pass. The Premier hasn't done much these last four years. He hasn't fulfilled many promises, and so at the end of the game, he's trying to chuck one up to get it done. What's important in the Hail Mary pass is protection for the quarterback. You have to let the receivers get downfield.

In the government context, it's protection for consumers that is important. Consumers, of course, are also known as residents. They're also known as taxpayers and also known as voters. Of course, this legislation has, as far as I'm aware, no protections for consumers in it at all. There's nothing in the bill that will ensure that everyday Ontarians are the ones who benefit from this tax cut. From what I can tell, there's nothing that requires the oil companies, the gas companies, to actually pass on the savings to consumers. As a result, as we've seen every time the government tries to play politics with gas prices, they might go down temporarily, and a week later they'll go up and there'll be another market course correction that requires them to go up and up and up and up. That's the trend. There's no protection for the consumers, there's no guarantee that Ontario residents are actually going to see this gas tax cut. They claim to have already cut gas taxes; I don't think any Ontarian will tell that you gas is cheaper today as a result.

As the residents get up off the ground—because there's no protection; they just got sacked—they're wiping themselves off, they're realizing that it's just one more unnecessary hit that this government keeps on delivering to them.

Now, it used to be that Ontarians had a bit of money left at the end of the month but, recently, there's a lot more month left at the end of the money, and the government has not presented a plan to help Ontarians get through that particular financial reality.

So we've got the broken beer promise, we've got the broken gas tax promise; let's talk about another broken promise. The government promised to reduce hydro bills by 12% and that that would save families \$173 a year. Boy, were they wrong. Instead of lowering hydro rates 12%, they've increased them 4%. That's a 16-point difference between what the Premier promised and what Ontarians are paying today for hydro prices.

So we've got a thousand bucks a year in the broken gas tax promise, we got a couple of hundred bucks a year in

the broken hydro promise and we got a hundred bucks a year in the broken beer promise. We're coming up to \$1,500 a year in broken promises for an average family. That's a lot of money for most families. That's a lot of money.

The government's broken promises don't end there. The whopper of all broken promises: the 20% tax cut for middle-class families—20%. I don't know anyone who got a 20% tax cut. Do you know anyone who got a 20% tax cut?

Mr. John Fraser: No.

Mr. Stephen Blais: No. I don't know anyone who got a 20% cut, because it never happened.

Let me quote the news release from May 10, 2018: "a targeted tax cut to Ontario's second tax bracket, with the biggest relative savings realized by those earning \$42,960 to \$85,923 per year." The Premier said it would save families \$786.

You got \$128 a year in extra beer costs, you've got a thousand bucks a year in the broken gasoline promise, you got a couple of hundred bucks a year in the broken hydro promise, you've got nearly \$800 a year in the broken income tax promise, and now middle-class families are paying \$2,000 more a year than what the Premier and this government and that caucus promised them before the last election in 2018. And that doesn't factor in all the downstream impacts higher hydro rates and gas prices will have on food and everything else.

With an election less than two months away, the Premier and his government are doing in their final days this little magic trick to try to demonstrate to Ontarians that they have a plan for fiscal relief, that they understand that the cost of living is on rise, that they care about these things. It's just another grouping of broken promises.

What did Ontarians get for this privilege of paying another \$2,000 a year compared to what the Premier promised them? They got attacks on teachers, they got larger class sizes, they got attacks on nurses, they got cuts to public health, they got the reduction of environmental protections, the attacks on the Franco-Ontarian community and so much more, all for the privilege of paying \$2,000 more a year every year for not realizing the promises that the Premier made before the last election.

I don't think we should make that mistake again.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member did say he'd be sharing his time; I see he has finally decided to do so. The member from Ottawa South has the floor.

Mr. John Fraser: I don't need much time, Speaker. I don't need much time.

Actually, Speaker, I do want to say, we've been talking a lot about pixie dust today, and this is pixie dust here. You give the definition, which is "a substance ... with an apparently magical effect that brings great success or luck." The other thing that we didn't mention is pixie dust isn't real. That's what this gas tax cut is: It's not real.

1900

The Premier made a promise, just like the 20% income tax cut that didn't happen, the 12% reduction in hydro

rates and the buck-a-beer that went flat after six months. Now the Premier is saying, “I promise to cut your gas tax”—almost four years ago; actually, probably four years ago. And now he’s saying, “And you know what? I’m going to cut your gas taxes, but it’s not coming till after the next election and it’s only going to last for six months.” That sounds like a really good deal. I don’t think so, Speaker.

Families are looking for real relief, a living wage and a place to live. Bill 106, the housing bill, is the legislative equivalent of soda crackers—no nutritional value. What families want are solutions, not temporary gimmicks: buck-a-beer; we’re working for workers. Just because it sounds good doesn’t mean that it’s actually going to happen, and that’s what we learned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions?

Hon. Doug Downey: I just don’t even know where to start with Never-Never Land over there, as was coined by my friend.

Look, what constituents don’t want, what Ontarians don’t want are permanent hydro increases. What they don’t want are gas plant scandals. What they do want: child tax care credits, job training tax credits, permanent licence sticker refunds, health care tax reductions, staycation tax credits, Seniors’ Home Safety Tax Credits—a whole suite of things, Mr. Speaker.

When we reduced the gas tax, the party opposite is in favour of carbon tax to fill the space. So I would like to hear from the member opposite one single thing that they did to make life more affordable for families in the 15 years they were in power.

Mr. John Fraser: Easy answer: full-day kindergarten, \$6,000 a year per child per family. That’s an easy answer. Maybe you want to call us Never-Never Land here, but you’re from the island of Lost Boys.

Let’s talk about this bill. It’s only giving families relief for six months after the next election. It sounds strange to me. But where’s the actual protection against gas companies taking the 5.7%. Is it in the bill? Does anybody see it? I don’t see it. Is the government going to amend the bill to prevent that from happening? It doesn’t sound like it’s going to happen. So what are you really doing? You’re telling people that you’re going to give them a break for six months, which somebody might take away from them, and then it’ll disappear just like pixie dust.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The next question goes to the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan.

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: Thank you to the members from Orléans and Ottawa Centre—

Mr. John Fraser: Ottawa South.

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: South—sorry—for the comments.

Mr. John Yakabuski: She’s sitting beside him.

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: Yes, I know. That’s why I was confused, I guess.

I appreciated your comments. It was an interesting analysis. The discussion of affordability: I hear people are

upset about rising gas prices. I especially hear it because gas prices are often 30 cents more than they are in Toronto, for no apparent reason, and we pay that in northern Ontario. Coincidentally, it happens on the long weekend or when people have to fill up their boat or their skidoos. Your concerns about where’s the meat, where’s the protection that this isn’t going to happen, where’s—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Where’s the question?

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: So my question is, what do you think is the reason we don’t have that kind of clarity in this bill?

Mr. Stephen Blais: As we’ve seen repeatedly from this government, as I mentioned, they like to distract with baubles and gimmicks. They’re magicians with moving things around to keep Ontarians from looking at the reality of the situation.

They’re bringing this bill forward to reduce gas taxes. They have every opportunity to put something in the bill that says, “No, you will not pocket this money yourself. There will not be some kind of dramatic or mysterious market correction that all of a sudden gobbles up all this money. You will have to provide it to taxpayers and consumers,” and they’ve failed to do that. They failed to do that, because at the end of the day, they don’t have a comprehensive plan to provide relief to residents, given the tough economic times we’re facing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Next question?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I want to thank the member for Ottawa South for his brief speech, and the member for Orléans for his longer one.

I want to speak to the member for Orléans. He used the football analogy. Well, I’ll tell you, nobody was better at fumbling the football than that gang of Keystone Kops over there, as they say. They fumbled their way, all the way, to the minor leagues. They showed up here after the election in 2018 in a minivan. They fumbled their way, all the way, to the minor leagues.

One of the biggest things, when people lost trust in this government—remember when they said, “The increase in energy prices because of our Green Energy Act is going to amount to a cup of coffee.” Well, I’ll tell you, the price of coffee must have gone way up.

Maybe the member could tell me how—hydro rates have stabilized. We’re bringing jobs back to Ontario from other jurisdictions, when they left in droves under you—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you very much. We’ll go for an—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you very much, or not so very much.

The member for Orléans.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Thank you. I appreciate the question.

To continue the football analogy, seven-on-seven football is one of the fastest-growing sports in North America. You never know what might happen.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's not seven on seven, son. It's seven on 70.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Come to order, please.

Mr. Stephen Blais: In terms of hydro prices, the Premier promised to go down 12%. They've gone up 4%. That's a 16-point swing. That's hundreds of dollars a year for middle-class families. That's hundreds of dollars a year—

Hon. Paul Calandra: A 19% reduction—19%.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Order, please.

Mr. Stephen Blais: That's hundreds of dollars a year for families in Arnprior, Renfrew and Pembroke. That's hundreds of dollars a year for your—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke will come to order, please.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Come to the counties.

Mr. Stephen Blais: I'm in the county—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): First warning to the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. Stephen Blais: In any event, Mr. Speaker, a 16-point swing in hydro prices between what was promised and what was delivered—my constituents are fed up and they don't want it anymore.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for London–Fanshawe has a question.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Thank you, Speaker. I just want to read this email from my constituent.

"The landlord has asked us to leave since she wants to move and live in her townhouse; it's not only the timing, but it's almost impossible to find something within our budget. On top of that, I work for London Health Sciences Centre; a couple of realtors we connected with for help informed me it will be difficult to accept our application as they think our income is insufficient compared to the rent and other" utilities. "It's tough and difficult when you start thinking will I be able to afford food and a good level of life for my kids!" That's what they said here.

In this six-month pilot project, how do you see \$65 a day helping this person from London afford a home?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: It really doesn't. It might help some people, but it's not going to help that family. How can it help that family? People need real relief.

Bill 106—nothing in there about rent control. That was another broken promise—which is, "I'm leaving everything the way it is in rent control." The Premier gets here and it changes. We even talked about that tonight.

Look, we're not here to talk about Bill 106, but there's nothing in there on rent control, nothing in there for first-time homebuyers, nothing in there for taxation on

developers who hang on to land for a long time. It's the legislative equivalent of soda crackers: no nutritional value.

I do have to say, I am really disappointed in the member for Renfrew, because I told him, in the late show debate, that I did need him and he directed his question toward my colleague. So I'm deeply hurt.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The next question.

Mr. Will Bouma: I wanted to just ask the member from Orléans a quick question. He mentioned in his debate that in order for this to come into effect, we'd have to win the next election, but I believe that's not exactly the case. If I remember this morning, the government House leader made a motion looking for unanimous consent to pass this bill immediately so that it could come into effect even faster. But someone from over there said no. So that didn't happen. That means that if this bill passes here in the Legislature, it will come into effect July 1, regardless of whether we form government on June 3 or not.

So I was wondering; if he was to form government with the Liberal Party on June 3—I know, an unlikely event, but if that were to happen, would he keep this 5.7 cents off on gas from July 1 to the end of the year?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Well, let's find out. Back to the member from Orléans.

1910

Mr. Stephen Blais: I'm sorry if I implied that it was contingent on the results of the election. I apologize. Of course, it's promised to happen after the election is over.

We've put forward an aggressive plan to help families, to bring economic dignity to Ontarian families, economic dignity to help Ontarians get through these challenging times—not gimmicks and baubles and one-offs, but a comprehensive plan to ensure that families can address the affordability challenges that we're facing each and every day here in Ontario. That's what I think Ontarians and Ontario families want and need.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We have 40 seconds. I don't know that that's enough time for a quick question and a quick answer. Do you want to try, the member from Timmins?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Listen, I can do the one-minute waltz in 30 seconds. A quick question is this: If the government is really intent on doing this and they're going to reduce the gas price by 5.7 cents, what mechanism do we have in order to make sure that the gas companies aren't going to make up the difference?

Mr. John Fraser: There is absolutely no mechanism in this bill to protect consumers from gas companies taking and eating that 5.7 cents and putting it back on them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We have further debate. I recognize the member for Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock—wait, I'm sorry. I'm getting all kinds of mixed signals here this evening. I'll go to the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Speaker. I've waited a long time to get up here. In reference to the comments made earlier by the member for Waterloo, I

want to inform the members across today that a new basket of orange socks has arrived in the west lobby so that I can get through this without being heckled at all.

