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Mardi
28 février 2023

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 28 February 2023

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 28 février 2023

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Good morning. Let us pray.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

YOUR HEALTH ACT, 2023

LOI DE 2023

CONCERNANT VOTRE SANTÉ

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 27, 2023, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 60, An Act to amend and enact various Acts with respect to the health system / Projet de loi 60, Loi visant à modifier et à édicter diverses lois en ce qui concerne le système de santé.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Miss Monique Taylor: Oh, there's 20 minutes on the clock; I thought there would have been 10 minutes by this point. Good stuff; excellent, because I have a lot to say when it comes to this bill.

I'm pleased to have the opportunity to be able to speak up to this government to the concerns I've heard from my community when it comes to privatizing—profitizing—our health care system, which is exactly what is happening here in Bill 60—oh, it is 10 minutes. Now I'm disappointed because this is an important bill. We have definitely seen the crisis that has been happening in our health care system for years. Under the Liberals, we've seen hospitals underfunded, not kept up with inflation, and that was happening year over year.

The Conservatives come in in 2018 and continued and furthered that train even further. We're watching emergency rooms that are exploding at the seams, surgeries that have been cancelled. Sure, COVID definitely played a huge part in the struggles that we see in our health care system, but investment into our health care system would have helped alleviate some of those issues, and this government is sitting on billions of dollars that could be invested into our empty operating rooms. They could be investing into the empty beds that we see in our hospitals. It could be invested into the nurses in the health care system that we have relied on our entire lives here and who put everything on the line for each and every one of us during COVID and were thanked with a pay reduction—with legislation that forced their wages to receive 1% or less in raises. As we know, the cost of living has definitely increased, inflation has gone up, and we have put nurses,

who did everything for us, further behind, and we're seeing the effects of that.

To me, knowing that the Conservatives have always believed in small government and a privatized health care system, this is by design. We know that the government has starved our health care system and now created the scenario where people think that it's better—that it will be better, that it will be easier for them to receive the health care that they need if it's a private system, if we're “innovative,” as the government likes to call it.

Well, if they would have funded the public system, our public system would not be in the disrepair that it's in. And they have billions of dollars to be able to do that and, instead, they're choosing to sit on it, and what money they are investing into health care, they're investing it into for-profit institutions to be able to pick up those surgeries—the same surgeries that could be done in the public system if the dollars were there.

So the government is putting the money where they're choosing, and it's not in our public health care system so that everyone can get the health care that they need when they need it. Instead, they're going to put it in a for-profit investment system.

When people are building and creating these surgical centres of excellence, that they're going to be called—integrated community health service centres—they're doing that with their own money. They're doing that with invest-or money. When you invest in something, you're expecting a return, and that return is going to come from our collective health care dollars. Those collective health care dollars get there by the public's taxes. And so, to be taking those valuable taxes and giving them to profiteers to fix a problem that you created instead of just putting those into the public coffers and paying for our public health care system—that's a mess. That's definitely the wrong direction and nothing that I know my community wants to see.

I hear it on a regular basis of how disheartened they are with this government—I know they never really did have much faith in the Conservative government in my riding of Hamilton Mountain. That's why they don't vote for them and—I get it, and I'm grateful, because I'm here. But I'm here to speak on their behalf and through their voice. And that's exactly what the plan here is, and it is making sure that we are fighting back against the profitization of our health care system.

We hear from families who are struggling on a regular basis. This morning, I had the opportunity to go downstairs and to have breakfast with the rare disease folks, and I ran into someone who has been known here for quite some time, definitely to me: Sherry Caldwell. She's from the

Ontario Disability Coalition. She is an advocate. She is a mom. She is a mom with a now young woman daughter, who has had critical needs for her entire life, and that has forced Sherry to become an advocate. Because you can't just be a parent and sit back in Ontario when you have a child who has needs, because you will literally drown in the bureaucracy and in the wait times and in the not being able to get the services that your child needs. So these parents have to take on extra and become advocates to be able to work through our system.

She talked about the poverty that people with disabilities face. She talked about the struggles. And if you want me to expand on the poverty portion, a mom who has a severely disabled child—probably trach, feeding tubes, constant care—not able to get enough nursing care into the homes for these critical kids was definitely a story that she was telling me. And so mom has to stay home, and a lot of times, it's a single mom, and now she's forced to be on Ontario Works—she can't even get on a disability program or a caregiver program—to be able to care for her critical-needs child because she can't go to work because the government is refusing to provide the services and the funding that she needs.

0910

It's a broken, broken, broken system, but privatizing the system is not going to fix it. It is not going to help these moms who are struggling and kids who are on wait-lists to get surgeries. Some 12,000 kids waiting for surgeries in the province of Ontario—how is this humanly possible? Where is the heart in any of this government when it comes to taking care of our children? Because when we're not taking care of them now, we're destining them to a life of need, to a life of more services, to more supportive housing, to more social services.

Not providing kids what they need when they need it is a problem, and I wish I could get that through to this government. Our most valuable resources, our future, are our children. They are the ones who are going to lead us in the future. Without providing them with the resources they need when they need them, you're setting them up for failure. That is a big message—that has to happen.

Privatizing our health care system is not going to fix any of this. It is not going to alleviate the wait-lists. It's the same pool of nurses, it's the same pool of doctors that we have that have to be able to manage the public system and the private system. What are those same nurses and doctors going to do? They're going to go to the private system because they're going to get paid more, and they're going to get paid more out of the same pot of dollars that you're refusing to pay them with in the public system. How does this possibly make sense, other than it's buddies, it's friends, it's investors, it's "How do you help your friends make more money?"

There's no other explanation for investing in a for-profit system instead of into our precious, precious public health care system. I know I'm out of time. I'm looking forward to questions from the opposite side and members on my side. I appreciate the opportunity of being able to speak to Bill 60 today.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): It's now time for questions and answers. Questions?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I want to commend my colleague the member for Hamilton Mountain on her remarks. A lot of concerns have been raised about this legislation and the impact on patient safety. There are concerns about the total vagueness of the legislation when it comes to protections for patient health and oversight.

I wondered if the member has also heard those concerns being raised and whether the legislation actually does include anything to safeguard patient health in these for-profit health clinics.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you to the member from London West. She is absolutely correct. Schedule 2 is about deregulating health care settings by expanding the definition of "regulated health professionals" to include those who are not part of a regulatory college. So we're actually going backwards when it comes to safety and regulation. Going into any health care clinic, as Ontarians, as Canadians, we have come to be comfortable with believing in the fact that they're regulated, that they have the proper qualifications.

By deregulating the system under schedule 2, there will be no regulation. They have not decided who the oversight body is going to be. They said that will come later, in regulations. There are a lot of concerns happening here. The government has not thought this out. Again, I think it's more about the quick buck than it is public safety.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Ms. Laura Smith: In the Thornhill riding, we've had the incredible opportunity to explore the health system within the Shouldice. For years now, it has been a historic precedent. We've had hernia surgeries performed at this location. People have always said such glowing things about this location. I think it's actually the second or the third location in Ontario where these types of surgeries are performed. It is stand alone, one of the best locations in Ontario to have that kind of operation.

Everyone who walks into that facility pays with their OHIP card and not with a credit card. This has been going on for a very long time and I'm a very proud—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Question?

Ms. Laura Smith: Okay. We've heard from Ontarians across the province that they want access to care closer to home. Will the member opposite please support and expand access to care closer to home?

Miss Monique Taylor: Yes, I would love to. Can we do that on the public dollar? Can we make sure it actually goes to services and not for profit? That is the difference. We only have one lump of money. It has got to pay for services on both sides. You're taking part of that and giving it to a for-profit industry. How does that possibly make sense?

Of course people are happy that they're getting services. People need services. But they don't see the difference if it's coming from the public or from the for-profit. Who is going to see the difference is our public coffers and how far that can actually go. When they only have so much

money, what's going to go first? It's not going to be the for-profit. They're going to make sure that their shareholders get their investments back. What's going to happen is it's going to come from that health care service that individual's counting on.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Mr. Jeff Burch: I'm sure my friend from Hamilton Mountain agrees that we should be learning from other jurisdictions when we solve problems, and I'm sure she's also aware that in British Columbia, under the Liberal-Conservative coalition, they put a lot of money into private clinics and it was a disaster. It was more expensive. They were upselling people. It did not work out well. The current BC government has been taking back private clinics into the public realm and solving those problems.

Why does my friend think that this government in Ontario has such a problem learning from best practices in other jurisdictions?

Miss Monique Taylor: You're absolutely right. BC did just do that. They spent \$11.5 million to bring two private surgical centres on Vancouver Island back into the public system. They're not doing this because that system was working; they're doing it because they know that the precious dollars that are in our health care funding pot need to go to health care. They need to go to patients, not to for-profit investment corporations. That's exactly what this government is doing.

I think it's unfortunate that they're actually moving in the opposite direction from the fact-learning process that BC has put themselves into. It costs them money now to bring those systems back into the public realm. The Conservatives in Ontario are going in the wrong direction—*for-profit is not for our health care system.*

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Mr. John Jordan: We are all aware of surgical backlogs and that the status quo is not acceptable. That is why we are expanding our publicly funded system.

Does the member not agree that all health service providers need to be part of this solution?

Miss Monique Taylor: I don't think I caught the last words that he was saying, but what I did catch from him is, "Do I not agree that our health care system should be public?" I heard something about "public" over there. Our health care system needs to be in public hands. Expanding the services, making sure that people are getting the surgeries they need, that can still happen if you took that money that you're investing in private systems and invested it into our public system. You're going in absolutely—you're helping profiteers and their pockets instead of investing in those surgeries.

So who is it—which side of the aisle here—that's actually preventing people from getting surgeries? People wouldn't have the wait times they have now if this government wasn't sitting on billions of dollars in contingency funds instead of investing it into our health care system. For years our health care system has been underfunded, has not kept up with inflation, and now we're

seeing the devastating effects and the surgical backlogs that go with that.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank my colleague from Hamilton Mountain for her comments and her concerns about privatization and profitization in our health care system. As well, I would like to thank you for mentioning the importance of publicly funded as well as publicly delivered health care.

0920

Back in March 2022, the Deputy Premier and Health Minister Christine Elliott stated, "We are ... making sure that we can let independent health facilities operate private hospitals." Then, the minister's spokesperson jumped in and said, "The use ... of private hospitals and independent health facilities in Ontario is not being expanded or changed."

My question to the member: Is this an example of the government being accountable or transparent, given that this privatization and profitization is exactly what Bill 60 is doing?

Miss Monique Taylor: The member raises a great point. This is crisis-by-design. The minister, back in the day, spilled the beans that it was happening when she wasn't supposed to. Comms tried to cover it up and to fix that issue. But here we are, seeing exactly what she had said years ago with the for-profit system that is going to siphon our precious health care dollars that could be paying for those surgeries, that could be paying for those kids' critical needs and nurses at home instead of having moms struggling, not being able to go to work, instead of 12,000 kids on wait-lists for surgeries. All of those things could have been paid for instead of investing into a for-profit system helping those investors get money back when they shouldn't even be in there in the first place.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Mr. Will Bouma: I appreciate the opportunity to interact with the member from Hamilton Mountain. She always brings such clarity to the opposition position on an issue, and that's what I was hoping to ask her.

Yesterday morning, during question period, we had a very interesting question from one of the opposition members stating that the operating rooms in many hospitals were operating overcapacity. And then yesterday afternoon, we were debating a motion from the opposition stating that the hospitals were under capacity. So I was wondering if the member could help clarify exactly what the position of the opposition is on this issue.

Miss Monique Taylor: We have operating rooms that are empty, so I'm not sure what you heard. Maybe you should check Hansard to clarify that. But we know that operating rooms are running under capacity and that surgeries are in the thousands on wait-lists—just kids alone: 12,000 kids. I don't have the numbers in front of me for adults on wait-lists, but you can be assured that it's high.

This bill will do nothing to correct that. It is going to be the same number of nurses, the same number of doctors. You're just splitting them in half.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further debate?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: I'm happy to speak to Bill 60, Your Health Act.

Yesterday, I stood up in the House and spoke about the all-hands-on-deck approach that our government is taking to build a strong, more resilient health care system. As part of this approach, we're working hard to hire more health care workers, and that starts with ensuring that the next generation of those workers have access to high-calibre education right here in Ontario. As Minister of Colleges and Universities, I have the distinct privilege of overseeing this important work. We are currently seeing record numbers of students registering in health human resources programs across the province.

At colleges and universities, students enrolled in health human resource programs such as nursing, PSW and paramedicine are getting the skills and training they need to make a difference in our communities and begin a rewarding career and to support a strong and sustainable health care sector that helps ensure people across the province have more ways to receive the high-quality care they deserve.

I think we can all agree that having faster access to care and the ability to receive care closer to home is a good idea. But what many seem to forget is that this is not necessarily a given, especially for those in remote communities. There are many, many Ontarians who need to leave their home communities just to access care they need. For example, in some cases I've heard of people travelling all the way from Timmins to Toronto, staying for a few days and then travelling back, just to receive patient care.

I can tell you, in the early days of when my middle daughter was born, we travelled from Orillia—not as far as Timmins or some of the areas that people are travelling from—but we were travelling to SickKids every two weeks for the first three years of her life. So I can understand how difficult that is for families to make the travel arrangements, arrangements at home with your family and how difficult that can be, especially with a newborn.

What's clear is that while we're lucky to boast both top-notch doctors and health care workers in this province, not all communities have equal access to those workers by sheer geography alone, and that's just unacceptable. That is why, as minister, I was so eager, excited and proud to announce our medical seat expansion last year. This medical seat expansion announcement was the largest our province has seen in a decade, with our government adding 160 undergraduate and 295 postgraduate medical seats across the province to increase access to health care for more communities.

I was also thrilled to announce the creation of the northern Ontario medical school as a stand-alone institution and expanded enrolment capacity for the institution to help foster the next generation of doctors in the north. Last year alone, we had over 2,000 students preparing to

become a doctor in Ontario, including 124 studying in the north.

I actually visited the Northern Ontario School of Medicine in Sudbury in November and had the opportunity to speak with fourth-year students. They were telling me about their third-year placements, which they spend in communities. These students are from northern communities, and they want to stay in those communities to practise in the future. They were telling me some of the reasons why. They like that community aspect. One student was telling me that he and his team were working on a young boy. He said, "A week later, we were at a local restaurant, and it happens to be owned by that young child's family." He said that's the personal aspect they like of practising in small communities—and in family medicine as well. It was great to talk with these students. They were very excited, because they're about to become doctors. But in their third year during these placements, compared to some of their other colleagues, he said, "We really get to participate in everything. It's really all hands on deck and a great learning experience."

We also announced the new Toronto Metropolitan University medical school in Brampton that will be opening its doors in the near future. This will help solidify local health care needs in the region for generations.

Along with the Premier, the Minister of Health and the rest of our cabinet and caucus, our government is forging ahead, stronger than ever before, to ensure that all Ontarians have the ability to access health care services whenever and wherever they need it. We recognize that in order to build on our health care system we need to ensure that students pursuing medical studies have access to a world-class post-secondary education. But doctors aren't the only group we have focused on over the past few years. Part of being able to access care wherever you need it means we need to have a strong and reliable nursing team at your care centre, and as with any career in Ontario, a great team begins with a flawless education.

Last year alone, there were over 25,000 domestic full-time students studying at one of our colleges and universities—a number that continues to grow year over year. On our part, to help support these students, we've invested \$342 million that will train an additional 5,000 RNs and RPNs as well as 8,000 PSWs over the next five years. But our work doesn't stop there. When our students are ready to leave the classroom and head into the workforce, we have created pathway opportunities through clinical placements by investing an additional \$160 million into these placement spaces and into our students. These investments are making a true difference in Ontario. At every opportunity, we are making the critical investments into health care education and training, supporting the amazing work done by our sector to ensure students are ready to take on these important roles upon graduation.

For a brief moment, Speaker, I would like to talk about a school that is very close to my heart, Georgian College. Aside from it being my former employer before I entered politics, Georgian is also my local college as the MPP for Simcoe North. I have had the great pleasure of visiting the

campus as both the MPP and minister many times, seeing first-hand the incredible progress they have been making with their health human resources education. Since launching their own stand-alone nursing program—which is yet another initiative created by our government—Georgian College has been making incredible strides in training the next local nursing workforce. I want to really emphasize that point: a local workforce.

0930

Before localized education like this at an institution like Georgian existed, many young people would finish their education at a major university and partner with the local hospitals in that area for their careers. We saw that at Georgian College. Students would do their first two years at Georgian, and then leave and do their second two years at York University. That meant they likely did their clinical placements in the big city and stayed here upon graduation.

While it's great for communities like Toronto, Ottawa and London, smaller communities like Orillia, Owen Sound and Sarnia would continually see their bright young people leave their home communities for opportunities elsewhere. So as a ministry, we stepped in. We created pathways where students can choose the community where they're able to study in, if they want to be at a college or a university, and allow for greater retention of young people to learn and stay in their home communities.

But this was just the beginning. I know the MPP for Sarnia-Lambton is very excited that Lambton College offers a stand-alone nursing program—as well as Sault College, my member colleague from Sault Ste. Marie, under his leadership, allowed and created the pathways for students in stand-alone nursing at that college.

Seeing the success of our stand-alone nursing program, we wanted to create even more pathways and incentives for young people to build their careers in underserved communities across the province, something we saw become more important when the pandemic hit. We also wanted to ensure that communities that have demonstrated the greatest need for increased health human resources could rely on this government to get it done and bring the workers to them.

With that, the Learn and Stay grant was born. Through this grant, which will see its applications open this spring, eligible students will be able to apply to in-demand health human resource programs at one of our institutions in an identified priority community. If selected, and if they agree to complete their studies and work for a period of time in that community, our government will cover the cost of their education.

Speaker, this is a program that we at MCU, this government as a whole and everyone should be very excited about. Let me just give you a couple of stats that are very exciting. Since the launch of the program, and to date as of February 9, we have had over 326,000 hits to the website, so students are excited about this. On January 20, with the announcement where we expanded the program to now include paramedics and lab technologists, that day alone we had over 14,000 visits to the website. So students are

incredibly excited about this opportunity, and I hope those who are looking at going into nursing and having the opportunity to train and to possibly work in an underserved community—this is great for all students.

Partnering with the Ministry of Health, this program is meant to be responsive to evolving needs and could be tailored for any program or region, to ensure that people across the province continue to receive the health care they need, when they need it, no matter where they live.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): It's now time for questions.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My thanks to the member for her presentation. At the beginning of her comments, she noted that a lot of what is driving this is concern that services be made available to people who are in remote locations who may not be close to major medical centres.

I just want to note that last year, the payments to doctors for doing remote and virtual consultations were cut dramatically, so that many doctors have now abandoned that. Talking to my friends from the north, their experience has been that those arrangements allowed people for the first time, for many of them, in their lives to access a doctor quickly. Why did you cut that support for virtual consultations while you are espousing support for greater access to medical help?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you to the member for that question. Having supports in the north is very important, and in underserved areas. That's why, with the new Learn and Stay grant, we've seen those areas specifically identified not just for nursing, but for lab technologists, for paramedicine.

With the work that we've been doing to ensure that there are more doctors, this is the first time in 10 years that we've seen a seat expansion for doctors: 160 undergraduate spaces and 295 postgraduate spaces. This was not done under the Liberal government. It was this government that came in and said, "We need to ensure that people have access to doctors."

I can tell you that in my own area, I've talked to families who are experiencing not having a local doctor, but accessing the work at some of our community care clinics through our local health teams and the resources and supports that are served there. So we do recognize the need for more doctors in the north, but also in rural and underserved areas across this province.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Mr. Billy Pang: When it comes to our health, the status quo is no longer acceptable. Can the member tell this House what our government is doing to protect Ontarians from extra billing?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you to the member for that question. The clinics that we're talking about opening are completely public. I know there's been great excitement in my own area, asking lots of questions about, is it something that would be looked at and what are the considerations? I know health human resources would be the number one consideration, as well as the collaboration amongst the local hospitals as well as the local health

teams. We make investments in health care. We're seeing great investments in long-term care, great investments in our hospitals.

The status quo is not working. We need to do better for the people of Ontario. Before COVID, we were working hard, and COVID just expedited that as well, but the investments are being made. We're here to support all Ontarians and ensure that you're going to the doctor or a hospital and using your OHIP card and not a credit card.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Meegwetch for the presentation. I know that in far northern Ontario—sometimes I refer to it as the other Ontario because we're treated differently because of who we are and where we live. In the north, it's not a health care system, it's not a health system; it's a sickness system. It's a sickness system because you don't get access to health services until you are sick. For example, Ornge is our ambulance.

When you have a community of 1,000 people, you have five days of physician services per month, which is only—five days and two days are travel days, so that's three days per month. Like, the needless deaths, the unnecessary suffering: That is our status quo. Status quo is construed as normal and acceptable. That would not be acceptable anywhere else in Ontario, anywhere else in Canada. How will this bill help First Nations and northern Ontario, for example, Fort Severn?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you to the member for the question. One pillar of this bill is around training health care workers. That's exactly what we've been doing, and we have been doing it.

I just have a note from my staff that says that as of 9 a.m. today, the Ontario Learn and Stay Grant website has had over 405,000 visits, so the word is getting out there. It's to support northern and rural communities, the ones you're talking about, that we're encouraging students and paying for their education to get them to learn in those communities and make that commitment of staying for two years, because if you're staying there for two years, you're starting to set down roots. You are becoming familiar with the community and maybe meeting someone there and staying in that area.

But the supports that we're giving to ensure that more nurses, paramedics, lab technologists—we're also working with the Northern Ontario School of Medicine to ensure there are more doctors in the north as well, so that everyone has access to quality care.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions? I recognize the member for—Brantford—Brant.

Mr. Will Bouma: Thank you, Speaker. You had me fooled there for a second.

I have to say to the House that one of the things I appreciate most about being a member of this government is that we refuse to accept the status quo, and what's so interesting is that all we hear from the opposition is that they tell us that we must continue to invest in the status quo.

Travelling around with the minister in my riding and seeing the incredible work we're doing in training new people to go into the health care field in different directions than we ever have before and seeing the success of those programs like the Learn and Stay program is so exciting to me. I'm just wondering if she could expand on that further, on what it means in the health care system that we are looking at different options. Ontario is a land of innovators and to see innovation bear fruit in the health care system is really exciting for me, and I'm wondering what that means for her.

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Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you to the member for that question. It's always a privilege to tour your riding and meet with the schools in your areas as well. I think you can see my excitement about the Ontario Learn and Stay Grant, as well as the Premier's and the Minister of Health's, but the excitement for students who are looking to go into that field. Imagine considering nursing and to find out that you could have your education paid for if you were open to living in a different area, spending two years there. Like I said, it's likely that you spend some time there, you start to love that community and hopefully stay in that area.

But looking at how you ensure that we have more nurses and doctors, it's innovative programs like this, and I think—this is just the beginning of this program. We announced last March, we've already expanded it. It was nursing in the beginning; now we've expanded to lab technologists and paramedics. I think there's so much more we can look at doing as this progresses, but we're already seeing that there's a huge interest in the program so there will be more to come on that and I think great opportunities to look at other communities—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Thank you. Further questions?

Mr. Chris Glover: Thank you to the member opposite for your comments this morning. Our public health care system in Canada is one of our biggest competitive advantages. When companies are deciding whether to locate in the States or in Canada, they look at our public health care system and they say it's a far better system, it's a far less expensive system. A previous Conservative government converted our long-term-care homes from public not-for-profits into private for-profits, and then the Armed Forces report during the pandemic showed what a travesty that was, how people were dying of thirst because there was nobody there to give them a glass of water.

Why is this government converting our public not-for-profit health care system into a private for-profit system that will prioritize profit over the care that people receive?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you to the member for that question. I agree with your opening comments that we have a publicly funded health care system here in Ontario and Canada that we are all very proud of, and I've actually heard the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade talk about that being one of the reasons that companies are looking at coming to Ontario, because of the access to publicly funded health care right here in Ontario.

We are making investments into our hospitals, our long-term-care centres. Under this government, we saw the increase of care to clients in long-term care up to four hours. We've also seen the investments, the 60,000 new long-term-care spaces. I've seen the investments in long-term-care homes in my area as well, which I know we're all very excited about, to ensure that seniors have access to long-term care in their communities.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): That's all the time we have for questions.

Further debate?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: It's with regret today that I rise to speak to Bill 60, the government's plan to introduce two-tier health care in Ontario. Public health care is a key component of our identity in Canada. Unlike our neighbours to the south, we made a decision that we weren't going to let wealth determine people's access to vital health care. We created a public medicare system that ensures everyone is able to get the health care they need, when they need it, without any question of how much money they have. People don't have to go deeply into debt or sell off homes or businesses just because a family member got sick. People without money don't need to worry that people with more money are going to come along and bump them out of the way. Access to health care is based on the urgency of your condition instead of your bank account.

Conservatives have never liked this system. They've always hated the fact that you can't buy your way to the front of the line, and we know there have always been many people lobbying them, salivating over the opportunity to make a lot of money off of people in need. So, over the past four years, they've been hard at work generating a crisis.

Admittedly, the past Liberal government wasn't great at managing health care either. They cut and underfunded until people were being treated in hallways—hallway medicine, everyone called it. But, under this Premier, we've gone from hallway medicine to no medicine. Emergency rooms are closed, so people can't even get into the hallways. We've got beds and operating rooms that are empty despite the demand for health care, the long wait-lists, because we don't have nurses and health care workers to staff them.