But anyway—Speaker, where do you start with this stuff? Where do you start with this stuff? I’m referencing more to what’s been said from the other side than what’s actually been talked about of the bill, because they have almost not talked about the bill at all. In fact, the member for Waterloo was making election predictions. Can you imagine that? She’s making election predictions; she’s saying that what she’s hearing over here, or seeing over here, reminds her of the demise of the Liberals in 2018. I told her, I’ll take wagers on that one. But then she left the chamber. She didn’t want to make that bet.

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I didn’t say she’s not here. Hold on, I did not say she’s not here.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I will remind all members that we do not make reference to those who may be here, may have left or may have returned.

I’ll return back to the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you, Speaker. I guess there’s a new rule. I wasn’t aware of that one. But anyway, I abide by your rulings all the time, as you know.

Let’s get back to the bill—or let’s get back to the speeches. My gosh, they were talking over there about hydro rates. From 2009, with the advent of the Green Energy Act, until the Liberals lost power in 2018, hydro rates went up by more than double. They chased 330,000 manufacturing jobs out of this province. One of the reasons—it’s not just because of the great economic policies that are saving businesses over \$7 billion a year and the work that the finance minister and the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade have done to attract and retain businesses; they’re coming back because of the policies, the policies of this government that will, in fact, Speaker, benefit everyone.

You know, we’re going to talk about the impact that that had on the auto industry. The cost of electricity—or as my friend from Quinte would say, ee-lectricity—was driving jobs out of the province in droves. High, wide and handsome, they were leaving the province. What have we done to change that? Speaker, before we left this place in 2018—and I remember having a conversation before the election. When the Liberals were decimating Ontario with their employment policies and economic policies, I remember having a conversation with someone who understood the auto industry pretty well, as you would yourself, Speaker, because so much of it is from your town. I remember them saying to me that they believed that we may have seen the end of auto production here in Ontario, that in 10 to 15 years, we won’t be building a car in this province, and it’s because of the policies of the government. Because you’ve got to remember, Speaker, these companies of this size, of this magnitude and this global power, can establish and set up shop wherever they want, and they’re going to set up shop where they’re most wanted. And they were getting a message from the

Liberals that they weren’t really wanted. Well, let’s turn the clock ahead a few years and see where we are today.

I know, Speaker, you’re not going to be running again, and I do thank you for your service and your friendship and collegiality over all these years. We haven’t always agreed, but we’ve always agreed to disagree.

I do have one note here before I go too much further, because I’ve got to get this in: I wanted to wish Mary, John Fraser’s mother, a happy 90th birthday. I would be remiss if I did not also remember that, should my sainted mother still be with us, she would be 98 today. She left us some 48 years ago, but I do want to wish my mother a happy birthday. I think about her every day.

Speaker, let’s get back to the auto sector. There’s this old saying, “As the wheels of the auto sector turn in Ontario, the wheels of our economy don’t fall far behind,” because it’s such an intrinsic part of what makes the world go round in this province. Ever since we started building cars and trucks in this province, we have turned to the auto sector as one of the leading industries to keep the thing rolling, as they say.

But what have we got here today? What have we got going forward? Well, not that long ago—and my colleague from Brantford–Brant was talking about it just a few short hours ago. What was it, a \$1.4-billion investment by Honda? A \$1.4-billion investment in Honda? What does that say to the future of people in Alliston and the area all around it? What does that say to them? It says, “We’re here to stay. We’re here for the long run.” But that wasn’t enough: We’ve got announcements by Ford Motor Company with respect to electric vehicle production here in Ontario. And just very recently, LG and Stellantis, along with the federal and provincial governments: almost a \$5-billion investment right in your community, Speaker—\$5 billion. The Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade was talking about the size of this plant. What did he say? The size of 210 hockey rinks, or something to that effect; I might have the numbers off a little bit. What about the impact that’s going to have on our economy? And then we have people on the other side wanting to stand in the way of that.

Oh, but there was more to come: Just the other day, General Motors in Oshawa—good Lord. I remember that joke one time—maybe I won’t make it today, because it’s about a country I don’t really want to talk about today, but anyway. So General Motors in Oshawa: For this part of Ontario, that is the hub. Now, the Unifor guys, a couple of years ago or a year and a half ago, thought it was all over. They’re done. The plant is closing. Their jobs are gone. Well, they were saved. It’s amazing. General Motors was saved by Ford—Doug Ford, that is. General Motors is going to be there for the long run in Oshawa now. “Ford Saves General Motors.” That should be the headline. Talk about corporate co-operation, Speaker.

When you look at the future here in Ontario—and that’s what I say to the member when she starts talking about the election. Every day, there’s new—you know, “news” is a derivative of the word “new.” Well, every day there’s new news. And let me tell you, folks, it’s good news. It’s good

news, brought on by the economic policies of this government. People are now talking about Ontario again as that engine of economic activity that drives the whole country. For a while, they were talking about Ontario disappearing.

1920

You know what it reminds me of, Speaker? We go back to old man Ontario, Leslie Frost. In the late 1950s, I remember a friend of mine, Del O'Brien, told me about Leslie Frost visiting a bunch of young Conservatives and talking about how "we're building Ontario. We're going to build the 401 and it's going to go from Windsor to the Quebec border. We're going to build schools in every community, we're going to build hospitals, we're going to build highways and we're going to build subways. We're going to build Ontario." They had just finished the St. Lawrence Seaway, talking about the economic things that were going to happen not just in Ontario but all across the country because of what Ontario was doing.

Well, it's like Yogi Berra would say, "It's déjà vu all over again." It's not Leslie Frost; it's Doug Ford and the PC Party. We're going to build Ontario again. We're doing the things that will make Ontario the champion that it once was, because we are listening. We are listening to the people and what they need.

You can't create prosperity if you don't build things. You can't do it, Speaker. You can't have the status quo and have everything go up, like all the indicators, standard of living etc., go up. But we're doing the things that are going to allow that to happen.

One of the things we're doing with this bill is putting money back into the people's pockets. The NDP have one way they think they're going to do it; the Liberals have another way. And they're going to talk, but we're actually doing it. We're actually doing it. We're putting money back into people's pockets, and they know it.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, you're not.

Mr. John Yakabuski: And I say to my friend from Timmins, they're going to have a chance to pass judgment. I don't get that judgment passed on in this House. I get judgment passed on in Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke on June 2 and the advance polls before that—it won't be counted until the 2nd. We're all going to have that, and people are going to have that opportunity to adjudicate on our government's record.

When you think about it, to have almost two years stolen from you because of a worldwide pandemic—but we never lost focus of the goal. We never lost focus of why we were here, why we came here, why we accepted the honour and the privilege of being the government of the people of Ontario. We never lost sight of the goal. Even though we were mired in this pandemic, we never lost sight of it.

Let's talk about this gas tax now. I hear the folks on the other side: "Well, what are you going to do to guarantee that the oil companies or somebody, that they don't gobble up the difference?" There's never been anything to deal with—those are market forces. Prices go up, prices go down. But we're acting because it's never been more necessary for us to give some relief.

I know my friend from Ottawa senator—I said "Ottawa senator;" I'm sure he's a fan—Ottawa Centre is talking about—he'd like to see the carbon tax go up 30%, just crazy amounts. Would that drive up the price of gas? You're darn tootin', I would say. But the market forces drive things up and they drive things down. So six months, we believe that that is the prescribed amount of time to see what the forces on the market will do.

We're giving them relief because we can't depend on the federal government to give them relief. We asked the federal government, "Please, please reduce the carbon tax and do not increase it on April 1." The last thing the people need at this time is another gut shot from the federal government with regard to the carbon tax. But they are driven philosophically by their own theology.

Interjection: Theology?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, we'll call it that because for them it's a religion. Carbon taxes for the federal government are like religion to them.

They said no, and our Premier said, "If the federal government doesn't recognize the need of the people and families who are struggling across this province, then we're going to do something about it." Well, 5.7 cents a litre on gasoline, 5.3 cents on diesel fuel: That's doing something. And we're codifying it in legislation. It will be the law.

Now, if you folks over there don't want to support relief for families to the tune of 5.7 cents or 5.3 cents, that is how it works in here. You can vote against it. You can vote against it, and you can certainly explain to the people on the campaign trail why you voted against relief for families. I'm sure you'll have some other scheme that you're going to tell them about, about your own election platform or whatever, and we'll see what they have to say. We'll see what they have to say. That's the wonderful thing. People will pass judgment, and they'll decide who they believe in.

You know, this wasn't the first thing we did. I see the Minister of Transportation and always, always appreciate the tremendous work that she has been doing for so long for the people of Ontario. She came out with this plan to help families, to help small businesses. Everybody is feeling the pinch. Directly, right into the pockets of people, a rebate or, if they hadn't paid it yet, removal of the licence plate sticker fees on those smaller vehicles—not the big commercial ones; we get that. Do you know what that means to a family when they're struggling, as it has been for so many through this period, to see that relief? That's real relief.

I know the folks on the other side have said, "Oh, I talked to somebody who said that's just a gimmick." Well, are they returning the cheques? Are they returning the cheques? No, they're not returning the cheques, because they know—and those people who say that, quite frankly, are people who aren't voting Conservative and probably never have and never will. So they're making their own political statement. But the average person out there who's not committed to any political party, not to vote for me or you or anybody else—they've all been asking themselves,

what is the government doing to help me and my family and our children get by? Well, a removal of that fee is helping them get by. But we're not done. Oh, no.

Then there were musings about, "Yeah, well, where are you going to get the money? What about the gas tax for the municipalities to put into public transit?" The Minister of Finance and the Minister of Transportation poured cold water on that one right away. Municipalities will be kept whole: not one nickel less for public transportation or transit systems in municipalities that qualified on June 30 versus July 1. Happy Canada Day to them; they're getting their money just the same as before.

Canada Day, by the way, will be our youngest granddaughter's first birthday, so I'm going to celebrate that day real, real good.

I don't have that much time left, but I want to say to the members on the other side—and one of them made a comment not that long ago—I was sitting here and they said something about, "You're sitting on your hands," and then they were talking about the budget. Well, not everybody was here, but I certainly was, and a lot of you folks were here. I think there was some bill that they were wondering if we were going to be an up or down on that bill.

I remember, and I do believe it was the only time in Ontario's history, maybe in Canada's history—and I've only been around for 60-some of those years, not all 155. But it may have been the only time that on a matter with the gravity of a budget—we're not talking about John Yakabuski's private member's bill; we're talking about a budget, the financial blueprint for the next fiscal year. Do you know what the party on the opposite side did?

1930

Hon. Paul Calandra: Tell me.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, I appreciate that you're asking. You see, on a budget, just like every other bill—but it is a confidence vote—you get to vote with the government as a yea, or vote against them as a nay. And I remember when that budget came in. This would have been the first budget of the Kathleen Wynne–Steven Del Duca minority government—the first one. I stood up because I felt it was the wrong budget for Ontario, and we were right on that, because the next time they had an election, as I said, they drove in in a minivan for their swearing in.

But the party opposite that holds Her Majesty's opposition now—it was, "All those in favour?" The governing party at the time stood up, voted for it. "All those opposed?" Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition at the time, the Progressive Conservatives, stood and opposed, and the opposition of today that was the third party then—apparently, somebody had come by with a whole bunch of bubble gum and stuck it on their seats before they sat down that day because nobody stood up: no yea, no nay. They abstained for the vote on a budget. I hope you don't abstain on this one.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I'll be surprised if there's no one with a question. The first question goes to the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan.

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: I thank the member across, from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, for your comments. I was enraptured, as it just reminded me of *The Music Man*. I know you have a theatrical background, but that was very, very interesting. Something about River City—it was intriguing.

When we give rebates to people who own cars and who drive cars, we are forgetting that there are people who can't afford to drive cars and don't have cars. So why did this kind of relief not go to the people who most need it?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I want to thank the member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan for her question. I assure you, I am no thespian. Everything I do here comes straight from the heart.

I do want to tell you that all of the questions that you bring lead me to believe that you folks over there are torn. Inside, you're having this battle going on: "Do we support this bill or do we not support this bill?" What do you want to do when you go out there in Thunder Bay–Atikokan or Algoma–Manitoulin or—well, in Windsor–Tecumseh, you might be out with a new candidate. What are you going to be telling people when they ask you, "Were you in favour of giving me a break on my gasoline or not?" I guess we'll find out.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): I recognize the member from Brantford–Brant.

Mr. Will Bouma: You could have heard a pin drop here over the last 20 minutes there, and I commend the member for just an incredible speech.