I guess it's "mission accomplished" for the Premier and for the private, for-profit health care industry that has been lobbying him so hard for the past few years. Now that he has made the crisis so bad that nurses are leaving the profession in droves, now that people are waiting 12 hours at the emergency room, now that the wait-lists for surgeries are so long, the Premier has decided that this is the moment to really stick the knife in public health care and introduce two-tier health care in Ontario.

Make no mistake: This is deliberate. This government has set up public health care to fail so they could replace it with a for-profit model to line the pockets of their wealthy friends. And it is Ontarians—as always, with this government—that will pay the price, that will have to pull out their credit cards to pay for health care at these private

facilities, that will wait even longer for health care in our public system as they bleed even more health care workers out of our hospitals, that will have to pay the taxes that are going into the pockets of private shareholders instead of strengthening and expanding our public health care system.

This is part of a pattern with this government. Whether it's the development of the greenbelt, the refusal to invest in public education or the destruction of public health care, we see this government constantly make decisions that don't help people with the very real challenges that they face every day but somehow manage to make a bunch of friends and lobbyists around the Premier a lot of money.

We've seen this pattern with health care throughout this government's time in office and throughout the pandemic. They took away public oversight of home care, leaving people vulnerable to the whims of for-profit companies. They granted licences to for-profit long-term-care providers that had hugely disproportionate death rates and they took away the rights of family members to sue. They contracted out PCR COVID testing to for-profit companies, leading to Ontarians having to pay \$200 out of pocket to be tested because publicly accessible tests were so tightly rationed—unless you happened to attend a private school. And they've been expanding private clinics.

This most recent bill is not the innovative, bold or creative solution to surgical backlogs the health minister has claimed it is. It is the oldest trick in this government's book: Put further pressure on an already struggling sector and offer privatization as the only way out.

If this government really wanted to address the current concerns in the health care sector, they would actually listen to nurses and health care workers about why they are leaving the health care sector and stop their appeal to try to save Bill 124, a bill that the courts found unconstitutional, a bill that nurses and health care workers have told this government they found profoundly disrespectful—humiliating, even—at a moment when they were working so incredibly hard throughout the pandemic, with their wages capped well below the rate of inflation.

I was at the pre-budget hearing in Ottawa, where nurses said that they were leaving the profession because of Bill 124 and that they found Bill 124 profoundly humiliating. Instead of listening to them, government members of the committee got into arguments with them. Nurses were literally telling them, "We're leaving because of Bill 124," and the government was saying, "No, that's definitely not it." How profoundly disrespectful is that?

What's even more disrespectful is that government members tried to claim that it wasn't Bill 124 that's causing the shortage, because other jurisdictions also have a shortage of health care workers. Well, if other jurisdictions also have a shortage of health care workers, then how foolish is it to cap the wages of our health care workers and drive them away when there are job opportunities in other provinces?

If the government actually wanted to improve health care, they would focus on recruiting, retaining and returning nurses to our health care system—and personal

support workers and other health care workers—providing them with better pay, better working conditions and the respect they deserve.

The government could work on licensing tens of thousands of internationally educated nurses and doctors already in Ontario, who are waiting years and paying thousands to have their credentials certified. The government could also fund hospitals across the province so that they have enough staff on every shift and on every ward, so that rooms don't sit empty due to understaffing.

Make no mistake: The bottleneck for the surgical wait-list in Ontario is not due to a lack of operating space, it is due to a lack of staff for these operating rooms. Operating rooms are sitting empty because hospitals don't have the resources to staff the ORs they already have. And now this government is trying to create a parallel system which will pull more staff out of our publicly funded system.

This move is also going to cost our health care system more. Services in private clinics receive more money than our public hospitals do for the same service, meaning that when private facilities perform surgeries, Ontario tax dollars will be going right into the pockets of shareholders that have invested in these facilities. The government's actions will lead to investors making large profits off the backs of sick Ontarians.

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Meanwhile, our hospitals depend on economies of scale to be able to fund more complex surgeries. So when we pull services out of the hospital, we leave the hospital trying to provide the more complex surgeries and the people with complications requiring longer surgeries, but we're paying the hospitals less money than the private facilities are getting for simple surgeries, so we're actually making it harder for the hospitals to pay the cost of these surgeries.

And while these clinics are able to charge our health care system more for the services they provide, they can also charge extra fees directly to the patients who are being sent there by this government. These fees take the form of consulting fees or membership fees that patients are made to cover in order to receive the health care they desperately need. We also know that many patients are upsold by doctors keen to make a profit.

But it's not just people who are getting surgeries or procedures at private clinics who will be paying a price for this government's policies; patients using the public system will also pay a price. They're already paying a price now for Bill 124, with 12-hour wait times or longer at emergency rooms.

The Ottawa Hospital has had many times over the past year where they have been short as many as 800 nurses. They've had to get creative, and these absences are filled with unregulated, unlicensed care providers, not trained, professional registered nurses. In January, the Ottawa Hospital lost more nurses than they were able to recruit. While this is happening, this government has chosen to suppress nurses' wages, ignore their concerns and undervalue their profession, while people are working in unbelievable conditions.

Here's why this really matters, Speaker: There's not a magical pool of nurses and health care workers that we just haven't tapped yet who are suddenly going to appear and fill these positions in private health care facilities. These nurses and health care workers are going to come from our public system. And when we're capping their wages in the public system, when we are putting them into unsustainable and dangerous working conditions, when nurses are already leaving to work at Costco because it's less stressful, then why wouldn't they leave to take a job at a private facility that only works weekdays from 9 to 5 and doesn't have a wage cap?

This move is only going to pull more nurses and health care workers out of our system, leaving public health care in an even more precarious state, lengthening wait times for everyone, and the minister's toothless staffing plan requirement isn't going to address that, as we've already seen at the Riverside hospital in Ottawa, because that's not a magic wand that can miraculously create more health care workers.

Ontario's public health care system needs fixing. It absolutely needs fixing, but by allowing for-profit companies to offer health care services that were originally done by the public sector, this government is instead ensuring that sooner or later, those with more money will have access to better health care faster than other Ontarians, and this is unacceptable.

And so, Speaker, here we see another pattern emerging: Ontario residents are demanding better, health care workers are demanding better, but instead of listening to them, working with them and investing in the system, the government is enriching some private, for-profit corporations that lobbied really hard. Shame on them.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Questions? I recognize the member for Sarnia–Lambton.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's good to see you in the chair.

Thank you to the member for Ottawa West–Nepean for that presentation this morning. One thing I don't think has been touched on in the debate that I've heard so far is that Bill 60 talks about expanding the number of physicians who can join a family health team. I'd like to know the member's position on that, if she supports expanding access to family health teams with more doctors.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Thanks to the member for Sarnia–Lambton for the question.

The crisis that this government has created in health care extends to all parts of our health care system. We have incredibly underfunded community health centres that haven't seen an increase in their base funding. We have family physicians who are leaving the practice mid-career because they just can't take the workload anymore and are struggling with burnout. We have health care workers and nurses who are leaving the profession. We absolutely need to improve conditions for all workers across this system.

Expanding the number of doctors who are working in family health teams could be part of the solution, but we need to make sure that this continues to be part of the public health care system and we are not directing the

funds that should be going to health care into the pockets of investors instead.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Mr. Chris Glover: Thank you to the member from Ottawa West–Nepean for the question. I'm going to ask the same question I asked the member from the government side.

Public, not-for-profit health care in Canada is one of our biggest competitive advantages. When companies are deciding whether to locate in the United States or Canada, they look at our public, not-for-profit health care. It's far cheaper than the system in the United States. It's far better. We are healthier in Canada because of our system.

A previous Conservative government privatized long-term care. They changed it from public, not-for-profit system to a private, for-profit system. We saw from the Armed Forces report what a travesty that was and how people were dying in just unspeakable conditions.

Why do you think this government is converting our public, not-for-profit health care system in Ontario into a private, for-profit system, instead of just expanding and supporting the public, not-for-profit system?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Thanks to the member for Spadina–Fort York for that great question.

This is part of another pattern that we see from this government. Our public health care system, as you say, is absolutely a competitive advantage. So is our publicly funded education system, and we also see the government making decisions there that are undermining the quality and the strength of our public education system.

We've seen in the United States what happens when public systems are allowed to erode—kids are no longer getting health care, they're no longer getting a decent education—and what that does to a country, what that does to an economy. The only explanation when we see these kinds of examples around us is that this government is more motivated by ideology than by the actual needs and concerns of Ontarians and by the evidence that exists around us about what practices would actually support Ontarians in getting the health care and education they need.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Mr. Will Bouma: I thank the member from Ottawa West–Nepean for her discussion this morning, but it left me curious. Obviously the opposition has to oppose what we're doing, and it sounds like they'll be voting against this piece of legislation also—

Miss Monique Taylor: One hundred per cent.

Mr. Will Bouma: Thank you for the clarity from the member for Hamilton Mountain—but what I was hoping for was perhaps an idea or perhaps an improvement, but all I keep hearing from what the opposition has to say about this bill is that we must continue to throw more money into a broken system. I believe that we all agree here that our system isn't working the way that it is right now.

So I was wondering if the member—because I know she has experience working on different sides of the House

in different places—has any ideas on how we could actually improve this legislation or what we could do to improve the health care system in Ontario, other than just continuing to maintain the status quo, which is what I've heard so far.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Thanks to the member for Brantford–Brant. I want to share a little anecdote first. I don't know if the member has kids, but I find quite frequently when I ask my children to clean their bedrooms or to clear the table after supper, they don't move. I begin to wonder if I was actually speaking German instead of English, and that's why they didn't understand a word that I said.

I listed the solutions in my remarks. We had a two-hour debate yesterday on the solutions. I suggest that the member consult Hansard if he didn't hear my remarks clearly, but the answer is to invest in our public health care system and stop driving our nurses and health care workers away from it.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Next question?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I want to commend my colleague for her very astute remarks about this bill.

I wanted to highlight a model that exists in my community in London. The London Health Sciences Centre has created the first-of-its-kind, stand-alone, self-contained, ambulatory surgery centre to allow people to get less complex minor surgeries performed there. It has demonstrated its effectiveness. The cost for surgeries is way down. It is a model of how we can deal with the backlog in hips, knees and cataracts surgeries under a public system, with oversight from the hospital.

I wondered if the member has any thoughts on why the government didn't just expand this model across the province to ensure that people have access to publicly funded and publicly delivered surgical care.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Thanks to the member for London West for that question, which is a great question, because we see all kinds of models of care that the government could and should be investing in within our public health care system.

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I know the community service agencies in my riding that provide preventative health care that keep people from getting sick and from ending up in the hospital are desperately underfunded. I know the Queensway Carleton Hospital is asking for an urgent care centre in Ottawa, which would keep people from needing to go to the ER for conditions that can't be dealt with in their family doctors' office but don't need the emergency room.

We know there are models for stand-alone surgical facilities like the one you described, and instead of looking at any of these solutions and investing in the solutions that we have in our public health care system, this government is bound and determined to go down the road of putting profits in the pockets of private investors, and the only answer can be that those investors lobbied them really, really hard.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Ms. Laura Smith: I want to thank the member from Ottawa West. Last month, my son had a very minor infection—I'm getting very personal—but we went to the hospital. That wasn't a good place for him at that time, and we decided that it was going to be a better spot at a pharmacist. The pharmacist actually took care of this minor situation, and we were in and out of the door very quickly.

This kind of innovation has made positive improvements for the health care system and the residents of Ontario. Will the member opposite support expanding the scope of pharmacists so that their constituents can get better access to care closer to home?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Let me share my own little story. In December, I visited the Queensway Carleton Hospital, which is actually closer to my home than any pharmacy, and it was hell on earth. There were people sitting in every chair in the emergency room. There were people sitting on the floor. There were people lined up on the walls. There was a lineup of people outside the door. There were seven stretchers in hallways outside of the ER and there were six ambulances waiting to off-load patients. Nobody wants to be in the ER right now. That's the crisis that your government has created. That's the reason that people are not being able to get the health care that they need. What I want to see is investments in our public system, to see investments in preventative care, to see everyone have access to a family doctor so that people get incredibly quick, timely care when they need it.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Mr. Jeff Burch: Thank you to my colleague from Ottawa West—Nepean for the comments. I know that they spend a lot of time with nurses in the riding in Ottawa, and I'm wondering if my colleague can tell me a little bit about some of the comments received from those nurses with respect to—you mentioned the lack of respect that they feel, especially after the pandemic, and now, on top of all that, the lack of investment in the public system. What are some of the comments you've heard from people in Ottawa West—Nepean?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Thanks to the member for Niagara Centre for that great question. I have heard absolutely jaw-dropping stories from nurses in Ottawa about the conditions that they're working in: 12-hour shifts every day, short-staffed on the units, in units that they're not prepared for and trained for, running from patient to patient, going home at the end of the night, wondering if they've done everything that they needed to in order to keep anyone alive or if they've made any mistakes.

In the midst of that incredibly hard and difficult work, this government capped their wages well below the rate of inflation. It's incredibly disrespectful and, as nurses said, humiliating, and we absolutely need to do better.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): It's now time for further debate. I recognize the member for Mississauga—Lakeshore.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: Thank you, Speaker. It's always great to see you in the chair.

It's a great honour to rise in the House this morning to speak in support of Bill 60, Your Health Act. I would like to thank the Minister of Health and her team on the work on this bill.

I was proud to join the minister, the Premier and the Prime Minister at AstraZeneca in Mississauga yesterday, where they're investing \$500 million in a major expansion in their Mississauga site, which will become their flagship global clinical research centre, with 500 new jobs right here in Ontario. This is very exciting news for Mississauga.

Just a few kilometres west of AstraZeneca, a new eight-storey parking structure is almost completed, which is the first step towards the complete reconstruction of the Mississauga Hospital. The new hospital will be almost triple the size: 24 storeys, three million square feet, with 1,000 beds—80% in private rooms. This will be the largest and most advanced hospital in the history of Canada.

And on the other side of Mississauga—Lakeshore, two new long-term-care homes, with 632 new beds, will be ready later this year. This is the largest long-term-care building program in Canadian history, including 1,152 new and upgraded beds in Mississauga—Lakeshore alone, more than any other riding in the province of Ontario. So again, I want to thank the Minister of Health and the Minister of Long-Term Care for all their work on these projects.

Speaker, over the last two months, I had the opportunity to travel around the province for pre-budget consultations with the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs. We heard from many stakeholders, including the Ontario Health Association, the Ontario Medical Association and hospital CEOs across Ontario who support Bill 60. They understand that the status quo in health care is not acceptable, and they appreciate all the investments our government is making to eliminate surgical backlogs after the COVID-19 pandemic and to reduce wait times for publicly funded surgeries and procedures.

In Windsor, David Musy, president and CEO of the Windsor Regional Hospital, told us about the Windsor Surgical Centre, a new community clinic that opened in 2020 that now handles about 6,000 eye surgeries each year. This hospital CEO said that without this community clinic, the wait-list for eye surgery would be 20,000 people. Instead, these 20,000 people got the surgery that they needed when they needed it—and they all paid with their OHIP card, not their credit card. He called this a "massive success," and I couldn't agree more. This model has been successful in Ontario and many other provinces, including Quebec and Alberta, and as many members have noted, it was recently expanded in British Columbia under an NDP government.

Some of my friends on the other side defend the status quo, but as our former Chief Justice Beverley McLachlin and the Supreme Court wrote in *Chaoulli v. Quebec* in 2005, "Access to a waiting list is not access to health care." As the minister said, that's why, if passed, Bill 60 would

expand community-based clinics to perform 14,000 more OHIP-insured eye surgeries each year across the province, and it would expand knee and hip replacement surgeries in community-based clinics by 2024.

In Windsor, Mr. Musyj also said a few comments for the opposition members, which I'd like to quote briefly: "Whenever Windsor Regional Hospital has asked for help in the last three years" our government has "answered the call. This includes extra funding for hiring close to 500 more front-line clinical staff ... 60 more medicine-surgical beds ... funding for lost revenue, funding to recruit more staff," funding for "signing bonuses.... Nothing has gone unanswered."

He said it is true that Ontario has a health care human resources problem, but this hospital CEO said he was "offended" by the members opposite trying to "paint" the problem as "the government not allowing us access to resources or telling us no. That's not what's happening."

As well, he said, "this government delivered on a previous government's failed promise to provide stage 2 funding to build a new acute care hospital" in Windsor. This is "the first government to actually put money where their mouth is and get this project going." And Speaker, I know the same is true in Mississauga, Brampton and communities across Ontario.

I don't have time to list everyone who supports Bill 60, but I do want to thank Karli Farrow, the president of Trillium Health Partners, for joining us at Sheridan College for our pre-budget consultation in Mississauga. We also co-hosted virtual town hall meeting together about the new Mississauga hospital in January.

I'd like to quote from her statement as well: "As one of the largest surgical service providers in Ontario, that also serves one of the most impacted communities due to COVID-19, we've been working to address wait times, which have grown due to the pandemic, by focusing on operational efficiencies and hiring more staff." Bill 60, she said, is "an important step in expanding access to surgical care, for patients in Mississauga and west Toronto."

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Today is International Rare Disease Day, and I want to thank the Canadian Organization for Rare Disorders for their breakfast reception this morning. The patients who joined us know that timely access to diagnostic testing, including MRI and CT imaging, is critical to improve early detection, to improve the length and quality of life for patients with rare conditions and also to reduce pressure on our hospitals. That is why it is so important that Bill 60 would expand access to these tests in community-based clinics to help reduce wait times.

Speaker, this is a personal issue for me. As some members know, I was fortunate to be diagnosed early, with heart valve disease. I had a mechanical valve installed 12 years ago.

I want to take a moment to thank all the members who came to our reception last week and had a stethoscope check. Dr. Janine Eckstein flew in from Saskatchewan, and Dr. David Messika-Zeitoun came from Ottawa. I also want to thank them, and Ellen Ross of Heart Valve Voice,

for all their support and for their help drafting my private member's bill. I hope all members will support Bill 66, as well, later this year.

Returning to Bill 60: I use community-based clinics every month. Because of my mechanical heart valve, I have to be on Coumadin for the rest of my life. So I use LifeLabs clinics on a monthly basis, and I thank them for all the great work they do in the area of Mississauga and across this province of Ontario. Instead of going to the hospital or to my family doctor, which would take up the physician's time or the hospital's time, it's good to have clinics like this in the community to make it easier and faster to access more convenient services, closer to home. This allows our doctors and hospitals to focus on more complex, high-risk cases.

Lastly, it is important to note, Ontarians will always access health care with their OHIP card and not their credit card.

The Prime Minister, when he was asked to comment on Bill 60, said that a certain amount of innovation is good, as long as we abide by the Canada Health Act. Section 12 of the Canada Health Act requires that we provide reasonable access to health care services. But as the Supreme Court of Canada said, "Access to a waiting list is not access to care."

The status quo might be good enough for the opposition, but it is not good enough for this government.

Bill 60 would help us improve access to care, within our publicly funded system. Again, I want to thank the Minister of Health and her team for all their work on this bill.

I urge all members to support this bill and provide the good health care that Ontario residents deserve and need in this province.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): It is now time for members' statements.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SKILLED TRADES

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's an honour to rise today to share with the Ontario Legislature exciting news from Sarnia-Lambton once more.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, one of the top priorities of the Ford government is promoting the exciting and lucrative career opportunities that await people who enter the skilled trades in Ontario. Across the province, many different stakeholders are working to help the province meet its skilled trades needs today and into the future, led by the Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development.

That is why I'm extremely proud to share with the House that the Economic Developers Council of Ontario recently recognized the Sarnia-Lambton Economic Partnership and their innovative Sarnia-Lambton Apprentice

Job Match tool as the winner of the 2022 award of excellence for the best workforce development and resident attraction initiative in the province. Through the job match tool, apprentices and employers in Sarnia–Lambton have a simple and effective way to connect and match skills with needs. This means that apprentices are finding work opportunities quickly, and employers are successfully meeting their ongoing labour needs.

Mr. Speaker, our government believes that when you have a career in the skilled trades, you have a career for life. I'd like to congratulate the Sarnia-Lambton Economic Partnership for receiving such an exciting award and thank them for helping new apprentices kick-start their exciting career journey.

BARBARA HELEN CASTLEDINE

SANDRA TREHUB

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: I rise today with a heavy heart. I'd like to commemorate two incredible women from Toronto Centre communities who we're missing now.

We lost Barbara Helen Castledine in late 2022. Barbara was a mother, a Regent Park resident and a caring advocate for everyone in our communities. She made a mark everywhere she went. She brought shoes to the 215 children's memorial right here at Queen's Park. She successfully campaigned to change dangerous intersections in our city. She advocated for fellow Toronto Community Housing residents and helped homeless people across our city. We are joined by her partner Miguel Avila-Velarde today, who is here in the gallery.

Earlier this year, we also lost Sandra Trehub, a pioneer in the psychology of music. As quoted in the New York Times article summarizing her life's work, "Every bit of research in the psychology of music over the past 40 years can be traced back to Sandra Trehub." She was a former neighbour of mine. She was loved locally for her work building up St. James Town Community Arts. Forever giving, when she was 80 years old she joined their board and increased their fundraising capacity. She was able to hone all of those grant-writing skills that she earned in academia to build that support. Over the next 10 years, she built St. James Town Community Arts programming and reached thousands of students. She will be forever missed. We will recognize her contributions and those of Barbara forever.

HOCKEY

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: As legendary Hockey Night in Canada broadcaster Foster Hewitt greeted listeners back in the day with the iconic introduction, "Hello, Canada and hockey fans in the United States and Newfoundland," it gives me great pleasure today to address the members of this Legislature and recognize the outstanding accomplishments of minor hockey associations in my riding of Durham.

Recently, Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to participate in the opening festivities and the ceremonial puck drop as Clarington welcomed 56 teams from across Ontario to the first annual Josh Bailey Classic tournament. This tournament showcased many young future stars in minor hockey from six different age levels, and included a video greeting from the New York Islanders' captain, Josh Bailey, and also a visit from three-time Stanley Cup champion, Orono's own Bryan Bickell.

From the Ontario University Athletics association, I would like to congratulate both the men's and women's Ontario Tech Ridgebacks teams, as they advanced to post-season play in the first round of the OUA playoffs. With a 31-4-2 record, the Clarington Eagles Junior C team have their sights set on the playoffs again this year.

And finally, I mark the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Clarington Minor Hockey Association and the 75th anniversary of the Oshawa Community Hockey League. We are proud that Durham is hockey town, Mr. Speaker.

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Speaker, for as long as I have represented my constituents of London–Fanshawe, there has been a doctor shortage in my community. For over a decade, I have seen constituents struggle to find a family doctor in the fifth largest city in Ontario. I'm sure you can imagine what it's been like for people living in rural, northern and other small communities.

The past few years have taken us past the crisis point. On February 25, the Ontario College of Family Physicians said more than 65,000 people in Middlesex-London are without a family doctor. On the provincial level, 2.2 million Ontarians have been left without a family doctor, a significant increase from the previously reported 1.8 million in 2020. Worse, there was a 66% increase in children and teens who do not have a family doctor between 2020 and 2022. These numbers are hard to comprehend. When I speak to women on ODSP who cannot get care or a man who has been waiting years for a family doctor, I share their pain and I share their helplessness.

But this government can take action. They can commit to real changes to help people to address this crisis, like expediting recognition of credentials for thousands of internationally educated nurses and doctors, and repeal Bill 124.

1020

I challenge this government to heed the calls of medical professionals and the 2.2 million people who need care, and take action on this doctor shortage immediately.

EVENTS IN MARKHAM–UNIONVILLE

Mr. Billy Pang: It's great to be back at Queen's Park after an eventful winter break. I appreciate this time today to share my engagement with my constituents during the holidays.

In December, I had a meet-and-greet event at Markville mall, one of the most popular malls in Markham–Unionville. It was wonderful seeing shoppers buzzing around the mall, signalling a recovery of Ontario's economy.

For the first time, this Christmas, my team and I visited hundreds of homes in Markham–Unionville for nominations for the Griswold Award, and 120 awards were presented to different homes to recognize their generosity in bringing joy to our community.

On New Year's Eve, I took part in a spectacular fireworks countdown event in downtown Markham.

Less than a month later, it was the lunar new year, which is one of the largest celebrations for the Chinese, Vietnamese and Korean communities in Canada. To celebrate this great festival, my office organized two meet-and-greet events in Markham–Unionville. My team and I gave out souvenirs and red packets to our friends, neighbours and constituents. It warmed my heart seeing families gather and embrace ancient traditions.

I also had the pleasure of attending some other celebration events across Ontario. We celebrated the many contributions that Canadians of Chinese descent have made to Canada for generations.

As we reminisce about the joyful times we had during these celebrations, let's look to the future with hope and confidence.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Joel Harden: Four days ago, you could hear the sound of hearts breaking across Ottawa. Why? Because the Rideau Canal Skateway was officially closed for the winter season. That was a tough loss for us. The National Capital Commission made the call because they said the ice wasn't thick enough. It was a loss for local tourism, small business and residents of our city, but, to be honest, Speaker, in my opinion, it is yet another reminder that Ontario is not doing enough to meet the imminent threat of the climate emergency we're living in.

Ottawa has been tested by extreme weather events time and again in the last five years and this government has done next to nothing about it: two once-in-a-century floods, two dramatic windstorms, millions of dollars in damage.

Speaker, it's time for Ontario to be part of the solution, not the pollution. The great Neil Young, one of the best songwriters to ever come out of this country, is challenging us to ask, in a recent song:

Who's gonna stand up and save the Earth?
Who's gonna say that she's had enough?