But I was wondering, because we have heard this evening, this afternoon, that there are so many different things that we could do to give direct relief to the people of Ontario. I was wondering if the member could speak a little bit more to why giving relief at the gas pumps is such a great idea, and how will it directly help the hard-working people and businesses in the province of Ontario?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I thank my colleague from Brantford–Brant for that question. Boy, I'll tell you, there's nothing out there that isn't impacted by the price of gasoline. There's no cost out there that isn't impacted by the price of gasoline, whether it's the cost to the health care system or food or anything else. Everything is dependent to get moved—we're a moving society. Everything has to be moved. When I think of rural people, like the people in my riding, boy, is this going to be a benefit for them.

I thank you for the question. Everything is affected by the price of gasoline. This will have a benefit to the consumers, the taxpayers and the residents of Ontario in every way, shape and form.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): I recognize the member from Timmins.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, my question to the member across the way is pretty simple. He said it in his speech: Market forces will dictate what the price of gas is. So he's already telling us that when the government decides—if they actually do, on July 1, reduce the price of gas by the amount prescribed in the legislation, what guarantee do we have that those companies will not just make up the room?

You know they're going to make up the room. The member across the way is admitting that market forces are going to drive up the price, because gas companies can't help themselves.

Why don't you put something in the legislation that protects the savings that you're trying to pass on to the consumer?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I thank the member for that question. If he recalls, at the beginning of the pandemic, market forces drove the prices to historic lows. Market forces work. Unfortunately, the NDP talks about regulated gas prices, and we know, historically, in every jurisdiction that brought in regulated gas prices, the average price of gasoline went up.

We trust the market forces, but what we have control over is what we take out the pockets of the people. We're going to ensure that 5.7 cents on every litre of gasoline and 5.3 cents on every litre of diesel fuel is staying in the pockets of the people so they can decide what's best for them.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): I recognize the member from Peterborough–Kawartha.

Mr. Dave Smith: When we take a look at this, we've talked about gas prices and gas prices and gas prices, and we've talked about the savings to individuals on what they're going to pay when they're filling up their tank, but I think one of the things that we're missing, that we haven't talked enough about, is diesel prices.

I come from a riding that is about 45% rural agriculture. Every single farm in my riding ships their product somewhere, because people don't drive out to the farm and buy chickens, people don't drive out to the farm and buy—well, they buy strawberries and raspberries, but, for the most part, all of the produce that comes from my riding that feeds so many people in the city of Toronto comes by transport.

How will this reduction in diesel fuel affect everyday people, people here in Toronto?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I thank the member for Peterborough–Kawartha for the question. He's absolutely right. I know we tend to live in a—I drive a gasoline vehicle, but I used to drive a diesel vehicle, and just like that farmer, once they get on the highway and they're moving their product and their produce, they're subject to the fuel tax just like anyone else. Now that's 5.3 cents a litre. That is part of what I'm saying is going to help drive down or prevent unreasonable increases in the price of food. We know there are a lot of supply issues out there, and one of the things we can be helpful on is helping them reduce the cost of transportation.

We don't know what the market is going to do and neither does the fellow from Timmins, but I can tell you this: There will be 5.3 less cents a litre going into the government coffers and staying in the pockets of hard-working small business men and farmers.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): I recognize the member from Algoma–Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I always enjoy the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. Him and I, we

actually have many conversations in the hallways here, and I thought today I was going to see the return of the guillotine. Just how he was going with his hands a little bit earlier, I thought it was going to come. That's what I admire about him, that passion, just that fire that he has, because he has a way of speaking to the cameras, to the room, to his constituents. I'm going to be counting on him for his passion.

I'm wondering, would he have the same passion in order to find out why \$210 million went to companies that were not eligible to receive any funds from the small business grant? Would he be able to help me out in understanding why this government won't explore that as an option and bring those findings back and those true savings to many Ontarians who are looking for it?

1940

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): That might have been a leading question. I'll go to the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Speaker. I would have to turn to the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade. We were very, very clear that we were trying to be as—

Mr. Jim McDonell: Quick.

Mr. John Yakabuski: —as quick and as enveloping as possible, to make sure that we got money into the hands of small businesses, so that they could keep operating and keep people working long past the pandemic. We did not want to lose people during that time.

But this is money that will go directly into the pockets of families raising children—

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: And we're not even talking about the child care bill yet. I don't know if we're going to have enough time for that. But I'll tell you, we have done so many things to reduce the cost of living and put money back into the people's pockets, I wouldn't be surprised if you vote for me.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): We have time for a short question. I look to the member from Perth–Wellington.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Several years ago I visited a trucking company. They had started putting automatic transmissions in their trucks, and they tuned the motors to that transmission. The reason was that they got better fuel mileage, so they were trying to cut their costs as much as transportation.

And the neat part about it is, the Minister of Transportation was driving that truck, and she missed everything in the parking lot—twice—so I must commend her on her driving ability. I just wonder if the member could expand on the—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): Thank you. We have time for a very short reply.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I want to thank the member for Perth–Wellington, and thank him for his tremendous service to the people of Ontario for many years. And from every bit of investigating and eyewitness reports that I

have received, the member is absolutely right: The Minister of Transportation is a tremendous driver.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: If the Minister of Transportation was a bad driver, that'd be a really terrible thing, I must say.

Listen, let me start at the beginning of this whole fiasco around where we're at with taxes on gas here in the province of Ontario, and on diesel fuel. Do you remember, Mr. Speaker? I think you do, because you were here in the previous Parliament, when we were dealing with gas plant scandals and everything else that was going on in the Liberal government of the day, and the privatization of hydro, all of which added to the cost of energy in the province of Ontario.

We know, and I think we both agree, as New Democrats and Conservatives, that the Liberals did a terrible job when they were there. But you guys went into the election and you said, "Oh, we're going to promise you a 10-cent reduction in the price of gas by eliminating 10 cents a litre on the price of gas in our first mandate." We're at the end of the first mandate, Mr. Speaker. The government never did anything in order to reduce the price of gas in the last four years.

But, my God, there's an election coming, and all of a sudden the government says, "Oh, yeah, we had a promise. Oh, God, what are we going to do now?" And the price of gas where I come from has gone to almost two dollars a litre at times. Right now it's about \$1.89; \$1.67 in Whitby yesterday. So the government has got this problem where it made a promise and it didn't hold its promise. It wasn't "promise made, promise kept"; it was "promise made and promise broken."

What's worse with what the government is doing now, Mr. Speaker, is they're saying, "We're not even going to do it in our first mandate. We'll do it in the next mandate. Trust us. When we're there, if we come back as a majority, this will happen, because we're passing legislation." Come on. I think most people see this for what it is. This is just an election ploy, and if the government was really serious about being able to save people money, it may be doing some things differently. I'm going to get to that in my talk in a little bit.

The second part is that the government, when it was running in opposition to the Liberals and their bad energy policy, said, "We don't believe in green energy. We think green energy is terrible," and they spent four years in opposition just doing everything to kick the heck out of anything that was green energy. Then they got elected. They cancelled green energy projects. They pulled out electric car chargers out of roadside stations across Ontario. They got rid of programs that assisted people in being able to purchase battery-operated cars. They were the anti-electric-vehicle party of Ontario.

And now, all of a sudden, prior to an election, they've had an epiphany. It was like Paul on his walk to—what do they call it?

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Damascus.

Mr. Joel Harden: Damascus.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: On his march to Damascus. He has been converted. It's all of a sudden. It's amazing how an election will crystallize politicians in trying to listen to what the public may want. But the Tories waited until the end of their mandate to do anything about it, and now we're supposed to believe the Conservative Party and Premier Ford is actually going to be converted on all of these things? Come on.

When it comes to the carbon tax, the reason we're paying a carbon tax in Ontario is because the Conservative Party got rid of cap-and-trade. Cap-and-trade was put in place by the former government, and, yes, we supported it as New Democrats because we thought it was important that those who pollute should pay the tax—as simple as that. The government, back in opposition under the Conservatives, didn't believe that, so they said, "Oh, no, we don't believe in that. We don't believe in anything when it comes to being green." So they get themselves elected and they get rid of the cap-and-trade system.

The federal government had said—and the government knew—that if you got rid of cap-and-trade, it would invoke the carbon tax in Ontario. So if we're paying a carbon tax in Ontario, look in the mirror. It's the government of Ontario who imposed the carbon tax in Ontario. Yes, the federal government under the Liberal administration put in place the mechanism; I don't doubt that for a second. We all understand how it works. But it was the Conservative government under Mr. Ford who forced the carbon tax on Ontario. We would be in a user-pay system today if they had not gotten rid of cap-and-trade. And here we are saying, "Oh, my God, there's a carbon tax in Ontario," as my friend Rosario Marchese used to say.

We have a carbon tax because the government imposed it on us. It was the provincial government of the Conservatives, Mr. Ford, who enacted the carbon tax in Ontario, and now they're saying, "We want to do something about it." Come on. Really? And what galls me, and it was admitted by the previous speaker—I have to say, I really enjoy listening to the member from Lanark—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. It's a good thing my friend is here, the Acting Speaker, because I wouldn't have got that.

I really do, because he is a good speaker and I think he's able to make some good arguments. But his arguments failed when it came to the market. The member admits that the market is going to decide the price of gas. What do you think is going to happen, Mr. Speaker, when the price of gas goes down by five-point-some-odd cents and diesel goes down by five-point-some-odd cents? It's going to go back up as soon as the gas companies can make up the difference. Why wouldn't they? So what you're doing—you got rid of cap-and-trade, the user-pay system, and now you're going to use taxpayers' money and give it back to the oil companies. Wow, that's great.

I'm not surprised. Conservatives have always been in the back pocket of big business, and this is just a bad piece

of policy. What the government should be doing is putting money where it means most to people. I want to give you but one example, Mr. Speaker, because I'm sure you got the same phone calls as I did. We know that, unfortunately, in our province, many children suffer with autism, and the parents have to deal with how to deal with the child with autism. There's one part of the spectrum which is kids under five, and that's for another debate, but I will only say this: The government, when in opposition—I remember Mr. Ford, at the debate with Andrea Horwath, stood up and said, "If I am the Premier of Ontario, you will never have to stand on the lawn of Queen's Park and ask that autism services be provided for your child."

Well, my Lord, Mr. Speaker, it's been the complete opposite. We had a failed program under the Liberals that only helped some of the kids that needed help when it came to autism services, and now we've gutted the program in such a way that everybody just gets less money. So parents with kids under five are having to deal with that. Why not use the money that you're putting forward on this, which is \$550 million, and put it towards autism services?

And then there's the kids on the other spectrum. I got a call from Bill. Bill's a good friend of mine that I've known for many years in the city of Timmins. His son turned 21, so he doesn't fall under the autism program for kids under five, and he's now aged out of the school system. When his son was in school—he was in school till 21, so there was somebody watching his son and taking care of him in school while he and his wife worked. Well, what do you think happened after his son turned 21? He lost the ability for his son to go to school. So he gets assessed by what's called Passport funding, and Passport funding says, "Oh, we'll give you \$5,000."

1950

How do you provide daycare for a 21-year-old who cannot be left alone—a wonderful young man. I've met him a number of times. He's such a delight to meet and such a delight to be with, a very positive young man, but he cannot be left alone. So mom and dad are having to struggle to provide daycare services to their son because Passport only pays \$5,000. Now, here's the kicker: They go and apply to have him reassessed because obviously it's more than \$5,000. The Passport funding people said, "Okay, fine. He can have nine." He will get \$9,000. It's pretty arbitrary what you're going to get, because you've got some children with autism who are now adults at 21 who are getting far more than \$9,000. He's given me some cases to prove that. We're going to go back and take a look at that.

My point is this: He gets assessed from \$5,000 to \$9,000, and then they say, "Oh, well, you can't have the money because we don't have it; we froze the program"—too bad, so sad, bye-bye. So Bill and his wife are having to struggle, along with many other kids in this province. I'm sure there are some in your riding, Mr. Speaker, as are in all of our ridings. They're having to struggle in order to provide support for their kids while they're going to school. His wife essentially works in home care. When she

has her son and it's her time to watch her son, she has to put her son in the van, go and do the call in-house and leave the son alone in the van—always sort of looking out the window, making sure everything is okay.

Is that the way we should be caring for our kids or our young adults? Absolutely not. There's an old saying—and I'm going to read it so I don't get it wrong: "Society measures itself on how it treats its most vulnerable citizens." This is not the way we treat citizens; this is wrong. If you're prepared to give \$550 million on something that's going to end up in the back pockets of oil companies, save yourself the trouble and give it to those families who need to have the service to support their children and their young adults. That's the honourable thing to do, Mr. Speaker. That's what you have to do. You have to support those in our society who need it the most.

We come here to Queen's Park, and you and I, Mr. Speaker, we're okay. We make a good salary. The base salary here is about \$118,000. It's been frozen—

Miss Monique Taylor: It's \$116,000.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It's \$116,000. I thought I'd give you a raise. It's been frozen for 20 years, but that's a whole other story. But we're not hurting. In many of our cases, our spouses are working and we're doing okay; we're fine. But there's all kinds of people out there who are working for far less than us, trying to make ends meet, and families who have young people with autism are struggling. Parents who have kids with disabilities are struggling.

I know my own granddaughter, Eva—a wonderful, wonderful little girl, seven years old. She's both physically and—what's the term?

Mr. Joel Harden: Developmentally?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Developmentally delayed. I should have known that, but sometimes you don't say things right. But my point is, she's a wonderful little girl, always very positive, always in a good mood. We're so lucky to have her. I always say that if anybody was going to have a child like Eva, it had to be our family, because both Shane and our daughter Natalie are professionals and able to properly care for her. My daughter is a psychologist and my son-in-law works in mental health. My wife, Murielle—my God, grandmothers, there's nothing like grandmothers to take care of kids. And yes, she gets help with Passport and other programs, but we need to make sure that all kids have that type of support for their families.

It's not fair that Bill and his son and his wife do not get the support they need to make sure that they can go to work every day, that they can produce wealth in our society, that they can pay taxes and that their son is able to get the support he wants. That's what's important here.

I think the government is making a choice based on politics. This is strictly politics. This is just strictly the government trying to check off a box for the next election and trying to wedge the opposition. That's all this is all about. I know what's going to happen. Mr. Ford is going to run around in the next election, saying "oh, hey" on gas taxes. I heard him in the last election, right? But in the end, I think there are a lot of parents out there who will be meeting Mr. Ford when he goes to different ridings across

Ontario, saying “What about me? What about my autistic child? What about the kids with disabilities? What about parents who are stuck in long-term-care facilities that have been privatized and that they re-contracted for 30 years?” There are going to be all kinds of things that people are going to be upset about, and the government is doing nothing about that because it’s worried about playing the short game of politics. This Legislature is not supposed to be about the short game. It’s supposed to be about the long game and it’s about us coming together, both sides of the House, to be able to look at how we approach the complex problems of our society.

Mr. Speaker, I will admit, as you do, autism is a complex issue to deal with when it comes to treatment and it comes financing the proper treatment. I understand that. That’s one of the reasons that Andrea Horwath, last week on Sunday, announced that we will move into the OHIP system, the public health care system, mental health services. How many people are left behind because they can’t access mental health services? You know them in your riding, Mr. Speaker. They come to your office, sometimes crying, because their family member can’t get the support that they need. So we say, “Here’s something you can do. You can provide mental health services through the public health care system, so that if you need to deal with whatever’s going on in your life and need support with the mental health issue that you have, that it’s there” And there’s not a member in this House who has not had to deal with constituents who are in crisis because of mental health. Why are we not dealing more effectively with those issues, and instead playing politics with gas taxes?

In the end, Mr. Speaker, you know as well as I do that we’re going to be in a situation, not long after July 1 if this increase is actually enacted, that we’re going to be in a position where gas companies will make up the difference. And so we’ll take \$550 million, put it in the back pocket of large gas companies, and guess what’s going to happen to those parents and citizens who need the support of their government to deal with whatever it is, such as autism services? That’s what really galls me about this whole thing.

The government made a promise in the last election: “We’re going to lower your hydro prices.” Has anybody seen their hydro bill go down in the last four years? It’s gone up each and every year. What happened to that promise? Why are you not coming back to the House within the four years that we were here to deal with electricity prices? As us, you were mad at the Liberals for their mishandling of the hydro file. I agree with you. The Conservatives were mad as heck at the time at what the Liberals did to the energy file in this province, and we as New Democrats agreed. Kathleen Wynne came to power and her suggestion was, “Oh, let’s privatize half of hydro.” Well, that worked out really well. Have you noticed?

And so here we are. We’re supposed to get a reduction in hydro prices, promised to us by the Conservative Party back in the previous election, and none of it has been done. Our hydro prices have gone up. People, with the price of

everything going up through this latest round of COVID and with everything that happened to our economy, are paying more for gas, yes; they’re paying more for the price of electricity; and paying more for a whole bunch of other things, and we’re not doing anything to deal with that. This is just crass political politics. That’s all this is. It’s as simple as that. The government is not serious about trying to deal with this in a real way.

The last thing I want to talk about—and it’s another issue that we can do something about—are rent evictions. I have citizens in my community, as you all do in your ridings, and Mr. Speaker, you have them as well. Somebody owns a big apartment building; they say, “Oh, your lease is coming due. Guess what? Bye-bye. You’re no longer a tenant here.” And guess what’s going to happen when they move that family out of that unit? Rent prices are going up. Is this government doing anything in order to be able to protect citizens so that they don’t see their rents go through the roof? We’re going to give \$550 million to oil companies and we’re going to allow people to get kicked out of their apartments because the Conservative government, under Premier Ford, won’t deal with renovations.

We’ve been calling on the government to do that throughout this whole time. There was a thing called rent control in this province. The first thing the Harris government did when they came to power is they got rid of it, and it’s been weakened ever since—and weakened by the Liberals. The Liberals didn’t do anything to help people who were renting. They actually, quite frankly, made things worse by dabbling around the way that they did.

2000

I’ve got people in Timmins—as you do, Mr. Speaker, in your riding, and everybody else—who are now starting to see rent evictions because landlords are saying, “Well, I’m charging \$1,200 a month for the apartment. I can not renew the lease, and I can get \$1,400 or \$1,600,” or whatever the market will bear. And you can’t blame the landlord, in a funny kind of way, because people, given the opportunity, will take whatever they can when it comes to being able to make a buck. I understand that. But that’s where government steps in. That’s where, yes, regulation does work. It allows a level playing field for citizens not to get run over by our market forces.

Yes, market forces are good, absolutely. We’re lucky to live in a democracy that allows us the freedom that we have to be able to do the things we do. But we need to have rules by which we operate, and when we allow citizens to be evicted out of their apartments, when we allow citizens not to get the autism services that they need as young people under five, when we allow people like Bill’s son not to get the services that he needs in order to be able to allow the parents to work by providing the money necessary to do proper daycare, we’re letting people down.

Mr. Speaker, that’s what angers me about this government. This government wants to talk a good game about, “Oh, I’m there for you, yup,” and people listen just to the top message until you have a child who is autistic, until

you have parents in long-term care, until you have any of those services that government provides to people that are needed in order for you to have that level playing field or not be kicked out of your apartment by rent eviction, and that's when you wake up and say, "Oh my God. I should have voted NDP."

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): Questions and responses?

Mr. Lorne Coe: Speaker, through you to the member from Timmins: Will you be supporting this legislation, yes or no?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, to the honourable whip across the way: Are you going to support parents who have autistic kids?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): Questions and responses?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: You've got to love the member from Timmins. He's one of the most passionate speakers in the House, one of the longest-serving members in the House. He knows well that the previous Liberal government was known for their promises, later called "stretch goals"—broken promises, a long line of them.

And then, just days before the last election, the Premier now said he was going to lower gas taxes in his first term. Well, we know how that went, like that song, the old Promises, Promises song written by Burt Bacharach:

You made me promises promises

Knowing I'd believe

Promises promises

You knew you'd never keep

So Speaker, my question to the member from Timmins is, why, when he said during the last election that he would lower gas prices and he didn't, is he now going to give us a temporary cut that will only take effect after this coming election is over?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I think, Mr. Speaker, as I was saying in my speech, the Premier is being converted on the way to Damascus, just because there's an election. He's going to forget right after. Where has he been, for three and a half years, on any of these issues? They haven't moved on any of these things. They made autism services worse; they haven't done anything with energy prices to drive them down. If anything, they've driven them up. And all of a sudden, we're almost at an election and it's like, "Oh, we've got to tinker around and we've got to send out some really good press releases to make it look like we're doing something."

That's what this is all about. This is about trickery. It's about moving things around.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): Questions and responses?

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: The member from Timmins, instead of responding to the member from Whitby, asked a question in response. I know he likes to deflect and express rage, but I'm just wondering, going back to the question, because he didn't answer it, will you be voting yes or no on this legislation?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, I really like—I appreciate that question. I've got to say, to my friend across the way and

to the member from Whitby—who is actually my daughter's and my grandkid's MPP. I would like to adjust that if I can, with a New Democrat, but that's a whole other story.

Listen, we have repeatedly said this government could choose. It could choose to do things in order to help people such as Bill, his son and his wife, to provide the types of services they need so that they can participate in this economy. If we don't provide those types of supports, people like Bill and his wife often are not able to go to work, and that doesn't help their family income in any way.

I return the question this way: What are you going to do to assist people with the services they want?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): I recognize the member from Ottawa Centre.

Mr. Joel Harden: I appreciate my friend from Timmins holding forth as he has done. As he was talking about the \$550 million that could possibly be handed over to the billionaires who run oil companies, I'm getting in my mind, my friend, an image of Galen Weston pulling up probably one of his many vehicles to a gas station, getting that money back in his pocket. Maybe he's going to fill up some of his yachts too, maybe his private jet.

I'm wondering if my friends over here have any ethical problems with giving money to billionaires and millionaires when people need a plan. The plan we have, Speaker—just so it's on the record—is bringing back cap-and-trade so we bring \$30 billion back into our economy to actually deal with the climate crisis and not watch the planet burn. I was wondering if my friend had any reaction.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Thank you very much to the member from Ottawa. Listen, I think it's a pretty straight-up thing. What I was saying earlier is that this Legislature is about trying to do what's right and doing the difficult things, not doing the baubles. When we turned our attention—and this House has done it. When the Conservatives and New Democrats have worked together in committee and tried to address certain issues in a serious way, we've moved forward by finding solutions. That's not what this government is doing.

If you're trying to put money in the pockets of people, help them with the services that they need so that they can participate in the economy—such as people like Bill and his wife.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonell: I listened to the member opposite talk. You must be talking about the former Liberals, because we did not get rid of rent controls. We got rid of rent controls on a small group of homes that weren't built yet, because we weren't seeing construction of rental units in this province. And with those changes, we're now seeing more rental units being built than since the early 1990s. Last year, on the vast majority, the 99% of the rental units there, the rent increase was 0%. This year it was just over 1%. That's the lowest two-year rate increase in decades. And I don't mean the 1990s or 1980s; I'm talking about

the 1960s and the 1950s. That's what this government has done.

Now, I just want to know one question you haven't answered: Will you vote for this bill or not?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, the member is not answering the question that I posed in my debate. What are you going to do to protect those people who are being evicted because of rents? Why not do something? It was the Harris government that got rid of rent control, and this government is saying, "All we did is get rid of rent control on new buildings." It's not working. People who had buildings before the ones that were newly constructed are renovating people out of the units, and the new units are not protected.

I say to the members across the way, you have choices: You can put money back in the back pockets of oil companies or put it in the hands and the pockets of those people back home who really need it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): Questions and response?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I think the member for Timmins did an excellent job of exposing this tax reduction in the amount of tax per litre of gasoline temporarily available after the election for six months. He exposed that as the gimmick that it really is and how it does nothing to address the real affordability pressures that people are facing in their daily lives.

I'd like to ask the member, what does he think that says about this government, that it is more interested in providing this tax reduction at the pumps that will likely go into the pockets of big oil companies rather than dealing with the pressures around housing and all of the other things that people are facing?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I thank the member from London. Yes, absolutely: That's the point that I was making in my debate. If the government were serious about making sure that money stays in the pockets of individuals who are supposed to get this five-point-some-odd-cent reduction, they would regulate the price of gas at least for six months. They haven't done it, because they say, as the member from Nipissing-Renfrew—or whatever his riding is—said, "Oh, we believe in the market, and the market is going to set the price." So it says that this government is more intent on putting money in the back pockets of oil companies, rather than putting money in the back pockets of individuals who need it in their communities for services such as autism, paying the rent and doing the other things that matter.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): Questions and response?

2010

Mr. John Yakabuski: I want to thank the member from Timmins for his statement and his speech today. But I go back to the question one more time. Now, it's interesting; I felt a little something from you there where you said we're putting money into the pockets of the oil companies. So does that mean you're going to vote against this bill that brings relief for families? Because you gave a little bit of a hint. I know you're trying desperately to not

answer the question, but you've got yourself in a bit of a box here.