That has got to be us. It's got to be the people of Ontario. We have an opportunity this Friday to be part of a global movement, the Fridays for Future movement. On March 3, join me and other people of conscience at 90 Elgin Street outside the department of finance, where we'll ask the federal government to stop subsidizing, through tax expenditures, fossil fuel growth in this country. We

have to stand up and save the Earth. Ottawa, I will see you on the street this Friday at noon.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms. Laurie Scott: Our government continues to invest in our health care system. Recently, I was happy to announce much-needed health care investments in my riding of Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock. The City of Kawartha Lakes Family Health Team will receive funding to support residents by adding two new nurse practitioners to enhance, support and deliver high-quality primary health care in Kawartha Lakes. I would like to take the opportunity to thank the team at the City of Kawartha Lakes Family Health Team for their tireless work in taking care of our community.

In addition, over \$1 million in funding support will add two new mobile wellness clinics. The Canadian Mental Health Association Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge will run these two mobile wellness clinics and they'll be able to service on-the-go health care to our rural communities that need them most. These communities in my riding will now have greater access to counselling and therapy, addictions support and substance use, mental health education, medical support and access to other psychiatry services. I know, Mr. Speaker, in parts of Haliburton county they've already had over 80 visits that have taken place. It's a great success.

But this initiative underlines the government's commitment toward promoting high-quality health care for the people in Ontario. I want to thank the Deputy Premier and Minister of Health and the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions for listening and addressing the concerns in Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock. I know it's just one step forward.

HEALTH ACCESS TAYLOR-MASSEY

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Good morning. It's a beautiful day, everyone.

In the heart of Crescent Town resides Health Access Taylor-Massey, a health care centre oriented around community and social services. It's actually an amazing health care model for all of Ontario. They are a crucial part of the East Toronto Health Partners, who are responsible for providing quality care and resources to the 300,000 people living in east Toronto communities, including my riding of beautiful Beaches–East York.

Health Access Taylor-Massey has helped 75,000 clients in an underserved community, addressing health inequities that have only become more prevalent with the COVID-19 pandemic. Their extraordinary services include family doctor appointments, vaccines, prenatal care, pap tests, cancer test referrals and COVID testing and treatment.

The strain on our health care system is evident with each passing day, with inconsistent wait times and long backlogs for medical services. Our health care system

needs some more support to keep up the quality care provided for Ontarians. Neighbourhood-based care models like Health Access Taylor-Massey help alleviate the burden for hospitals. This centre was developed with the dedication and hard work of many of our East Toronto Health Partners, including our ever-energetic Stephen Beckwith, and the input from the Taylor-Massey Residents Wellness Council, where community members were given the opportunity to share their opinions to have a say in the building process, led from the ground up.

We must strive toward accessible health care that prioritizes specific needs, making it easier for residents to find specific care in one place closer to home. I regularly hear from many happy residents who utilize the valuable services of Health Access Taylor-Massey. Thank you to the staff for keeping it running, and keep up the great work. Let's roll that model out right across Ontario.

JAYNE SCALA

Ms. Donna Skelly: I would like to take the time to tell you about an amazing woman in my riding of Flamborough–Glanbrook who is making miracles happen. Her name is Jayne Scala. Jayne operates the Dairy Queen restaurant in Waterdown. She has been recognized by Dairy Queen Canada with the Dairy Queen 2022 Miracle Maker Award. She received the award last week for her tireless efforts and dedication to raising funds for McMaster Children's Hospital. Jayne has gone above and beyond, particularly on DQ's Miracle Treat Day. That's the day that proceeds from the sale of frozen Blizzard Treats sold at DQ restaurants benefit the Children's Miracle Network.

Jayne has donated 100% of her sales of Blizzard Treats to McMaster Children's Hospital. To date, she has raised nearly \$148,000 for the hospital. Jayne was able to reach that goal in part because of the support she has received from customers in Oakville, Cambridge and Brantford who drive to her store because they know the proceeds are going directly to McMaster Children's Hospital.

Jayne has a special place in her heart for the staff at MacKids. When her daughter Amelia was five years old, she received life-saving treatment for pediatric cancer at MacKids. The funds raised by Jayne Scala support the pediatric oncology unit, the child life program and the neonatal intensive care unit. Jayne gives credit to her staff and customers, but she is the driving force behind the incredible fundraising effort.

Congratulations, and a heartfelt thank you, Jayne.

VERNON HENDRICKSON

Ms. Laura Smith: As we complete Black History Month, I would like to shine a light on a special person and organization. Today, in the House, I am happy to welcome the president of the Thornhill African Caribbean Canadian Association, Mr. Vernon Hendrickson, and his colleague Laclelle Campbelle.

1030

Vernon, a long-time resident, is the founding member of the Thornhill African Caribbean Canadian Association,

also known as TACCA, a not-for-profit multicultural organization with members from diverse backgrounds and ethnicities from all over Canada and the Caribbean. In operation since 2005, they offer support programs and scholarships to our extended community, and one of the highlights of their meaningful work includes the talented, mellifluous and melodic sounds of the TACCA steel drum band.

When I asked Vernon about his inspiration, he talked about a little boy who fundraised for his school. The school needed improvements, and this boy jumped on his bike and he stopped to collect money from the business people of Nevis, riding on his bike and going door to door to make a difference. That little boy later travelled to Canada from Nevis, worked and studied and went back to give back to his community in forming TACCA. In 2002, now an adult, he was awarded the Queen's Jubilee Medal for his meaningful and significant contributions to his community.

Mr. Speaker, I do not think I need to tell you that that little boy on the bike is Vernon, and I do not believe that Vernon's attitude or work ethic has changed since that little boy jumped on his bike to help his community.

I hope everyone in the House celebrates this last day of Black History Month by getting to know Vernon Hendrickson and his tireless commitment to the people of Thornhill. I encourage everyone to continue to appreciate the positive impacts Black Canadians have made for our economy, society and within our government, not just this month, but every month.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I feel compelled to once again remind members that members' statements are to be 90 seconds in duration.

INDEPENDENT MEMBERS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I understand the member from Guelph may have a point of order.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I am seeking unanimous consent of the House that, notwithstanding standing order 100(a)(iv), five minutes be allotted to the independent members as a group to speak on second reading of private member's bill, Bill 50.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Guelph is seeking the unanimous consent of the House that, notwithstanding standing order 100(a)(iv), five minutes be allotted to the independent members as a group to speak on second reading of private member's bill, Bill 50. Agreed? Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I was pleased this morning to meet with the consul general of Ireland to Toronto, Ms. Janice McGann, and I'm very pleased that she's joining us in the House today, in the Speaker's gallery. Please join me in warmly welcoming our guest to the Legislature.

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: Good morning. I'd like to welcome the representatives of the Canadian Society for Medical Laboratory Science to Queen's Park today. These laboratory specialists are a critical part of Ontario's health care system and were vital to tackling the COVID-19 pandemic. Lab specialists from the Canadian Society for Medical Laboratory Science are a trusted partner of the Ontario government and our work together is directly benefiting Ontarians. They will be meeting with MPPs throughout the day to discuss their policy recommendations, and will be hosting a reception in the legislative dining room from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. this evening. Welcome.

Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady: I'd like to welcome my constituent Ivan Tamminga to Queen's Park this morning. Mr. Tamminga is here to see and support his niece Charlotte in action as a page here in the House.

Mr. Rob Flack: It's a great pleasure to introduce Jim and Norma Poel, grandparents of page Harry Langford. The Poels live in Thames Centre. Page Harry lives in Oxford county. Welcome to Queen's Park.

MPP Jill Andrew: Good morning. I would like to welcome the wonderful team from Skills for Change from my community in St. Paul's and give a special shout-out to their phenomenal woman CEO, Surranna Sandy, who is also an inspiring Black leader in Ontario. Thank you very much, and welcome to your House. I don't see you all yet, but I hope you're getting here soon.

Mr. Nolan Quinn: I'd like to welcome the Canadian Organization for Rare Disorders, or CORD, which was here for breakfast this morning; the Canadian Forum for Rare Disease Innovators; Life Sciences Ontario; and all of the families with rare diseases.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: I'd like to welcome Miguel Avila-Velarde, a resident from Regent Park and advocate and strong community member from the Toronto Community Housing community.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I'd like to welcome Beth and Maddy Vanstone. They're here for Rare Disease Day. Maddy has CF and is now a young lady starting photography.

Ms. Christine Hogarth: I just want to welcome one of my constituency assistants who is here to spend their day with me, Camila Budylowski. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Laura Smith: I'm happy to welcome the President of the Thornhill African Caribbean Canadian Association, Mr. Vernon Hendrickson, and his colleague Lancelle Campbelle.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: I would like to wish a very warm welcome to the Council of Canadian Innovators, who happen to be up in the top row there—hi, folks. I met with them this morning and had a very insightful discussion. I appreciate the great working relationship. Thank you for being here, and I look forward to not only many more conversations amongst ourselves but with the whole team. So thank you for being here.

Hon. David Piccini: I'd like to extend a very warm welcome to two very proud parents, Paul and Keri Sharpe,

who are parents of page Wyatt Sharpe from my constituency of Northumberland–Peterborough South. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Jess Dixon: Today is Rare Disease Day, and I have the huge honour of introducing one of my constituents, Preston Botelho. Preston is here with his mom and dad, David and Lisa, and his friend Olivia. He's a grade 12 student about to start post-secondary school thanks to the treatment that he received just down the road at SickKids. Thank you so much for coming, Preston.

QUESTION PERIOD

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Marit Stiles: Good morning, Speaker. It was 18 years ago today that the greenbelt was established in law. The Greenbelt Act protected two million acres of remarkably productive farmland and environmentally sensitive areas, and it was a hard-fought victory—something that all Ontarians are very proud of.

But today's anniversary is a solemn one, because, as we know now, this Premier is in the process of carving up our greenbelt. What we don't know is who knew about the plan in advance and how select insiders came to benefit from these land deals.

Will the Premier reverse his decision to bulldoze the greenbelt and release the details of his dealings with the developers involved?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To reply, the government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I think the Premier has responded to that, as has the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

But what we're doing with the greenbelt—in fact, what we're doing across the province of Ontario—is ensuring that we have more than enough housing so that people can have their very first home, in many instances.

Look, Mr. Speaker, there are 350,000 people—think of that: 350,000 people—who are coming to Ontario each and every year. That's a city the size of Markham. Do you know why they're coming to Ontario? Because we're bringing back economic prosperity to the province of Ontario; we're creating thousands of jobs.

In order to ensure that they also can have the same dream as generations of others who have come and helped build this province, Mr. Speaker, we have to ensure that they have homes, that they have the best schools, that they have good hospitals. We are building a bigger, better, stronger province of Ontario, and that includes utilizing resources that this province has so that everybody can participate in the dream that is the province of Ontario under this government.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The supplementary question.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I'm going to go back to the Premier with this question. I want to say, first of all, I think everybody in this room and people across this province know

that the greenbelt and carving up of the greenbelt has nothing to do with housing or newcomers.

Speaker, we do know that the greenbelt matters to everyone, no matter where they live in this province. I can tell you that because I've been travelling around this province. And let me tell you, it doesn't take long to hear that people are struggling—people are struggling to pay rent, to find a doctor, to get their kids the support they need in school. People are looking for help and a government that's willing to give it, but what they're getting is one that refuses to spend the billions earmarked for health and education.

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How can Ontarians trust this Premier's upcoming budget will deliver for their communities when last year's budget hasn't even reached them?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To reply, the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: I'm happy to address the question from the Leader of the Opposition. When I think about why I got into government: For 15 years, we saw a record amount of spending, supported for three years by the NDP, I submit—from 2011 to 2014—as I have mentioned many times, in the history of Confederation up to 2003, \$130 billion of debt; the next 15 years, almost \$200 billion in debt.

Did those spending dollars go into health care? Did they go into building highways so people could move goods and people to market? Did the spending go into building more subways to connect the hundreds of thousands of people that move to Ontario every single year? Where are those people going to live? Where are they going to live? They have to live in housing. That's what this government is accelerating to make sure we get it done.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The final supplementary.

Ms. Marit Stiles: That is just typical of this government. When people need help, all they get from this government is rhetoric. Out there in the real world, people are tired of it. They're tired of it.

The fact is things are far from normal in a lot of places in this province. The services and supports that build strong and caring communities have been watered down, whittled away or just allowed to collapse altogether. Now, the finance minister is warning them to prepare for more "restraint" in this budget.

I would love to hear from the Premier on this question. I would really like to hear from the Premier on this question. Will the Premier tell Ontarians which services they rely on will bear the brunt of this so-called restraint?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: It's great being in this House because I'm learning new words, a new definition for the word "rhetoric."

That being said, let me also think about almost a year ago, when we tabled our budget for the people of Ontario and we took that budget to the people of Ontario. It included gas tax relief, because the cost of gas and the cost of everything was going up. It included a doubling of the low-income individuals and families tax credit so that the lowest-income workers in this province got a break. It

helped seniors with the seniors' home affordability tax credit.

But did we stop there? No. In the fall economic statement, what did we do? We increased ODSP funding by 5%. We indexed it to inflation for the first time ever. And we didn't stop there. We increased the earnings exemption. We provided the GAINS, the doubling of support for seniors and the guaranteed annual income. Also, we continued the gas tax relief for another year.

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Marit Stiles: I don't know what alternate universe this minister is living in that he thinks that life is more affordable in Ontario today than it was four years ago—my goodness.

Back to the Premier of this province, who I hope will answer our questions: At pre-budget consultations, MPPs heard ideas that would make a real difference in people's lives. So many people in this province don't have a family doctor. MPPs heard from the Ontario College of Family Physicians that Ontario could add the equivalent of 2,000 family doctors to our health care system and serve two million more patients simply by providing funding for around 19 hours a week of administrative support.

Will the government include administrative support for family doctors in the next budget?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Eglinton–Lawrence and parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health.

Mrs. Robin Martin: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. Our government is always listening to good ideas from all of our health care stakeholders, and we certainly will look at all of the ideas being brought forward.

As I said yesterday, Ontario is actually leading the country in access to family health providers and primary care practitioners, with 90% of people having access. But we know we must do more, and we will do more. That is why we are taking the steps we can, including currently adding 720 positions in 2022-23 for doctors in those family health organizations and another 480 in 2023-24. We're taking the steps necessary to make ensure that we have family health primary health care for all Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): And the supplementary question.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, on what planet? On what planet? There are two million people in this province who don't have access to a family doctor.

The committee heard a proposal to create a Peterborough community health centre—a very specific proposal—to ensure that people receive the wraparound health care they need to achieve their goals. That means people can keep their jobs, kids can focus on learning in school and families can spend more quality time together.

Access to this kind of comprehensive health care is a priority for Ontarians. Is it a priority for this government? Will you be funding the proposed Peterborough community health centre in the upcoming budget? My question's to the Premier.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To reply, the Premier.

Hon. Doug Ford: In 2018, when our government came to power, I can tell you there was hallway health care; the health care system was broken.

Since 2018, we have 60,000 new nurses, 8,000 new doctors who registered to work here in Ontario. In fact, last year we had over 12,000 new nurses registered and ready to work, and in the colleges and universities there are 30,000 new nurses ready to come on board.

We're putting—these are staggering numbers—\$50 billion into building new hospitals on 50 sites right across this province, focusing on the infrastructure, and we're going to make sure we have the best health care system anywhere in North America.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): And the final supplementary.

Ms. Marit Stiles: You know why there's no hallway medicine? Because the hallways are closed: 4,000 hours in emergency room closures in the last year alone.

Speaker, the committee heard from the Southwest Ontario Aboriginal Health Access Centre who told us that they are serving the Owen Sound community, along with two sizable Indigenous communities, with only one physician working part-time. They have over 100 people on their wait-list, which is 12 to 24 months long. They are severely backlogged for cancer screenings, and 45% of their diabetic clients have not seen a doctor in two years.

They're doing the hard work and all they're asking for is an increase from half a doctor to two. Will you fund Indigenous health services in the upcoming budget, including the proposals from Southwest Ontario Aboriginal Health Access Centre? To the Premier.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To reply, the member for Eglinton—Lawrence.

Mrs. Robin Martin: Thank you again to the member opposite for the question. Our government is working collaboratively with our Indigenous partners and communities to co-develop programs that will improve access to safe and effective health services. We acknowledge that programs and services must be designed, delivered and evaluated in collaboration with Indigenous partners to effectively meet the needs of Indigenous peoples, families and communities.

That's why we've invested, amongst other things, over \$41 million in Indigenous organizations and communities to support culturally safe mental health and wellness services for children, youth, families and communities in Ontario. Our government has made it clear that we will do everything we can to protect our most vulnerable, which includes Ontario's Indigenous populations.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question's to the Minister of Finance. I spent much of this winter travelling across the province, listening to Ontarians tell us what should be in the budget to create a stronger, more care province.

The Canadian Cancer Society told us about the need to expand access to take-home cancer drugs since that's what over half of the new oncology medications are actually developed for. Currently, OHIP doesn't cover these medications, which are costly and difficult to access without private insurance or employment benefits. Increasing access to take-home cancer drugs frees up valuable hospital resources and makes life a little bit easier for everyone who is battling cancer, no matter their income.

Will the government do the right thing in this budget, do the compassionate thing and do the fiscally responsible thing and provide OHIP coverage for these life-saving medications in this year's budget?

1050

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Thank you to the member opposite for that question. Last week, I highlighted that the budget date would be March 23, so I would encourage the member opposite to join us on March 23 when she will find out the historic and the unprecedented investments that we're making, not only in health care, but in infrastructure, in jobs, in labour and right across the board, Mr. Speaker.

This is a good point in time to highlight a very, very important point, something that happened last week on Thursday. You know what happened last Thursday? Under the Premier's leadership—and the Deputy Premier—Ontario was the first government in Canada to sign the Canada Health Transfer agreement. The Premier broke the logjam in this country and that allowed for us to get it done, because people don't want to hear governments just yapping and yapping. They want actual results. They want no backlogs in surgeries. They want better health care. They want access. They want—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you.

The supplementary question: The member for London North Centre.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Back to the Minister of Finance: I had the opportunity to travel across the province with the finance committee, hearing from people about what this government's priorities should be in this budget. Many of the proposals we heard were small investments that would produce significant long-term savings.

The Canadian Celiac Association brought to our attention that celiac testing is not covered by OHIP, which contributes to a higher rate of late diagnosis. Better access to this test would increase the quality of life for thousands and save millions in health care dollars by reducing unnecessary X-rays, ultrasounds, iron infusions and hospitalizations.

Will this government do the right thing—and the smart thing—by covering celiac testing under OHIP?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Thank you again to the member opposite for that question. I think the members opposite are acknowledging that we criss-crossed the province, not just with the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, of which they are members, and we went to many communities right across the province including: Kenora, Sudbury, Sault Ste. Marie, Timmins,

Kingston, the GTA, Mississauga, Brampton, Durham, London—all over Ontario.

Do you know what we heard? We heard, Mr. Speaker, our investments and our plan to build—we heard, “Keep going. Keep making those critical investments in subways, highways, in hospitals, in long-term care, in human health resources.” This government is listening and that’s why most of us are on this side, because we listen to the people of Ontario, and we’re going to get that job done.

LIFE SCIENCES SECTOR

Mrs. Nina Tangri: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade. Mississauga is home to large, knowledge-based industries including a robust life sciences sector that employs thousands of Ontarians. But we know that Mississauga needs to remain competitive if we are going to continue attracting these critical, life-saving investments.

Speaker, will the minister please provide an update on what our government is doing to continue creating highly skilled, well-paying jobs and attracting investments in life sciences?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, yesterday Premier Ford welcomed AstraZeneca’s latest investment. They were thrilled to announce the establishment of their Canadian research and development hub. AstraZeneca’s investment in Mississauga will create 500 new well-paying jobs here in Ontario. This will enhance Ontario’s competitiveness and leadership in our booming life sciences sector.

Speaker, Ontario has attracted record investments and jobs with nearly \$3 billion in life sciences alone in just two years, and we now have more than 70,000 life sciences employees working in Ontario. This is all a result of reducing the cost of doing business by \$7 billion annually. This is what we’re doing to attract investment to Mississauga.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary question?

Mrs. Nina Tangri: Thank you to the minister for his answer. Mississauga’s economic prosperity has been made possible by these important investments in life sciences, but beyond that, the prosperity of health care innovation and biomanufacturing is a result of the faith that global companies have in Ontario and in my riding of Mississauga–Streetsville.

Speaker, will the minister please elaborate on what our government is doing to secure Ontario’s standing as a global pinnacle of innovation in the life and health sciences sector?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: It’s important to note that years of previous government policies chased companies away. They left us dependent on others for our critical goods. They left us unable to innovate in health care. That’s why we released our government’s life sciences strategy. This is the first of its kind in over a decade, and it includes \$15 million in a Life Sciences Innovation Fund that will help our new start-ups, and a commitment to attract five or more investments of over \$100 million by 2030.

Yesterday’s announcement demonstrates that we’re well on our way to achieving that goal. Ontario now has everything we need in the global life sciences sector to help them innovate and succeed—a thriving research ecosystem, one of the most highly sought-after workforces in the world. This is where medical breakthroughs are discovered.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Chandra Pasma: During pre-budget hearings in Ottawa, we heard from the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board about the resources they need for a strong education system that meets the needs of Ontario students. In particular, we heard that schools are unlikely to meet the 2025 deadline for full accessibility set out by the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act because funding for building repairs and retrofits has fallen short over the last 25 years.

Making sure that every student has equal access to education is a priority for Ontarians. Will this government provide the necessary funding to make schools accessible in this year’s budget?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To reply, the Minister of Education.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I want to thank the member opposite for the question. We do believe we need to build new schools, and build these schools faster in the province of Ontario. It’s why the Premier has allocated \$14 billion over the next 10 years to finally build modern schools that are accessible and Internet-connected, with the highest standards of ventilation in Ontario. This investment has helped us deliver over 100 capital projects under way today—200 approved in the pipeline, and there’s more to go.

The Auditor General recommended to this province and government to allocate 2.5% on renewal to make sure that schools remain operationally sound for all children of all abilities, and we have done so, allocating \$1.3 billion each and every year in our budget.

In addition, the special education budget to help the most vulnerable children in our province is up to the highest levels ever, \$3.2 billion—\$90 million more today than just last year. We appreciate that the needs are rising, and our government and our province will be there for these kids.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The supplementary question.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: So that was a no to making existing schools accessible, then.

The finance committee also heard about the importance of ensuring that children can access mental health programming through their schools. Unfortunately, a new report has shown that less than one in 10 schools have access to a regularly scheduled mental health specialist or nurse.

Ensuring that children have the support they need to succeed in the classroom and that teachers and education workers have the support they need to do their jobs is a

priority for the people of Ontario. Is it a priority for this government? Will they include funding for mental health supports in schools in this budget?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Thank you for that question. Mr. Speaker, children and youth have the highest mental health care needs of any age demographic. This informs every investment that we've made as a government and will continue to make.

In fact, in 2022, in addition to the investments made in the Ministry of Education, we invested another \$31 million in new annual funding to reduce wait-lists and support the mental health and well-being of children and youth. These investments are in the community sector.

We're also innovating on new ways to treat children and youth, and use new means for them to access care. We invested \$3.5 million in Step Up Step Down, a live-in treatment program helping move kids through levels of intensive treatment, and \$2.1 million in virtual walk-in counselling, connecting youth to a clinician by phone, text or video chat. Dollars were invested in 22 youth wellness hubs in the province of Ontario.

We're going to continue making investments because this government is more prepared than any other government to ensure that our children and youth get the mental health supports they need, where and when they need them.

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FISCAL AND ECONOMIC POLICY

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: My question is for the Minister of Infrastructure. My constituents expect to see a government that respects their tax dollars and works hard to be good, strong fiscal stewards. It's essential that our government continues to demonstrate strong leadership by cutting red tape, implementing projects that boost good jobs in our economy and show overall respect for the taxpayer.

Our government must continue to do all that we can to be prudent fiscal managers, especially during this time of global economic challenge and rising costs.

Speaker, my question to the minister: Could the minister please explain to this House what actions our government is taking to ensure that taxpayer dollars are being spent wisely and appropriately?

Hon. Kinga Surma: Thank you to the member for the question. The people of Ontario expect us to be good stewards of taxpayer dollars. That is why, yesterday, I introduced Bill 69, the Reducing Inefficiencies Act, 2023, that, if passed, would allow the province to improve the management of real estate which will reduce red tape, optimize office space, enhance fiscal management and save taxpayer dollars.

Currently, Ontario has one of the largest and most complex real estate portfolios in Canada and we have been working towards establishing a more holistic approach to managing provincial agency properties. As part of this

legislation, a framework would be established to modify the real estate authority of 14 entities under eight ministries to just the Ministry of Infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, we have an obligation to be fiscally prudent when managing government assets. It is my hope that the members opposite will support this legislation.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The supplementary question.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: My thanks to the minister, and my thanks for her sharing with the House the important work that is brought forward in this legislation. We saw that until our government came to office, the hard-working tax dollars were not respected, and unfortunately, bureaucracy and red tape grew. We saw that this resulted in barriers, delays and setbacks to the implementation and management of vital infrastructure projects.

But, as a government, we are making the strategic investments necessary to build community infrastructure and ensure that these crucial projects are completed. We're responsible to ensure that we're delivering effective and resilient infrastructure that serves the needs of our communities, the needs of our constituents and protects the things that matter most to the people.

Could the minister please elaborate further on how this proposed legislation will ensure that crucial infrastructure projects can move ahead quickly and efficiently?