You said we've got two choices: to help the people or help the oil companies. You're implying, then, that to vote for this bill is helping the oil companies. So are you going to vote against the bill then? I really need to know because there are people calling me high, wide, and handsome here, or whatever you call it—left, right and centre. They want to know what the member from Timmins is going to do about the bill.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Listen, Mr. Speaker, nobody is going to have to worry about that. I've been here for 32 years, and New Democrats have always stood up and done what we thought was right for citizens.

You've admitted in your own debate that, in the end, the market price will dictate the price of gas and the price of diesel. What we're proposing is that if you're going to do that, you have two choices: You can do what we're proposing in our motion and give people a \$200 credit as far as a cheque back—or actually, three. You can put the money into autism services; you could do that. Or you can at least regulate your own legislation to say, "In the period of six months, we will regulate the price in order to make sure that oil companies do this." They're not doing that, so that tells me that this is nothing more than an election gimmick. Why don't you just admit that's what you're up to?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): There's not enough time for further questions or answers.

Further debate?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I rise to participate in the debate on Bill 111, the Tax Relief at the Pumps Act. If the government was serious about saving people money at the pumps, they would get the pumps out of our lives by getting big oil out of our wallets. We need relief from the pumps, not at the pumps, and we can do this in a more financially responsible and environmentally responsible way by cutting transit fares in half—municipal transit fares, GO fares and Ontario Northland fares—making it more affordable for people to be able to take transit and utilize existing transportation assets.

We can do this by bringing EV rebates back so the average person can afford to buy an electric car or pickup truck. We can do it by building affordable homes near where people work, so they're not forced into these long, soul-crushing commutes, just to find a place to live.

Speaker, here is the reality, and this where we need to be honest with the people of Ontario: We are in a climate crisis. The IPCC report this week once again says that it's now or never. We're at the point of no return. And do you know what the government's response to that was? To introduce legislation to increase fossil fuel consumption. And then, they've now doubled down and accelerated their desire to build the Bradford Bypass Holland Marsh highway. The Holland Marsh highway, along with Highway 413, will not only pave over the farmland that will feed us and the wetlands that will protect us from flooding, but it will lock people into expensive, unaffordable commutes, increasing climate pollution at a time when we need to urgently reduce climate pollution.

Speaker, we can do better. We can build connected, affordable, livable communities where people can live, work, play and shop locally. We can increase access to reliable, affordable transit. We can make electric cars and trucks affordable. But it will take leadership—leadership that's not going to go with simple slogans and election gimmicks; leadership that will be honest with the people of Ontario about the scale of the challenge and the urgency to act. Ontario can be a global leader in the new climate economy if we have a government that's going to take the climate crisis seriously. Speaker, it sends the wrong message to global investors who want to create jobs in this province when the government doesn't act to reduce climate pollution.

I have two daughters, and I think about them every time I walk into this House. We simply cannot leave them a burning planet. Half measures and no measures will not solve this crisis. We can't leave them an affordable housing crisis, and we can't leave them a province where we paved over the farmland that will feed them.

There are many things driving the affordability crisis in this province, but three of the main ones are food, fuel and housing. So at a time when we know the global supply chains are increasing the price of food, you would think we would have a government that would be committed to permanently protecting the prime farmland that grows that food, shortening our supply chains, increasing our food security and ensuring the affordability of our food for generations to come.

When it comes to fuel, here's the bottom line. International global oil shocks have disrupted our economies over and over again throughout my lifetime: in the 1970s, again in the 1980s, and now we're dealing with it again. So why don't we just get it out of our lives, especially when you can drive an electric vehicle. The cost of filling up my electric vehicle overnight is five bucks; meanwhile, people are spending over \$100 to put gas in their cars. Why don't we make electric cars affordable for people? Why don't we make transit affordable for people? Why don't we build communities where it's safe for people to walk and cycle or maybe to buy an electric bike? Actually, electric bike sales are going up as fast or faster than electric vehicle sales because people want affordable, clean modes of transportation.

When it comes to housing, we have a whole generation of Ontarians who are wondering if they'll ever be able to afford a home. So why don't we make changes to zoning rules to give people more choices to build duplexes, triplexes, quadplexes, laneway housing, tiny homes, secondary suites and basement apartments, so we can increase our housing supply within our existing built environment? Why doesn't the government come to the table once again, like we did back in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, and work with non-profit and co-op and social housing providers to build housing that people can live in and can afford to live in?

Speaker, we don't have to force a whole generation of Ontarians to commute long distances just to be able to find a place to live. We have solutions to the climate crisis.

They will improve our lives, and they will make life less expensive. We just need the leadership to get it done.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): Question and response?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I want to thank my colleague from Guelph for his speech there. But I've got to say, is he starting a new party, the "gryopic" party, because it's a cross between "green" and "myopic"? He's on one track here—one track.

The member knows that we are transforming the global economy in the EV sector. They're beating a path to Ontario. We're going to be the leading jurisdiction for electric vehicles, but that doesn't happen overnight. We are taking the steps to make sure that Canada and Ontario lead the way when it comes to the transition to green vehicles. But there won't be a charging station everywhere for your \$5 fill-up tomorrow. But in the meantime, you're saying that we want to increase the consumption of fuels? No, this will reduce it with our electric vehicle plan.

I do want to ask you one question—it's in your riding. Highway 7: Are you proposing that we should stop construction on that so that people in your riding have a tougher time getting from A to B?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: In my riding, I hope the government finally delivers on all-day, two-way GO. I hope the government actually invests in electric buses so we can get between Guelph and K-W and Hamilton and Cambridge affordably and efficiently.

But when it comes to electric vehicles, I've been calling for a mining-to-EV minerals and manufacturing strategy for years. It's unfortunate—

Interjection.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Hold on. It's unfortunate that the government is finally realizing at the last minute that this is a smart move. But let's be honest: Tennessee and Kentucky, two states that we compete with, last year got \$11.5 billion in EV manufacturing investment. Ontario has only captured a fraction of it. So let's ramp it up and make sure that the people of this province can actually afford to buy the electric vehicles that we're going to make right here.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): I recognize the member from Algoma–Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Since we're on EV vehicles, I might as well continue on with that theme. I think maybe the member will be able to help me out. We've seen what other incentives when it comes to EV rebates have done globally. We've seen it here in our country, particularly in Quebec and BC, where the manufacturing sector has really blossomed, has really grown. Whereas here in Ontario, we've seen this government—as soon as they came into power, they actually removed and withdrew the rebates that were there. If we're looking at growing markets, if we're going to profit, if we're going to move EV vehicles going forward and that's the path we're taking, what would you think would be an initial way of actually doing it? Would the rebate and incentive actually work in order to create greater markets?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Absolutely. We want to build electric vehicles in Ontario. I think, actually, everybody in the House agrees with that now. After years of being opposed to them on the other side, I think we're all in agreement that we want to build them here. But we want people to be able to afford them. In places like British Columbia and Quebec, their EV sales are far higher than in Ontario because they helped make them affordable for the average person.

I'll use my own electric vehicle as an example. The sticker price is \$38,000. If we would bring in what the Ontario Greens are proposing, a \$10,000 rebate, that would knock it down to \$28,000. If you add the federal rebate, that's \$23,000. Suddenly, that is a vehicle that people can afford. We're not going to need to have those rebates in place for a long time, because as we have more vehicles available, the price will come down. But while we're building the market, let's make it affordable for the average person so they can save money by avoiding the pumps.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): We have time for a 30-second question and a 30-second answer.

Mr. Dave Smith: I'll be very quick on this: In the spirit of collaboration, if I concede that all internal combustion vehicles need to be replaced by electric vehicles, will you concede that they need a road to drive on, and support the 413?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I concede they need a road to drive on, which is exactly why we should not have the 407 be so underutilized that you could actually land planes on the 407. Why don't we take the leverage we have from the \$1-billion penalty that we should have charged them and say, "Do you know what? Let's have a dedicated truck lane on the 407 so we can avoid having to build the 413, spending \$10 billion that could go to autism and affordable housing and health care and so many other things."

Speaker, I want to close and be very clear: I will be voting against Bill 111, and anyone who believes in climate action should vote against Bill 111 as well.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): Further debate?

Ms. Laurie Scott: I just want to say I'll be splitting my time with the member from Whitby.

I am pleased to speak about the Tax Relief at the Pumps Act, 2022. It has been an exciting debate this evening here, Mr. Speaker.

This bill, without a doubt, is putting hard-earned money back into the pockets of the people and the businesses in Ontario—and that will happen. This is part of our plan to provide relief to Ontarians by temporarily cutting the gas tax by 5.7 cents per litre and the fuel tax by 5.3 cents per litre for six months, beginning July 1, 2022. These are direct savings in addition to the steps that we've already taken to reduce gas and fuel prices by eliminating the cap-and-trade system.

From day one, our government has worked to keep costs down and provide much-needed relief to families and businesses. That's why one of our first actions as a government was to cancel the cap-and-trade system,

cutting government charges on gasoline by 4.3 cents per litre. When combined with the savings from this proposed legislation, the reduction in provincial taxes and charges on gas would total 10 cents per litre.

Unfortunately, we all know what happened: The federal government elected to raise the carbon tax on April 1. We all know the history, how we fought the federal government and went to the top courts. We lost, and you're paying for it at the pumps. So on April 1, an extra 2.2 cents is now added on to the cost of a litre of gas just from carbon tax, and then the carbon tax now accounts for 11 cents a litre. They want to see it go higher than that. The tax of the federal Liberal government will reach nearly 38 cents a litre by the end of this decade.

I've said many times in my riding of Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock that the feds should not have increased the carbon tax on April 1. We're all talking affordability, we all know people are hurting, but they ignored that totally. We all know that people, especially in rural Ontario, suffer the most from this.

At a time when the cost of essentials, from gas to groceries, is on the rise, we need to be helping Ontarians, not hurting them, and this new development is just one more reason the federal Liberals must rethink that additional tax on everything and come to the table. They can't ignore what they're hearing, because if we're hearing it, they're hearing it. We're going to continue to call on the federal government to cut the carbon tax and join us in providing relief to Ontario families. That's why our government is taking action and cutting the gas tax on a temporary basis to offset this increase in cost and provide real tax relief to the people of Ontario.

That's not all we're doing. We're removing road tolls on Highways 412 and 418. Thank you to the Minister of Transportation—a good announcement this week. We're eliminating licence plate renewal fees and stickers, and we're providing tax relief for seniors, workers and families. It's clear our government is keeping costs down for the people of Ontario.

Vehicle owners in Ontario would see significant direct savings from this proposed gas tax cut, and, in addition to the elimination of licence plate renewal fees I just mentioned, households will benefit from an average combined savings of about \$465 dollars in 2022.

In this period of economic uncertainty, families and businesses need extra help to keep the costs down. That's why our government intends to cut the gas and fuel tax rates, tackling the rising cost of living and putting money back in the pockets of people and businesses. We all know Ontarians work hard, and our government understands that taxpayers are under pressure. We've been steadfast in our commitment to make every necessary resource available to protect people and to protect jobs.

Before our government came into power, we were seeing companies like Ford leaving, we were seeing GM close down, we were seeing Chrysler say that Ontario was the most expensive jurisdiction to do business in and there was no point in making investments. Well, that changed in 2018. We lowered taxes, we reduced electricity costs and

cut red tape that was stifling innovation and manufacturing that we know drove those 300,000 manufacturing jobs south of the border.

But look where we are today. We've reduced business costs in Ontario by nearly \$7 billion annually after listening carefully to what the auto industry requires to safeguard the goods it supports today, and while investing in the skills and technology essential to remain competitive for tomorrow.

There have been recent investments, thanks to the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade. Thank you very much. You and the Premier have been doing quite the show and the people of Ontario appreciate that—almost \$6 billion in Ontario assembly operations investments, including transformative investments in electric vehicle production that offer a game-changing opportunity to position the province as the North American leader in building the car of the future. The companies that left came back. I'm not using that as a prop but just to say there's a lot of information in Unleashing Ontario. Thank you again, Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade.

We put the investments in place and the economy in place so that GM could come back, so that Ford would continue manufacturing, so that Honda would continue to manufacture. The leader of the Green Party has got to be a little bit happy on this, what we're seeing. Come on.

I know that a couple of days ago we were at GM, announcing a \$2-billion investment with our government's support of a grant of up to \$259 million. Many people don't know, but GM used to be the largest private employer in my riding of Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock. It's very close to Oshawa. That changed, of course, over the years, but the bounce is coming back. I think they're saying almost 2,600 jobs are going to come back, and I invite people to come and live in the beautiful riding of Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock and you can work close to home.

This investment—you've seen it on TV, the Chevrolet Silverado pickup production: They're adding a third shift. It's going to be making Oshawa's GM plant the only one to produce both heavy- and light-duty pickups. These are good-paying jobs. It's good for the province of Ontario. I know that the Minister of Economic Development and Job Creation said that we're at 307,000 more jobs than before COVID. We are bouncing back. We're advocating for making life more affordable in the province of Ontario. I know that there are different kinds of good jobs that are out there, and I know the minister of labour, skills training and jobs—a lot of words in there—has put a great deal of work in trying to match jobs for the people that we have in the province of Ontario and getting that training coordination.

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When we said that the carbon tax would cost the people of the province of Ontario too much, I want to say that the party opposite fought against us on that. The parties opposite, they're advocating for making life more expensive, but we're not advocating for that and we've shown

that in the three and a half years, almost four years that we've been in government.

We know that the price of the carbon tax would drive up everything. Members have spoken about the ripple effect. When you put up the cost of gas, everything is affected. You see the price ripple into our communities, into our grocery stores, into the everyday shopping, truck drivers pay more—it continues on and on. So now we're looking at gas that's around \$1.70 a litre. It's going to only increase with the carbon tax.

We saw people hurting; we've listened. Small business owners in my riding, residents in rural ridings everywhere, as I said, they hurt the most. This bill that we're introducing puts more money back into Ontarians' pockets.

I know that not everybody has natural gas in the province of Ontario. I know that in rural Ontario we have propane and oil. One constituent of mine, since the carbon tax has been on, they pay \$1,400 a month to heat their home. That is just borderline unaffordable for him. It's making everyone suffer.

The carbon tax is only making life more difficult for Ontarians. We saw that go up on April 1 again. It's just too much. We continue to fight the federal government to say, "Give us a break. We can't afford these increases nor the future increases." Mr. Speaker, I have no idea, but we will continue to fight the federal carbon tax, because it's not the right approach for the people of Ontario. We can get and we are building and making great strides to a green economy by the investments that I've just mentioned, just in the EV sector alone.

I think that I have to share my time with the member from Whitby. He and I are pretty close to Oshawa, so we're probably all going to talk about the similar investments that we're happy to see that our government has made, but also the fact that those investments would not have been made unless we as a government brought down the cost of doing business in Ontario—get those companies back, get those jobs on the way. We're providing relief for the people of Ontario by bringing in this legislation.

I will pass it over to the member from Whitby.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): The member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock indicated she would be sharing her time, so I recognize the member from Whitby.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Good evening, Speaker, and thank you very much for the opportunity to speak on the Tax Relief at the Pumps Act, 2022. What's clear when you look at the legislation is that so many of us spend a significant amount of time in our daily lives in the car or a vehicle, criss-crossing the province to best serve and be of service to our local constituents. I know I do, and I'm sure you do as well, Speaker. Meanwhile, households that do not own vehicles will benefit, with this particular legislation, from the impact of the proposed gas tax cut in the prices paid for things like taxis, food delivery and consumer products. And overall, households would benefit from an average combined savings of about \$465 dollars in 2022.

We've experienced so much uncertainty over the past two years, thanks in large part due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which presented unprecedented challenges for us both globally and locally, and the effect in the region of Durham was significant. Supply chain disruptions reminded all of us that even the best and strongest systems can waver in the face of global geopolitical conflict and extraordinary health and health care system challenges.

After more than two years of social and economic uncertainty, our government's proposed Tax Relief at the Pumps Act, 2022, brings a degree of certainty to one aspect of people's lives, and that is helping families and businesses bring down their costs, so they can focus on what's important. Our government's proposed Tax Relief at the Pumps Act is another legislative initiative aimed at keeping costs down for Ontarians.

Speaker, here are some of the measures that have already been announced and are under way across Ontario: To help commuters in the region of Durham, our government has eliminated the road tolls that were placed on Highway 412 and Highway 418 by the previous government, supported by the NDP. My thanks again to the Minister of Transportation for her leadership and commitment in getting this done.

Who thought the drivers of Durham deserved to be shaken down for more cash, just for trying to get from point A to point B? For context, Speaker, Highways 412 and 418 were the only tolled north-south highways in Ontario. Removing the tolls as of yesterday, April 5, provides more travel options for local residents, relieves gridlock on local roads across Durham region and helps improve economic competitiveness for local businesses.

Yesterday, the regional chair, John Henry, was on location with the Premier and the mayors from the region of Durham. They made a very important point about the linkage of what we're doing in improving economic competitiveness with the economic recovery plan for the region of Durham. Most importantly, our government restored fairness in the region of Durham, while also addressing local congestion.

We also provided relief to all drivers in the province, making life more affordable and convenient for nearly eight million vehicle owners by eliminating the licence plate renewal fees and the requirement to have a licence plate sticker for passenger vehicles, light-duty trucks, motorcycles and mopeds, effective March 13, 2022.

Our government introduced red tape legislation that would enable the province to refund eligible individual owners of vehicles for any licence plate renewal fees paid since March 2020. Thousands of refund cheques started to arrive in mailboxes at the end of March. Importantly, Speaker, eliminating renewal fees will save vehicle owners \$120 a year in southern Ontario and \$60 a year in northern Ontario for passenger and light commercial vehicles.

Our government's work to make costs lower for people also extends to some of our advocacy. The Ontario government is continuing to call on the federal government to help families and businesses in the face of rising costs by

cutting the carbon tax, which increased to 11.5 cents per litre on gasoline and 13.4 cents per litre on diesel on April 1, 2022.

Since the beginning of this mandate, Speaker, our government has urged the federal government not to move ahead with its job-killing carbon tax. In 2018, we implemented legislation to eliminate the previous government's cap-and-trade carbon tax; to reduce gas prices by 4.3 cents per litre and to lower home heating costs, saving households on average \$260 per year in fuel and other costs; and to remove a burden from Ontario businesses by allowing them to grow, create jobs and compete around the world.

But, Speaker, the federal government implemented a law to force low- and middle-income seniors, workers, families and small businesses to start paying a rapidly escalating carbon tax, starting on April 1, 2019. We knew then that families and businesses simply could not afford another cost-of-living hike, and yet, every year since then, that tax has been going up.

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Our government is urgently calling on the federal government to step up and do something about rising gas prices. What's clear is that families in Ontario should not have to make the difficult choice between filling their tank and filling their fridge. That is our bottom line and will continue to be our bottom line going forward.

This proposed tax cut would be effective July 1, 2022, to provide the industry, including manufacturers, wholesalers and retailers, the required time to adjust their systems and business processes.

Speaker, after so much uncertainty and sacrifice, both personally and collectively, now is the time to take bold action and make meaningful changes that will impact the bottom lines and pocketbooks of Ontario's businesses and hard-working families in the region of Durham and other parts of Ontario.

With the latest job numbers pointing to an economic recovery that includes 194,000 jobs gained in February in Ontario and critical investments during the pandemic that are paving the way for healthier communities, new jobs and opportunities—when I go to the doors in the town of Whitby, people are looking for that: healthier communities, new jobs, opportunities and hope.

Even though there are many reasons to celebrate the enormous progress we've made together, we also know that people and businesses want our government to keep working for them, serving them, to do more to keep costs low. We know that seniors, workers and families want to keep their tax dollars where they belong, and that is in their own pocket.

I was out this past weekend canvassing, knocking on doors in an area of Whitby that is just in the middle of the riding. What I heard consistently from those hard-working families in Whitby is they need the tax dollars where they belong—in their pockets—so they can invest in themselves, in the town of Whitby, other parts of the region of Durham, their families and, importantly—and this is a generational point—their future and the future of their children. That is why we've brought forward the Tax Relief at the Pumps Act, 2022.

What's abundantly clear is that we will continue fighting for the workers, the drivers, the front-line heroes and the hard-working families, the town of Whitby, the region of Durham and every part of this great province of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): Questions and response?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'm going to read from an email I got: "I had an unfortunate event of becoming unemployed a few years ago, due to illness. The situation forced me to be on a strict budget, as I am now on a fixed income of \$1,000 per month. After paying essential bills, I have \$120 left for food for the month."

This government has calculated for six months this pilot project. You're going to get \$65 back. Keep in mind, this person doesn't have a car. I'd like to know how this bill is going to help this person's budget and put food on their table when they don't have a vehicle. How do they guarantee grocery stores are actually going to reduce food costs so that this person can afford to eat?

Mr. Lorne Coe: This particular initiative fits into the overall government's plan to cut costs and to keep life affordable. We appreciate that Ontarians work hard, and our government understands that taxpayers are under pressure. That's why we've introduced and expanded a suite of a variety of initiatives to address these particular demands going forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): Questions and response?

Mr. Will Bouma: I appreciate the debate tonight. I was wondering if I could ask the member from Whitby— few weeks ago, we listened to the opposition introduce a bill, Bill 91, which would have had the government just set fuel prices to give relief to people. Obviously, we see holes for that. We're actually reducing taxes for the people of Ontario. I was wondering if the member from Whitby could help explain to the House a little bit why this is a much better approach than just the government setting fuel prices?

Mr. Lorne Coe: Bill 111, the Tax Relief at the Pumps Act, is one of the best ways to cut costs for Ontarians and help keep their money where it belongs, in their pockets. That's why I believe this particular bill will have an effect, along with some of the other initiatives that we introduced earlier this year to address the demands that hard-working families are dealing with.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): I recognize the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan.

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: Thank you to member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, who always brags about her beautiful riding, and the member from Durham for their remarks on Bill 111.

When I'm looking at the savings of potentially \$65— and I agree with you that \$65 is significant to a lot of people. The member from Durham said that people need time to adjust to this, and that's why we can't implement this immediately. But they don't need any time to adjust when they're raising it every weekend or every five minutes in northern Ontario. What I want to know is, if

this is such a great idea and you're boasting about it, why aren't you doing it immediately?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): I recognize the member for Whitby for the answer.

Mr. Lorne Coe: I think I indicated in my remarks that there were steps in terms of the suppliers and manufacturers that they would have to take in order to effect that. That work is under way, and that is part of the aspect that is informing the delay.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): I recognize the member for Sarnia–Lambton.

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a pleasure to rise in the House today. I've listened to most of debate here all afternoon and evening, so I want to thank both the member from Whitby and also the member for Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, and I'd ask to direct a question to her.

The federal government recently increased the carbon tax, and it couldn't have come at a worse time for Canadians. Could you speak to the effect of the carbon tax on the taxpayers of Ontario?

Ms. Laurie Scott: Yes, I can. The carbon tax is a terrible tax to put on the people. I've referenced my riding many times. It's a rural riding, and I know the member from Thunder Bay has similar situations.

We've fought the federal government on the carbon tax. We said no. We have a plan to decrease emissions. It's not by taxing people. We can change our climate for the better—not through taxing people, through better public policy. You're punishing people, especially rural people, especially low-income people, especially medium-income people, by putting on the carbon tax.

The court made the decision and the feds put the carbon tax on. We see that the people need relief. We are bringing this bill forward, Bill 111, Tax Relief at the Pumps Act, 2022. I just wanted to make sure I got it right. But the federal government could have at least stopped that increase on April 1 and given us a break.

Come on, people. Listen to what's going on in your communities. Fight for those people that you think you represent, but you don't.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): I recognize the member for Windsor–Tecumseh.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: My question is also to the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, who started off her presentation by talking about the temporary solution that the government has come up with.

Now my question: If you really believe it, if you believe it's just the right thing to do, and it's not a gimmick on the eve of a provincial election, why are you only promising a temporary cut for six months and not a permanent one, as promised by your leader four years ago when he promised he was going to cut taxes on gasoline by 10 cents a litre? He hasn't done it, and now your government is promising a temporary cut for six months. If you believe in it, why aren't you making it permanent?

Ms. Laurie Scott: Well, Mr. Speaker, we have done many things besides cut the price of gas for the people of Ontario and the affordability factor. The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing has just come in. The

measures that have been taken to create more housing supply for the people of Ontario, a seniors' tax credit for renovations, we have the LIFT tax credit for those with low income—we've done many things.