Hon. Kinga Surma: Again, thank you for the question. Ontario is developing sensible, practical changes to ensure continued environmental oversight while reducing delay on a project-specific basis. Projects as routine as municipal roads undergo a class environmental assessment with a mandatory 30-day waiting period. The mandatory 30-day waiting period can cause delays in building infrastructure. This is inefficient for the taxpayer and municipalities.

The Reducing Inefficiencies Act, 2023, if passed, will modernize an almost 50-year-old environmental assessment process that is outdated, slow and costly. We are living in a world with cost escalations. We need to be nimble, responsible and we need to do everything we can to continue to build up this province.

NORTHERN ONTARIO DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: To the Premier: At the pre-budget consultations, Red Lake came to ask the government once again for funding to build a new multi-purpose recreation and cultural centre. This is a request that they have been making for more than 10 years.

Red Lake generates over \$4 million in provincial and federal income tax with a municipal tax base of 5,000 people. This project is a priority for Red Lake residents, but Red Lake needs this government's support to start building.

Will there be funding for this multi-purpose centre in this budget?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To reply, the Minister of Northern Development and Indigenous Affairs.

Hon. Greg Rickford: I want to thank the member for the question. The answer is yes, and the answer has been yes for some time now. I've spoken to the mayor of Red Lake on a number of occasions, and we stand ready with the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund, as we've demonstrated across the province, making investments in recreational infrastructure to improve and ensure the quality of life is there for the families that not just live in those communities, but that it serves—in particular, in the instance of Red Lake, a number of Indigenous communities, particularly during the winter, through winter road access.

We've made those offers to the mayor of Red Lake. We stand ready to support his application as long as it fits within the parameters of a very generous Northern Ontario Heritage Fund, which is responding to the surge in incredible economic growth in major sectors, including mining, across northern Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The supplementary question.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Speaker, that “yes” is actually a “no” because there are parameters within the funding frame itself.

This multi-purpose recreation and cultural centre will benefit existing residents and will help the community grow. While many people come to Red Lake to work in mining, they often take the money they earn back to the south. The area struggles to attract workers who need to support our population, including health care workers. Recreation and cultural centres are important to families when they're deciding where to live, which makes this centre important to the future of Red Lake.

Again, I know the answer is “yes,” but there's a “no” in there.

Will this government commit to providing funding for this project in this budget?

Hon. Greg Rickford: There's no “no” in “yes,” Mr. Speaker. The response to the mayor consistently, persistently has been that we stand ready to support.

One of the nice things about the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund is its ability to stack. This is widely known for communities across the province, but particularly in northern Ontario, to leverage local investments, to leverage private sector investments, for mining operations—local there—and, as well, for the federal government to be involved in that. In many instances, we work on larger-scale projects with FedNor, a portfolio that I was the minister of in my federal days. It's easily done.

The mayor of Red Lake is well aware that we stand ready to support him and his community as they set out to build this important piece of recreational infrastructure.

There are countless examples across northern Ontario of where we've had this kind of success. We're going to continue to invest in the quality of life for the communities across northern Ontario.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. John Fraser: My question is to the Premier.

First off, I'd like to say it's good to be back. I did get a chance to see yesterday's question period. Scandal, espionage, accusations of racial bias—I had to check to make sure I wasn't watching CPAC. We don't need a big show—just the facts.

In 2018, the Premier was caught on video telling friends he was going to crack open the greenbelt, and then, for the next four years, he swore up and down that he wasn't going to do it.

Now he has cracked open the greenbelt and he's giving it away. To be fair—

Interjections.

Mr. John Fraser: No, I have to be fair to the Premier. I guess it was hard to decide which promise to keep—the one to his friends or the ones to the people of Ontario.

Why did the Premier break his promise to the people of Ontario?

Hon. Doug Ford: First of all, I want to thank the leader of the opposition for that lob ball—considering you changed it 17 times. Who were you taking care of 17 times when you changed the greenbelt? You didn't have a housing crisis.

I can tell you what we're doing. We're going to build the 1.5 million homes. There's going to be long-term care. There are going to be hospitals. There are going to be houses for people who can't afford houses—but again, we're doing it to make sure that we build homes for people who can't afford it. We aren't changing it 17 times, like the opposition changed it, endorsed by the NDP throughout the whole process.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I remind the members to make their comments through the Chair.

The supplementary question.

Mr. John Fraser: In case the Premier forgot, I'm the minivan guy, okay?

The fact is, too many people who benefited from the Premier's decision to crack open the greenbelt were, by the Premier's own admission, his close friends.

More facts: The Premier hosted a private fundraiser at his home—one that directly benefited a member of his family. Developers, their lobbyists, people doing business with the Ontario government were invited. Invitees were asked to buy tickets and reportedly donate up to \$1,000, all to benefit a family member.

The Premier has confirmed the tickets were \$150—thank you, Premier. Then, when he was asked about who was invited, he said, “Well, the boys took care of that.” Not sure who the boys are.

Simple, straightforward facts: Will the Premier admit this was indeed a conflict and disclose the list of developers and people doing business with the government who were invited?

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The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock for a second. I'm just going to remind the House that it's against the rules of the House to impute motives, and to refrain as much as we can from personal attacks.

Start the clock. To reply for the government, the government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Ah, the Liberals. Things are so bad for the Liberals that the leader of the Green Party took one look and said, “I don’t even want to lead this party”—right? This is a party—25% of their caucus wanted to support the Green leader to take over the leadership of the party. Their House leader actually wrote a letter supporting the Green leader to “please take over for our party.”

He wants facts? I’ll give him facts. Under the Liberals, 300,000 jobs gone; under the Liberals, manufacturing in this province decimated; under the Liberals, hydro rates through the roof. Under the Liberals, people had to decide whether to keep their homes or eat. Under the Liberals, long-term care decimated; under the Liberals, schools closed; under the Liberals, health care brought to its knees.

Under Conservatives: massive investments in health care, massive investments in education, transit and transportation back on track, Mr. Speaker—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. The House will come to order.

Start the clock. The next question.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Mrs. Nina Tangri: Roads, highways and other critical infrastructure are vital to ensuring our economy remains strong and productive. Unfortunately, under the previous Liberal government, Ontario’s transportation networks were neglected, especially in growing regions like my riding of Mississauga–Streetsville.

Highway 401 is North America’s busiest and most congested highway. In fact, approximately 180,000 vehicles use this highway daily just from Mississauga to Milton alone. Our government needs to take action today to make sure highways are less congested and more convenient to keep Ontario moving. This will ensure that we’re helping individuals and families get to where they need to go. Together, let’s build the transportation infrastructure needed to keep Ontario strong and prosperous.

Can the Associate Minister of Transportation please share with our government what we are doing to improve our highway network?

Hon. Stan Cho: My in-laws live in that member’s riding, and every time I see them, they tell me what a great job she’s doing for her constituents.

I’m glad to inform that member that, on December 12, just before the holidays, we announced that our government finished expanding Highway 401, with 18 kilometres of spacious new lanes now open from the Credit River in Mississauga to Regional Road 25 in Milton. To break it down, our government has taken the previous six lanes along this portion of the 401 and practically doubled it to include 10 to 12 lanes. In fact, this includes one new median high-occupancy vehicle lane in each direction—a huge game-changer for drivers, a multi-lane expansion that will help fight gridlock and keep goods and people moving across the GTA.

Widening Highway 401 just goes to show that, unlike the NDP and the Liberals, our government is building Ontario and getting it done for drivers.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The supplementary question.

Mrs. Nina Tangri: Thank you to the associate minister for the response. As part of my daily commute, it has made a world of difference.

Building highways for the people of Mississauga–Streetsville and all Ontarians needs to be a priority of our government. Roads, highways and other critical infrastructure help get goods and services to market faster. Clogged roads and gridlocked highways impact families and their quality of life by preventing busy moms and dads from getting home to their children on time. Road congestion traps transportation trucks from getting goods to business, costing more than \$11 billion annually across Ontario’s economy.

Speaker, can the Associate Minister of Transportation elaborate on how our government will deliver on our promised plan for highway improvement?

Hon. Stan Cho: The member is absolutely right: After 15 years of no action from the NDP and Liberals, Ontario’s highway system is simply not where it needs to be. From awarding contracts to widen Highways 11 and 17 to announcing successful bidders on Highway 3’s expansion later this year, and of course, building Highway 413, our government is getting highways built throughout the entire province. In fact, across the 2022-23 fiscal year we have dedicated over \$2 billion to expand and repair highways and bridges across the north and the south of Ontario. What’s more, Speaker, these vital infrastructure upgrades will support the creation of 15,700 jobs in northern and southern Ontario combined while ultimately connecting the province like never before.

The people of this province elected our government, under the leadership of Premier Ford, to get critical infrastructure built and grow Ontario’s economy. That’s exactly what we’re going to do.

SHELTER SERVICES

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: My question is to the Premier. When pre-budget consultations came to Windsor, we had the opportunity to hear from Hiatus House about the life-saving and life-changing work of shelters for women and children escaping domestic violence. These shelters are grossly, negligently underfunded. All they’re asking for is some stability in their funding and the ability to focus on the work they do for the community instead of needing to fundraise or apply for grants or beg this government for money.

Will this government finally break the cycle of violence against women by providing stable, long-term funding to organizations like Hiatus House in this budget?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Children, Community and Social Services.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Sadly, gender-based violence, domestic violence and human trafficking have been

more present during and since the pandemic, and it is crucial to ensure that those affected by violence and exploitation receive the supports that they need while offenders are held accountable through the justice system. That's why we're investing in violence prevention and community services that support women and their dependants. It's why we've launched programs and past legislation to support our efforts to end violence against women. No woman should be subjected to violence, and our government is working to prevent violence against women and supporting women to escape it and investing in the programs that are necessary to stop gender-based violence.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The supplementary question: the member for Toronto—St. Paul's.

MPP Jill Andrew: This is to the Premier: Advocates for survivors of intimate partner violence have echoed at this year's pre-budget hearings the same recommendations following the Renfrew county inquest. Ontario needs a plan for housing survivors of intimate partner violence. Shelters are overflowing. Women have to stay in shelters longer and longer because of the challenges in finding their own safe and real affordable housing, and this Conservative government does not have a plan. This is a priority for Ontarians. Is housing survivors of gender-based violence a priority for this government?

Will the Conservative government provide adequate, stable, long-term funding for women's shelters, for real affordable housing, for transitional housing in this year's budget? I don't want to hear about five years from now—in this budget.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: First of all, our thoughts go out to the victims and the friends affected by the events in Renfrew.

Our government understands the importance of ending gender-based violence, and we have programs. We've passed legislation. We're making investments, and this is continuous. This is an ongoing effort.

The pandemic certainly had an effect on Ontario's most vulnerable, and that's why we're working to increase access to safe and affordable housing and providing supports to people who experienced homelessness during COVID-19. We're investing \$18.5 million over three years in the Transitional and Housing Support Program to support victims of domestic violence and survivors of human trafficking, maintain housing and help transition to independence.

It's our government that's investing in helping survivors of domestic violence and human trafficking find and maintain housing, and it's helping them transition to independence. We are connecting them to socially and culturally responsive wraparound services like safety planning, counselling, health and wellness, education, legal and immigration services, financial services—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much.

The next question.

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INDIGENOUS LAND DISPUTE

Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady: My question is to the Minister of Indigenous Affairs. Today is the 17th anniversary of the land occupation at Douglas Creek Estates in Caledonia. Seventeen years later, two governments later, not much has changed other than a second occupied site, and no leadership or clarity in terms of how to have productive Indigenous relations on development matters.

On February 10, members of this government were at Six Nations to announce an energy project, a project on lands in Haldimand county. Not one member addressed the mayor who was present that day, nor was any member of Haldimand county invited by this government to attend.

Speaker, the minister was part of that entourage, and he was asked by a reporter who the government consulted with on this project. Was it the elected council, the Haudenosaunee Development Institute or both? The minister didn't answer the question, so—Speaker, through you—I'm asking the minister to answer the question today.

Hon. Greg Rickford: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for the question. I also want to thank my colleagues who have been involved in one of the most exciting energy sector projects that have come along in a long time, and most notably involved the participation of an Indigenous community's economic development corporation. We see this, Mr. Speaker, as the future in our energy sector, working with Indigenous communities. We're going to continue down that path, supporting not just that project but other opportunities, for example in northern Ontario, where they have and where they will continue to exist.

With respect to the duty to consult with the people of Six Nations of the Grand River, we've made tremendous strides in meeting with mayors from the Haldimand tract, including the mayor who you're referencing. We see clarity and certainty as our top priorities moving forward so that any and all projects can be done on a consensus basis and focus on the priorities of those respective communities.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary question?

Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady: I'm a bit disappointed, because that was not an answer to my question.

As the minister should know, Six Nations Chief Mark Hill has made it very clear he believes his elected government is with whom consultations must occur. Would-be investors and developers are scared away from Haldimand county because they aren't sure what the rules are, and this minister, as we hear again today, refuses to state clear and consistent policy in terms of who represents Six Nations. Haldimand county asked the minister for clarification at ROMA, and no answer was given.

The crown has a duty to consult, and the province has handed that duty down to the county in the absence of a framework. Municipalities are told by this province to

engage Indigenous communities but are attempting to meet a non-defined standard. Through you again, Speaker: Will the minister please indicate who is to be consulted with at Six Nations?

Hon. Greg Rickford: Mr. Speaker, I don't accept that characterization at all. In fact, we've been working with the elected leadership of Six Nations of the Grand on a plan moving forward that will bring that kind of clarity and certainty.

If this member really understood the dynamics and the responsibilities of different levels of government, it would be perfectly clear to her that the most important thing that the province can do is work with the elected council of Six Nations of the Grand and, as the chief has explicitly requested, to have many of these issues and many of these opportunities settled at the community level.

To that end, we've made significant progress. We're meeting regularly with the mayors of the Haldimand tract, including the mayor who you spoke of. Other big-city mayors in Brantford and Hamilton and such were very encouraged that in the not-too-distant future, a policy position will respect consensus, co-operation and a desire to move on the important projects—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much.

The next question.

NORTHERN ONTARIO DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Kevin Holland: My question is for the Minister of Indigenous Affairs and Northern Development. The opportunities in northern Ontario are endless and we are hearing accounts of northern Ontario ingenuity daily. Our government recognizes and appreciates and values northern Ontario. Investments made by our government continue to provide support to improve the quality of life and promote economic development in our communities.

But there's more that needs to be done in order to further advance the successes we have achieved. Speaker, can the minister please explain how our government is increasing economic prosperity for people across northern Ontario?

Hon. Greg Rickford: As I mentioned to the member across the way earlier, we're working with our northern Ontario caucus, and in particular with my friendly neighbour here in Thunder Bay—Atikokan, to ensure that our communities are able to respond to the incredible opportunities across our vast region—filming, steel production, steel manufacturing, mining, forestry—reinventing itself.

All across our region of northern Ontario, there are many examples of the need to continue to invest in businesses, invest in communities and invest in Indigenous communities, as well, through community enhancements, cultural support programs, investing in innovation and research and investing in businesses. Their launches, their growth and expansion, relocation into northern Ontario as we build out capacity for supply chains in forestry, mining, filming and other examples: We're ready, and we're going to continue to respond to the northern opportunity—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you. Supplementary question?

Mr. Kevin Holland: Thank you to the minister for that response. It is positive and reassuring that our government is committed to supporting the hard-working people in northern Ontario.

Numerous success stories have emerged as a result of the excellent creative and professional work by the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp. Northern communities are unique, and not just geographically. These communities have specific needs when it comes to infrastructure, supply chains and supporting businesses. Our government must continue to invest in initiatives that bring practical and resourceful solutions to enhance the lives of individuals, families and communities in rural and remote areas of our province.

Speaker, can the minister please elaborate on how our government's investment in the NOHFC is supporting communities across the north?

Hon. Greg Rickford: I'd like to give a specific example, and it's in Geraldton—or Greenstone, as we refer to it now. This is a particularly important location, Mr. Speaker. It may very well become the new centre of gravity for mining in northern Ontario as we see the incredible opportunities in the Ring of Fire just north of it: the opportunity for a corridor that could supply energy and access for communities, leveraging health, economic and social benefits, and of course for the world-class mining deposits that are located there.

Greenstone itself is under tremendous growth, with a base-metal gold mine, and there's an incredible need there to support economic development in that community. That's why I visited there, spoke with Mayor James McPherson and made announcements on upgrading the waste water system, so the services can be extended for industrial and commercial capacity.

Supporting the rehabilitation of the local rink at the Longlac Sportsplex; refurbishing their boat launch and their golf course, including the clubhouse, which hosts many business events and such: Mr. Speaker, we're responding to the opportunity in—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much.

The next question.

LIBRARY SERVICES

Mr. John Vanthof: At the pre-budget consultation hearings in Timmins, we heard from the Cochrane Public Library about some of the services they provide to build a stronger, more caring community: services like Internet access for people who can't afford it or don't have a home to link it to. Did you know that in the district of Cochrane, the rate of homelessness per 1,000 people is higher than anywhere else in the province? Services like printing and faxing documents to help apply for jobs are all services that people need—people from all walks of life.

Libraries are often the great social equalizers. They have been through history, and they will be in the future.

But they're also the first thing on the chopping block for municipalities, who are also having a tough time balancing their budgets—but they're incredibly important. Will this government ensure that Ontario's libraries receive the direct, stable funding they need in this budget?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To reply, the Minister of Infrastructure.

Hon. Kinga Surma: Thank you very much to the member opposite for raising a really important issue in the province of Ontario, one that our government has tackled with a very significant investment of \$4 billion.

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Mr. Speaker, I agree with the member. I think it's absolutely critical in order for every single person in the province of Ontario to be connected to high-speed Internet, no matter where they live.

We have worked with the federal government. We have established a partnership to the tune of \$1.3 billion. We are now focusing all of our energies to connect the remaining 40,000 to 60,000 premises, and we will get it done.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The supplementary question: the member for Spadina–Fort York.

Mr. Chris Glover: My question is to the Premier. Access to information is essential for the success of Ontario businesses, students and residents, yet there is an incredible inequity in access to information that libraries across the province raised during the pre-budget hearings. Library systems in big cities can afford to buy licences for online resources, but towns, villages and remote communities cannot afford these licences. This means that Ontarians in rural communities cannot access up-to-date research, videos and other online resources that are available to residents in bigger cities.

In this budget, will your government be investing in the Ontario Digital Library so that Ontarians in every part of the province have equitable access to these licensed online resources?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To reply, the government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I'm actually quite excited; the NDP want to make investments. Now, here's the thing. We know that they've talked a lot about investments they want to make, right? We know that when we make these investments, historically, since 2018, they've voted against every single one of those investments. When we've put more money into arts and culture, they have voted against it. When we put \$4 billion into infrastructure, they have voted against it.

Now, of course we need to do more to ensure that all parts of this province are connected, that all parts of this province have access to information, so that we can continue to grow the economy. It's not just the hard work of the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade, who has seen \$18 billion worth of investment come back to the province of Ontario. It is why we're making so many investments in small communities across the province, so that our small business partners, as you referenced, can ensure that they participate in the amazing growth that we are seeing across the province of Ontario.

That is why thousands of jobs are being created. Welcome to the—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you.
The next question.

ELECTRONIC SERVICE DELIVERY

Mr. Ric Bresee: My question is for the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery. As we all know, under the previous Liberal government, access to vital services for drivers' licences, health cards and birth certificates was not provided in an easy and convenient manner. This process made wait lines at ServiceOntario access longer and more burdensome.

In my riding, as in many others across this province, it can require many miles of travel to get to ServiceOntario. It should have been more efficient and respectful to our individuals, families and our front-line employees. More needs to be done to create a system that better serves and effectively supports individual needs. Accessing government services online is preferred by many and should not be complicated.

Speaker, can the minister please explain what our government is doing to make improvements to ServiceOntario?

Hon. Kaleed Rasheed: I would like to thank my colleague from Hastings–Lennox and Addington for the question, and all the great work he's doing in his riding.

Speaker, first I would like to thank the amazing ServiceOntario staff across the province for their hard work, many of whom I've had the privilege to meet in person since taking over this role. I have seen first-hand the incredible work they are doing across the province, providing services to Ontarians as our front-line individuals. A big thank you to our team members, the ServiceOntario staff.

This government has been able to launch new options and improve our services for all Ontarians, both in person and online. I'm happy to inform the members in this House that Ontarians can now use an improved appointment booking system, available at many of ServiceOntario's busiest—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much.

Supplementary question.

Mr. Ric Bresee: Thank you to the minister for informing us of the new services.

My constituents in Hastings–Lennox and Addington increasingly expect access to services online from the comfort of their own homes. As I noted, in rural areas, this is vitally important. We must keep pace with technology so that individuals can access information and book appointments at ServiceOntario from a digital device of their own choosing. We can't afford to be an off-line government in an online world.

We've heard the minister say that our government supports modernization and innovation to improve the services that we offer. Will the minister please elaborate

on how this recent announcement will make life easier for the people of Ontario?

Hon. Kaleed Rasheed: Thank you to the member for the question. This government is putting Ontarians first by giving them more choices to access critical government services. We are using data and leveraging new technologies to design programs that work together seamlessly and cut red tape.

Furthermore, those who wish are now able to identify accessibility needs ahead of their appointments as part of our mandate to ensure that our services are available and accessible to all Ontarians. And we are just getting started, with new services being added online regularly. Led by our Premier, we are building ServiceOntario for tomorrow.

As I always say, every transaction online is one less person in line. This means that Ontarians can now book multiple services in a single appointment or conveniently book a single—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much.

The next question.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: During pre-budget consultations, we heard from the Ontario Community Support Association about the difficult decisions this government is forcing them to make. They are looking at a 36% reduction in transportation services, which is a reduction of 200,000 rides to medical appointments and other critical services. They're also looking at a 35% reduction in Meals on Wheels, which will result in 640,000 meals not being delivered.

These vital services are important to Ontarians, but they don't seem important to this government. Will the government ensure these programs are fully funded in this budget?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To reply, the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: We know that the economic effects of the pandemic are still affecting people, and we must get people out of poverty now more than ever. That's why we have numerous parts—and we're working across ministries, across governments, across layers of government to make life better for people.

With the impacts of COVID-19 still having an effect, we've launched the micro-credential strategy. We're improving mental health with the Roadmap to Wellness: \$3.8 billion over 10 years for mental health supports. We've committed \$1 billion to build thousands of new child care spaces. We launched \$1.2 billion last year for the Ontario Child Benefit. We're investing \$90 million to provide dental care to low-income seniors. We've got the CARE tax credit, which will provide about 300,000 families with up to 75% of their eligible child care expenses. We've got the low-income individuals and families tax credit, the Ontario Jobs Training Tax Credit, the Ontario Energy and Property Tax Credit.

We've got the minimum wage increase. We've raised ODSP rates. I could go on—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you.

The supplementary question: the member for Ottawa Centre.

Mr. Joel Harden: My question is for the Premier. It would be nice if the Premier answered instead of enrolling in the minister protection program, but I won't hold my breath—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to ask the member to withdraw—

Mr. Joel Harden: Withdraw, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): —and place his question.

Mr. Joel Harden: We did consultations in Ottawa. We heard from the Centretown Community Health Centre that they need resources to create a stronger and more caring city. They told us that this government is asking them to do more with less, and what that means is, they're going to have to cut one to two staff positions, which will mean 500 to 1,000 patients will no longer be able to access services.

The Centretown Community Health Centre is integral to a caring and strong community in Ottawa Centre. Will this government ensure that their budget is not cut?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To reply?

Interjection: It's not even worth responding to that.

Mr. Joel Harden: It's okay, we're used to you not responding—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

That concludes our question period for this morning. This House stands in recess until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1139 to 1500.

PETITIONS

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Miss Monique Taylor: I am happy to table this petition once again and to thank Dr. Sally Palmer from the social action committee.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario's social assistance rates are well below Canada's official Market Basket Measure poverty line and far from adequate to cover the rising costs of food and rent: \$733 for individuals on OW and soon \$1,227 for ODSP;

“Whereas an open letter to the Premier and two cabinet ministers, signed by over 230 organizations, recommends that social assistance rates be doubled for both Ontario Works (OW) and the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP);

“Whereas the recent budget increase of 5% for ODSP, with nothing for OW, could be experienced as an insult to recipients, who have been living since 2018 with frozen

social assistance rates and a Canadian inflation rate that reached 12%;

“Whereas the government of Canada recognized in its CERB program that a basic income of \$2,000 per month was the standard support required by individuals who lost their employment during the pandemic;

“We, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly to double social assistance rates for OW and ODSP.”

I wholeheartedly agree with this. Thanks again to all the folks who have been signing this right across the province. I’m going to affix my signature to it and give it to page Lindsay to bring to the Clerk.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ST. THOMAS-CENTRAL ELGIN BOUNDARY ADJUSTMENT ACT, 2023

LOI DE 2023 SUR LA MODIFICATION DES LIMITES TERRITORIALES ENTRE ST. THOMAS ET CENTRAL ELGIN

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 27, 2023, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 63, An Act respecting the adjustment of the boundary between the City of St. Thomas and the Municipality of Central Elgin / Projet de loi 63, Loi concernant la modification des limites territoriales entre la cité de St. Thomas et la municipalité de Central Elgin.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Jeff Burch: It’s a pleasure to stand and speak to Bill 63—and we often say that, but we don’t always mean it, I don’t think. But in this case, I think this is a bill that everyone in the Legislature would support. It’s a very simple bill that essentially takes land from one municipality and puts it into another to create a mega site of about 1,500 acres, to attract the kind of manufacturing jobs that I think many folks are excited for us to get.

We know that the Canadian government has been really pushing in the EV industry. We know the federal minister has been to Germany pushing Volkswagen and other investment.

Certainly, on all sides of the House, good-paying manufacturing jobs are something that we all want to see come to Canada and come to Ontario, as well.

I’m going to make my remarks fairly brief for a lead.

I want to talk a little bit about the land itself. After announcing in June that St. Thomas had bought 800 acres to attract manufacturing investment, with an eye to a possible electric vehicle battery plant, the city took another 700 acres of adjacent land under contract, which was expected to close soon. I can understand the urgency. We want potential investors to look at Ontario and look at Canada—and these municipalities who are working out this assembly of land to attract investment in a positive light. So that’s what this investment is all about. The

change will mean the site can be developed faster, with permits and site assessments done by just one local government—and any of us who have been in municipal government understand what that means, with what we sometimes call red tape or permits. It’s much easier to deal with one municipality. This is something that governments have been doing for a long, long time. I’m not sure it has happened quite on the scale that we see it happening with the assembly of these mega sites across Canada.

I can remember, as a councillor, I had the privilege of attending the auto city mayors’ meetings. When the mayor of my municipality couldn’t make it, I kind of subbed in for him. We’d meet at the Ford plant in Oakville. All of the mayors from cities where their auto manufacturing sector was active in their cities would meet. There were two things at the time that they were discussing, and one was assembling land; the other was, of course, an auto strategy, which I’m not sure we ever fully got, but we’re far enough down the road now.

We are making what they used to call turnkey plots. What that means is that the land is assembled, all the permits are already done. As in this case, perhaps they’ve assembled the land under one municipality to make it attractive to investors. So that’s what’s happening here. It has been happening for a long time. It’s great to see all levels of government co-operating to try to cash in on electric vehicle battery manufacturing jobs and other manufacturing jobs.

A lot of the credit, I think—it’s natural for the government to want to talk about its accomplishments and even to blame some of the bad things on past governments. That’s fair game. But I think what we really need to do is congratulate these municipalities and their economic development officers. I’ve had the pleasure of working with a lot of economic development officers in different municipalities in Niagara and elsewhere. They’re very important jobs. They’re the people who kind of work behind the scenes and get a lot of this done in advance of approaching levels of government, like provincial or municipal or even federal governments. Clearly, they’ve done a good job and they’re in the hunt, as many newspaper articles have reported, for the what has been suggested is up to 2,500 jobs.

A lot of us have personal stories about this. Mine is, my dad worked at General Motors in St. Catharines, so I’m the product of a family that was supported with good, unionized manufacturing jobs. I can remember, back when I was about five years old, when my dad got the job at General Motors, and it was a big change for our family. I wasn’t all that happy about it, at the age of five, because my dad was working as a milkman, so I got to go around on his milk truck, which was a lot of fun. So I was a little bit upset about it, but I learned to like it later when we got good family vacations and a nicer house and all the benefits that come along with good-paying manufacturing jobs. So that’s something that I think we obviously need more of.

St. Thomas was one of those areas in Ontario that was devastated when we lost manufacturing jobs, especially in

the 1990s. Most of us can remember those times. I know in St. Catharines, GM, at one time, was up to 11,000 or 12,000 manufacturing jobs; now we're just down to a couple of thousand. Places like St. Thomas lost their share of jobs too, and there was a lot of suffering at the time. We can talk all we want about the causes for that. I could stand up here and talk about free trade forever and probably disagree with a lot of folks on the other side about what the NAFTA agreement did back at that time. But the fact is, we lost hundreds and hundreds of thousands of manufacturing jobs. It's great to see the possibility of getting some of that back across Canada and the prosperity that hopefully will bring to many folks.

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There are times when we're going to disagree on things in this House, and there are other times when it's incumbent on us to put the partisanship aside and recognize that—folks are going to take credit from all levels of government, and a lot of that credit is due, but we all want to see these jobs coming to Ontario. Certainly, on this side of the House, we're right there supporting the promotion of good-paying, unionized manufacturing employment.

I should say that—my friend from Niagara Falls brought it up the other day—we have to give some of the credit not only to the municipal, provincial and federal governments, but to the unions as well, who went through very difficult times with thousands of their members losing jobs. They went to the bargaining table—and there are times for confrontation, but there are also times to work together, between industry and the unions, because everyone benefits when these jobs come to Canada and come to Ontario. So I think we have to give some credit where credit is due to unions like Unifor and the Steelworkers and others who have gone to the bargaining table and worked with the government and with the industry to try to create the conditions to bring some of these jobs back.

I just want to wrap up by saying that, on this side of the House, we want to work to get this through as quickly as possible. We understand the urgency. By the way, this is something the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing already had the power to do under the Municipal Act, but this expedites that process. We want investors who are looking at coming to Canada and coming to Ontario to see us working together, between levels of government, to be a place where those jobs can come.

I'm happy to stand here and support this bill. We will be voting in favour of it.

I look forward to any questions that the government has.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Questions to the member for Niagara Centre?

Mr. Will Bouma: It's a pleasure to engage with my friend from the great riding of Niagara Centre, and it's good to see the member from Sudbury sitting right beside him—and in fact, just over there, the member from Humber River–Black Creek.

It doesn't happen often, as you mentioned, but it's great when we can get together to do something really good for a community.

I don't want to trap him at all, but I'm just curious—obviously, this land is being transferred from one municipality to another. He has been in that municipal world too, and I was wondering if he had any thoughts—because I've just been chewing on it myself—on what would be appropriate compensation for Central Elgin with this moving forward. If he had any thoughts on that at all, just to put that question out there—and if he doesn't have an answer, I don't right now either, but it's just something that I've been thinking about for the last couple of days.

Mr. Jeff Burch: Thank you, my friend, for the question. I did ask that question the other day, and I learned that there is some facilitation that's going to go on between St. Thomas and Central Elgin, which is a common way to resolve any kind of issues. I think that those municipalities will put the prospect of getting thousands of good-paying manufacturing jobs ahead of their own issues, and I would expect they would come to some kind of an arrangement. The only dispute I would be aware of is whether they can share tax revenue. I trust that they will be able to get together to resolve those issues.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The next question?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I want to thank the member from Niagara Centre for his presentation.

Getting back those manufacturing jobs is something central to the NDP, certainly—in Ontario and across this country. It's a real pleasure to know the member for Niagara Centre on a personal level because we've had conversations, and I know how important it is for him, and it's something he does talk about. I want him to once again reiterate why it's so important to bring those jobs back that have been lost year after year in the past.

Mr. Jeff Burch: I talked about St. Catharines. I currently live in Thorold. I represent Thorold, Welland and Port Colborne—and all kinds of manufacturing jobs. Some are still there but, boy, there used to be tens of thousands in the Niagara region.

I can remember, growing up, when my dad started working at General Motors—10,000 or 12,000 jobs. He started out in the forge and worked his way through the plants. And to see those jobs leaving through the 1990s—very, very painful. It had a ripple effect through the whole community. I was active in my dad's union, CAW 199, which my friend from Niagara Falls was president of—and just the money that that union local gave to local charities and seeing that dry up as a proportion of the membership was painful to watch.

This will have the opposite effect of a positive ripple effect through the community.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Next, the member for Mississauga–Lakeshore.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I want to thank the member from Niagara Centre today.

As you know, I worked for Ford Motor Co. The 1990s was a difficult time in the automotive industry.

With the previous government, we lost 350,000 manufacturing jobs here in the province of Ontario.

Our government has been attracting jobs at a rate of \$17 billion here in Ontario, an investment in the automotive industry—like Ford Motor Co. with \$500 million, and other companies across the province—and attracting more automotive manufacturing here in the province of Ontario.

Can the opposition agree that this government has been successful in attracting billions of dollars in investment for the future of manufacturing in Ontario, and will you support us on these types of bills moving forward?

Mr. Jeff Burch: I would say to take yes for an answer. There's only so far I can go.

All levels of government and all political parties have to get together to bring these jobs. We're going to have disagreements, even on economic issues, when it comes to attracting investment. There are all kinds of issues. My friend from Timiskaming–Cochrane might talk about having a way to track how much farmland we're using and things like that. But at the end of the day, we need these jobs to come back, and I think there's enough credit for everyone to take.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further debate?

Mr. Rob Flack: I'll be sharing my time today with the honourable member in front of me, from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

I spoke last week to Bill 63, the St. Thomas–Central Elgin Boundary Adjustment Act. My hope is to share with the House today the amazing potential this mega site opportunity really does bring to southwestern Ontario.

To remain competitive, Ontario has to position itself as the most attractive place to grow. To accomplish this, we must work with our municipal partners to create the best possible environment for new investment to come our way.

Before us today is a game-changer opportunity—game-changing in the sense that we can create shovel-ready mega sites that are the envy of North America.

This legislation would allow the city of St. Thomas and the province to proceed with speed and efficiency with respect to permitting and preparing the site to meet potential investors' timelines. Speed is of the essence.

As I think everybody knows, there is a shortage of mega sites available in Ontario. With the introduction of the Job Site Challenge in 2019, this government cast a wide net throughout Ontario municipalities to assemble mega site opportunities from 500 to 1,500 acres. The challenge has been met, and Elgin county will have the most advantageous site in North America if this legislation is passed and passed quickly. It's advantageous in these ways: First of all, it's a large industrial site. It's got close proximity to major transit routes, highway and air; serviceability of infrastructure, with electricity, gas, water and waste water; access to the largest market in the world, the United States of America; clean energy—and let's not forget this important point: Clean energy is key, I believe, going forward, to our future success. But most importantly, it's advantageous because of people—and

that's what this project is ultimately about. It's about jobs. It's about innovation. It's about innovative, hard-working Ontarians ready to enjoy and take on good-paying jobs with benefits and pensions.

1520

As I said last week, Ontario is in fierce competition with close to 40 jurisdictions in the United States—competing for these major investors. All of them are shovel-ready. In fact, as Minister Fedeli said earlier this week, they have 19 to 51 certified sites in inventory in the US competing against each other and Ontario, and they are aggressively targeting the potential investors we are targeting as well. We need to be ready, and that is why, again, I say speed is of the essence. We will be ready to act, and we will be ready to win.

Minister Fedeli has spoken in this House about discussions currently taking place in this province and with various investors—with close to \$20 billion in projects that require large-scale sites. Will we get every one of these deals? Likely not. But if we get our fair share, I think we will benefit. The people of Ontario will benefit, indeed. Having the ability to assemble industrial sites, shovel-ready and investor-ready, is obviously key to closing our fair share of these economy-building opportunities throughout the province—not just in Elgin–Middlesex–London, but throughout the province, as we have already announced and already displayed and already closed.

Allow me, Speaker, to move to a key part of this legislation and why it's important that fairness prevails if and when Bill 63 is passed. The city of St. Thomas, the municipality of Central Elgin and the entire county of Elgin will all share in the economic prosperity and success of any future investment, if and when it comes. I am confident, at the end of the day, that with this project, we will be the envy of Ontario.

Throughout my nearly 40 years of living in my region, which includes Elgin county, Middlesex county and the city of London, I have witnessed the demise of good-paying jobs in the manufacturing sector. Company after company after company closed or moved elsewhere because it was too expensive to survive in Ontario. Simply put, we were not competitive. We are now competitive. We were not competitive, for sure, and we paid the price with the loss of jobs and the loss of these employees—and remember, you have good companies, and there's tertiary spinoff to go with it. We lost it all.

In the last number of decades—and we all have heard this: that the service sector, while important, is the future of work in Ontario. Under the previous government—their long-term report on the economy stated: “The structure of the Ontario economy will continue to shift from goods-producing to service-producing sectors,” and this will result in “shifting employment from goods-producing industries, in particular manufacturing, to service-sector industries.” While that's important, it just simply was not good enough.

I can state that this Premier, his cabinet and caucus have said loud and clear that an attitude of failure was not good enough. It was not good enough for Ontario workers now,

nor a number of years ago, and it was not good enough for the long-term success of this province.

That is why Minister Fedeli, Minister Clark and the entire government here have worked so hard throughout this province to attract investment—“Come back home to Ontario. Think about how Ontario used to be.”

Post-, or throughout the industrial revolution—we were part of a major automotive industry sector. In fact, I believe—the minister said this earlier—that we closed \$17 billion of deals in the last number of years, which is simply amazing, when you think about it. For so many years, I believe, so many people gave up on the manufacturing sector, which is so important to southwestern Ontario.

Also, I'd like to say that we're here to cut some red tape. It's important to cut red tape. It's important to cut costs in government. It's important to be efficient. In business, if you're not competitive, you're not in business. You have to be competitive. But cutting your way to prosperity is never the total answer. If you're going to grow, you have to do it by growing the economy. And how are we going to do that? We create jobs. When we create jobs, we can create economic wealth—people come, people invest. That's how you grow an economy. When we grow the economy, we're going to generate provincial revenues, and the treasury will be filled with dollars that we can invest back into hospitals, into our schools, into our health care providers, into our teachers and ultimately get the services we need funded well and into the future.

As we've said before in this House, there are two million to three million more people coming to this province in the next 10 years. We need to find a home for them to work. We also need to make sure that those workers are trained and skilled up so that they can meet the available opportunities that exist. I believe that will happen, ultimately, on this project.

On this project, I also want to point out that, yes, there's a potential for a mega site or a mega industry to invest, but think of the tertiary spinoff we're going to get—the sub-manufacturing jobs, the supply chain that comes into these businesses and these industries. That really is the magic of what these big investments do. It's what happened in the auto industry for years in southwestern Ontario—many of which are still in business and many of which, unfortunately, have got out of business.

Speaker, I will conclude by saying that I thoroughly support this bill. I'm excited about the opportunity that it presents. I'm excited for the people in southwestern Ontario. I think this is going to be a great example of what we can accomplish not only as a region—but set an example for the entire province and, in fact, all of Canada. The challenge of change is before us. The challenge of the Job Site Challenge was met and has succeeded. The opportunity for changing municipal boundaries is before us here in Elgin county, and the challenge of closing a deal—which I'm sure, at some point in time, will happen and bring economic growth to southwestern Ontario—is at our doorstep. Now is the time to act. Now is the time to make Ontario much more prosperous.

Thank you for your time.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further debate?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to speak to Bill 63 this afternoon here in the Legislature.

I want to begin by thanking my colleague from Elgin–Middlesex–London for his leadership on this issue as well. As you know, the boundaries that we're talking about—his riding encompasses all of this, and he has shown tremendous leadership in making sure that his region is working together to bring prosperity not only to the people from St. Thomas and area, but, indeed, prosperity to our great province.

I listen sometimes—not all the time, but I do hear the members of the opposition, and we have a competing vision for Ontario. But it's not really a fair competition, because their vision is not backed up with any real action. Their vision for Ontario is to leave things the way they are and not make the necessary changes.

I just heard the member from Niagara Centre talking about—we all want to see jobs created, we all want to see prosperity, but wanting and getting it done require two different steps. The NDP, on the other side, may want jobs and prosperity for the people of Ontario, but they are absolutely not willing to take the necessary steps that will actually make that happen. They would rather sit back and say, “Oh, no, we can't do that, because that might cause this, and some of our supporters might get upset”—or the lobbyists who love to talk to the NDP and write cheques to the NDP won't like that.

We were elected in 2018 on this premise: Ontario is open for business. And since that day, we have maintained that as a founding principle of this government. Ontario is open for business.

1530

Think about where we are today with respect to where we were when the Liberals, those folks over there who just about destroyed the manufacturing sector in Ontario—where we were in 2018. Because of the commitment of this Premier, this government, the world has changed in Ontario. We are seeing a renaissance in the auto industry here in Ontario.

In his address the other day, Minister Fedeli talked about the investments—\$15 billion to \$18 billion, if I recall—coming into Ontario, into our auto sector; Ontario being the only jurisdiction in the world that has manufacturing facilities for General Motors, Ford, Stellantis, Honda and Toyota all in this jurisdiction—the only jurisdiction anywhere that has manufacturing facilities for all of those companies. Why? Why are they showing a willingness to continue to invest—or should I say, to actually re-prime the pump of investment—here in Ontario? It's because of the leadership and the vision of this government—this government that has said to manufacturers and companies around the world, “Come back to Ontario. We're waiting for you. We're ready for you. Do you know what we're going to do in addition to welcoming you? We're going to make the environment work for you.”

So what are we going to do?

When I was a kid—some people say I still am, and that’s a matter of opinion. When I was younger, let’s just say, in the 1970s—do you remember, in the 1970s, when all of these towns were opening up what they called their industrial parks, because they were all recognizing that they wanted to take part in the industrial growth and the growth of manufacturing? It was small manufacturing in smaller places, big manufacturing in bigger places, but they all were opening up these lands that we would call our local industrial parks. It was designed to send the message to people of “We’re here and we’re ready to work with you.”

Well, things started to change after the 1970s. We had the recession in the 1980s. We had the big meltdown in the 2000s, with the tech meltdown and stuff like that—and we lost. Then we had the unfortunate culmination of those two forces meeting at the same time—we had the Liberal government, supported by the NDP every step of the way, who wanted to stifle our manufacturing sector here in Ontario, who wanted to shut it down—

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: My friend from Sarnia said they wanted to choke it. I’m not sure if it was quite that serious, but maybe if they had got another term, they might have done it. But in 2018, our government said no.

So what are we doing now? We’re recognizing that we have to change the ground rules somewhat so that these people have a chance. And what are we doing? Minister Fedeli along with Minister Clark, Minister Piccini and others are making sure that not only the “welcome” sign is out, but that the actions we’re taking are clear, delineated measures that send the message that we’re not only saying we’re open for business; we’re doing the things that allow us to be open for business.

My friend from Elgin–Middlesex–London mentioned that we’ve got two million to three million people coming to this province. You’ve got to bring them to this province, but where are they going to work? We’ve got to make sure that we have the jobs for them. We’ve got 124 members here. We can’t have 25,000 members of this Legislature. We’ve got to give them a real job, I say to my friend from Mississauga. And where are we going to give them those real jobs?

Well, we’re going to start in places like this mega site in St. Thomas and Elgin county. But how do we make that simpler, so that they’re working with one jurisdiction and they’re only working on one set of rules, so it’s not, “Well, Elgin likes it this way, and St. Thomas”—wait a minute. My friend from Elgin–Middlesex–London and Minister Clark said, “Well, we have a solution. Let’s put that land under one jurisdiction so that when people are coming to this new mega site with a hope of being successful in this, the greatest place in the world to work, play, and raise a family, here in Ontario—we’d like it to be simpler.” Isn’t that one of the things I say to my friend from Richmond Hill? We’ve always said, too, “How do you get people to buy into what you want them to be a partner in with you?” Well, make it simple. Let’s not make it complicated.

We have a red tape minister. What are we doing? We’re eliminating burdens. We’re eliminating red tape, unnecessary red tape, while we still protect the people and the environment here in the province of Ontario. We can walk and chew gum at the same time on this side of the House—over there, it’s one or the other. But here, we recognize that in order to be able to provide for the prosperity of the future, we’ve got to start taking care of the present. That’s what we’re doing in this province, with this government.

Those 2.3 million people who are coming here—obviously, some will be at a stage where they’re not working, but most of them will be working, will be raising families, and it would be nice to have a place to live. Well, this is all part and parcel of what we’re doing as a government. We’re bringing more people to Ontario because we’re going to be able to offer them a job. But what good is a job if you haven’t got a place to stay? If you haven’t got a roof over your head and a pillow to put your head on, what’s the point?

We don’t just have this narrow-minded thing about, “Well, let’s do this and everything will be fine.” No. In this province, in this government, we’re saying we have to have that holistic approach to the future—and we’re not looking at the next three years, five years; we’re looking at the next 50 years, because that’s what we’ve got to start thinking about, in those kinds of increments. I’m not saying we can do everything at one time, but we’ve got to start somewhere. What was that—“a journey of a thousand miles starts with a single step”? I didn’t write that poem, but I think it’s a good one. We’re looking at this whole picture, and we’re saying we’re going to bring all of these things together, so that we’re doing things one, two, three, four, five; five, four, three, two, one; one, two, three, four, five—they’re all working together.

And do you know what the result of this is and what I’m so confident about? The best thing is that those folks over there continue to stand in the way of everything we want to do—no matter what we do, “No, no, no, no, no, it’s a bad idea,” is what they say. But I am absolutely confident that everything we’re doing, when we take it to the people of Ontario in 2026—because by that time, they’re already going to see the manifestation of our commitment and our actions. We know that Rome wasn’t built in a day, but we’re already starting on the foundations, and we’re going to get it done. By the time 2026 rolls around, this government, because of the leadership it has shown and where Ontario will be as a result, will be re-elected in a resounding way because we never gave up, no matter what they said on the other side.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further debate?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: As much as I would like to [*inaudible*] the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke about the difference between hearing “yes, yes, yes” and turning that into “no, no, no,” or his misapprehensions about the values and plans of the NDP, my question is to the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London. I know you’re from the area, so I’m sure you will

be able to answer this question well. I understand that Central Elgin, at one point, wanted a different piece of property to be used and wanted to protect farmland, and I think the property that's being used may have some element of farmland on it. I'm just wondering if you can explain to us—because I'm an outsider to this project—why that particular piece of land is the one that was chosen. I'm sure you've got a good reason for it.

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Mr. Rob Flack: That's a very good question.

When the minister set out the job site challenges, municipalities had a chance to apply. St. Thomas was chosen. Remember, part of the original lands that were acquired butted up against land that St. Thomas already owned. So it just complemented that piece, and the infrastructure that St. Thomas has is going to service that site. That is why. Then, as time moved on, an opportunity presented itself—understanding, as I said earlier, we're competing with 40 states. Many opportunities and investors presented themselves and, as such, we needed to be shovel-ready, and to do it we needed to act quickly, with speed, to ensure that we could act in a timely manner to meet their specific timelines to close any potential deal now or a year from now. That's why the added lands, again, butting up to the original lands that were bought were acquired.

At the end of the day, it's important for us to remember that this is the best site in all of Ontario, and, I might even argue, North America—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Mr. Vincent Ke: Thank you for my colleagues' wonderful presentations.

With our government's policies, Ontario has seen more than 600,000 new jobs created since the province elected us in June 2018. It is clear that this government has a plan and it's working. In 2022, the government's plan to cut through excuses, get shovels in the ground and create new jobs with bigger paycheques once again shows that we have a clear direction for the future of this province.

Speaker, would any one of my colleagues please speak to where this legislation falls in the government's plan to build Ontario and what else we can expect to see in the near future?

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): I recognize the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much to my colleague for the question. He hit the nail on the head, as my colleague from Elgin–Middlesex–London did—shovel-ready. This mega site that encompasses a part today of east Elgin—is it east Elgin or Central Elgin?

Mr. Rob Flack: Central.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Central Elgin and St. Thomas—I don't know the boundaries like my colleague does.

It's shovel-ready. So when Minister Fedeli talked about the competitiveness around the world—all of these manufacturers like what they see in Ontario. They like the skill of our workforce. They like our transportation network. They like an awful lot about Ontario. But if

they're going to make this jump—"How soon can we actually be into production? How soon can we actually be providing those jobs"—not the construction jobs, but the manufacturing jobs that are so vitally important for the long-term health. To have a piece of land that is ready to go, shovel-ready—we've got it here, in St. Thomas.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

MPP Jamie West: Thank you to the members opposite.

The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke seemed to not be able to take "yes" for an answer. He seemed very riled up that we were saying yes, and that felt interesting.

We're talking about the potential for battery plants and battery vehicles in this area and across the south. I know he has been up to Sudbury several times, and the mining community around there. What does it mean for mining companies in the north?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, the mining companies in the north are going to be huge beneficiaries of our EV battery plan and our critical minerals sector. But I also say to the member from Sudbury—come to this government with a plan, with a mega site. We're always willing to talk to potential investors here in Ontario. That's the way we are. We're open for business.

The north is going to be a tremendous beneficiary of what this government is doing with regard to the largest EV battery plant anywhere in the world, which is going to be built in the Windsor area, and the critical minerals that will be coming out of the north in order to service that plant as we transition into more and more of an electric vehicle province.

They're great opportunities for Ontario—great opportunities for Sudbury and the north.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions? I recognize the member for Sarnia–Lambton.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's good to see you in the chair.

I've been reading a book at night—which is all you do when you get to my age—about how 85 years ago, right in this chamber, there was a great debate going on about a man from Central Elgin. Mitch Hepburn was the Premier at the time. I think about it because of the gentleman from the other side there talking about his dad working at GM in Oshawa. It was a great debate going on. I'll go into it sometime, when I've got a lot more time. I found it quite interesting that you're from Elgin and Hepburn was from Elgin. Anyway, it would be interesting times if he was still here.

My question is, how have the investments that this government has already made set up the province for success, like this project in Elgin you're talking about?

Mr. Rob Flack: Through you, Speaker: I think every disadvantage creates an opportunity. The fact that we've learned over the last number of years how not to attract jobs in this province, how not to build a manufacturing sector—and I go back to the GM days and the Hepburn days and decades ago, when this auto industry was built, as an example.

I think we're planting the garden for success. So if we can prove that we can get this done, this legislation passed—and I appreciate the members opposite's support, and I'll say that publicly. I take yes as yes. The bottom line is that if we do this well, I think it will set the stage for attracting further investment throughout all areas of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Questions?

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: I always enjoy listening to the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke—

Mr. Will Bouma: Well, that makes one of us.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: We're supporting the bill—and he gets worked up when we're supporting it, and he gets worked up when we don't support it.

With the infrastructure that's happening—and we know the conditions of our roads up north and what's going to happen with all these mines being developed. Speaking to the president of the road builders of Ontario—they recognize that our infrastructure is not there, as we stand.

I'd like to hear from the government what they are going to do to make sure that our highways—Highway 11, in particular. With the way that our highways are right now, how are they going to support all this extra travelling on our highways? Right now, we are suffering because, as you know, we have many accidents happening. Some of the roads that are being cleaned still are problematic. I'd like to hear from the government their position on—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Response? I recognize the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I thank the member for the question. I'm not really sure what he's getting at here. I wish the Minister of Transportation was here.

Our transportation strategy and our long-term planning here in the province of Ontario pay complete attention to the needs. We're doing it every year. If you look at what we're doing every year with the highway-building program here in Ontario—it's number one in the world, including if you look at what's invested in the north.

I say to my colleague from Mushkegowuk–James Bay that I realize he'd like to see six-lane highways going through every part of the north.

But if you look at what the investments of this government are doing in the north to ensure highway safety in the north, we're far ahead of any previous government, because our commitment to the north is not just about mining, it's not just about forestry; it's to the people of the north—and that includes highways.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): We are out of time for questions and answers.

Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to speak in this House—today, on Bill 63, the St. Thomas–Central Elgin Boundary Adjustment Act. And it's always a pleasure to speak in the House and listen to the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. We disagree on many things, but he is one of my favourite speakers.

In his speech, he took a few potshots at the NDP, and I'll give him his due—but a lot of people misunderstand the NDP. Sometimes when I talk to business people, the

chamber of commerce, they say, “John, what's with you and the NDP?” And I say, “Well, do you know what?”—a very famous member of the NDP passed—it was the anniversary of Tommy Douglas's passing a few days ago. I usually say, “Do you want to know what kind of NDP I am? I'm a Tommy Douglas NDP.”

What's the first thing that Tommy Douglas did when he became Premier of Saskatchewan? He balanced the budget, because he knew that to progress as the leader of his province, he needed to have a solid financial foundation.

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What's the second thing that Tommy Douglas did as Premier of Saskatchewan? No takers? He electrified Saskatchewan. He made sure that the people on the rural roads of Saskatchewan—because Saskatchewan is an agricultural province. He knew that farmers needed access to the most modern technology available at the time to make their economy flourish, and at that time, it was electricity. As a former dairy farmer, I can imagine the huge advancement—it went from milking cows by hand to milking cows with a machine, or actually having a cooler to cool the milk. Tommy Douglas knew that.

The third thing that Tommy Douglas did as Premier of Saskatchewan, and what he is most renowned for—Saskatchewan was the first province in this country to have publicly funded, publicly delivered medicare. When he became a federal member of Parliament, he drove that, so that we have it right across this country. And every day, we have to fight to protect it. We're in that fight right now with Bill 60.

When people ask me what kind of New Democrat I am—I'm a Tommy Douglas New Democrat. I said this yesterday in the House, and I'll say it again: Some people see me as a small-c conservative—not the current group of Conservatives, but a small-c—very socially progressive, but careful with funds, because you have to invest your money or the funds of the people wisely. As a businessperson, you always invest your own funds wisely, too.

Back to the bill: Just to be clear, I announced that on second reading we were going to support this bill. We are going to support it on third reading as well, and for several reasons—

Mr. John Yakabuski: There's hope.

Mr. John Vanthof: And I'm going to point to the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. There was a broadband bill a while ago—and that's why I talked about Tommy Douglas. We would have supported that bill, but in the middle of that broadband bill, there was a planning section about a ministerial zoning order for some place where we didn't believe it should be. When I questioned the member, he said, “Well, if you don't like it, just pretend it's not there,” and he tore it out of the bill. It was very theatrical. It didn't really get the response that he was expecting. To be quite open and forthright, I was going to try to repeat it, but I only have one thumb, so I couldn't tear it out.

Laughter.

Mr. John Vanthof: I apologize for making you laugh, Madam Speaker.

But this bill is not like that. This bill has a clear purpose, and actually, this bill speeds up a process that already exists, because annexation is possible within the Municipal Act. As a former municipal councillor in a small municipality—we shared some services. We shared water with another municipality, and we shared other services with a third municipality. It was really hard to come to an agreement on who should pay what and how it should be paid. It was really hard, and they were small municipalities. So we can fully understand that when an investor—and it's a major auto manufacturer—is looking at this area, coming back to St. Thomas, they want to deal with one municipal entity. That makes complete sense to us. They want to deal with each issue once—with the planning, with the zoning, with the infrastructure. This is speeding up the process.

I did raise in second reading that—yes, I bring up the loss of agricultural land every time I speak; if I have to speak on something, I bring that up. We believe, in the NDP, that there should be a process where you can assess, frankly, whether there's a better use for that land than producing food. I think in this case, although we never want to lose agricultural land, the benefits to the economy, the benefits to the environment—because this will, from what we understand, provide clean auto—automobile manufacturing, the overall—that's a big word for me. It will be a benefit to the economy and to the green economy. We believe that, in this case, based on what we know, the loss of agricultural land, in this case the loss of farmland, is—although all farmland is precious, and we have to treat it as so, we have to look at it in the bigger picture. On this one, the bigger picture says this is a worthwhile project.

I was thinking, when I was—it was a long time ago, when the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke was young, in the 1970s—

Mr. Will Bouma: The 1950s.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes, I thought it was the 1950s. I thought he was pushing it by saying he was young in the 1970s, because I was young in the 1970s.

I do remember, in the 1970s, going to visit my aunt and uncle who lived close to Fingal. He worked at the plant in Talbotville—so that's that neighbourhood. That family built a quality life from that job.

We in the NDP want people in Ontario; I think we all do. It's hard for me to really take offence to people, but I sometimes take offence when they say, “One political-philosophical belief doesn't want jobs, and another one does.” I'm of the firm belief that we all want this province to be the best province it can be. We often disagree on the best way to get there, but we all—otherwise, if we didn't believe that, we wouldn't be here. This is an incredible job, an incredible experience. I'm happy to represent the people of Timiskaming–Cochrane. To be here, to want to work as hard as we all have to do to get here, to stay here, you have to believe in our system and in our province.

Before I veer off too far again—I was looking for my glasses, and then I realized I never use notes anyway.

I think this bill is an example—we do have some issues with the way the bill was. If we had had a bit more notice, we would have been more comfortable. When you have a bill introduced one day with no warning and you have to debate it the next day, you're always looking for the poison pill—we're getting used to it, so every time, we look for it. I'm going to give you the biggest example: I'm probably the only small-c conservative here who didn't vote to use the “notwithstanding” clause to take away people's rights. That was a big poison pill. I'm proud that I didn't vote for that. But this bill, Bill 63, is straightforward. It makes economic sense. It not only helps the people in the St. Thomas area; it helps people across the province, across the country. The auto sector is important to people across the province.

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In my riding—I am between the towns of Temiskaming Shores and Cobalt—we have a refinery that can refine rare-earth metals. It's going to recycle batteries. It is going to provide the basis for electric vehicles, for the batteries. And our riding is going to benefit from it big-time. Around Timiskaming–Cochrane, both within and around—in Sudbury, there are big nickel deposits, but we're finding nickel all around our riding. Nickel is very important in the manufacture of electric vehicles.

I do take exception sometimes when the government says that this will be the first time that northern Ontario has ever contributed to the auto industry, because that is not accurate. We have had iron ore mines in my riding that have fed the steel mills of southern Ontario, and those steel mills also played and still play a critical role in auto manufacturing.

Speaker, you're from the Hamilton area. Iron ore from Timiskaming went to Hamilton—a lot of it. And when those mines closed, it caused a huge—we know what it's like to have one of your main industries go dormant.

And now that we've had a resurgence in mining—forestry is doing well, agriculture is doing well—we know what it's like. Now we have an area in Timiskaming–Cochrane where, like many other parts of the province, we can't find the people to fill the positions. Before, we lost a lot of population. All our children went somewhere else, because there was no work. And now we're looking for people to come, as many other parts of the province are. There are jobs. There is a quality of life in Timiskaming–Cochrane. We all say we have the greatest ridings in the province, and we all feel that way, because we all believe in Ontario. But there's a quality of life in Timiskaming–Cochrane that is unparalleled. You have to like snow, but if you like snow—and we have a beautiful summer. We have a beautiful winter. We don't have much spring and fall.

A while ago, we had the owner of the Canadian Tire in Cochrane, in the north part of my riding—he moved from a franchise in southern Ontario, and he moved to Cochrane. I was talking to him, and I asked about southern Ontario—as a farmer, I love Timiskaming–Cochrane, but if I could move my 500 acres from Timiskaming–Cochrane and plunk them in Oxford, I'd be there. He said,

“Well, the one great thing about northern Ontario, about Cochrane, is that we actually have four seasons.” If you’re a Canadian Tire owner-manager and you load up on snow shovels, toboggans, snowsuits or whatever, and you have one or two big snowfalls like we have in this area or farther south, you might not sell your inventory. But in Cochrane, you load up for winter; we’re getting winter.

I’m going to give a plug for Cochrane right now. If you want the best snowmobiling in the province, start in New Liskeard or Temiskaming Shores or Temagami or maybe a bit farther south, in Marten River—but the longest season and the best trails are in Cochrane. The trails in Timiskaming are beautiful—the Tri-Town Sno Travellers are putting out a contract on me as we speak. I’m a proud member of the Tri-Town Sno Travellers, and the trails are beautiful, but even in Timiskaming we are feeling that the weather is not quite the same as it was 25 years ago; our winters aren’t quite the same. If you want to be guaranteed good ice, guaranteed enough snow, guaranteed a four-month season for snowmobiling, you’ve got to go a bit farther north. Right now, that’s Cochrane.

So anyone who wants to go snowmobiling, right now you can snowmobile in many, many parts of the province—and I know I’m far away from the car plant in St. Thomas, but it is economics.

I am happy to be able to support this bill. We in the official opposition support bills that don’t contain poison pills and that push this province forward. It is a bit tiring on our ears when we hear that we voted against this and we voted—yes, we voted against many Conservative budgets because, in our opinion, there were many bad things in those budgets.

There are actually in many parts of the province—at least in my part of the province, there are two Ontarios: the Ontario that’s doing very well and the Ontario that is feeling left behind.

I spent a few minutes talking about Cochrane—and I’m going to do this stat again. In the region serviced by the Cochrane District Social Services Administration Board, the rate of homelessness per 1,000 people is higher than anywhere else in the province. Remember, I just said that if you want to go snowmobiling, go to Cochrane because they have long, cold winters. The highest rate of homelessness is there, and it’s increasing.

We’re happy to support this bill. We’re happy the jobs are coming to St. Thomas. We’re happy that we can all work together to support the automobile industry, that we can all work together to support businesses in Ontario, but we are going to continue to push that everyone can benefit from the bounty of Ontario—because that’s what Tommy Douglas did, and at the end of the day, I am a Tommy Douglas NDP.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Questions and answers?

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I love to listen to the member across speaking about Tommy Douglas, and I like that he’s supporting the automotive industry.

As the member said, he was a big supporter of Tommy Douglas. But Tommy Douglas supported user fees for

health care. In October 1961, in the Saskatchewan Legislature, he said, “I think there is a value in having every family and every individual make some individual contribution. I think it has psychological value. I think it keeps the public aware of the cost and gives the people a sense of personal responsibility.”

I want to give the member the opportunity to clarify: Does he agree with Tommy Douglas about supporting user fees in health care?

Mr. John Vanthof: That’s a pretty tough question.

I support Tommy Douglas’s dream of having publicly delivered, publicly funded health care. That’s what I support. I support that that health care—that there’s not portions of it that are publicly funded and other portions that you need that you have to pay for yourself. I don’t support that. I wish that Tommy was still alive and that we could have a discussion on that. When I listened to Tommy’s speeches and when I listened to Tommy’s discussions in the Legislature—he had good discussions, like we’re having.

I appreciate the question.

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The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: It’s always a real pleasure and honour to hear the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane speak. His speeches are always full of history and humour, and there’s always something to be learned from them.

He talked about the poison pill. I know that the government wants to shame us for not supporting their budget. If we can’t support most of what you’re doing, if not all, we’re not going to wear it.

Today we are debating a bill where we’re talking about bringing manufacturing back—something central to the NDP, and something that we believe strongly in the official opposition—about returning potential auto sector jobs and expanding electric vehicles and green vehicles for the future, and here is a simple, straightforward matter, where we could vote on it together.

I would like to ask our House leader: Is there a willingness by us—if the government is willing to come across at the ideas stage, to sit down with us when they’re building the blueprints for their bills, motions and ideas? Is there a willingness from the opposition to work with them for a better Ontario?

Mr. John Vanthof: I’ve said in the House before that sometimes the questions from my own side are harder than the questions from the other side.

I am honoured and a bit daunted by the prospect. I am House leader, but I think from my perspective—and I’ve been in this House for a while. I have tried and we have tried to work with everyone in this House. I don’t always agree with everyone in this House, and I make it very plain when I don’t. But where we can work together, we will work together. We’re all here for the same reason, and I hope that in the future we do a better job of working together.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Speaker, through you: The member offered so much valuable information, and I couldn't help but think that one of the lessons—and there's always a teachable moment—I draw from is that he spoke about the ways that this House can work collaboratively together.

The type of bill that's before us now is very focused, it is very purposeful, and it's also reinforcing a process around annexation that already exists.

I'm very curious to hear more from this member about when the government members oftentimes stand up and provide quotes that are out of context, or try to create a “gotcha” moment about a party that says no. In this case, this party is saying yes to a bill that actually is going to bring manufacturing and jobs back to Ontario. I'm very curious to know: What is it, specifically, about the bill that makes it so agreeable?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's a good question.

The goal of the bill is obvious. It makes sense. It's not saying that there are no issues, because it's not that—there is going to be a loss of farmland. Whenever there's a boundary change, there are going to be people who are impacted. It's not saying that no one is going to be impacted, but the overall benefit is larger than the problems that can be solved, and that's our bar for a bill. If the problems caused are greater than the benefit that could happen, then it's thumbs-down for us—I was going to say “two thumbs-down,” but I can't do that. It's pretty simple. If the benefit outweighs the risk—this bill very much does that, and that's why we can support it.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Mr. Rob Flack: I appreciate the member opposite's remarks in debate this afternoon. In particular, when he talks about the north, I very much appreciate it. I have property in the Ottawa Valley, right near my colleague here from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, and I appreciate that economic development needs to take place right across this province.

Maybe the member opposite could explain, in his opinion at least, when we think of the Ring of Fire and the natural mineral resources we can use—I know the Premier said, “Let's not export them. Let's put them to good use, and we can build our own supply chains and build our own EV plants, whether it's in Windsor or whether it's going to be wherever in Ontario.” Who knows what's going to happen in St. Thomas? Who knows if it's going to be EV, if it's going to be an automotive plant, if it's going to be food or food processing? It's going to be great. The bottom line is, talking about automotive—how does EV help northern Ontario and the Ring of Fire help complement what you're trying to do in northern Ontario for economic development?

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you to the member for that question.

I've talked about it in my remarks—how the auto industry has impacted northern Ontario or is going to impact northern Ontario, and how the electrification of the

auto industry is going to have an even bigger impact on northern Ontario.

Regarding the Ring of Fire, the one thing that we are all going to have to realize is, we all have to benefit. There has to be a true partnership with the people who are there now. That has not happened in the past. Indigenous people are still paying the price for that. We have to be cognizant that the people who live there now have to be partners. Unless we realize that, the Ring of Fire may never happen, and that is a very serious issue.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

MPP Jamie West: Thank you to my colleague from Timiskaming–Cochrane for his debate. During his debate, he talked about supporting the bill. There has been lots of conversation today about poison bills and how debate happens and omnibus bills. Previously, we talked about not travelling bills or going to committee and rushing people deputizing and speaking to the bills.

In terms of presenting solutions to the government, what are some tips, out of the many years you've been here, on how we could work more effectively together to have good legislation for the people of Ontario?

Mr. John Vanthof: That's a great question.

I haven't been here that many years—I've been here 12 years—but there are things that have changed. Before, when the government dropped a bill, or introduced a bill, the opposition would often have a couple of weeks or a month to do the research; we'd have a bit of a heads-up. It wasn't always friendly. Sometimes when the opposition has more time to do research, it causes the government a bit more trouble, but at the end of the day, the province gets better legislation, because it's our job to find the faults, if they are there.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further debate?

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: It gives me particular pleasure to address the House this afternoon to speak about the importance of moving forward now on third reading of the proposed legislation, the St. Thomas-Central Elgin Boundary Adjustment Act. I am thrilled to hear that His Majesty's official loyal opposition is supporting this bill clearly. I thought the member for Niagara Centre was perhaps only speaking for himself, but all of the NDP caucus is planning to support this bill. I congratulate His Majesty's loyal opposition for seeing the light on this, and I hope that the members of the unrecognized parties, one of whom is in the House now, will make it unanimous. Let's hope for that. I will speak with that goal in mind.

Speaker, this bill confirms our government's commitment made to all Ontarians, a commitment to secure new investment opportunities in growth communities across Ontario. This bill in particular is taking steps to help secure new investment opportunities for a site in the St. Thomas area specifically. This site has the potential to create thousands of new jobs for the community, for the region and, indeed, the province.

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Global investors and organizations are looking for regions in which to invest, and currently there is a shortage

of shovel-ready industrial mega-site projects in the province of Ontario that are comparable to other jurisdictions. In the United States alone, there are close to 40 jurisdictions offering global investors some form of certified mega-site programs. Without immediate action, Ontario will be unable to compete for and win these transformative investments, along with the hundreds of thousands of jobs that come with these investments. That is why this legislation is necessary. This is necessary because we live and work in a global economy. If we don't modernize and act now, much like from 2003 until 2018, Ontario will be left out. If passed in this House, the St. Thomas-Central Elgin Boundary Adjustment Act will secure the important investment opportunities necessary to have both direct and indirect jobs in the tens of thousands created.

My colleagues the Honourable Steven Clark and the Honourable Vic Fedeli stated in this House that our government is focused on securing these major investments that will employ generations of Ontario workers in rewarding and well-paying jobs. As mentioned before, Ontario is in fierce competition with other jurisdictions when companies consider making larger investments in manufacturing and industrial operations, including such investments as this multi-billion-dollar transformational project.

We know that, in contrast, the previous Liberal government for 15 years, from 2003 to 2018, chased away 300,000 manufacturing jobs. This was due to their mismanagement, the uncompetitive business environment they created, high taxes, red tape and regulation. Countless business owners told us, and presumably told many members of His Majesty's loyal opposition, that the Liberals strangled Ontario's competitiveness and made it very difficult for businesses to compete due to these high taxes, cumbersome red tape, higher energy costs and payroll taxes that suppressed growth.

Speaking of red tape, we have a great minister, the first full-time minister to reduce red tape and regulation in this government of the 43rd Parliament of Ontario. That's how committed we are to eliminating red tape regulation and burdensome and cumbersome roadblocks to job-creating investments. The job losses that we saw under the Liberals can now be a footnote in history as our government takes leadership, supported by the official opposition and hopefully—hopefully—the unrecognized party members to make it unanimous in passing this bill in short order.

Through this proposed legislation, we are taking steps to ensure that Ontario can continue to compete worldwide. Since taking office in 2018, just four and a half years ago, our government has created a playing field that produced over 600,000 new jobs. The once struggling Ontario auto sector now employs 96,000 workers and indirectly employs hundreds of thousands of individuals in supply chain, parts manufacturing and distribution through the province.

As has been said in this House before, and I applaud it, that is the key to protecting core public services, to being able to make record investments in health care and

education and social services and infrastructure. When we create jobs, when we grow the economy, then the treasury has the revenue to do right by the people of Ontario, to fund the public services that we all depend upon.

In 2022 alone, our government secured 150 new deals, resulting in thousands more secure, high-paying jobs. Ontario has now become one of the most competitive places for businesses to invest and grow. We have a talented workforce because our government has made significant investments in the growth of skilled trades. We have state-of-the-art research and development and an abundance of critical resources which have contributed greatly to our increased manufacturing sector.

We pledged to the people of Ontario, both in 2018 and 2022, that our government would honour its commitment to reducing the burdens of red tape regulation and high taxes and unleash the potential for the creation of hundreds of thousands of jobs. We will continue to make good on that pledge, and the more support we have from His Majesty's loyal opposition, the faster we can get the job done. We look forward to getting it done.

Under the leadership of the Minister of Red Tape Reduction, the Honourable Parm Gill, our government is getting it done. Our government has introduced with his leadership—and passed—eight red tape reduction bills. We've taken 400 individual actions to reduce red tape, and we have reduced Ontario's total regulatory burden dramatically in just a short time. To date, our red tape reduction efforts have saved businesses and other organizations \$576 million in compliance costs each year. But reducing red tape is only one factor.

The critical factor is what we're doing with this proposed legislation: securing new investment and expansion opportunities in Ontario focused on a particular area and moving forward from there across the province. This is to ensure that we have a suitable place to land an industrial site where timing and associated costs are readily known and streamlined to meet project timelines. That is what we mean when we say it is shovel-ready. As my colleague, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, stated last week, our government is working closely with municipal partners to introduce a land-boundary adjustment to allow the site to be fully situated within the municipality of St. Thomas, ensuring that the site is shovel-ready for investment.

As an example for other municipalities to follow, the St. Thomas site is considered highly attractive as a mega-site and has been identified as one of the few potential mega-sites in the province. We have been working not only with municipalities but also with First Nations across the province to identify other large-scale sites that will be needed in the future to support our rapidly growing array of strategic manufacturing and industrial projects.

It is important to emphasize that this is not the first time that such an idea has been pursued. A specific act with respect to the targeting of a municipal area for investment and growth was actually passed by the former Liberal government. I can't recall and I'll have to look at the record as to whether or not the official opposition, which

was the third party then, supported the Barrie-Innisfil Boundary Adjustment Act back in 2009. But with a general shortage of quality industrial land, it is imperative for Ontario to show that we are not just open for business; we need to also demonstrate that Ontario is ready for business. That means a serious leadership approach to being shovel ready.

With that, I once again thank my colleagues on the government benches for their efforts in speaking to this bill, for the leadership of Ministers Fedeli and Clark and, as well, for the support of His Majesty's loyal opposition. Let's make it unanimous.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Questions?

MPP Jill Andrew: It's my honour to stand today and support and say yes to this piece of legislation that isn't a perfect piece of legislation, but one that we have certainly found common ground on.

It's especially a good opportunity because I know previously, this Conservative government had cancelled electric vehicle rebates, ripped EV charging stations out of the ground. At one point, we know that the government didn't have much faith in GM Canada's ability to be resilient in the face of the pandemic. Clearly, we care about auto workers. I don't know that that was always the opinion on the side of the government, but I'm glad to see that today, we're in a place where auto workers and the auto industry—which we know has been severely under-supported over the last couple of decades—are finally getting help today.

My question to the government is, since you've had this change of heart toward auto workers and the need for more manufacturing jobs, will we see additional change of heart, say, around the issue of injured workers receiving compensation—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Response? I recognize the member for Durham.

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: That was a very long question, and I have a very short answer. We have pledged to work for workers. We're getting it done. We'll continue to get it done, with or without the support of the official opposition.

1630

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Before I continue, I also want to remind members: We do not refer to other members by their name and we do not make reference to whether a member is or is not in the House or in the chamber.

Further questions.

Ms. Laura Smith: I want to thank the member for Durham for educating us on not just the work that's required for a mega-site, but the preparation. The member discussed the competition, with close to 40 US jurisdictions offering mega-site programs. With this in mind, the government needs to grow the economy and invest in the future, because if we don't, somebody else will.

Speaker, can the member talk about this challenge for large-scale projects and how this legislation, if passed, will attract investment in Ontario that will have otherwise gone elsewhere?

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: Well Speaker, I think the question calls for an answer about all of Ontario. This is mega-site specific. It will have the effect, we believe, of creating directly and indirectly tens of thousands of jobs. But as I've indicated, we are in conversation with municipal partners. We are in competition with 40 other potential jurisdictions in the United States. We are having conversations and we'll continue to have conversations with Indigenous persons and their leadership. We will make sure that we identify properly ready, receptive mega-sites for these kinds of investments everywhere that we can.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Thank you to the member across for his comments. I wanted to just dig a little bit deeper. I think it's important for us to recognize that there is a description of the annexed area that's described in the bill, in the schedule, but we have learned that the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing can oftentimes prescribe a different outcome.

I just want to make sure that the area described, the annexed area in the bill, in the schedule, is going to be exactly what is going to be prescribed by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing afterwards.

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: Well, the bill is very precise about the mega-site in question. If you haven't read the bill or you've glossed over it, if the member opposite has glossed over it, then I encourage her to read it, or even to reread it. We all have a lot to read, but it's very specific and it will accomplish the objective that is set out in what we have put before this House in the various comments at second and third reading.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): We have run out of time for questions and answers. Further debate? Further debate?

Mr. Fedeli has moved third reading of Bill 63, An Act respecting the adjustment of the boundary between the City of St. Thomas and the Municipality of Central Elgin.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

YOUR HEALTH ACT, 2023

LOI DE 2023

CONCERNANT VOTRE SANTÉ

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 28, 2023, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 60, An Act to amend and enact various Acts with respect to the health system / Projet de loi 60, Loi visant à modifier et à édicter diverses lois en ce qui concerne le système de santé.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Questions and answers?

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm glad I have this opportunity because, as the member was speaking this morning, all I kept thinking in my mind is I want him to think of this scenario. He comes from Ford; he's an autoworker. If he has the ability to buy and pay for a car at, say, \$10,000—just to make it easy—under the public system, and then he has that exact same vehicle that he can get that's privately done at \$15,000, which one is he going to do? It is a perfect example of for-profit in our health care system compared to public.

I would love to hear from the member: Is he going to buy the \$10,000 public vehicle or the \$15,000 private vehicle?

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I want to thank the member for that question. In health care, we want our patients to get the service they need, as quick as they can. If you have to wait for 18 months to have a surgery and I can get it done in four months and pay with my OHIP card, that's what I'm going to do. I want to get it done quickly and have the care to take care of me and be able to get back on my feet and get back to work. So that's what I would do.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Mr. Will Bouma: I find it interesting in the House this afternoon—especially since we were just debating putting together this big piece of land for, potentially, a new automotive manufacturing plant—to hear from the opposition that they actually want to set the price of vehicles that an auto manufacturer can charge. I find that amusing.

But I know for the member, who had to have life-saving surgery himself and has been quite open about that in the House, that wait times are very, very important. They're very personal to him.

I was wondering if he could speak a little bit more about how important it will be for everyone in Ontario to be able to get the health care that they need, faster and more effectively, when they need it, and to be able to pay for that with their health card.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I want to thank the member for Brantford–Brant. As you know, I had a heart valve replaced about 12 years ago, and I could not find a cardiologist because there weren't any available. I had to find my own cardiologist. The wait times were unbelievable at Toronto General, but I was lucky because I was able to find my own cardiologist. Otherwise, I would not have had the surgery I needed at the time and I wouldn't be here today.

If we can move the non-invasive surgeries out of the hospital so we can do the heart valve surgeries and the cancer surgeries in the hospital, that would save a lot of lives in the province of Ontario. I think that's the way—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions? I recognize the member for Sudbury.

MPP Jamie West: Thank you very much, Speaker. Thank you to the member opposite as well.

I was reading in Hansard yesterday that the member for Nickel Belt was talking about how, in Health Sciences North in Sudbury, we have 17 surgical units available. Only 14 of those are open; typically, they don't even run

the entire year because they run out of government funding.

I'm curious to understand why the Conservative government thinks that's a better solution than providing the funding to operate these existing, publicly structured, already-built hospital surgical rooms; that funding them at a lower cost doesn't make sense, but funding a private clinic where there's a profit margin that will cost more, ultimately—it's through the OHIP card, but it still costs the only taxpayer we have. There's only one taxpayer; we'll pay more, all of us, as taxpayers. Why is that a better solution than actually funding the hospitals that exist, that could be doing the work with the equipment in facilities that we already have?

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: As you know, we've invested \$75.7 billion in health care, \$14 billion more this year than last year. And as you know, we are hiring 14,000 new nurses in the province of Ontario. As well, we're investing \$342 million to hire 5,000 upskilled registered nurses and 8,000 PSWs. We are investing in health care as a government and we will continue investing in health care.

My goal is to get surgeries done. We have a 200,000-surgery backlog due to COVID. We have to get these surgeries done so we can get these people up and running quicker.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): We have run out of time for questions and answers, but we do have time for further debate. I recognize the member for Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you very much, Speaker. It's a pleasure to see you in the chair; it's the first time.

It is always an honour to rise in this House to represent and speak on behalf of the good people of my riding, Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas. This Bill 60 and the changes that this government is making to our public health care system are of significant concern to the people in my riding. They call to share their hopes and their dreams and—I've been hearing so much from my constituents—to ask the question: Why is this government rushing to dismantle our public health care system, our publicly delivered, world-class health care system that has been the envy of the world?

1640

As has been said here, health care is in crisis. We acknowledge that; we recognize it's in a crisis, but it's this government's job to fix that crisis with the solutions they already have before them, not in fact to make it worse. For example, in Hamilton, we have world-class health care facilities. We have Hamilton Health Sciences, we have McMaster Children's Hospital and we have St. Joseph's. These are world-class hospitals that are struggling under the underfunding, the lack of funding, the lack of supports they need to be able to continue to deliver the health care the people of Hamilton need. It's been said many, many times here that the solutions—in fact, it's been said that you've manufactured this crisis, taken hallway health care that was a legacy of the Liberals and doubled down by making it worse by underfunding health care, and by introducing Bill 124, that has created and exacerbated a health care human resource crisis.

It's a mystery to me why this government would, rather than the easy solutions which are to fund the health care hospitals we have, these world-class hospitals, cut them off and let them have to put people on wait-lists for surgery. Why you wouldn't make sure they have the adequate funding? Why you wouldn't make sure that the money you have in contingency funds and \$12 billion of unspent money could be going right now to address wait-lists? Why are you not doing that? Why is that not your first choice?

Why are there 12,000 children on a surgery wait-list in the province of Ontario when you could start to address that by making sure these closed operating suites, these unused facilities are open again so that people could start getting the procedures and the surgeries they need to save lives, relieve pain and suffering and the fears of parents who are hoping that their children would get the care they deserve under this government?

I also wonder why you continue to disrespect health care workers, nurses and PSWs and refuse to repeal Bill 124. You continue to underpay them in a time when they are burnt out, stressed and doing the best they can in a system that you have destabilized further. Why are you taking nurses and PSWs back to court on Bill 124 when it's been shown that this is an unconstitutional bill? Why is that not your first act?

The question really stands: Why are you rushing, rather than looking at the solutions that are before you? Why is your first act, the thing you're putting all your effort into, to introduce profits into the health care system? It's been called the profitization of our health care system, and it's hard to describe it as anything other than that.

We have talked in this House about the proud history of the NDP and Tommy Douglas and our medicare system. All of you know, and all of you have been hearing from your constituents, that that is the pride of Ontario. That's one of the things we're so proud of: that people can get access to the health care and the emergency care they need, despite their ability to pay, anywhere in this province. To now go down the road of a two-tier health care system is exactly the wrong, wrong direction and nobody, if they understood what you are doing, would support this. I can only imagine that you are also hearing from your constituents that this is not what they expected and this is not where they want to see you going with their precious health care system.

Rather than taking the steps that you know will help to relieve the burden and will help to improve our publicly delivered health care system, you're still rushing to introduce privatization without learning the lessons of the past. In this bill, there are absolutely no protections for patients seeking care in private, for-profit, corporatized facilities. It's not in the bill. All you have to do is to look at the evidence that comes from what already exists in private, independent health facilities.

The report from the Auditor General is invaluable, and I wonder whether the opposite members, the MPPs or the ministers, have taken into account the findings of this value-for-money audit that the Auditor General has put

out, because the warnings are there. The recommendations to protect patients both financially and health outcomes are in this report, but nothing has been put into this bill to address that.

Let me just point out some of the highlights—not really highlights; some of the actual dire warnings or recommendations that come from this report that should have been included in this bill but are not there.

I'm just going to start by—it's interesting reading if you take the time to look at it, but really, the Auditor General said that there is "inadequate and inconsistent monitoring of the quality of outpatient surgeries." No one is monitoring the results, the outcome of how people fare after they have surgeries or procedures in these independent health care facilities. There's inadequate monitoring.

There's also "no regular review and monitoring of funding and billings for outpatient surgeries." So it's all fine and dandy for you to say that people won't have to pay extra—it's absolutely not the truth, because in Ontario, people already pay extra for these procedures. They pay dearly for these procedures.

In fact, the Auditor General goes on to say that there's absolutely "no provincial oversight to protect patients against inappropriate charges." The ministry has not sufficiently reviewed "unusual billing patterns or trends to identify possible issues, such as inappropriate billings or inappropriate rendering of services." These are the findings that the Auditor General did in 2021, and these problems still exist and are only going to be exacerbated by this bill.

I think the overall conclusion of the Auditor General that speaks to the two protections that people should expect from a government—to protect them financially and to protect their health outcomes—when they're being driven by this government to private, for-profit clinics, the Auditor General says, clearly, "The ministry does not have a centralized way to measure and report on surgical quality and outcomes for all surgeries being performed in Ontario." That's shocking. There's no oversight in place, and this bill does not put any in place.

The Auditor General also goes on to say that "We found that some patients could be given misleading information as part of sales practices to make a profit." So the warning is here. This is already happening. The quality of people's outcomes are not being monitored, and the fact they're being charged inappropriately and overcharged for fees is not at all being addressed by this government. I would be curious to know what the government is doing to address these recommendations and these findings from the Auditor General.

The Auditor General's work is invaluable to all of us in this House to do our work. Her work is stellar, and her work is invaluable. She's an independent officer of this Legislature, and we should be listening to this and using this to make our bills better and to improve our bills. She said, mincing no words, that "the ministry is putting patients at greater financial risk by allowing additional private organizations to provide publicly funded surgeries while also being allowed to charge patients directly for

additional uninsured services to make a profit without appropriate oversight mechanisms in place.”

There it is. It’s happening already in this province. You’re putting a bill forward that’s going to double down on this and that has not in any way addressed those concerns.

My question to the government would be, what happens if something goes wrong in one of these private clinics? What is the procedure when there are complications or urgent issues that arise? How will this impact our emergency rooms that are already closing? Have you considered any of this? Because it’s not in the bill, and in the debate that I’ve heard, you don’t address any of the concerns that people have.

So I would just say, despite the despair that we feel that this government is not protecting people when they need health care in this province—that in fact, you’re protecting profits over patients—I just have to end with a quote from Tommy Douglas, because it is the anniversary of his passing. Despite the despair that we feel, I think Tommy’s words would be, “Courage, my friends; ’tis not too late to build a better world.” That’s what we should be aspiring to, not a downward spiral to privatization and lack of services for the people of the province of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Time for questions and answers.

I recognize the member for Mississauga-Lakeshore.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I thank the member for her debate today.

I just want to ask the member a few questions. I hope that she can answer them.

Do you go to LifeLabs and do you use LifeLabs? It’s a private organization where you pay with your OHIP card. And if you do have a family doctor, which most of us do have, it is another private organization where you pay with your OHIP card. So are you against family doctors and LifeLabs? Do you want us to put them back into the hospital?

As well, the late Jack Layton, rest his soul, used Shouldice Hospital to have his hernia repaired. Do you agree with what Jack Layton did?

1650

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Well, that was a multi-pronged question that went in all directions, but I would take from it that you’re asking me if I think that it’s okay, because I am forced to go to a privatized LifeLabs, a privatized diagnostic clinic, that I agree that the Liberals began the privatization of health care? No, I don’t think that makes any sense at all. I don’t agree with that.

Do I support family doctors? Of course I support family doctors. I want to give a shout-out to my doctor, Dr. Nathanson, who has been looking after me and my family and all my brothers and sisters for many, many years. Absolutely we support the idea that people should have access to health care, publicly delivered, publicly funded.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: I have here a long list of people who have already been extra-billed substantial amounts of

money for various surgeries in for-profit clinics: \$8,435, plus \$150 for a checkup, for cataract surgery, upsold; in Lindsay, \$5,300, private cataract clinic, upsold—this already happened in 2019—a private eye clinic, another one, \$58,000.

I wonder if the member from Ancaster—

Interjection.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Yes, actually, my home area, where I first grew up.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Really? I didn’t know that.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Yes. My question is, can you please explain, for the members on the other side of the House, the difference between health care that exists primarily to generate profits versus health institutes that are there primarily to serve the public using only OHIP to finance their operations?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you for that question. I will have to have a Hamilton chat about your origins at a later time.

Yes, the Auditor General, particularly when it comes to cataract surgery, identified in this report that people were being overcharged for specialty lenses, that the surgeon said, “I only work with that kind of lens,” that they paid the money and afterward didn’t realize that it was optional. There were pressure sales tactics to spend extra money for something that should have been covered under the public dime, so it’s absolutely happening already.

I think what’s really important to note is that we’ve had the warning from this government and that they’re not being heeded. This is only going to continue, so people that are already stretched thin and are seeking care in their most vulnerable moments will be pressured into spending money that they don’t have and they don’t need to spend.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Mr. Will Bouma: I was intrigued by the comments from the member from Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas. I’m an optometrist. I have a small-town private clinic. I sell some of my patients glasses and/or contact lenses. Using her logic, because I support my family that way and I bill OHIP, it sounds like she’s intimating that I’m somehow gouging people. I would just like her to give clarity to optometrists across the entire province of Ontario who operate their own private clinics, billing OHIP and also selling people optical goods, whether they’re good people or bad people, from her logic.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: The vision of medicare, the vision of Tommy Douglas, was to extend this to all parts of our body. The idea that we have pharmacare—it’s one thing to go to the doctor and get a prescription, but if you don’t have the money to fill that prescription, how is that health care? So we look at expanding what is covered by our publicly funded system.

We think that the whole idea of dental care is something that people should be able to have covered. People go to emergency rooms—I think one in five visits to the emergency rooms are for pain in people’s teeth. That is a waste of a service when we could be covering dental practice in a publicly funded system.

And eye care: Eye care is very, very expensive for families that can't afford the tests for their young children. They can't afford the glasses. We should be bringing that into a public system to allow people, from head to toe, to have the kinds of supports they need to keep themselves healthy.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: My question is really about the state of health care right now. We know that the system is in crisis. We have ORs that are not up and running. They're actually tired, largely because there is a shortage of health care workers.

Does this legislation do anything to bring the nurses back into the field? Does it do anything to retain health care workers? Does it do anything to address the shortage of primary care providers across the province?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: The answer is absolutely not. It does nothing to address the crisis that we have when it comes to the workers in our health care system. In fact, it only makes it worse. We've heard stories from Ottawa where there are private practices that are standing outside of operating rooms, trying to get nurses to come and work in their private practice. What you see in a hospital, where there's already such a low morale issue, where they're burned out and they feel disrespected by this government—now we see, to add insult to injury, that the work that they're doing in our public system is not protected, not valued, and that we are going to now siphon off limited resources to private practice being paid with public dollars. Let's not forget that this private system is underpinned with our public dollars, but people are making a profit on those.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

Mr. Vincent Ke: Thank you for the member opposite's presentation. When it comes to your health, the status quo is no longer acceptable. Our government is taking bold action to eliminate surgery backlogs and reduce wait times for publicly funded surgeries and procedures. By boosting this availability of publicly funded health services in Ontario, our government is ensuring Ontarians currently waiting for specialized surgery will have great access to the world-class care they need when they need it.

My question is simple. Will the member of the opposition support their constituents by supporting this bill to ensure that Ontarians are not waiting too long for surgeries and procedures?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: To put it bluntly, I am going to support my constituents by not supporting a bill that privatizes our health care and makes things worse for the people of the province of Ontario. Some 12,000 children are waiting for surgeries. Are you going to tell me that a private practice is going to address this? Why are our operating rooms being shuttered? It's a lack of funding. Your government is sitting on billions and billions and billions of dollars that you should be investing in the public system. I will not support a bill that is a further dismantling of a public system that people rely on that has

served us well until you came to town and underfunded it and started to disrespect nurses and public health care workers.

Interjection: Your constituents will thank you.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: My constituents will thank me; yours will not.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further questions?

MPP Jill Andrew: Thank you to our member for that wonderful presentation. The government seems to think that privatization of health care gives Ontarians choices. But really, it gives choice to those who have the deep pockets to be able to take advantage of private care. I'm wondering if the member can express how this broadens the gap between the haves and have-nots in terms of access to health care, where it seems that the healthy and the wealthy are at the front of the line. They're at the top. But where are those who don't have? Where are they?

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): For response, 20 seconds.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I think that that exactly captures it: the healthy and the wealthy. Because private practices are not going to take on complicated cases. They're not going to take on people who have high blood pressure, who have multiple complex issues. Those people will not be addressed. They have the choice to refuse that. If you can't pay for additional expensive procedures and lenses, who's overseeing that you're not being refused service? Clearly, the Auditor General says, "nobody."

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): That's all our time for questions and answers.

Further debate?

Mr. Dave Smith: It's great to stand and talk to this bill.

One of the things that we were first electing on in 2018 was reducing hallway health care. Obviously, with COVID, there were some changes that had to happen, some things that we had to do differently. Let's be honest, there were 214 countries dealing with it, and they all had to do things in a different way.

1700

Now that we're transitioning out of COVID—it's not the pandemic; it's become more of an endemic—we can get back to dealing with some of the challenges that we had. But COVID did do something that created a negative for us, as well, and that was to increase the backlog of surgeries. One of the things that we did earlier on was to increase funding to hospitals, to their operating rooms, to try to clear up some of that backlog. I'm going to give you some statistics on it, and I'm kind of averaging and rounding it—not giving the total number, but an average of what they were. Roughly 260,000 surgeries is what we had as the backlog; prior to COVID, we had a backlog of about 200,000. We've brought that back down to about 200,000. It has taken almost three years to bring that down. So about 20,000 extra per year is what we can handle under the current system. That means it would take a decade to clear the backlog that we currently have under status quo. I'm not a rocket scientist, but I can look at it

and say that 10 years is not realistic—status quo cannot remain.

I've heard some of the opposition members talking about this, and they've thrown these scare tactics out—“Oh, my goodness, the sky is going to fall if the ophthalmologist who does the surgery in the hospital does that same surgery someplace other than the hospital.” What we've heard from ophthalmologists is that they can do more surgeries in the same length of time if they're not using the hospital operating room. We've heard the opposition say, “Well, they're only going to do the easy surgeries.” Yes, that is correct. They are only going to do the surgeries that do not require hospitalization after surgery.

If you think of it from a common-sense approach—common sense doesn't seem to be something that I'm hearing an awful lot from the opposition on this—would you want to have a surgery outside of the hospital if you were going to have to be hospitalized directly after the surgery? The answer to that would be a resounding no. But, if you're going to have a surgery that's going to take roughly 20 minutes, and 15 minutes after the surgery you're in a condition that you could go home, wouldn't you prefer that? Wouldn't you rather come to the clinic, have your surgery fairly quickly, go through the appropriate processes to make sure there aren't any side effects, and then go home? Or would you rather go into the hospital; spend some time waiting, prepping; go into the surgery room; leave the surgery room or the operating room; and follow the hospital's protocol, which is probably closer to an hour? You're going to spend roughly a three-hour time frame for a 35-minute process that wouldn't be at the hospital. To me, it makes logical sense. If I only have to spend 35 minutes someplace to accomplish exactly the same thing, I'm going to want to do that. And if I only have to spend 35 minutes instead of three hours, wouldn't that tell you that more surgeries could actually be completed?

It seems like this is something that's a stretch for the opposition, and I truly do not understand why, because the same doctor who would operate on you in the hospital is the doctor who's going to operate on you in the clinic. They've said things like, “Oh, my goodness, it's going to cost millions of dollars more to do that.” The doctor gets paid the same, whether they're in the hospital or their clinic for the surgery portion of it. And then they say things like, “Oh, my goodness, you're doing this instead of doing it in the hospital. We should be opening it up so it can be done in the hospital.” Obviously, they have not read the legislation or, conveniently, they skipped over parts of the legislation, because nowhere in the legislation does it say the hospital can't apply for this. Nowhere does it say, if a hospital has extra capacity and wants to do it and has the staffing to do it, they can apply for this and do it—nor does it say that they can't; the reality is, they can.

I then turn to my opposition friends and say, what's the issue? If the hospital can do it and the hospital says, “We can do it,” and the hospital applies to do it, they get approved to do it. But if the hospital says, “Right now,

we're at capacity and we can't,” or “We have some higher-risk surgeries that we need to get completed, so we would like to have some of those low-risk things moved out so that we can have the capacity to do things like a valve replacement surgery”—as one of our colleagues has had done to him. Or perhaps they're looking at it and saying, “Our backlog for cancer surgery is too long. We could do more cancer surgeries if we take these non-invasive, non-medically critical surgeries and move them out.” Wouldn't that be something to which the average person would say, “This is a good idea”? Those who need medical intervention, those who need to have hospitalization after their surgery, those who have those critical illnesses that are more complex that should be done in a hospital will have faster access to it. Don't you think the average person is going to say, “That's a good idea”?

Now the sky is going to fall because your OHIP card is going to be used to pay for this someplace else—because that doctor who is doing the surgery in the hospital suddenly is an evil person for doing that same operation someplace else and getting paid by OHIP. Where they were getting paid by OHIP to do it over here, it's evil for them to get paid by OHIP to do it over here—and if we only kept status quo, nobody would be evil. Of course, our backlog would take a decade to get cleaned up. I've had a number of people reach out to my office and say that's just not acceptable. They want service.

I find it so ironic that the opposition members stood up last term and presented all kinds of petitions to save eye care, because those evil optometrists, as my seatmate described, who get paid by OHIP to do eye exams, were selling glasses to those people or selling contacts to those people—we can't trust those doctors because they're getting paid by OHIP and they're selling something as well. Perhaps what we should have been doing is having petitions by the opposition saying, “Optometrists should never be able to sell glasses to people because OHIP is going to fund them to do the eye exam, and they should only ever do eye exams, and we should have glasses sold someplace else because they can't be in the same building as each other, because that would be evil if we were to do something like that.”

The logic the opposition has put forward just doesn't make any sense. At the end of the day, you're getting the care you need, when you need it, where you need it, and you're paying for it with your OHIP card.

With that, Speaker, I move that the question now be put.

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The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Mr. Smith has moved that the question be now put. I'm satisfied that there has been sufficient debate to allow this question to be put to the House.

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

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

All those opposed to the motion that the question be now put, please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

Vote deferred.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Orders of the day.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Madam Speaker, if you seek it, I'm sure you'll find unanimous consent to see the clock at 6.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Is there unanimous consent to see the clock at 6? Agreed.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

BUILDING BETTER BUSINESS OUTCOMES ACT, 2023

LOI DE 2023 POUR GARANTIR DE MEILLEURS RÉSULTATS POUR LES ENTREPRISES

Ms. Bowman moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 50, An Act to amend the Securities Act to require certain issuers to adopt and make publicly available written policies respecting their director nomination process / Projet de loi 50, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les valeurs mobilières afin d'exiger que certains émetteurs adoptent et rendent publiques des politiques écrites concernant leur processus de mise en candidature des administrateurs.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Pursuant to standing order 100, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: I am proud to stand today to talk about my first private member's bill, Bill 50, the Building Better Business Outcomes Act. It is great to have with me for this occasion my family, friends, and business and community leaders who are committed to diversity and inclusion for a stronger economy and a more inclusive society, and to also have people here from groups identified in this bill.

I will add that, while I did not pick the date for the debate of the bill, I'm delighted that this is happening during Black History Month and just ahead of International Women's Day.

This bill has a simple premise: that progressive policy is good business policy; that more diverse boards magnify the success of business, which grows our economy and is good for our society. My goal is to drive more opportunity in our economy through improving diversity.

Specifically, this bill will require an issuer whose shares are publicly traded to adopt and make publicly available a written policy respecting the director nomination process that provides for the identification of candidates who belong to one or more of the following groups: women; persons who are Black, Indigenous or racialized; persons with disabilities; and persons who are LGBTQ+.

During my corporate career, I developed an early interest in advancing women in business, and that grew to supporting others from under-represented groups. I have followed with interest the advocacy of organizations who work in this space. I truly believe that diversity at the table and real inclusion lead to better business outcomes, from team decisions made every day at work to big decisions made by the board.

Governments have a role in helping to create the conditions for people of our community to succeed. Many of the residents in my riding of Don Valley West come from racialized communities. Many are immigrants. I want to make sure that we have an Ontario where more of them can become leaders in corporate Ontario.

I want this government to do something that advances where we are today with this very important issue of diversity and inclusion on corporate boards, which, as importantly, will lead to enhanced opportunities in other areas of corporate life for the groups identified in this bill. I want the diverse populations in my riding of Don Valley West and across Ontario to see more people who look like them on boards, because that will create more opportunities for them to succeed in our province.

The topic of diversity on boards has been talked about and researched for decades. Let me share with you the current state of affairs with respect to diversity on boards in Canada. Statistics from the most recent Osler report on board diversity show that women make up 26% of board members of TSX companies—not bad, but we can do better. When we look at other groups identified in the bill, we see that there is still much, much further to go. Of companies that report this data—there are 162 board members who are visible minorities, 17 who are Indigenous and 10 with disabilities, and we don't know how many LGBTQ+ members, because we don't track or report that today.

People from under-represented groups, starting with women in business many decades ago, have used three primary arguments to convince decision-makers that diversity on boards is worth pursuing:

- (1) the capability argument: "We are capable and deserve as much opportunity as those who are already here";
- (2) the equity argument: "Since we are capable, it is fair and just that we should have a seat at the table"; and
- (3) the business-case argument: "Putting women on your boards will help your organizations perform better."

I believe there's merit in all of these arguments, and so does this government's own Capital Markets Modernization Taskforce, which the government commissioned "to help transform the regulatory landscape for the capital markets sector, and advise the Minister of Finance on how to improve the innovation and competitiveness of the province's capital markets and best help build Ontario's economy." I commend the government for initiating this work and the members of the task force who worked on it.

In 2021, the task force issued its report, with 74 recommendations, including three on how to improve corporate board diversity. My bill is taken word for word from one of these three recommendations. In fact, the

government has implemented or is moving on many of the 74 recommendations, and I commend them for that too. But there has been no progress reported on the three recommendations related to corporate board diversity, and my hope today is that the debate of Bill 50 will nudge the government to take that action.

As the task force said, “Investors are increasingly demanding data on diversity on boards and in executive officer positions to make informed investment and voting decisions.”

My intention is not to criticize when I say this, but I had to consider the lack of movement on the three diversity recommendations as I sit here in the opposition. In talking to people, some of them said, “Your bill goes too far.” Others said, “Your bill doesn’t go far enough.” I thought about how to encourage the Conservative government to take some action to move on this important issue, so I decided to make this bill only about the least interventionist policy from government and market perspectives. This bill, about adopting a policy, is a light touch to advancing diversity by helping to ensure boards are looking at the broadest possible pool of qualified candidates.

Other jurisdictions are ahead of Ontario on this front. The European Parliament recently passed legislation that compels member states to create their own policies for ensuring that there is diverse representation on boards. In the US, NASDAQ has adopted policies that require women, under-represented minorities and LGBTQ+ persons to be nominated to boards.

So why this bill and why now? There are three reasons:

(1) It has taken decades for our corporate boards to reach about 25% women directors and just 4.5% people of colour, 17 Indigenous board directors, 10 directors who are people with disabilities—and as I said, we do not know the number of LGBTQ+ directors because it’s not tracked or reported. So while the progress and the attention to diversity in ESG more broadly is something to celebrate, we still have a long way to go. About Ontario’s current “comply or explain” policy, which relates only to gender diversity on boards, Maureen Jensen, former chair and CEO of the OSC, said, “The progress has been slow.”

(2) Research shows that more diverse boards are more likely to have better business outcomes than their less diverse peers, so this kind of policy is good policy to grow our economy. One report by McKinsey demonstrates that businesses with more women and more racialized people are 48% and 36%, respectively, more likely to outperform their less diverse competitors. We need this kind of progressive policy here at work in Ontario, for Ontario and for Canada. We know that we want our companies, our corporations to invest more, to innovate more. But Canada is behind its international peers, and this bill can help.

(3) It is a positive, light-touch, action-oriented bill that provides a gentle nudge to business leaders to demonstrate Ontario’s commitment to diversity at all levels of corporate life, starting at the top with their boards.

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But let’s be clear: We should not do this only because the business case is solid. Sarah Kaplan, distinguished professor of gender and the economy at Rotman School of Management, has studied this topic extensively and said, “We are not debating the business case itself. Many are convinced that the case has already been made. Complex social issues such as changing social norms and challenging stereotypes cannot be reduced to a spreadsheet. They can only be tackled with an unreserved, passionate commitment from senior leaders.”

This House is among that group of senior leaders who have the power to help make change. That’s why I’m here—that’s why all of us are here. If improving the level of diversity of other under-represented groups takes us as many decades as it did for women to get to just 25% of corporate board positions, that will be decades of missed opportunity and economic growth that the increased diversity could bring.

My hope is that this bill will ensure that more boards, at a minimum, are having this conversation, are looking at the broadest pool of candidates possible to advance their diversity, not only for women but for persons who are Black, Indigenous or racialized; persons with disabilities; and persons who are LGBTQ+; and that boards will do this more quickly than if we maintain only the status quo rule of “comply or explain,” which has moved the needle only slightly.

Leading scholars and businesspeople support this bill. Poonam Puri—who I’m delighted to say is here today with her daughters—an esteemed professor at Osgoode Hall Law School who researches and teaches in the areas of corporate law, corporate governance and capital markets regulation, said that Bill 50 would benefit corporations and their investors, as it “will require companies to consider how they approach their board nomination process to ensure they are getting the best voices they can and will show investors which companies are taking this issue seriously.”

Pamela Jeffery, founder of the Prosperity Project, said, “When you have competent directors looking at a problem through different lenses, better discussion ensues which in turn leads to better decision-making.”

Deborah Rosati, founder and CEO of Women Get on Board, said, “As business leaders, our duty is to all step up today and collectively be agents of change in advancing board diversity in Canada. Together, we can make a difference by promoting diversity as a strategic opportunity for board-building.”

I’m pleased to say this bill is also supported by organizations like Meridian Credit Union, the March of Dimes, LGBTQ+ Corporate Directors Canada Association, the Arya Samaj community of Markham and Toronto, and Intriciti.

I’m also pleased to have the support of Cody Anthony, the founder of the Ted Rogers Indigenous in Business student group that works to increase Indigenous participation in leadership positions, highlight Indigenous

entrepreneurs, and encourage Indigenous students to seek an education at the Ted Rogers School of Management.

I'm also proud that Leaside Business Park Association in my riding of Don Valley West supports the bill.

Thank you to all who gave me input, advice and their support.

This issue is a business issue, it's a societal issue—it's not a partisan issue. I look forward to hearing from my colleagues on this side of the aisle, as well as from the government members.

There is a time for waiting, and there is a time to act. A vote in favour of this bill is a vote for building our economy by maximizing the diversity of our population, by leveraging the talents of constituents across all 124 ridings represented in this House.

Speaker, it is time we act on this issue and send a signal to all communities that Ontario is not only open for business but that Ontario business is open to them.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further debate?

Mr. Stephen Crawford: First, I'd like to start by thanking the member for Don Valley West for bringing attention to this important issue. The topic of diversity on corporate boards and executive positions is one that the Ministry of Finance has been engaged in for some time. Also, this is a topic that is very important to the minister himself.

While it may seem like a small part of the corporate world, the makeup of boards of public companies is important to their leadership and to potential investors. In an increasingly competitive marketplace, Ontario needs a modern, dynamic capital markets sector that puts Canadian firms on a fair footing globally. This government is committed to modernizing Ontario's capital markets and making this province one of the most attractive capital markets destinations in the world to support Ontario's economy and long-term growth.

Ontario is home to the major share of public companies in Canada. In 2022 alone, more than 50% of Canada's equity market value came from public companies where the Ontario Securities Commission was the principal regulator. We want public companies in Ontario to excel, to thrive and to set the global best standards in corporate governance. Diversity is an important part of that. An important part of building a successful business is ensuring a wide range of perspectives are heard, especially at the decision-making tables, in boardrooms, among executives.

The world of investing is evolving rapidly. In the marketplace of a changing, globalized world, investors are increasingly looking for more information and background on firms and their leadership. For Ontario firms to compete successfully on a global scale and contribute to Ontario's prosperity, they need to be enabled with all the tools that a modern and competitive capital markets system brings to the table. Improving corporate diversity is essential to achieving this outcome.

The member opposite has done a commendable job in bringing this issue to some wider attention, but I will now

have to explain why we will be unable to support the member's proposed legislation, in spite of this government's strong and consistent support for diversity on corporate boards. I will begin with some background on the member's proposed legislation itself, and then the work that has been done in Ontario so far for diversity on corporate boards.

The text of this bill proposes to amend the Securities Act with an addition that is a recommendation on diversity on corporate boards from the larger Capital Markets Modernization Taskforce final report. This task force was established in February 2020 by this government to help transform the regulatory landscape for the capital markets sector and advise the Minister of Finance on how to improve innovation and competitiveness of the province's capital markets and best help build Ontario's economy. The Capital Markets Modernization Taskforce engaged with more than 110 stakeholders. They consulted on the challenges that businesses, intermediaries and investors face in Ontario's capital markets ecosystem. Based on these consultations, the task force developed a consultation report, which includes 74 policy proposals to modernize the province's capital markets regulations.

The task force asked for feedback on the consultation report from July 9 to September 7, 2020, and received over 130 stakeholder comments during that time. The task force submitted its final report to the Minister of Finance, which includes 74 policy recommendations. These recommendations are intended to modernize Ontario's capital markets and drive innovation, competition and diversity, resulting in job and wealth creation. The final report contains recommendations on:

- improving regulatory structure and enhanced governance;
- improving competitiveness through regulatory measures;
- ensuring a level playing field between large and small market players;
- improving the proxy system, corporate governance and the process of mergers and acquisitions;
- fostering innovation; and
- modernizing enforcement and enhancing investor protection.

The Capital Markets Modernization Taskforce had a detailed recommendation on improving corporate diversity in Ontario's markets. For context, public companies in Ontario are already required to report on gender representation. Our 2022 budget committed to continue to consider this issue as part of our capital markets modernization efforts.

Additionally, corporate diversity continues to be an important initiative for our securities regulator. The Ontario Securities Commission, working with its provincial counterparts, consulted publicly on this issue in 2021.

In 2023, the OSC, along with its provincial counterparts, will consult on how to improve representation of other under-represented groups beyond gender. We look

forward to hearing the feedback from stakeholders and the public on the OSC's proposal.

Our government is committed to improving corporate diversity in Ontario's capital markets sector. But, as a government, we cannot support this particular legislation for a few reasons.

First of all, the Capital Markets Modernization Taskforce was established with a clear mandate, and the trusted experts at the OSC are best placed to continue this work.

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Secondly, supporting this legislative change to the capital markets would, if passed, make Ontario an outlier in its process for capital markets modernization. Supporting this legislation would make Ontario an outlier in this regard and would create more red tape for business and harm the overall efforts of the capital markets modernization across Canada. These recommendations from the capital markets task force will go through an industry trusted consultation period, and much good work is continuing on diversity topics at the OSC and the CSA.

As a responsible government that respects the work of agencies, we should not and will not interfere with the trusted work of these great organizations. The work on the task force recommendations continues, and there will be more to say about this in the coming months.

Our government continues to have a vision for improving this province and making it one of the best places in the world to invest, raise capital and start a business.

Before I close, let me reiterate that the principles behind the recommendation on diversity from the Capital Markets Modernization Taskforce is an important priority for the modernization program and this government. We will continue to work to ensure that Ontario is the best place to grow, prosper and build a business.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further debate?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I rise today in support of the bill being debated, the Building Better Business Outcomes Act, as a reasonable step in the right direction. By amending the Securities Act to require publicly traded companies to have a written and publicly available policy on the diversity of their boards of directors, we can promote the inclusion of more women, more people of colour, more people with disabilities, and more members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community on corporate boards.

Everyone in Ontario deserves to feel safe, to feel welcome and to feel at home in this great province. No one should have to face discrimination or fear because of the colour of their skin, their gender, their sexual orientation or their abilities, and that includes at work.

The question becomes "What is diversity?" When we think about diversity, we typically think about race and gender, but it should be more broad, more inclusive. When we look at diverse employees, they don't automatically create an inclusive workplace. They can start that process, but the workplace also has to have policies and frameworks that recognize the importance of both

diversity and inclusion; there have to be teams with anti-discrimination policies.

Further to this, people don't know what they don't know. Until we have people of differing backgrounds, differing perspectives—can we begin to understand once we listen.

It's disappointing to hear that the government is not in favour of supporting this. Representation is truly what matters. Diversity doesn't happen by accident or by happenstance. It's about making room at the table. It's about providing that space. It's about making space, not taking space. When people see themselves reflected, that is when you build trust, that's when you build accountability, that's when you build authenticity, and it provides an inspiration to young people. It broadens our minds.

To share some statistics—the Ontario Securities Commission reports that total board seats and executive positions occupied by women was less than 20%, yet only about the same percentage of companies had adopted targets regarding the representation of women on their boards. They hadn't provided that room. Even worse, a study highlighted in the report found that only 5% of all directors were visible minorities. That's not a reflection of the Ontario that we live in. Indigenous directors and directors with disabilities made up 0.05% and 0.04% of boards, respectively. Together, they didn't even form half of a per cent. That's problematic.

This bill echoes the recommendations from the government's Capital Markets Modernization Taskforce. Investors are increasingly demanding data on diversity on boards and in executive officer positions to make informed investment and voting decisions, and this legislation addresses that demand. The task force recommended that publicly listed issuers set a target of 50% for women and 30% for BIPOC, persons with disabilities, and members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. It also recommended that these targets should be completed—within five years to meet the target for women and seven years to meet the other targets for BIPOC, persons with disabilities and members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. This report was issued in 2020, but the government has not taken any steps toward these goals.

The gender wage gap still exists to this day. We consider ourselves modern, we consider ourselves evolved, and yet why is it that for the same work, women are paid less? Why is it that women are still encountering the glass ceiling? Why are they not able to hold those positions of power? Women in this province earn far less for every dollar made—and that gap is even wider for intersexual identities, women who are racialized, Indigenous women, women who are newcomers, women with disabilities, trans women, and non-binary folks. We have tens of thousands of women in this province who are underpaid and undervalued for their work every day, and they earn less than they deserve. Quite frankly, it's outrageous.

Over the course of the pandemic, it was women who were doing double duty, working and parenting without child care or school, or who were forced to give up their

jobs entirely to stay home with children. This could have been resolved with more workplace flexibility.

When it comes to hourly wage rates, the gender pay gap is about 11%. The wage gap has always been greater for racialized and Indigenous women, and it could be resolved by more representative leadership.

The Equal Pay Coalition did a poll that showed that 85% of Ontarians said it's important for the Ontario government to do more to promote women's economic equality. But this government stalled the implementation of legislation that aimed to increase pay transparency in Ontario. This government instead makes cuts that disproportionately impact women—cancelling an increase to the minimum wage, slashing paid sick days, and refusing for years to make investments in affordable child care, long-term care, education and health care.

The London and Middlesex Local Immigration Partnership has also studied the impacts of discrimination on immigrants, visible minorities and Indigenous peoples. The outcomes of this study called for strategies to promote an environment that encourages victims of discrimination to report their experiences and engage in effective initiatives to prevent and reduce discrimination. The report states: "These anti-discrimination initiatives would help make London-Middlesex a more just and equitable community, and would protect its residents from the harmful negative outcomes that experiencing discrimination can produce ... would help make London-Middlesex a more welcoming community that could attract, integrate, and retain diverse individuals, an integral part of Canada's strategy to sustain the economy."

Of course, in my community of London, we know first-hand the horror of unchecked discrimination and what can happen as a result. On June 6, 2021, three generations of the Afzaal family were killed in an Islamophobic terror attack while out on a walk, leaving the youngest member of the family as the sole survivor.

In the last Legislature, the NDP tabled a day of remembrance and action on Islamophobia. That bill was ordered to the standing committee after second reading, and it never left.

Further, I was proud to table a bill to declare May 10 as a day of remembrance and action against anti-Asian racism. Unfortunately, that bill never passed.

We need more bills like Bill 50, to make sure that we are taking an active role to promote diversity within our province.

For Black, Indigenous and racialized people in Ontario, discrimination and racism are far too often a daily reality in a maze of deeply ingrained systemic barriers. It starts at the top. As a step to fight economic discrimination, publicly traded companies need to better reflect their workers, customers and their communities. When people see themselves reflected, it makes a difference.

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To really and truly address the economic inequality experienced by women, people of colour, people with disabilities and members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, we must also be looking at fresh solutions such as

updating and enforcing the Pay Equity Act and moving forward with the Pay Transparency Act so we have mechanisms in place to track and hold companies accountable for the gender pay gap.

We could also make investments and do the work to dismantle structural racism in every sector in Ontario. Shortly after this government was formed in 2018, there were many concerns about the dismantling of the Anti-Racism Directorate and the \$1,000 that was afforded to something that was supposedly formed to tackle racism across the province.

There's also rock-solid evidence that more diverse boards have better bottom lines. It is a win-win.

Ontario has the opportunity to become a leader in this. Ontario has an opportunity to be the first to do this. The world of work is changing, and Ontarians must be set up to succeed now and in the future.

I hope that this government will reconsider. I hope they'll listen to the debates that have been presented by the member from Don Valley West as well as the official opposition. This is a way for us to move forward. I hope that the government is listening.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further debate?

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: The Building Better Business Outcomes Act is a bill that would have a hugely positive impact on corporations and their process for choosing board directors, leading to more diverse voices to be present on all corporate boards. The member from Don Valley West is an impressive advocate for diversity in business, entering politics after many years of experience in the corporate world, with a strong interest for encouraging and lifting up women in business.

Studies have shown that companies with directors and executives with diverse backgrounds have better business outcomes. Our province prospers when the key decision-makers reflect Ontarians—all Ontarians. We have the opportunity in this chamber today to make Ontario's corporations more inclusive, equitable and successful.

When I was first elected to city hall as a Toronto city councillor, women made up only one third of the seats—pitiful. After the 2022 provincial election, women represented 47 ridings in the Ontario Legislative Assembly, out of 124. As women, we face a unique challenge when chasing our career goals. Often we must choose between family life and our own ambitions, often in industries that don't favour us. Black, Indigenous and racialized people, people with disabilities and LGBTQ+ communities face their own barriers to entry into positions of power.

Bill 50 would be a step in the right direction to a more equitable and innovative future that recognizes the voices of everyone. I am in full support of this bill and hope that my colleagues from all parties can work and back it as well.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further debate?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I'm honoured to rise and speak in favour of Bill 50. I want to thank the member from Don Valley West for bringing it forward, because diverse voices, perspectives, ideas and experiences in corporate

governance matter. Studies show that companies with directors and executives with diverse backgrounds perform better in business, and it's in the public interest to have diverse directors and executives of publicly traded companies.

But despite the positive social, economic and business benefits of diverse directors and executives, the government's own Capital Markets Modernization Taskforce itself has noted that diversity has been painfully slow on boards.

According to the Ontario Securities Commission, women on boards only increased from 11% in 2015 to 17% in 2019, and 24% last year. In a recent study that the task force cited, only 5.5% of boards represent visible minorities. People with disabilities make up less than 1%, 0.5%, of board diversity.

Speaker, we know we can do better in Ontario. We know that our businesses can perform better, and that's exactly why I will be voting in favour of Bill 50.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further debate?

Mr. John Fraser: I, too, support Bill 50, the Building Better Business Outcomes Act, 2022, and I want to congratulate the member from Don Valley West for putting forward this bill. She did her homework. The bill is well-thought-out. It's a reasonable, measured approach to something that needs to happen. We all know that it needs to happen, because everybody keeps saying it.

The question really is: Are you going to support it? Are you going to support probably the least interventionist measure that your own commission suggested? I've kind of got the sense that the government is not going to do that. They're not going to allow this bill to pass to second reading, to have more discussion in committee of something that your own folks came back and told you you needed to do.

So I hope that the government has a change of heart. I hope that I'm wrong, because one of the greatest challenges we have in any organization and in business is governance. Why is it a challenge? Because boards of directors become clubs. They become clubs for mostly men, so we need to ensure that we set up processes that reflect what our society—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): Further debate? Further debate?

Back to the member for Don Valley West for a two-minute reply.

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: I'm happy to hear the member from Oakville say that diversity is an important part of being a leader in corporate governance. I thank my colleagues on this side of the House for their genuine support.

I'm disappointed to hear that the government considers this to be red tape. This month is Black History Month.

International Women's Day is next month. Reconciliation with Indigenous people must be at the forefront of what we do as leaders in government. What better time for all members of this House to come together and show our commitment to building a diverse Ontario?

Our laws reflect our values, and so I had hoped that this government was ready to incorporate diversity into the Securities Act. Bill 50 will advance our economy and the conversation around inclusivity within corporate boards. I know that this is something members from all parties agree on.

The member from Oakville says that there's merit in this proposal, that the idea of diversity is something that should be considered, but they need more time, that we need to consult more about this requirement. But Speaker, there has already been, as the member opposite said, lots of consultation. The task force received 123 submissions, including from all five Canadian banks, Canadian and international investment firms, pension funds and corporations. The task force consulted the OSC and the Canadian Securities Administrators.

The government-appointed task force reached its conclusions after considering these submissions, including on board diversity. Delaying this further is unnecessary. It doesn't make Ontario an outlier. Ontario is the engine of the Canadian economy, and all the nation's most significant corporations are traded here. When Ontario moves, Canada listens. This legislation won't make us an outlier; it would make every other province an outlier.

Speaker, I hope this government will quickly advance the work on diversity on boards to make Ontario a leader in corporate governance, because that's what Ontarians deserve and that's what our communities across this great province deserve as well.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

Ms. Bowman has moved second reading of Bill 50, An Act to amend the Securities Act to require certain issuers to adopt and make publicly available written policies respecting their director nomination process.

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

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

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

In my opinion, the nays have it.

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

Second reading vote deferred.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly): All matters relating to private members' public business having been completed, this House stands adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1750.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenante-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Elizabeth Dowdeswell, OC, OOnt.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Ted Arnott

Clerk / Greffier: Todd Decker

Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffier: Trevor Day

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Valerie Quioc Lim, Wai Lam (William) Wong,

Meghan Stenson, Christopher Tyrell

Temporary Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes par intérim: Mike Civil

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Anand, Deepak (PC)	Mississauga—Malton	
Andrew, Jill (NDP)	Toronto—St. Paul's	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London—Fanshawe	
Arnott, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (PC)	Wellington—Halton Hills	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Babikian, Aris (PC)	Scarborough—Agincourt	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia—Lambton	
Barnes, Patrice (PC)	Ajax	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Begum, Doly (NDP)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough- Sud-Ouest	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Bell, Jessica (NDP)	University—Rosedale	
Bethlenfalvy, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (PC)	Pickering—Uxbridge	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Blais, Stephen (LIB)	Orléans	
Bouma, Will (PC)	Brantford—Brant	
Bourgouin, Guy (NDP)	Mushkegowuk—James Bay / Mushkegowuk—Baie James	
Bowman, Stephanie (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	
Brady, Bobbi Ann (IND)	Haldimand—Norfolk	
Bresee, Ric (PC)	Hastings—Lennox and Addington	
Burch, Jeff (NDP)	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	
Byers, Rick (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	
Calandra, Hon. / L'hon. Paul (PC)	Markham—Stouffville	Minister of Legislative Affairs / Ministre des Affaires législatives Minister of Long-Term Care / Ministre des Soins de longue durée Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Raymond Sung Joon (PC)	Scarborough North / Scarborough- Nord	Minister for Seniors and Accessibility / Ministre des Services aux aînés et de l'Accessibilité
Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Stan (PC)	Willowdale	Associate Minister of Transportation / Ministre associé des Transports
Clark, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (PC)	Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes / Leeds— Grenville—Thousand Islands et Rideau Lakes	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Coe, Lorne (PC)	Whitby	
Collard, Lucille (LIB)	Ottawa—Vanier	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Crawford, Stephen (PC)	Oakville	
Cuzzetto, Rudy (PC)	Mississauga—Lakeshore	
Dixon, Jess (PC)	Kitchener South—Hespeler / Kitchener-Sud—Hespeler	
Dowie, Andrew (PC)	Windsor—Tecumseh	
Downey, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte	Attorney General / Procureur général
Dunlop, Hon. / L'hon. Jill (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Minister of Colleges and Universities / Ministre des Collèges et Universités
Fedeli, Hon. / L'hon. Victor (PC)	Nipissing	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique, de la Création d'emplois et du Commerce
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Waterloo	
Flack, Rob (PC)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Michael D. (PC)	York South—Weston / York-Sud—Weston	Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism / Ministre des Affaires civiques et du Multiculturalisme
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Fullerton, Hon. / L'hon. Merrilee (PC)	Kanata—Carleton	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn (PC)	Newmarket—Aurora	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Ghamari, Goldie (PC)	Carleton	
Gill, Hon. / L'hon. Parm (PC)	Milton	Minister of Red Tape Reduction / Ministre de la Réduction des formalités administratives
Glover, Chris (NDP)	Spadina—Fort York	
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Grewal, Hardeep Singh (PC)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harden, Joel (NDP)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Harris, Mike (PC)	Kitchener—Conestoga	
Hogarth, Christine (PC)	Etobicoke—Lakeshore	
Holland, Kevin (PC)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
Hsu, Ted (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Hunter, Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough—Guildwood	
Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin—Caledon	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health / Ministre de la Santé
Jones, Trevor (PC)	Chatham-Kent—Leamington	
Jordan, John (PC)	Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston	
Kanapathi, Logan (PC)	Markham—Thornhill	
Karpoche, Bhutla (NDP)	Parkdale—High Park	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Première vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Ke, Vincent (PC)	Don Valley North / Don Valley-Nord	
Kernaghan, Terence (NDP)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Kerzner, Hon. / L'hon. Michael S. (PC)	York Centre / York-Centre	Solicitor General / Solliciteur général
Khanjin, Andrea (PC)	Barrie—Innisfil	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe du gouvernement
Kusendova-Bashta, Natalia (PC)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga-Centre	
Leardi, Anthony (PC)	Essex	
Lecce, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)	King—Vaughan	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Lindo, Laura Mae (NDP)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Lumsden, Hon. / L'hon. Neil (PC)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean	
Mamakwa, Sol (NDP)	Kiiwetinoong	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Martin, Robin (PC)	Eglinton—Lawrence	
McCarthy, Todd J. (PC)	Durham	
McGregor, Graham (PC)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	
McMahon, Mary-Margaret (LIB)	Beaches—East York / Beaches—East York	
McNaughton, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (PC)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de l'Immigration, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences
Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)	York—Simcoe	Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Oosterhoff, Sam (PC)	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	
Parsa, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (PC)	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	Associate Minister of Housing / Ministre associé du Logement
Pasma, Chandra (NDP)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	
Piccini, Hon. / L'hon. David (PC)	Northumberland—Peterborough South	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs
Pierre, Natalie (PC)	Burlington	
Pirie, Hon. / L'hon. George (PC)	Timmins	Minister of Mines / Ministre des Mines
Quinn, Nolan (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	
Rae, Matthew (PC)	Perth—Wellington	
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
Rasheed, Hon. / L'hon. Kaleed (PC)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery / Ministre des Services au public et aux entreprises
Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Indigenous Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones Minister of Northern Development / Ministre du Développement du Nord
Riddell, Brian (PC)	Cambridge	
Romano, Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	
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
Sarrazin, Stéphane (PC)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Saunderson, Brian (PC)	Simcoe—Grey	
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	
Shamji, Adil (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Skelly, Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Vice-présidente et présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-présidente
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, David (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Graydon (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Smith, Laura (PC)	Thornhill	
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Tangri, Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain / 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	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Vaugeois, Lise (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
Williams, Hon. / L'hon. Charmaine A. (PC)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity / Ministre associée des Perspectives sociales et économiques pour les femmes
Wong-Tam, Kristyn (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	
Vacant	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	