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What I want to say also, to carry on for the member from Sarnia–Lambton, is that we're going to continue to fight the federal government. The carbon tax is penalizing the people in the province of Ontario that need all governments' help the most. So yes, we're lowering the price on the gas pump. We've lowered other taxes for the people of Ontario. We're going to continue to do that when we form the next government—the people willing—and we're going to continue to fight the federal government, because the carbon tax has to go.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): I recognize the member from Niagara West.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I appreciate the opportunity to rise and ask the member from Whitby—the excellent member from Whitby—a question about affordability. I know the member from London–Fanshawe touched a little bit upon this question, but obviously, I recognize that the reduction in gas taxes is not the only thing that's been put into place since our government came to office. I'm wondering if you could speak a little bit more about the low-income family tax credit, the LIFT credit, and what that means for low-income workers who will not have to pay a single cent of provincial income tax, and how that money is going directly back into their pockets and, of course, some of the other measures that we put in place to save the people of this province money when it comes to improving the cost of living in the province of Ontario.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Thank you to my colleague for that question. In my remarks earlier I talked about some of the other initiatives that we have brought forward earlier in this particular term. I'll use a couple of examples: the Ontario Jobs Training Tax Credit that helps workers get the training they need; the Seniors' Home Safety Tax Credit that helps seniors make their homes safer and more accessible; and the low-income individuals and families LIFT tax credit. These are just examples of our plan to keep costs down for hard-working Ontario families and businesses, and make life overall more affordable.

We're getting it done; the opposition continues to say no.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Mantha: My question is going to be quick. This is a subsidized idea that's going to be to the tune of \$120 million-plus.

My question is to member from Whitby: Would you not think that it would be also something very beneficial for the government—and I asked this question earlier, so I'm going to ask this member as well. The \$200 million that the government put out to other companies which weren't eligible for the small business grant: Wouldn't it be an opportunity for you to pursue down that avenue to obtain that \$200 million for Ontarians so that they could benefit from using those dollars in their own pockets?

Mr. Lorne Coe: Thank you to my colleague for that, Speaker. In my particular riding, what was really important was getting the grant to the small businesses immediately, so they could continue their business, provide the level of service that they could within the parameters of the pandemic, but also make sure that their families were sustained as well. That particular approach was very successful, based on the feedback that I got through round tables that I hosted in the town of Whitby, for the hard-working businesses.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): Further debate? I recognize the member for Peterborough–Kawartha.

Mr. Dave Smith: God's country.

Interjection.

Mr. Dave Smith: I am going for that name, absolutely, yes.

Mr. Speaker, tonight's sitting—there are times during night sittings where we can get away with a little bit of poetic licence, so to speak. In honour of my good friend from Windsor–Tecumseh, who passed a private member's bill for the poet laureate in the name of Gord Downie, I thought this would be fitting tonight to quote some lyrics from a Tragically Hip song:

There's no simple explanation
For anything important any of us do
And yeah, the human tragedy
Consists in the necessity
Of living with the consequences
Under pressure, under pressure.

Mr. John Vanthof: Bring back Doug and the Slugs.

Mr. Dave Smith: I love Doug and the Slugs too.

But where I'm going with that is, really—as we've been talking about putting money back into people's pockets, as we've been talking about reducing the amount of tax that people are paying, it's been tried to be brought down to something very simple. The opposition has said, "It's a simple explanation. We're trying to put money in the pockets of big oil companies." What we're saying is that instant relief in the pockets of the taxpayers of Ontario is something that's good.

I'm actually going to use a sentence that the member from Waterloo said tonight in her speech. She said that people need relief right now. The carbon tax that the federal government increased on April 1 increased the costs for people. It increased the cost of gasoline. It increased the cost of diesel fuel. It increased the cost of every single thing that we have.

I said it earlier tonight in my questions. I live in a riding where about 45% of my population is rural. Agribusiness is a massive part of my riding. It's been said before that one out of every eight people in Ontario works in the agribusiness, but I can guarantee you that eight out of every eight people in Ontario eat food from agribusiness. There's not a single person in Ontario who will not be affected when the price of fuel increases. Let me say that again, because I cannot emphasize it enough: There is not

a single person in Ontario who will not be affected by an increase in the cost of fuel.

One of the opposition members tonight talked about someone in their riding who has \$100 at the end of—

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: It's \$125.

Mr. Dave Smith: Not a great deal of money to spend on groceries. Everything in the grocery store, every single item in the grocery store, was shipped to the grocery store. If it was produce, it was shipped from the farm to the food terminal to the grocery store. Every single item that you buy in any store, anywhere in Ontario, was brought to that store.

Transport trucks have improved significantly in their gas mileage, in their fuel mileage. Back in the 1970s and 1980s, it wasn't uncommon to get about five kilometres per litre. Now transport trucks are getting around 7.5 kilometres per litre of fuel. Why did they move to that? Because if they use less fuel, it reduces their overall cost. If you're increasing the price of fuel, you're increasing the price of every single thing that you buy. It is very simple economics.

In my riding, it's about 150 kilometres, give or take, depending on where you are in the riding—it could be as much as 225 kilometres—from the farm to the food terminal. At seven kilometres per litre—you're travelling roughly 150 kilometres each way; 300 kilometres—we're talking about 40 litres of fuel every trip, every single day, 365 days a year. Even if we just say that it's business days, just the five days of the week, not Saturday and Sunday—farms actually operate seven days a week, but let's bring it down to that. For 250 or 260 trips, how much money are we talking? It adds up very quickly.

About 45,000 people in my riding have something to do with the agriculture industries. That's an awful lot of money. That's an awful lot of expense that gets added to the cost of food, to the cost of clothing, to the cost of building materials. Every single thing we have in Ontario has been transported at some point.

2100

Winston Churchill once said, and I love this quote: "I contend that for a nation to try to tax itself into prosperity is like a man standing in a bucket and trying to lift himself up by the handle." And he's right: Every time you increase taxes, you're making it more difficult for someone.

I find it really interesting when we're talking to some of the members of the opposition, because they talk about government revenue. Government doesn't make money; government takes money from you to do something. And it is inefficient, and it doesn't matter how much money it takes from you; it will never be able to give all of that money back to you in service. So we as Conservatives look at ways—"How can we put money back into people's pockets? How can we give you the ability to choose how you're going to spend that money?" That's what this bill does: It gives real relief to everyday people, whether they own a car or not, because, as I said, every single thing, every single item, that you purchase in a store had to be shipped into it.

Ronald Reagan said, "Whenever we lower the tax rates, our entire nation is better off." We're lowering the tax

rates here in Ontario. We're putting money back into people's pockets. It's a very cynical opinion that has been brought to us by the opposition: "Oh, if you cut the price of gas by five and a half cents, the oil company is just going to raise it by five and a half cents, so you're not doing anything."

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: It's simplistic.

Mr. Dave Smith: It's very simplistic. But there is no simple explanation for anything important any of us do.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: They have no nuance.

Mr. Dave Smith: None whatsoever.

Here's a great commentary on this, Mr. Speaker: Back in the summer, I was on the Rob Snow Show in Ottawa a number of times, and the member from Timmins was on it with me a number of times, and the member from Nickel Belt was on it with me a number of times. One of things that Rob Snow talked about was what the cost of gas was at that point for all of us, and it was before the significant increase. It was around \$1.25, \$1.30 or so. I think it got as high as about \$1.39. The member from Timmins spoke repeatedly about how expensive it was to buy gas in northern Ontario, that he was paying, his constituents were paying a couple of cents more than in southern Ontario. Every time we talked about the price of gas, he was consistently about three cents more than what it was in Peterborough, so I'll give him that. It fluctuated in Ottawa. Sometimes, Ottawa was cheaper than the three of us; sometimes, Ottawa was a little bit more expensive than Peterborough but less than Timmins and so on.

The member from Nickel Belt talked about gas prices in her riding as well, and both of them came out and said we need to find a way to reduce the cost of gasoline in northern Ontario. Ladies and gentlemen, I offer you Bill 111. We are reducing the cost of gasoline all across Ontario by more than five cents. So I want everybody from Timmins and everybody Nickel Belt to watch the debate, to watch the vote, because those two members have said, publicly, we need to find a way to reduce the price of gasoline, and we're doing that tonight. If they don't vote in favour of this, they have stood up publicly on public radio, where the CRTC has copies of all of the broadcasts. They have it on public record: "We must reduce the price of gasoline," and we are doing that with this bill. So if they don't vote in favour of it, what does that say about their word? Because they say publicly we must reduce the price of gas. This bill will reduce the price of gas. They're boxed into a corner. Either they believe that we should reduce the price of gas and vote in favour of this, or they do not believe that we should be reducing the price of gas, although they have publicly said it.

The NDP have advocated repeatedly for a higher carbon tax: "We must increase the price of gasoline to change behaviour." A higher carbon tax; higher expense. And what's happening tonight? They're now are saying that we're not doing enough, that we're not reducing the price of gas enough. We should be regulating it and lowering it. We should be saying, right now, that that five and a half cents comes off immediately—not in July, immediately. Which is it?

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Are they going to vote for it?

Mr. Dave Smith: Are they going to vote for it? It's a great question. Are they going to stand up and say, "Yes, my word means something. When I said I wanted gas prices lowered, and I had the opportunity to vote on a bill that would lower gas prices, yes, I voted in favour of lowering gas prices to make it easier on the people of this province"? Or are they going to vote no and go against what they have been saying? Because we're already seeing that dichotomy of it. On one hand, they're saying, "We have to lower the price of gas. It's too expensive for people to buy gasoline. But we have to increase the price of gas by increasing the carbon tax, because the only way we're going to get people to stop using gasoline is if we increase the price." Kind of a flip-flop here.

I am really looking forward to how this vote is going to go when it goes forward, because we are lowering the price of gasoline, we're lowering the price of diesel fuel, we're lowering the cost of every single thing that you're going to buy, because that's what the government should do. We should be looking at how we make life easier for people, how we make life more affordable for people, how we give you, the consumer, you, the taxpayer, and you, the resident of Ontario, a reduction in your costs. How do we make life easier for you? How do we find a way to help you? Real relief at the gas pump; real relief with fuel. It helps everybody.

I know that there are going to be members opposite who are going to say, "Not everybody has a car. Not everybody is buying gasoline. Not everybody is going to benefit from this," according to the opposition. Because they discount the fact that every single farm in my riding that feeds so many people who live in cities has to ship their produce, their meat, their eggs, their milk, and they pay tax on those fuels. Every single product that you buy in a store is shipped. We've got raw materials that are coming down from different areas that get processed. They have to be shipped, have to be transported from wherever it is to wherever it's going to be processed. Then when it's processed, it has to be shipped from wherever it is to whatever retail outlet there is. Every time you increase an input cost, you increase an output cost. If you can reduce the input cost, you reduce the output cost, and that's good for the people of Ontario. That is something that's positive.

We've embarked on reducing red tape for so many people in Ontario. When we were first elected, we were the most regulated province in Canada. We still are, but we've reduced a fair number of them. I think the stat was that we had well over 300,000 regulations in Ontario, and British Columbia was the next closest at 169,000. We were massively overregulated. We've worked through that trying to reduce those regulations.

What the NDP have put forward is, "We should regulate this more. We should regulate gasoline. We shouldn't provide real relief for people; we should provide more red tape. We should make it more difficult. We should make it harder, because if we make it harder, maybe somebody will do something differently, because it will affect them too much in their pocketbook."

2110

Our job as elected officials, as government, is to regulate to the point of integrity but not to the point of interference. Our job as legislators is to find ways to make life easier for the people who live in Ontario. Our job as elected officials is to represent the people who put us here. Every single day, somebody reaches out to my office and tells me that they can't afford something. Every single day, somebody reaches out to my office almost crying because of the situation they are in. They don't have enough money. They can't afford this. They can't afford that.

It's a very small amount that we're talking about. I grant you it's not a massive amount of money that every individual is going to see. We're talking about \$450 for the average family, between the reduction in gas, the reduction in the cost of licensing for your car, and some of the spinoff effects of it. It's going to work out to about \$450 a year; \$450 more in someone's pocket. It's \$450 more than they had.

I remember back to 2016—because this is one of the things that had made me think about entering politics—when the member from Don Valley West stood at the mike, and the taxation change that they were going to do was only going to cost the average person five more dollars—only five more dollars. That was less than the cost of a week's worth of coffee at Tim Hortons. Coffee was about a buck and change. It was going to be less than that. But everything that they did increased costs.

Dalton McGuinty, the former Premier, made a pledge that there were no new taxes, and the first thing he did was add user fees, because they weren't a tax. That hit the pocketbook of people in Ontario. I know it's a difficult thing for some in the opposition right now to understand. The way to build the economy in Ontario and the way to help people in Ontario is to reduce their costs, to put more money back in their pocket, to let them decide how they want to spend it.

We have an electric vehicle plan. It's going to take a number of years to transition to electric vehicles. They're still expensive. Not everyone can afford them. We know right now that there isn't a transport that is an electric vehicle transport that is going to be able to travel the distances that we need in Canada, especially in the winter when it's cold, because we know that those batteries' range gets cut in half. We're exploring other things, but until we get to the point where we can go to that type of an economy, we have to deal with what we have, and what we have right now is skyrocketing prices for fuel, skyrocketing prices for gas, for diesel. By cutting the provincial tax portion of it, that gas tax, we're cutting the costs for everyday people. We're making life more affordable for everyday people and we're reducing the cost it's going to be when they go to the store to buy their food.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): Question and response?

Mr. Joel Harden: Speaker, do you ever feel sometimes when you listen to debates in this place, particularly late at night, that you're in an episode of the Hunger Games? I

do. Here's why: We're debating a measure that the government wants, to bring more affordability to folks, but outside this theatre that we are in here, where very powerful people like Galen Weston or David Thomson or some of the powerful developers in our country are pulling various levers, inserting their influence—these are the folks making life more expensive. These are the folks making sure that the minimum wage increase that was supposed to come in during this Parliament didn't happen. That would have benefited 1.3 million Ontarians. They scrapped it. They brought in the LIFT tax credit, which is actually a net decrease for people.

So I'm asking the member from Peterborough sincerely: If you want to make life more affordable for folks, what are you going to do to make sure you create good jobs at gig employers? You've got a bill before the House that's going to make it worse.

Mr. Dave Smith: Let me tell you how we're going to create good-paying jobs for people in Ontario. We've got the best critical minerals strategy in the entire world, because every single critical mineral that you need for electric vehicles comes from Ontario. We are building that supply chain for it, so that you can take that raw material and you can process it in Ontario. And we have the manufacturing coming to—wait for it—Ontario.

In Windsor alone, 2,500 great-paying jobs; in Oshawa, 1,800 people right now working at General Motors, and they're adding another shift. Think about that. That is thousands of people making hundreds of thousands of dollars doing what we can do better than any other jurisdiction in the entire world.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): I recognize the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

Mr. Jim McDonell: The members opposite talk about the money, the savings on gas going back in people's pockets. Well, I'll tell you, a number of years ago, we did a study to see the effect of regulating gas prices. We are one of the few provinces in the country that don't regulate gas prices. When you looked at it and took away the taxes, we had the lowest-priced gas in the country, and we were the only one that wasn't regulated, because everybody that was regulated went to the top end of the range. That's what you get.

So when you're looking at putting money back into people's pockets, how do you see this bill working? And can you support it?

Mr. Dave Smith: Absolutely, I—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): I return to the member from Peterborough–Kawartha.

Mr. Dave Smith: Sorry, Speaker. I just get excited talking about these things sometimes. Absolutely, I'm going to be supporting this, because this is something that puts real relief into the pockets of people—real relief into the pockets of everyday people.

It might just be that those who are driving cars—let's say that they're only getting a single tank of gas a month. If nothing else, with a single tank of gas, the average vehicle in North America right now has a 72-litre tank. Seventy-two litres; five cents: They're going to be saving

almost four bucks on that. And what are they going to do with that \$4? Whatever they want, because it's their money; it's not ours. And we as government need to make sure that we're taking the least amount we can from people, because they know how to spend their money. They know how to manage their money, and we should be respecting that and putting as much money back in their pockets as possible.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): I recognize the member from London West.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Speaker, I suspect that the member for Peterborough–Kawartha recalls the last election, when he likely went door to door promoting his leader's promise to reduce the price of gas by 10 cents a litre if that government was elected. I suspect that he shared that promise far and wide.

And now, here we are, on the eve of another election, and his party is once again promising to reduce gas prices, if they are re-elected, for a temporary period of six months. Given the record, why should the people of Ontario believe anything that your party has to say?

Mr. Dave Smith: This is one of those fabulous things that we get to do when we're in government, one of those great things that we get to do as legislators: When we pass a bill, the bill has a royal assent date on it. We're going to pass this bill, and we're going to cut 5.5, 5.6 cents a litre of gas—

Interjection: It's 5.7.

Mr. Dave Smith: That's right, it's 5.7 cents a litre for every single litre of gasoline sold in Ontario. Because this bill will pass, this bill will receive royal assent, and those changes will happen in July, just as we said they would. Because as the government, when we pass a bill and we say, "Here's what's going to happen," and it receives royal assent: promise made, promise kept.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): I recognize the member from Niagara.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I appreciate the member's contributions today, Speaker. I've been very shocked to hear the members of the opposition, both the New Democrats and the Liberals, speak so glowingly about their love for taxes. On the one hand, they seem to be talking about the cost of living and understanding that there are pressures for their constituents, and yet on the other hand we see the New Democrats and the Liberals, as well as the Greens, join together to vote against the low-income family tax credit; to vote—at least it seems like—against this measure to reduce taxes. We've seen them vote against reducing the small business corporate income tax rate. We've seen them vote against measures that are going to put money back into the people of Ontario's pockets.

2120

My question to the member from Peterborough—a fantastic member who's advocating for the cost of living of the people in his constituency—is very simple: Why did the New Democrats and why did the Liberals love taxes so much?

Mr. Dave Smith: It reminds me of a quote of Margaret Thatcher, "The problem with socialism is you eventually run out of someone else's money." What the NDP haven't

realized yet is the government doesn't have a dime; it only has money that it takes from people. It is taxpayer money, it is not government money. There is nothing for free. We are taking money from people and we're paying for something else or we're giving it to someone else, and this is one of those cases where we are not going to take more money. We're actually putting money back into your pocket. It's a novel concept. Put money back into people's pockets and give people the ability to spend their money how they choose. Give people the ability to buy the things they need because you're not taking so much from them that they can't afford it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): I recognize the member from Windsor—Tecumseh.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Are you ready? I listened fully and intently, fully and completely to my friend doing his best Gord Downie impression tonight, and I was all torn up at his blow at high dough. Now he may think he's ahead by a century. Perhaps some of us think it's more like a nautical disaster that we've witnessed here this evening.

He's not locked in the trunk of a car, Speaker, I will give you that, but this bill is about the gas tank near the trunk of a car, and I'd just like to ask the Tragically Hip fan over there if he can tell us why it's only a temporary solution, not a permanent solution? If you believe in what you stand for, then stand for the permanent solution to high gas prices in Ontario.

Mr. Dave Smith: I think that our government has demonstrated over the last three-plus years, almost four years now, that we are looking at ways that we can reduce the cost of living for everybody in this province.

We have done things, like reduce the personal income tax on everybody who is in the lowest tax rate. They're not paying any tax. That is money right back into their pockets. That is demonstrated proof that that's what we're trying to do. We got rid of cap-and-trade because it was an unnecessary expense, and then the federal government, what did they do? They tacked on a carbon tax on top of it. Who opposed getting rid of cap-and-trade? The NDP. They were not looking at ways that they could reduce the price for everybody. What we're doing today is, we're going to reduce the price of gasoline by 5.7 cents, we're

going to reduce the price of diesel by 5.3 cents. That is real relief, and it's going to cut the cost of every single thing you buy.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): We have time for a very quick question and a very quick answer.

Mr. Michael Parsa: I thank my colleague for his presentation at this time. He did a great job. He just touched on this, so I wanted to ask him: The federal government's decision to increase the carbon tax virtually could not have come at a worse time after two years of challenge for the people of Ontario. I'm wondering if my colleague could tell us the effects that it will have on people, businesses in Ontario, and what our government will do in response?

Mr. Dave Smith: What we've seen from the federal government is an increase in the cost of doing everything in this country—not just in Ontario, but across the entire country. What we are doing is we're reducing the cost of doing business. We're reducing the cost of everyday life. We're making a positive difference by cutting the amount of money that people are going to have to pay for everything and giving more money back to them. It's like a double savings for them.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): Further debate? Further debate?

Mr. Parsa has moved second reading of Bill 111, An Act to amend the Fuel Tax Act and the Gasoline Tax Act with respect to a temporary reduction to the tax payable on certain clear fuel and on gasoline. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

Second reading vote deferred.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): Orders of the day?

Hon. Paul Calandra: No further business.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): There being no further business, this House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 2125.

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Ghamari, Goldie (PC)	Carleton	
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Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
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Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (OP)	Chatham-Kent—Leamington	
Oosterhoff, Sam (PC)	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	
Park, Lindsey (IND)	Durham	
Parsa, Michael (PC)	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth—Wellington	
Piccini, Hon. / L'hon. David (PC)	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
Rasheed, Hon. / L'hon. Kaleed (PC)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	Associate Minister of Digital Government / Ministre associé délégué de l'Action pour un gouvernement numérique
Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Indigenous Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones Minister of Northern Development, Mines, Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre du Développement du Nord, des Mines, des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
Roberts, Jeremy (PC)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	
Romano, Hon. / L'hon. Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	President of the Treasury Board / Président du Conseil du Trésor
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Simard, Amanda (LIB)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Singh, Gurratan (NDP)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Singh, Sara (NDP)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Skelly, Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	
Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Tangri, Hon. / L'hon. Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction / Ministre associée déléguée aux Petites Entreprises et à la Réduction des formalités administratives
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thanigasalam, Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	
Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associé délégué au dossier de la Santé mentale et de la Lutte contre les dépendances
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
Wilson, Jim (IND)	Simcoe—Grey	
Wynne, Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	
Yarde, Kevin (NDP)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	
Vacant	Ajax / Ajax	
Vacant	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Vacant	Elgin—Middlesex—London	

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Randy Pettapiece
Teresa J. Armstrong, Toby Barrett
Lorne Coe, Rudy Cuzzetto
Goldie Ghamari, Randy Hillier
Christina Maria Mitas, Judith Monteith-Farrell
Michael Parsa, Randy Pettapiece
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Thushitha Kobikrishna

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Ian Arthur
Ian Arthur, Will Bouma
Stephen Crawford, Catherine Fife
Ernie Hardeman, Mitzie Hunter
Logan Kanapathi, Sol Mamakwa
Jeremy Roberts, Dave Smith
Vijay Thanigasalam
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Michael Bushara

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: Logan Kanapathi
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Mike Schreiner
Jill Andrew, Robert Bailey
Will Bouma, Guy Bourgouin
Chris Glover, Mike Harris
Logan Kanapathi, Sheref Sabawy
Amarjot Sandhu, Mike Schreiner
Daisy Wai
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Isaiah Thorning

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Président: Gilles Bisson
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Aris Babikian
Deepak Anand, Aris Babikian
Gilles Bisson, Lorne Coe
Wayne Gates, Robin Martin
Norman Miller, Billy Pang
Amanda Simard, Marit Stiles
John Yakabuski
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tanzima Khan

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Daryl Kramp
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lucille Collard
Lucille Collard, Christine Hogarth
Daryl Kramp, Natalia Kusendova
Jim McDonell, Suze Morrison
Randy Pettapiece, Gurratan Singh
Donna Skelly, Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Kevin Yarde
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Thushitha Kobikrishna

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Présidente: Laurie Scott
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: France Gélinas
Rima Berns-McGown, France Gélinas
Goldie Ghamari, Mike Harris
Faisal Hassan, Jim McDonell
Sam Oosterhoff, Laurie Scott
Vijay Thanigasalam
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tanzima Khan

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Taras Natyshak
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Hogarth
Deepak Anand, Toby Barrett
Jessica Bell, Stephen Blais
Stephen Crawford, Rudy Cuzzetto
Christine Hogarth, Michael Mantha
Taras Natyshak, Michael Parsa
Amarjot Sandhu
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Aris Babikian
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: John Fraser
Aris Babikian, Lorne Coe
John Fraser, Vincent Ke
Laura Mae Lindo, Paul Miller
Billy Pang, Jeremy Roberts
Dave Smith, Daisy Wai
Jamie West
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Isaiah Thorning

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Présidente: Natalia Kusendova
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Bhutila Karpoche
Aris Babikian, Jeff Burch
Amy Fee, Michael Gravelle
Joel Harden, Mike Harris
Bhutila Karpoche, Natalia Kusendova
Robin Martin, Jim McDonell
Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Vanessa Kattar

**Select Committee on Emergency Management Oversight /
Comité spécial de la surveillance de la gestion des situations
d'urgence**

Chair / Président: Daryl Kramp
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Tom Rakocevic
Robert Bailey, Gilles Bisson
John Fraser, Christine Hogarth
Daryl Kramp, Robin Martin
Sam Oosterhoff, Tom Rakocevic
Sara Singh, Donna Skelly
Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell