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of Ontario



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(Hansard)**

N° 62A

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43<sup>rd</sup> Parliament

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Mardi  
4 avril 2023

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Speaker: Honourable Ted Arnott  
Clerk: Todd Decker

Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott  
Greffier : Todd Decker

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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 4 April 2023

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 4 avril 2023

*The House met at 0900.*

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

*Prayers.*

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

#### 2023 ONTARIO BUDGET

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 30, 2023, on the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

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

**Mr. Billy Pang:** Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to address the House today to discuss the 2023 Ontario budget.

**Building a Strong Ontario:** The proposed budget reflects a focused and responsible approach to building a strong Ontario that supports families, workers and businesses, while ensuring a strong fiscal foundation for future generations. Despite recent economic challenges and geopolitical instability, Ontario's economy has demonstrated remarkable resilience. Our government's budget provides the right strategy to navigate short-term uncertainties while creating conditions for long-term economic growth.

Ontario's economy has continued to grow despite ongoing uncertainty. As of the third quarter of 2022, real gross domestic product exceeded the COVID-19 pre-pandemic level by 4%. In 2022, Ontario created 338,300 jobs, following a gain of 367,400 net jobs in 2021. These were the two strongest years of job growth on record. The provincial unemployment rate is currently near historic lows.

Our government has taken significant measures to boost growth by reducing costs, expediting key infrastructure projects, and cutting through red tape. Our efforts have attracted new investment to key industries and have generated additional high-quality, well-paying jobs. Above all, our government is committed to taking a responsible approach to budgeting and financial management, with plans to balance the budget and to post a surplus in the fiscal year 2024-25. That is an impressive three years earlier than the 2022 budget forecast.

Access to this region's critical minerals will create multi-generational opportunities for northern and First Nations communities. Building this corridor to prosperity can leverage an array of health, economic and social benefits. Dependable all-season road access is a prerequisite to unlocking the region's potential. This access will enable effective supply chain connections between industries, resources, workers and communities in both northern Ontario and manufacturing in southern Ontario.

Through investments and community support, our government is helping to build a robust critical minerals sector in the province, with a commitment of nearly \$1 billion for investment in critical legacy infrastructure, and providing services to help bring prosperity to First Nations communities. Our government's strategy will also help secure Ontario's position as a reliable global supplier and processor of responsibly sourced critical minerals. Furthermore, these northern critical mineral resources have a critical connection to Ontario's world-class electric vehicle sector in the south.

Speaker, I'm proud to share with you the positive developments of Ontario's electric vehicle sector as we strive towards building the cars of the future. Our government is dedicated to promoting Ontario as a global leader on the EV supply chain. We are thrilled to see the positive results of our clean-tech efforts and electric vehicle initiatives. Over the past two and a half years, our province has attracted more than \$16 billion in investments from global automakers, suppliers of EV batteries and battery materials, even before the most recent announcement for a subsidiary Volkswagen AG to establish an EV battery manufacturing facility in St. Thomas, Ontario.

The recent announcement by Volkswagen AG to establish an EV battery manufacturing facility in Ontario is a historic moment. It is a huge vote of confidence that will further strengthen our made-in-Ontario electric vehicle supply chain, creating additional good-paying jobs for workers in St. Thomas and across the province. It will be the first overseas "gigafactory" for battery cell manufacturing for the German automaker, with production scheduled to begin in 2027.

In further support of our EV sector and homegrown automobile innovation, we are proposing a new Ontario Made Manufacturing Investment Tax Credit. This initiative will help local manufacturing companies to invest and expand so the products of the future are manufactured right here at home.

#### 0910

Speaker, one of the most common concerns I hear from my constituents is about the high cost of goods and services. We understand the issue of financial difficulties, especially for our low-income seniors. Our government is committed to supporting them through this challenging time.

In this period of high prices, our government has temporarily doubled the Guaranteed Annual Income System, GAINS, payments for 2023 to help approximately 200,000 eligible low-income seniors.

Under the 2023 budget, we are also proposing changes to expand eligibility for the GAINS program. Starting in

July 2024, we would see approximately 100,000 additional seniors be eligible for the program, for a 50% increase in recipients. The proposed amendments to the Ontario Guaranteed Annual Income Act would allow more seniors to be eligible for the program and to keep more of their benefits. Our government is proposing to lower the rate at which the benefit is reduced in relation to annual private income and, at the same time, to continue to put more money in the pockets of eligible seniors, and is proposing to adjust the benefit annually to inflation.

As part of its plan to help keep costs down for Ontario families and businesses, our government is also extending the current gas tax and fuel tax rate cuts for an additional year, keeping the rates at 9 cents per litre until December 31, 2023.

Because of our government's thoughtful and transparent planning, we will continue to build an Ontario the people of this province can be proud of, not only today but into the future.

In conclusion, I urge all members of the House to vote in favour of the 2023 budget and join me in looking forward to a stronger Ontario.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Further debate?

**Mr. Todd J. McCarthy:** As a point of order, I have engaged in debate on the budget motion and, if they are one and the same as Bill 85—they certainly are the same subject matter—I may want to defer to a colleague on the government side to address this House at this point.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Sir, if I could ask you for a moment—

*Interjection.*

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Just to clarify the rules, the member from Markham–Unionville didn't indicate that he was sharing his time, so I'm required to move over to the rotation on the NDP side of the official opposition.

**Mr. Todd J. McCarthy:** Unless he's not finished. He may not be finished.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** He sat down, and once he sat down it's kind of over. So I'm going to turn to the official opposition—

*Interjections.*

**Interjection:** He sat.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** He has. He said, "In conclusion," and then he sat down. We're just going to have to move to rotation—

*Interjection.*

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** To questions. We're on the motion. Okay. So we'll move to questions.

**Mr. Joel Harden:** I thank the member for his comments this morning.

Thinking about the electric vehicle industry, I'm wondering if the member could reflect upon the state of Ontario's readiness with respect to the infrastructure we have. I know there have been some recent announcements at the ONroute stations. But I can tell the member, as an owner of an electric vehicle, that it is hard, when the

charging capacity reduces in the winter—and the winters are cold in Ottawa, as you know—to find adequate charging stations at an affordable price.

I'm wondering if the member can inform this House about what the government's readiness plan is to make sure that we aren't just doing manufacturing-side incentives; for the consumer, there's actually going to be a charging station when they urgently need it to get their kid to school, to get to work, to get around town to do things they need to do. Is there an update the member can provide?

**Mr. Billy Pang:** Madam Speaker, through you: Thank you for the question. I think the best answer is not from me; it's from the industry.

The investors are putting money into our province. GM is putting a more than \$2-billion investment that will protect thousands of jobs. Tesla is manufacturing the equipment to make the battery for the future. Honda is making a \$1.4-billion investment to make hybrid vehicles. Ford is making a \$1.8-billion investment to produce EVs. Toyota has invested \$1.4 billion to make vehicles, including hybrids. GM is building Canada's first-ever full-scale EV manufacturing plant. And LG Energy Solution is investing more than \$5 billion to build Ontario's first-ever large-scale EV battery manufacturing plant, with 2,500 jobs.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Next question?

**Ms. Donna Skelly:** To the member from Markham–Unionville: Could you please explain to the House why the Ontario Made Manufacturing Investment Tax Credit is important and how it will bolster Ontario's economy and how it will create more jobs?

**Mr. Billy Pang:** Thank you to the colleague for asking this very important question.

Investment needs support from the government, and this is why we provide this tax credit for all the investors that want to invest in Ontario, so that we can move forward with the industry of manufacturing—not like the previous government, putting a lot of red tape into all the manufacturing sectors. We are helping them to prosper, to grow, and to invest in all the investments so that they can help—they can be a colleague for our government to work together to build a stronger Ontario.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Next question?

**Mr. Terence Kernaghan:** I'd like to thank the member from Markham–Unionville for his presentation. Curiously, in his presentation as well as in the budget, there is no mention of school violence.

I'd like to turn to a pre-budget submission from ETFO Thames Valley Teacher Local in which they report—and this is in addition to the Thames Valley District School Board—that in June 2022, there were 463 reported acts of school violence; in September 2022, 687; October 2022, 982; November, 693; December, 490; and January 2023, 502. The six-month average will be 636, and this would show that schools in the Thames Valley District School Board are well on track to report 6,360 acts of school violence.



Why is the government ignoring the problem of school violence here in Ontario?

**Mr. Billy Pang:** Through you, Madam Speaker: Thank you for the question.

As a previous school board trustee, I have a big concern with school violence. During my time as a school board trustee, I'd go to all the schools in my riding almost every single week. I talked to the administrators, the teachers, and they always needed the government to give them enough support, and also, when I was in the school board—they need support now because of that.

When we look at the budget for the education sector, in 2021, we had a \$28.8-billion investment for the education sector; for the interim, 2022-23, we invested \$32.4 billion; and in this year's budget, we proposed \$34.7 billion—which has an increase of \$2.3-billion investment for the education sector.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** That's the time for questions.

We're going to move to further debate.

**Mr. Joel Harden:** It's a pleasure to rise today to talk to the government's budget motion. I'm doing so this morning, in particular, in my capacity as the province's transit critic, because the last couple of weeks—well, in all honesty, the last few months—have been a really tough time for transit advocates, transit riders and transit workers.

0920

We've seen escalating incidents of violence in our public transit system, and it's not unique to this great city of Toronto.

In fact, in the city where you and I come from, on March 27, there was a gentleman who was swarmed at the Rideau LRT station in Ottawa at 11:30 p.m. Three of the people responsible for that act have been charged, but one person is still at large.

I still keep getting contacted by people in Ottawa—Ottawa transit riders, city councillors I'm privileged to work with—who are concerned that in this environment right now, people are not going to want to use public transit if they don't think public transit is safe.

We should talk about what we need to do, as a Legislature, to ensure transit safety in the province of Ontario. There is one major reason why we should talk about that beyond making sure mums and dads, kids, folks getting around the community on public transit can feel safe. The biggest reason we, as a Legislature, have a responsibility to ensure the safety of public transit is because of the climate crisis.

We know that as far as Ontarians' emissions are concerned, 34% to 35% of Ontario's emissions are coming from the transportation sector. And we know that public transit is a major way by which we can reduce emissions.

I think we can agree, Speaker, that if people are avoiding taking the bus, if they're avoiding taking the train, if they're avoiding taking the LRT systems because they're fearful for their safety, that is a step backward in Ontario's action on climate change.

Because this has been a major subject of debate, let's talk briefly about what people are saying is happening in our subway systems.

I just want to say off the top, for folks listening either on television or here in the chamber, that some of the things I'm about to talk about detail some graphic incidents. I'm just going to invite you to turn off your television or tune out of this debate. But these are things that are happening on our public transit system, and it bears repeating for the record of this place.

On April 8, 2022, Kartik Vasudev, a 21-year-old international student, was shot outside the TTC's Sherbourne subway station.

On June 17, 2022, Nyima Dolma, a 28-year-old woman, was doused with a flammable liquid and set on fire, believe it or not, outside the TTC's Kipling subway station. She succumbed to her injuries in hospital two weeks later.

On December 8, 2022, Vanessa Kurpiewska, age 31, died in hospital after she was stabbed by a man she did not know at the TTC's High Park subway station.

On January 21, 2023, a 24-year-old TTC operator was shot with a BB gun while waiting for her shift to begin in Scarborough.

The next day—

**Ms. Donna Skelly:** Point of order.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** I apologize to the member. I do have to address a point of order from the member from Flamborough—Glanbrook.

**Ms. Donna Skelly:** Madam Speaker, I'm not sure how this ties in with the budget.

*Interjection.*

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Yes. In the budget, the issues are pretty large. I'll allow the member to continue.

**Mr. Joel Harden:** I think I understand my friend's objection to my remarks as not having a link to the government's budget bill. What I'm attempting to establish, over the next 16 minutes, is that we as a Legislature—not just this government—have a responsibility to ensure adequate funding is put into our transit system to ensure people's safety. I think it's important that we're all aware of the gravity of the matter. I apologize to the member if some of the issues that I'm talking about here, in all honesty, are hard to hear, but they are happening on our transit system, and I will endeavour over the next 15 minutes to make the link to the investments this place needs to make in our transit system to ensure people's safety.

Speaker, I'll continue.

On January 21, 2023, a 24-year-old TTC operator was shot with a BB gun while waiting for her shift to begin in Scarborough.

The next day, four teenagers were charged with swarming and violently beating two other TTC operators.

On March 4, 2023, Waterloo Regional Police Service was notified of a man following a woman off a public transit bus with the intent of sexual assault. Three similar incidents happened the following week.

On March 24, 2023, a 19-year-old in Barrie with no fixed address assaulted a bus operator. The operator, to this day, remains on disability leave. The assailant was released to the community without any supports.

On March 25, 2023—an incident many people in this House will know well—Gabriel Magalhaes, 16 years old, died in hospital after being stabbed by someone as he sat on a bench at the TTC’s Keele subway station.

On March 27, 2023—the incident I recounted, in our city of Ottawa, at the Rideau LRT station.

Then, most recently, on March 31, 2023, a man was robbed at knifepoint by two suspects at the TTC’s Coxwell station. He was not injured.

It bears repeating that hundred of thousands, millions of people—if you think about how many people used public transit in the province of Ontario over the last few months—have used public transit without experiencing violent, graphic incidents like these, have worked in the system, but I want to believe that our goal in our public transit system is zero injuries, zero accidents, zero assaults. That’s our goal. It’s the TTC’s stated goal. It’s OC Transpo’s stated goal. Most municipal transit authorities say the same thing.

People are alarmed, moms and dads are alarmed, neighbours are alarmed at what is happening in the transit safety system. Unfortunately, too often, people think that the answer to dealing with violence in our transit system is simply a criminal justice response; that this is matter of very violent people who need to be locked up and kept away from the public, and that will resolve our problems in public transit. Experts I’ve had occasion to speak to recently dispute that case.

It’s also not accurate to attribute all of the transit violence I named—and I did not name a complete list—to simply folks struggling with unmet mental health needs or folks who are homeless. Many of the incidents of violence in our public transit systems have happened with people who, for one reason or another, see transit riders and transit operators as easy targets of violence.

So what can we do? I want to make the case in the time I have this morning that what we absolutely must do is put money into the operational budgets of transit systems. Let me give you a very concrete example that comes to me by way of the great people who operate the TTC systems, who are members of the Amalgamated Transit Union Local 113.

Subway cars operating in the city of Toronto historically had two major positions per car. There was a driver, and then there was another position known as the guard. The guard would be that person—if you’re on the subway platform—who’s looking out the window, ensuring that the doors are safely closed, that there’s nothing wrong happening on the platform, but, also, the guard’s job is to monitor general well-being of the platform itself. If they see a problem, they have the capacity inside the subway car to immediately notify the TTC constables, who are represented by the Canadian Union of Public Employees, and the two units work very well together. Unfortunately, given the fact that operational funding has dramatically reduced in the TTC system, that guard position has been cut by the Toronto Transit Commission. So transit operators, in some cases, are—the only source of support in a critical incident could be that

one person who is operating that subway; the window opens temporarily. Yes, there are emergency buttons you can push, but the operators of the system tell me it’s not sufficient, and I trust them.

I also know that budget 2023 that the government just introduced allocated only \$80 million—on a provincial budget offering of over \$200 billion—for operational funding for our public transit systems. There is a link between that underinvestment and the inadequacy of funds available for the guard position on subway cars or other crisis response people who could be made available to help neighbours in crisis.

What could we do? There’s a lot we could do. The first thing we can do, as I’ve tried to do in recent weeks and months in my capacity of transit critic, is talk to the folks who know what’s going on. Foremost for me are the workers who fix, operate and maintain all of our transit infrastructure. They have been telling me since the fall of last year that we are at risk of multiple critical incidents in public transit in Ontario. Sadly, incident after incident has taken place, and we have not been able, yet, at least, to convince the government to prioritize money into operational funding for public transit—but money, also, that would not just be for reinstating positions like the guard position that I was talking about; money that would work hand in hand in a city like Toronto with crisis response that is appropriate to the situation.

#### 0930

Let’s talk about what happened to Gabriel Magalhaes, the 16-year-old who lost his life after being stabbed at Keele station. Gabriel’s mom, who I’m sure many of you have seen, has had the bravery to speak publicly about her grief and about what should be done. I want to read into the record words that she expressed to the CBC’s Adrienne Arseneault in a poignant, candid interview. Andrea is a nurse, and this is what she said:

“We need to start talking about violence, the root causes of violence. I know it comes down to the social determinants of health. It’s not an easy solution. We’re not talking about adding more police force” or “locking people up.” We need to ask the question, “What are the root causes? Why is this happening? Why is a person homeless? Why is a person not able to access care, access supports? ...

“I came from ... a very violent country, Brazil. Why did I move away? I wanted a better life. I see the violence escalating. I read about horrible things ... on the TTC. I feel deeply when I hear those things, but you never think it’s going to happen to you.... I would like people to try to put themselves in my shoes, in my husband’s shoes ... a beautiful ... shy boy, but he had dreams. He had goals....

“I’m a nurse. I had a clinical placement in mental health hospitals. As a society ... we love to blame one person ... ‘You picked up the knife.’ But could this have been prevented ... from the beginning?”

Then, she went on in responding to a question from Adrienne Arseneault about folks in our profession, Speaker, who are elected officials offering our thoughts and prayers. To that, she said:

“I’m going through” stages of grief, “but that makes me angry—so angry. Because when they want votes, they promise everything, but how about action? How about what really needs to be done? Empty words make me mad....

“Don’t live with fear.” We need to use public transit. “But can’t we please ... make effective change, so we can all be able to go outside and be able to breathe and feel safe? I feel like this is still an amazing city; we can do better.”

I agree, wholeheartedly, with every single word.

I think that’s why the Premier, as I understand it, called Andrea personally.

But as she implores us to realize that we have to go beyond empathy—although empathy is the important first step. If we’re hearing from transit authorities, workers, riders, administrators who run the system that we urgently need more operational funding, right now, to deal with this situation in a multi-faceted way, we have to revise what we propose in budget 2023 and unleash a lot more revenue.

I know the government has an unallocated contingency fund of \$4 billion. I hope I persuasively made the case this morning that some of that money needs to go, right now, into our operational funding for public transit, so nobody’s loved one faces the kinds of consequences I talked about in the speech I made this morning.

I had occasion at committee to see the Minister of Infrastructure present on Bill 69—and I think this is a related point. The minister made the point in her presentation of saying it’s a priority of the government to utilize surplus government-owned buildings in the province of Ontario, and that that was one of the motivations for Bill 69. I was shocked to learn, as I prepared for that committee, that the Auditor General put out a report in 2017 noting, believe it or not, that there were at that point 812 unused, vacant government of Ontario buildings that we heat, that we electrify. The minister named that as a major problem the government wants to address.

I want to submit, for the purpose of the budget bill, that were the government to say today, after hearing what I had to say and listening to experts in the transit sector, “All right, we’ve missed something; we do need to allocate money into operational funding for transit,” I guarantee you the first thing that crisis workers will say—the great Streets to Homes program the city of Toronto has, that was often the first group of folks who will show up to help TTC constables, to help TTC staff. If someone in a mental health crisis is in a subway station, or on a bus, streetcar or train, the Streets to Homes program will greet that person in crisis, sit them down, put their arm on their shoulder and say, “Are you having a tough time? How’s it going?” They’ll talk it over with coffee. They are skilled de-escalators. But do you know what those crisis response workers don’t have? They don’t have access to shelter space or transitional housing to refer people to. So guess what happens? You de-escalate somebody in one moment, but then an incident goes on to happen later.

We’re in a province where, as of five years ago, there are 812 vacant public buildings that, I want to believe,

experts in crisis response and transitional housing—because I’m going to guess a lot of those buildings are in this city. We can repurpose and reutilize those spaces so you can find some temporary homes for people, wrap some supports around it, with their consent, and get them started on making a better life.

One of my gateways into politics, when I was a graduate student in this city in the 1990s, was helping the great Jack Layton when he was a city councillor fight for programs just like this. What motivated Jack to act was the gaudy spectacle of homeless folks freezing to death near his home. He felt compelled to act, as a city councillor, and he knew there was money in the country, in the city and in the province to address it. To his credit, the then mayor, Mel Lastman, initiated a program that, as I understand it, eventually grew into the Streets to Homes outreach program that the city has.

But now everything old is new again. Now we’re in a situation where, yes, the city of Toronto and other cities can demand that homeless encampments be taken down. But people don’t disappear. The housing and homelessness crisis that we have in this city doesn’t go away.

If, in polar climates, which our country has—January and February; we’re both from Ottawa, Speaker—you push people out of an encampment, where are they going to go in a large city like Toronto or Ottawa or London or Windsor? They might go on a bus. They might go in a subway station. They might be living with unmet needs. And that’s when accidents happen.

I want to believe, as I believed then, that an ounce of prevention is better than whatever one would think a pound of cure is. Locking people up and having a very harsh criminal justice response to situations like the ones I’ve talked about this morning is not going to get the outcomes we need.

Speaker, I just want to be clear: I am not saying that people shouldn’t be held accountable for their actions—absolutely not. There is no justifiable case for violence. But as Andrea Magalhaes said in honour of her son, if our goal is actual community safety, then we can achieve community safety. But it requires the right smart investments. It requires an awareness, as she said, as a nurse, of the social determinants of health—and it requires us prudently using the money given to this place.

The government has proposed a budget of over \$200 billion, \$80 million of which was allocated to transit authorities for operational funding. If we can get to what advocates told me they needed for this upcoming year, \$500 million—and I know the government was made aware of this; I know the finance minister was made aware of this; I know the Minister of Transportation was made aware of this. If those investments could go directly into partnerships with community agencies who work directly with folks at risk, either at risk of reoffending—they’ve offended before, or if there is a recidivistic risk, or if there is a behavioural risk due to traumas that person grew up with—that is money well spent. That is us, as Andrea said in her comments, moving beyond thoughts and prayers.

I don’t think any of the families of folks who suffer violence that I’ve named in my speech this morning want

to hear thoughts and prayers anymore, as important as that empathy is. They want this place to act.

The good news is, we have the resources to act, we have the expertise to act, and we can act, but we have to do it.

That's how budget 2023 can be improved.

0940

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** We're going to move to questions and answers.

**Ms. Donna Skelly:** Madam Speaker, for the past 20 minutes, the member from Ottawa Centre has talked about how unsafe it is on transit—particularly in Toronto, but across Ontario. The number one ask of transit riders, transit workers and most Ontarians is a heightened police presence. And yet, the member opposite is part of a party that consistently attacks police in Ontario.

Let me just reference a quote by the newly elected member from Hamilton Centre: "Police in Ontario have a record of arbitrarily killing babies, Black, Indigenous, racialized, disabled civilians ... & those who are in crisis."

My question to the member from Ottawa Centre: Will you ask the member from Hamilton Centre to apologize to the men and women who put their lives on the line each and every day to not only protect transit workers and transit riders, but all people across Ontario? And will you ask your party to stand up and support the men and women who put their lives on the line to protect Ontarians?

**Mr. Joel Harden:** Thank you for the question.

I'm not sure if the member was here for the debate yesterday, but I think what was made very clear to me in the debate yesterday is that there is a unanimity of respect in this place for folks who work in first responder positions, whether they be police, firefighters, personal support workers, crisis workers. There is no disagreement about that.

I'd just invite the member to rethink the priority in the question. Is the priority to try to go after a single member in this place? Or should the priority be using the budget of this province to help people in crisis and people at risk? I know many officers back in Ottawa who do that every day. But right now, this government's budget does not do that. People are being injured, and people are being hurt. I invite her to think and the government to think—let's reallocate the money that we're spending to make sure nobody else is hurt—

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Thank you for the answer.

Next question.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** My question is to the member for Ottawa Centre.

Thank you so much for your comments about what's happening in transit today. It concerns me, as well.

When I look at this budget, I see an increase in the amount of funding that's going to independent health facilities, which means this government is doubling down on the delivery of for-profit surgery; in my opinion, at the expense of public health care.

Can you explain what's happening at Ottawa Hospital right now? What is our future if they continue down this path?

**Mr. Joel Harden:** I thank the member for University–Rosedale. She knows well that this is an issue really gripping our community at home. We've spoken about it many times in this place.

What I'd tell the member is, we don't know what's happening. This is a private contract with 23 orthopaedic surgeons at one of our public campuses of the Ottawa Hospital, the Riverside Campus.

At a minimum, I think it's incumbent upon the government to at least tell the people of Ottawa and the people of Ontario—what is this arrangement? How are people being remunerated? Why weren't these public employees simply offering these services within our public ORs? Why do we need to create a corporation that brings in its materials from Toronto every day by truck? What's the business case for this? We haven't heard a response yet.

We have 2,000 orthopaedic surgery folks waiting in acute. We can reutilize our public systems to do it better. I don't know why there's a need for secrecy.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Next question.

**Ms. Donna Skelly:** About a month ago, I was fortunate enough to go on a ride-along with Hamilton police. At the beginning of the night, I took a picture with a friend, a young man by the name of Marco, who is a new police officer. At the end of the night, I happened to see him again, and we took another picture. He had been kicked in the head and had suffered a serious facial injury, from helping people at our local mall—in Hamilton Centre, by the way. He had been accosted by an unruly patron.

Throughout the evening, I had an opportunity to work with police who really do care about the homeless residents in the city of Hamilton.

This same young man is the person the member from Hamilton Centre accused of killing babies.

My question to the member from Ottawa Centre is, will you ask the member from Hamilton Centre to apologize to the members of the Hamilton police force for what she said about them?

**Mr. Joel Harden:** I would invite the member, if she has a debate she needs to undertake with another elected representative from her city, to take it up with that member directly, not through an intermediary.

I'm trying to make a serious effort this morning. My serious effort is to make the case for this government to invest massively in the operational funding of public transit, because officers like the gentlemen the member named, riders, workers—it is those lives that are at risk, and we should be spending more time allocating the budget of this province to help ensure their safety than taking potshots at each other.

If the member feels passionately about something a member of this House said, she should bring it up with that member directly.

The debate I wanted to have this morning is about whether a province that is rich, that has talent, that has expertise can help people in crisis and can ensure safety on public transit. That the debate I wanted to have this morning. And I hope the government is listening.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Next question?

**Ms. Chandra Pasma:** Thank you very much to my colleague from Ottawa Centre for his very thoughtful remarks this morning, which I hope the government will take to heart.

I have some concerns about the government's larger approach to the issue of violence in society, particularly as it affects the youngest members of society, who are seeing a very concerning increase in violence in our schools. We're seeing the same tactics from the government of empty words that aren't being matched by action. Parents, educators, education workers are all calling for an increase in mental health funding for our students, yet the government is giving less than a quarter per child per day, after a three-year pandemic.

Last week, when the member for London North Centre asked the Minister of Education why he's not responding to these requests for increased funding, the minister responded by speaking about bail reform, when we are talking about young kids who are experiencing violence in their schools, who just need supports with their mental health.

Does the member from Ottawa Centre not agree that it would be much wiser to address the root causes of violence in our schools with increased funding for mental health and more supports and workers around our kids?

**Mr. Joel Harden:** I want to thank the member for Ottawa West–Nepean for all her work in advocating for safety in our public schools.

I will never forget a moment, in the recent election campaign, when I knocked on the door of somebody who works as an EA in our school system. I had knocked on this neighbour's door before. When she came to the door, she had a tank top on, and there was a scratch going all the way from the top of her shoulder—it was very visible—right down to her wrist. I said, "Are you alright?" She said, "No, I had a really rough day at work." And I said, "What happened at work?" She said, "Well, there's a young guy I'm responsible for who has cleared the whole classroom three times last week. He grabbed me, and he had nails—I keep asking the family to make sure the nails are cut—and my arm was completely ripped up." She talked about how the advice she got on one occasion when she reported this incident up the chain was to wear a Kevlar-reinforced sweater, issued by the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board. That's where we're at.

So the member is right; we need to make sure that we support kids with mental health needs and support the workers in the public school system.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** We have time for one last question.

**Mr. Todd J. McCarthy:** In 2012 and 2013, the NDP, with a Liberal minority government in this House, supported two budgets that made no new investments and resulted in effective cuts to social services.

Why, then, is the NDP not supporting this budget which will increase core allowances to ODSP, invest an additional \$202 million in homeless prevention and

Indigenous supportive housing, and temporarily double the Guaranteed Annual Income System and expand the number of seniors into the system as much as 100,000, in this age of high inflation? Why not?

**Mr. Joel Harden:** I appreciate the passion from the member from Durham. I know he cares about disability issues, in all sincerity. We've talked off-line about this.

Let me say this to the member, through you, Speaker: If we actually wanted to make a significant difference in the lives of low-income seniors and persons with disabilities, we would heed the advice of advocates in the sector and double social assistance rates immediately. It can be counterintuitive for people who think, "Well, we shouldn't just be giving money to low-income people. They should have to earn it." This notion of thrift and hard work—an important part of our society—is in this moment counterproductive, because what the research shows is that the cost of doubling ODSP and OW is around \$9 billion, as I understand, but the cost of poverty, according to the experts in the sector, is \$33 billion. So give people—

**0950**

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Thank you. That's time.

We're going to move to further debate.

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** Good morning, everyone. I'm always happy to be here in this chamber representing beautiful Beaches–East Yorkers and to speak on the budget.

I guess my theme today will be "Invest Now," because as we know in our own personal finances and in our own lives, when we invest now and we get proactive and preventive, we're not saddled with a colossal price tag later—it's basically pay now or pay later. A little investment now goes a long way later. That could just be the theme of this whole budget, because—I'm sure you're hearing from your residents what I'm hearing from my residents: that this budget does not go far enough, unfortunately.

We'll start with the autism community—strong advocates there. They've been out there marching, protesting on our lawns. They've been writing to us. They've been calling us about more investment.

We need more investment in mental health programs. We're seeing more and more people on the street, more and more people struggling.

We are here, we're in a position where we can make a difference, and we need to make a difference.

Paid sick days—we've learned that with the pandemic; we don't want people coming to work when they're ill. When they even have a sniffle of a cold, we don't want them coming to work. We want them at home, taking care of themselves, not spreading their illness. It's just so antiquated to not have paid sick days. It makes no sense. If you look all over the world, people stay home, and they get paid to stay home when they're ill—we do, so why not have that for Ontarians?

Again, invest now and not have the colossal price tag later.

Bill 124—we've been around in circles; it's a broken record with that. We need to pay people properly. We need

to respect people. I think we've all learned, in this pandemic, how we wholeheartedly underestimated how valuable our health care workers are. Boy, we can talk one way, but then when we're ill, when we're in the hospital, when our loved ones are struggling, it's a whole other eye-opener for us, and we learned that. We learned the trials and tribulations of front-line workers, how they struggle, how they work endless hours, how they're overwhelmed, how there aren't enough of them to do the job properly. They're leaving their profession. It's tragic. They've gone into a life of service like us, public service, and yet—that's their passion and their love, and they have to leave it because they're not being paid well enough or treated well enough. They don't have the sick days they need.

There are other investments—ODSP, the Ontario Child Benefit. Again, we just need to invest now.

What is the problem with just a little bit now—and then reap the rewards later? We won't have the colossal nightmare of dealing with a situation that costs a fortune and puts our Ontarians at risk later.

The Landlord and Tenant Board: I'm hearing so much from my residents about this.

I'm hearing from my residents about all these issues—the backlogs on everything. Wait times and backlogs—that's all we hear about. And what can we do about it? I can't do a whole heck of a lot over here, but I can share the voices of my community. I can stand up for them and I can let you know what my residents are saying and what I'm sure your residents are saying.

Health care: That's a whole kettle of fish in itself. My colleague the member from Don Valley East does a phenomenal job in fighting—truth to power—from his lived experience as a medical doctor, sharing first-hand his knowledge of how we need to invest our money and where we need to invest our money and why.

Long-term care: We've seen the nightmare of that—the lack of investment and the lack of attention over the years. I lived in Japan 33 years ago, and, boy, does that country know how to treat their seniors well. We can learn from them. We can learn a lot from other countries. Intergenerational living—we could get creative with our housing, which I will get to in a little bit. We just need to take a breath, take a pause and not be shy about creating a budget for everyone and leaving no one behind and paying a little bit more.

Housing—it's the lofty goal of 1.5 million homes in the next 10 years, which is great, depending on your definition of "homes." I think we all have different definitions of that. For me and for many Ontarians, it's not a colossal monstrosity McMansion out on a wetland; it's all types of different styles of homes, including rental. I still feel that somehow in this House people have a stigma around rental, when the world rents. Montrealers rent. Europeans rent. Torontonians rent. New Yorkers rent. There's nothing wrong with that. It's actually kind of smart, where—carpe diem—you're spending your money on seizing the day, although rents are terribly expensive now. But we're looking at co-ops and intergenerational living. There's a great model of a school in north Toronto, where

the developer built condominiums above a school. That kind of intergenerational, creative style of housing—we should be thinking about that, not just the standard meat-and-potatoes single-family home with the white picket fence. That's so dinosaur-age thinking.

I worked for an innovative tech company in my former life, and we had all kinds of creative, innovative housing ideas—a housing trust and the shared equity model that they have in the UK, where you buy what you can afford. So if you have a 465-square-foot unit and you can only afford 300 square feet of that, you buy that, and you rent the rest. You might rent to own, or you might always have that model of owning part of it and not all of it. And who cares? That's your home, and it works, and you have skin in the game.

New York has a housing trust idea where they slap 1% on the resale of market-rate condominiums, and then that goes into a housing trust for affordable home ownership.

So all kinds of things we can be doing—and we don't have to create it all ourselves. There are smart cookies out there who are passionate. They are in the housing sector.

That's the other thing: We think we're the sharpest knives in the drawer; sorry, we're not. We're talented in certain ways, but we're not the experts in every field. That's why we should be listening to stakeholders and heeding their advice.

#### 1000

Now we will get to my favourite topic of all: environment. I will say—I'm going to throw a bone—the emergency preparedness aspect of this budget is pretty good. Of course, it doesn't go far enough, but I think it's pretty good overall. Had my private member's bill, Bill 56, been passed last week, that would have been extra helpful for that. It was a piece of paper going out to your residents to educate them on basement flooding mitigation. It costs nothing for us, but somehow it didn't pass—so I'm not sure about that.

We're investing in EVs. That's great. That's not the full answer for creating a sustainable world, environment and Ontario.

Where are the investment incentives encouraging homeowners to do deep green retrofits? We know a huge chunk of greenhouse gases come from buildings. We can incentivize and educate homeowners on doing the right thing; they want to. I have a great group called Green East that is keen to do something for their homes and their neighbourhood.

There's a great group called the Pocket Change Project, and they're in the Toronto–Danforth riding, that beautiful riding next to me. They're doing great work. They're trying to educate people on heat pumps, get them off gas, get them electrifying their homes. They're taking it one community at a time. They've done such huge, phenomenal work in their neighbourhood, and they want to bring it further east to Beaches–East York—they want to take it everywhere. Residents are taking it into their own hands because the government is not.

We're here to lead, and we're here to be role models, and we're here to provide the education and the funding

for Ontarians, but I don't see that in this budget. We're not investing enough now, so we're going to be hit with a colossal price tag later on. We've been told by the Auditor General and the Financial Accountability Officer of Ontario about the high cost of inaction.

I'm not sure about that time, but I'll just keep going.

That's the deep green retrofits for our homes—

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** I want to thank the member, but you've used up all your time.

We'll need to move to questions and answers.

**Ms. Laura Smith:** I listened very thoughtfully to the member opposite, and I, too, share your concern about the most vulnerable.

To that end, our government is doubling the Guaranteed Annual Income System payment for recipients for 12 months.

Will the member opposite commit to fixing things and supporting expansion of the GAINS to help about 100,000 additional eligible seniors?

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** Of course, I'm here to help make the world a better place for all Ontarians, as we all are, and so it's great to invest, for sure.

One thing we all heard at the door—at least, I heard it in my community. I was surprised when I was door-knocking; I thought people would be most worried about the climate emergency—but it was affordability. It doesn't matter the demographic, the age, the background—everyone is worried about affordability. Seniors, kids—everyone is struggling. Just adding crumbs here and there is not enough. We need to really continue investing now rather than later.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** The member for Niagara Centre.

**Mr. Jeff Burch:** Thank you to my friend from Beaches–East York for her comments. She mentioned her private member's bill, which of course we all supported. It was a very common-sense, positive bill. I'm not sure what happened there. She might want to comment further on that.

This government has been really bad for the environment, and flooding and mitigating the risk of flooding is something that—the situation has just gotten worse, not better.

I'm wondering if the member would like to comment on what could have been in the budget to help with flood mitigation and the huge cost that's going to be for consumers and the government of Ontario in the future if that problem is not addressed.

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** Well, you have key experts out there, like the Intact Centre for climate action at University of Waterloo, sounding the alarm. We're just—I don't know. We've got our earbuds in; we're turning our heads away.

We know that price tag for BC was \$9 billion; for Alberta, it was \$5 billion. We had \$1.5 billion total insured catastrophic loss in Ontario in 2022.

For every dollar invested in the climate emergency, in climate action, it's a \$3-to-\$8 cost-avoidance savings. It's not rocket science.

My private member's bill—it was a big surprise to me, because I had spoken to 122—and I'm the 123rd—almost every member in this chamber. I've heard from people who had basement flooding. They were very supportive, and they wanted to save their residents, Ontarians, \$43,000 for a basement flood, that could be avoided by a simple infographic going out in the mail. If we can't even send out a flyer, I'm pretty worried about what we can do for the climate emergency.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** We're going to move to the next question.

**Mr. Will Bouma:** I appreciated the speech from the member from Beaches–East York. She did speak about long-term care. It made me think, because in the eight years before 2018, the previous government built 78 long-term-care beds in my community, averaging less than 10 per year, and in the last four years, we are now building 840 new and redeveloped beds in Brantford–Brant. So I was wondering if she was willing to stand on the record of her party in the previous government or if she's supportive of the fact that my residents are now getting 840 new long-term-care beds, after a poor record before by her party.

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** One of my favourite games in this House is counting how many times we hear PLG, “previous Liberal government.” With my fellow rumpers over here, we have a good laugh about it every time. Sometimes it's FLG, “former Liberal government,” but it's usually PLG—“propped up by the NDP.” I'm probably going to create a board game with it.

What I would say to one of my favourite members asking me the question, who was super keen on hearing my speech—that was lovely—is that my time started on June 2, 2022, and I'm forward-thinking. So I was here on June 2, and I'm optimistic, and I want to work together. I tried to work together on my private member's bill, but that didn't happen. I'm here, moving forward, looking to collaborate if I can—but I haven't seen that yet, and I'm not looking backwards.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** We're going to move to the next question.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** I know the member for Beaches–East York is very concerned about the climate and the climate crisis.

I also know we're debating a budget document right now which sets the priorities for this government—where they want Ontario to go, who they care about, who or what they care about less.

What do you see in this budget that charts a course towards a sustainable climate response for Ontario?

**1010**

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** I think I've mentioned this in the House—my friend's Irish mom saying, “Start as you mean to go on,”

We started with the throne speech, without having the words “climate change” in it once—“environment” was in it, but it was “business environment,” so it wasn't talking about sustainability.

And it's the same with this budget—we have “emergency preparedness.” That's great; I will throw a

bone there. EVs are great too, but they're not the be-all and end-all; neither is clean steel.

We're hearing from stakeholders and communities and builders and developers. They want deep green retrofits. They want green infrastructure. They want renewable energy. The rest of the world is going ahead, doing this. Continually, Ontario is lagging behind. We used to be a leader, but we're not going to solve it—

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Thank you. We're going to move to the next question.

**Mr. Billy Pang:** As the independent member concerned about the budget—she spoke about the budget.

People ask me why the previous Liberal government cost Ontario so much debt. What did they build? I told them the strongest structure that the previous government built was structural debt, structural deficits—while our government has proposed a capital plan in Ontario history, by investing more than \$180 billion over the next decade to build roads, highways, public transit, hospitals, schools and long-term-care homes.

So I want to urge the member of the opposite previous government to support—she just shared with us her insight—this government bill.

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** Well, I'm here to work together. I've always had a great track record, especially at Toronto city council, of working across party lines and working collaboratively with everyone. As I said, I don't care where the good ideas come from, as long they come forward. But I'll tell you, I haven't fully seen that from the government side since I've been here.

I put forth an idea to create an all-party climate change committee. How easy is that? Everyone gets to be on it. I was speaking to the House leader about that umpteen times, including making it reflect the House, where the government had more seats and more say on the committee than anyone else. How generous is that? How fair is that? But it got shot down—the same as my private member's bill last week, which would have helped your residents.

After the next flood, I want you to look your residents in the eye when they call you, upset, devastated, distraught, with raw sewage in their basements, all their prized—

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Thank you to the member for the reply. That's time.

*Debate deemed adjourned.*

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** We're going to move to members' statements.

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### PUBLIC TRANSIT

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Toronto needs a fast, reliable, safe and affordable TTC, where riders can get to their TTC stop and quickly board that bus or streetcar or train that transports them to where they want to go, at an affordable fare. Getting a seat would be a nice thing, on occasion. It

needs to be safe, as well, because no one wants to go from A to B and risk being assaulted just because they're trying to get to work or go to the doctor or go to school.

I wish the TTC was that fast, safe and affordable transit system, but it is not.

Yesterday, on April 3, transit riders got a fare hike.

A week ago, the TTC started rolling out big service cuts. In my riding, we saw service cuts on Queen Street, on the Dufferin line, as well as line 2, the subway line.

I fear that next month there will be more service cuts, which is deeply concerning, and that is because the federal government and the provincial government have not stepped in to fund transit at the levels that it should be funded. When we fail to fund transit, we create a death spiral. When we cut service, riders leave, they take their fare revenue with them, and then there are more service cuts as a result. We've seen this before on the TTC. We do not want to go there again.

I am calling on this government to properly fund transit systems, including the TTC, so that everyone in Toronto can get from A to B safely at an affordable price.

### ARTEMIS II MISSION

**Mr. Rob Flack:** It's my pleasure to rise in the House today to share some great news once again from London, Ontario.

Yesterday, NASA and the Canadian Space Agency announced the team of four astronauts who have been selected to orbit the moon on NASA's Artemis II mission. One of these individuals is astronaut Jeremy Hansen, who hails from London, Ontario. Jeremy and his team will be the first astronauts to journey to the moon since the end of the Apollo 17 mission in December 1972. A colonel and CF-18 pilot in the Canadian Armed Forces, Jeremy Hansen is a highly accomplished Canadian. At the age of 47, Jeremy will become the first non-American to travel beyond low-Earth orbit. They will be travelling 1,000 times farther than the International Space Station and will set the stage for deep space exploration.

I wish Jeremy and his colleagues great success on the Artemis II mission, which will launch in November 2024.

### NATURAL GAS RATES

#### TARIFS DU GAZ NATUREL

**Mr. Guy Bourgoin:** Premier, the rate of natural gas is at an all-time high, and people in northern Ontario are struggling. Residents are seeing an over 50% increase in their bills. Small businesses and non-profit organizations are at risk of shutting their doors. After speaking with Enbridge and the Ontario Energy Board, their hands are tied. The province cannot prosper and grow if everyone starts to close their doors and move away.

The rate for natural gas in northern Ontario for a residential account is set by a calculation based on an average consumption of 2,200 square metres. In the north, we surpass this usage in less than nine months. This is unfair, and we're paying the price.



Une jeune dame de 86 ans de Smooth Rock Falls : sa facture est partie de 160 \$ par moi à 360 \$ par mois. La Maison Verte, une entreprise sociale qui pousse des semis pour la transplantation forestière, ont vu des factures de 80 000 \$ pour deux mois, même après avoir investi 300 000 \$ en bouilloires intelligentes juste pour réduire leur consommation. Le Kap friendship centre, un autre organisme à but non lucratif, ne peut pas budgéter avec des factures de 18 000 \$.

Le gouvernement dit toujours que les coûts sont élevés à cause de la taxe de carbone. Par contre, c'est eux qui ont perdu la décision en cour. Alors, monsieur le Premier Ministre, arrêtez de blâmer le fédéral et utilisez votre pouvoir et venez en aide aux familles et aux entreprises du Nord et offrez des réductions significatives aux consommateurs pour mieux encourager ces derniers à vivre en prospérité tel que mérité.

#### EVENTS IN MARKHAM–UNIONVILLE

**Mr. Billy Pang:** I am pleased to share some wonderful community events in Markham–Unionville recently.

On Saturday, two weeks ago, I attended a charity gala hosted by the Carefirst Seniors and Community Services Association, which has been serving seniors in the GTA for over 40 years. The gala has successfully raised funds for their new long-term-care campus in York region, which will be completed next year.

The same evening, I also attended the charter and officers installation ceremony of the York Region GRACE Lions Club. With different chapters across the world, the Lions Club is well known for their charitable activities and relief work. I'm glad that the newly established York Region GRACE Lions Club will continue this meaningful work and bring a positive impact to the community.

The next day, I was invited to join the 100th birthday celebration of Mrs. McNeilly. It was a special and joyful celebration with Mrs. McNeilly's loving family and friends.

That evening, I also attended Honouring Our Heroes: A COVID-19 Commemoration Concert and Fair, hosted by the Frontline Community Centre. We recognized the incredible achievements made by front-line workers during the pandemic and commemorated the third National Day of Observance for COVID-19—

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Thank you. That's time.

The member for Niagara Centre.

#### EVENTS IN NIAGARA CENTRE

**Mr. Jeff Burch:** I'm pleased to speak about some important events happening in my riding of Niagara Centre.

This week, Port Cares in Port Colborne is having its annual soup fest to raise funds for their food bank. The number of people who rely on this food bank has skyrocketed to almost 2,700. Port Cares reports that their food bank is helping at least one out of eight local residents in Port Colborne, and 34% of those are children.

For the week of April 17, at the Seaway Mall in Welland, the Hope Centre, Open Arms Mission, Salvation Army and Holy Trinity church are teaming up to hold a week-long food drive.

Municipalities are crying out for help. Just last week, the city of Welland passed a motion calling for the province to do more to address homelessness. They stated: "The homelessness crisis is taking a devastating toll on families and communities, undermining a healthy and prosperous Ontario." They went on to say that this crisis is the result of the "underinvestment and poor policy choices of successive provincial governments."

**1020**

I join them in demanding that this government "acknowledge that homelessness in Ontario is a social, economic, and health crisis" and commit to working with AMO, our municipal partners and not-for-profits like these fantastic organizations I've just mentioned, who are working so hard to feed so many individuals and families in my community.

The message is clear. The solutions are there at the grassroots level, but the provincial government must be willing to partner and provide the legislative and financial supports to make them work.

#### ANNIVERSARY OF QUEEN'S PARK

**Mr. Todd J. McCarthy:** It is my great pleasure and it is with pride that I rise today in this House to acknowledge the 130th anniversary of the grand opening of this building. Ontario's Legislative Assembly, the Parliament of Ontario, the beacon of democracy in this province.

Queen's Park officially opened on April 4, 1893, after six years of construction. Premier Sir Oliver Mowat was the first of 82 elected members, at that time, of the Legislative Assembly to walk through the main doors of the building, up the grand staircase and into this chamber, where 82 seats and desks were placed into a horseshoe pattern for improved ability of members to hear each other during debates. Historians have noted that much of the original Richardsonian Romanesque style of architecture and amenities is still present in the building today.

It is located on the traditional territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation and is a gathering place of many First Nations communities.

Just about 1,969 citizens of Ontario have ever served as members of provincial Parliament.

We are coming together, with Bill 75, to restore Queen's Park, because we remember our history and we are investing in our future, as we celebrate 130 years of this building today.

#### ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** April marks BeADonor Month here in Ontario. One organ donor can save up to eight lives and enhance the lives of 75 others through tissue donations. Everyone has the potential to be an organ or a tissue donor, regardless of their age or health status.

In Ottawa, a former nurse whose liver was damaged by hepatitis C, following an accidental needle-stick during her shift in 1990, was in vital need of an organ donation transplant. Although her husband launched a public petition last August for a liver donation, for months and months and months she waited, without any luck, for an eligible donor. Thankfully, she just received a life-saving organ transplant, thanks to a donor who read about the story in the local newspaper and graciously stepped up to donate. The donor said that he hopes that more people will consider organ donations, and he said that he's "not sure there are many actions you can take in life that are more impactful."

Currently, there are 1,400 people in Ontario waiting for life-saving organ donation transplants. Ontarians are generous, and that's why I know they will continue to step up. We need to continue to publicize the stories of people waiting for organ transplants.

I'm proud that over four million Ontarians have formally registered to consent to organ and tissue donations.

I hope that everyone will join me in spreading the word to promote April as BeADonor Month. Have your friends, family and neighbours sign up for organ and tissue donation.

#### EASTER

**Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta:** Holy Week, which began with Palm Sunday, is the most sacred week in the liturgical year in Christianity.

This weekend, I will be joining the Catholic community of Mississauga Centre in celebrating the Easter three holy days of Last Supper Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday. On Saturday, I will be joining the parishioners at St. Maximilian Kolbe Catholic Church for the traditional blessing of the Polish Easter basket—which is one of my most favorite days of the year.

Easter is one of the most religious celebrations for Catholics and Christians across the world and in Ontario. It is a time of hope, renewal and rebirth. It is a time when families can come together and recognize their faith on a set of shared values, embedded in the sacred principle of the passion, death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In the Kusendova-Bashta household, we are fortunate because we get to celebrate both Christmas and Easter twice, in the Catholic tradition and in the Orthodox Christian tradition. Yes, this involves a lot of delicious food and multiple church services in multiple languages. But above all, we get to celebrate the birth, life, death and resurrection of one God, Jesus Christ, twice.

From my family to yours, I wish everyone happy Easter, joyeuses Pâques.

*Remarks in Polish.*

#### MARIPOSA DAIRY

**Ms. Laurie Scott:** Last week, the city of Kawartha Lakes hosted the Spotlight on Agriculture awards. Sharon

and Bruce Vandenberg of Mariposa Dairy won the Excellence in Agriculture Award. From their humble beginnings in 2005, their dedication and talent enabled them to grow from a small farm operation to something much greater. After just 18 years, they are now the second-largest goat cheese manufacturer in North America, employing upwards of 200 people at a plant in Lindsay, producing 100,000 pieces a day. They receive half of Ontario's goat milk produced on 140 farms, and 80% of their income stays right here in Ontario, most within only 100 miles of their plant in Lindsay. It is their sense of responsibility to give back to their staff and community that has propelled them to such success.

The Thurston family—Keith, Sandra, Jeff and Nicole—won the agriculture Farm Family Award for outstanding contribution to agriculture. This award recognizes the legacy contributions of farms that are economically viable, environmentally sustainable, and socially responsible. The Thurston family have been a farming family in the county of Victoria for over 175 years. They are leaders in their industry through their steadfast values and extensive community engagement—from 4-H leadership of agriculture and homemaking to mentoring international students, coaching sports teams, and many local and provincial agriculture committees.

Both award recipients earned their prestigious awards and embody the values of community, partnership, capabilities, commitment, and vision for the future.

#### HOSPITAL SERVICES

**Mr. John Jordan:** One of the most important investments in our communities is our hospitals. Thanks to the dedication of the hospital foundation, the unwavering support of the local community, the Premier and Health Minister Sylvia Jones, construction is under way on the new MRI site at the Smiths Falls campus of the Perth and Smiths Falls District Hospital.

When a hospital receives state-of-the-art equipment, people take notice. They move to these communities knowing that their health care needs are being looked after. Doctors, nurses and specialists take notice when given the opportunity to access the tools they need to achieve the highest standards of care. And the Ontario government takes notice by supporting these investments.

In December 2022, the province announced that it was working to improve access to diagnostic imaging services and reduce wait times by investing in operating funding for 27 new MRI machines.

Mr. Speaker, a groundbreaking ceremony will take place at the Smiths Falls site of the hospital on Friday, June 23. Patients will be using the MRI by this fall.

Margot Hallam, executive director of the Perth and Smiths Falls District Hospital Foundation, says the MRI magnifies care close to home. The foundation has committed to a three-year campaign to facilitate the MRI project.

The Ontario government continues to lead the way with investments in health care. And with all the rural communities in my riding, the best care, close to home, is what we all take notice of.

1030

### INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** We have with us in the Speaker's gallery today His Excellency Héctor Igarza Cabrera, the ambassador of Cuba to Canada, and Mr. Jorge Yanier Castellanos Orta, the consul general of Cuba in Toronto. Please join me in warmly welcoming our guests to the Legislative Assembly today.

**Hon. Michael S. Kerzner:** I'm delighted to introduce a group that led for 10 years the Taste of Manila, a celebration of Philippine culture and excellence: Rolando "Rolly" Mangante, Nieves Mangante, Pepito Torralba, Lovely Danasol Luna, Marites de Jesus, Rose Ami, Dean de Jesus and, from my constituency office, Ferline David-Tura. Welcome to Queen's Park.

**Miss Monique Taylor:** Once again, I would like to welcome Michau van Speyk from the Ontario Autism Coalition back to the Legislature.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** We have with us in the public galleries today young women from across the province here for the Legislative Assembly's women's forum. Throughout the day, they will meet with current and former parliamentarians and discuss new perspectives on becoming engaged and strong leaders in their communities.

I hope that today's activities inspire you to take an even greater role in public service or even politics.

Please join me in warmly welcoming them to the Legislature today.

**Mr. Todd J. McCarthy:** I want to acknowledge page Savannah Chu Morrison, who today is the captain of the pages. Her wonderful parents, Jemille Chu Morrison and Martin Chu Morrison, are in the gallery today. They are wonderful York Catholic District School Board teachers at the secondary level—wonderful, caring educators. Thank you to her parents as well.

**MPP Jamie West:** On behalf of the NDP, I'd like to welcome Patty Coates, the president of the OFL, as well as Chandra-Li Paul, the OFL director of women's rights, and Mina Amrith, SEIU Healthcare vice-president. Welcome to Queen's Park.

**Hon. Stephen Lecce:** I want to introduce Jessica Rotolo, who is with us today. Jessica is an amazing model, artist, dancer and actor. She was born with Down syndrome and is a role model and self-advocate for the Down syndrome community. I'm very excited to introduce her; her father, Joseph; and her mother, Dorlean, to the Legislature.

Welcome, and thank you for inspiring us all.

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** It gives me great pleasure today to introduce members of the Equal Pay Coalition: Patty Coates, Chandra-Li Paul, Mina Amrith, and Maide Yazar.

Thank you for being here today, and thank you fighting for equal pay for women in this province.

**Mr. Stephen Crawford:** I'm delighted to congratulate Madison Wong from Oakville, who is page captain today, and welcome her parents, Agnes Lim and David Wong, who are here in the Legislature today.

**Ms. Doly Begum:** I'm very excited to welcome one of the young women—from the town of Wasaga Beach—Alex Kostecka-Silva, who is here with us for the women's forum program.

I am very pleased to also welcome my friend, the former councillor and deputy mayor of the town of Wasaga Beach, Sylvia Bray, who is in the members' gallery.

Seeing women involved in politics and the love that you have for Wasaga Beach—thank you so much for being engaged and for everything you do.

**Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon:** I just wanted to add to the Minister of Education's introduction, because Jessica Rotolo is my resident in beautiful Beaches—East York.

Welcome to the chamber.

A thing you should know: Jessica is a very talented artist, and has beautiful cards and artwork available at a beautiful shop on Kingston Road called Chocollata, if you want to write anyone a love letter or a kind letter.

**Mr. Andrew Dowie:** I wish a very warm welcome to an incredible person who I expect to be the future member for Windsor—Tecumseh: Jada Malott, who is participating in A Remarkable Assembly women's forum today.

Welcome to Queen's Park, Jada.

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** I am delighted to welcome Cat Van Eyk, who is here from London West as part of A Remarkable Assembly women's forum.

Welcome to Queen's Park, Cat.

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** I know that they're making their way into the chamber, but I do want to acknowledge that, in our House today, is Scarlett BoBo, Crystal Quartz, Cher, Rachel Sher, Nipless Cage, Miss J, Mark Henderson, representatives of the Church-Wellesley Village BIA, Friends of Ruby, and many friends and supporters of the drag and 2SLGBTQ+ community.

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** I'd like to acknowledge Darrell MacInnis, who is in the east visitors' gallery this morning. Darrell started with the Legislative Assembly in January 2010, and he has been the media studio coordinator since 2017. During that time, he has been the friendly face of the media studio, even when that face was behind a mask. He will be retiring on April 6.

*Interjections.*

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** Aw, I know. We're all going to miss Darrell.

I know Darrell has family in Guelph, so I'm sure we'll be joining each other on some dog walks during his retirement.

On behalf of the members of the Legislature and the Queen's Park press gallery, I would like to thank you for your incredible service and wish you all the best, Darrell, in your retirement.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** I'd like to welcome Katrin Bender and Yasna Yassini from A Remarkable Assembly. Welcome to your House today.

## QUESTION PERIOD

### PAY EQUITY

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Today is Equal Pay Day in Ontario. It symbolizes how far into the next year the average woman has to work to earn what the average man has earned in the previous year. And we haven't yet reached the Equal Pay Day if you're a woman who's racialized, Indigenous, 2SLGBTQIA+ or disabled.

Pay equity is the law in this province. So my question to the Premier is, will he commit to enforcing the law to ensure every woman worker earns as much as her male counterparts?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity.

**Hon. Charmaine A. Williams:** Our government is dedicated to supporting equal pay for work of equal value. Our government introduced the Supporting Retention in Public Services Act to ensure that existing pay gaps are not widened and that we are ensuring that employers meet their obligations when it comes to equal pay for equal work.

I'd also like to say that we have the Pay Equity Office in place to ensure that we have a functioning and strong complaints system in place, and they are busy and they are working really hard.

We've also been working diligently on empowering women and providing women with supports to make sure they have all the resources they need to enter or re-enter the workforce.

And we're breaking down barriers for women so they feel free to pursue male-dominated jobs, such as ones in the skilled trades and STEM.

We are taking many actions and making sure that we're going into communities and making sure organizations have the supports to see women succeed in Ontario.

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

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** This government is actually in the courts right now fighting to suppress the wages of a largely female workforce.

The cost of living is going up and up and up, and many women are having trouble covering even basic necessities, all while this government does next to nothing to tackle the affordability crisis. I'm sorry to say that their for-profit health scheme is only going to make it worse. It's going to cost women more in health care user fees and upselling. And women health care workers are going to earn even less, too, because research shows that privatizing public services leads to lower wages for women.

Back to the Premier: Will he stop his privatization agenda to deliver fairness for women?

**Hon. Charmaine A. Williams:** While women's workforce participation has increased significantly, we do know that there are gender pay gaps. In fact, when we close the gender pay gaps and increase women's participation in the labour force and increase women's representation in high-productive economic sectors like agriculture, like health care—you name it—we could be adding up to \$60 billion to Ontario's economy by 2026.

**1040**

Mr. Speaker, we're seeing a significant increase in women entering the workforce; around 70,000 women have come back to the workforce since December.

We're going to continue to keep moving forward, because we know women have so much to contribute to Ontario.

And I'm telling you, Mr. Speaker, when women have to take care of families, they need to make sure they can afford things, and the gas tax is making it very difficult for women to be able to afford the basics in life.

So I would encourage the members opposite to—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Stop the clock for a second, please.

I can't hear what's being said with my earpiece. There seems to be a technical malfunction—so no heckling. There can't be any heckling until we get this fixed, because I can't hear.

Start the clock.

The final supplementary.

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Speaker, 68 cents on the dollar—that's what women are earning right now, and it's just not right.

Closing the gender wage gap lifts up all workers. Closing the gender wage gap makes our province more attractive to international investment. Closing the gender wage gap is the right thing to do for our economy and for women.

To the Premier: Will he commit to closing the gender wage gap once and for all?

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Members will please take their seats.

The associate minister.

**Hon. Charmaine A. Williams:** The member opposite and the Leader of the Opposition is absolutely right. That's why we have a government that sees women's social and economic opportunities as a priority. Women contribute so much to our overall economy—and that's why we are investing significantly to see that we are expanding the Investing in Women's Futures Program across Ontario; we announced 10 more locations opening up, to get more women the skills and the supports they need to get into the workforce and into the driver's seat of their financial future.

Mr. Speaker, we've invested over \$170 million in employment and training supports so that women have training for in-demand skills and have the opportunities to connect with employers. That's why we have the Minister

of Economic Development, who has brought in billions of dollars in the EV technology sector—

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Response.

**Hon. Charmaine A. Williams:** —that is going to see women in many of those positions.

Ontario is primed and ready to see women at the forefront, and we are doing everything—

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

#### PUBLIC SAFETY

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Speaker, 2SLGBTQIA+ communities across Ontario are more and more seeing hate-filled protests, especially at community events like drag performances. But Ontario doesn't have a plan to get tough on anti-queer or anti-trans hate crimes or to keep drag artists safe.

Speaker, my question is again to the Premier: Does his government agree that queer and trans Ontarians deserve new protections from hate crimes, and legally enforceable safe spaces?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism.

**Hon. Michael D. Ford:** I'd like to thank the Leader of the Opposition for that very important question.

First and foremost, Ontario is proud to be home to a strong, resilient and vibrant 2SLGBTQIA+ community, whose experiences and contributions have shaped our province into the great place it is today.

There is no place for hate of any kind here in Ontario, and it will never be tolerated.

As the Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism, I am proud to be working with the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, listening and learning from their lived experiences and the ongoing struggles that we work on together for equity and inclusion.

We will continue to work with our 2SLGBTQIA+ community, as allies and partners, to build a stronger, safer and more inclusive Ontario. Together, we will continue to build a province where people from all walks of life can freely express who they are and who they love, wherever they want.

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

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Well, Speaker, sadly, it is being tolerated.

A few months ago, I was in Hamilton, when a fabulous drag artist, Crystal Quartz—who is coming here into the gallery in a few minutes—was putting on a show at Kelseys. Unfortunately, there was a really hateful protest outside the restaurant. So MPP Wong-Tam and I decided to go and show our support.

This was in Hamilton, but we're seeing this all across the province: Guelph, Sault Ste. Marie, North Bay, Welland, Renfrew, Elora, Dryden, Sarnia, Peterborough, Ottawa, and Toronto—just a few of the cities in Ontario where drag artists have faced hate speech, harassment, and even death threats.

Communities have come together to resist this hate in many inspiring ways, but without the urgent action that people need, people are at risk.

Back to the Premier: Will his government commit today to supporting the NDP's legislation to protect 2SLGBTQIA+ communities and drag artists across Ontario?

**Hon. Michael D. Ford:** Thanks again for the question.

Speaker, as I mentioned, hate and intolerance against anyone in any form will never be tolerated by this government or in this great province.

Ontario is a place where people from all traditions, customs and beliefs can come and express fully and safely—respected, no matter your background, faith or sexual orientation.

I'd like to just remind the opposition that it is under the leadership of this Premier and this government that we invested \$40 million to protect faith, cultural and vulnerable communities, and another \$5 million to raise awareness to fight hate and racism in all its forms.

Mr. Speaker, this government will always stand with our 2SLGBTQIA+ community and all vulnerable communities to make sure they can live in the province of Ontario free of hate and can succeed.

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

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** With thanks to the minister—the words are nice, but we need urgent action.

My question was very specific.

Queer and trans Ontarians have been asking for action from this government for months. Every time an all-ages drag event is targeted in a small business or a library, it's not just 2SLGBTQIA+ Ontarians but also staff and workers and business owners who are threatened.

Again to the Premier: Will his government step up and stop the hateful extremists from trying to force queer and trans people back in the closet?

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

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** I thank the member for the question. It's obviously a very important question.

Let me just say to the Leader of the Opposition that we are supporting all Ontarians, regardless of sexual orientation, race or creed.

Nobody wants to force anybody back into the closet, so I reject that outright.

I do understand the issues that the Leader of the Opposition is raising. I fully expect that she's raising them with the utmost care and wants to promote an important issue in the community.

That's why the government is continuing—I know the Solicitor General, the Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism, and the Minister of Education, with respect to some of the changes that we're making in our school system—we are all seized on this, and it's not just the government, frankly.

I think members on all sides of the House understand how important it is that everybody feels safe in the province of Ontario and that we honour everybody's right to live and prosper in Ontario, regardless of who you are, who you love, and what God you worship.

## PUBLIC SAFETY

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** Some of the drag artists the leader was speaking about are specifically in the House today. Scarlett BoBo, Crystal Quartz, and a number of other drag performers prominent across Ontario and Canada are here.

Speaker, they have been asking and calling for action from this government now for months. They are asking for help. Their shows are being targeted. Their audience is being discriminated against—as well as harassment being targeted at the venues, the businesses that are hosting these events.

Because there has been no action and no real response from the government, we're putting together a private member's bill that will specifically address the hatred targeting the 2SLGBTQIA+ community in Ontario. I need to know, and we all need to know today: Will you be working with us to make sure that this bill becomes law to protect this community?

1050

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** As I say on every piece of private members' business, the House will review the legislation once it's tabled and will make a decision. Members will make a decision on their own whether that should be supported.

We have demonstrated over the last five years, in two Parliaments, that a good piece of legislation that is broadly supported by members on all sides of the House will receive the support from members on all sides of the House.

There is already a significant body of legislation that is in place to protect all communities. We have put significant additional resources in place—not only the minister of multiculturalism, but as well the Solicitor General, to ensure that all communities are safe.

But specific to the bill—once the member has tabled the bill, we will give it due consideration, as we do every private member's bill.

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

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** We're not talking about all communities. Today, we're talking about this community, the drag community, the 2SLGBTQIA+ community.

Across Ontario, from Toronto to Thunder Bay, communities have been targeted. They are experiencing hate and violence on the very doorsteps of your business associations and on your small business storefronts, from Welland to Fort Erie to Guelph to Kingston, Kitchener, Gravenhurst, Brockville, Peel, Elora, Lambton, Sarnia, Sudbury, Sault Ste. Marie, North Bay—and I could go on. The list is so long.

The private member's bill—and this government will know it—will take years to pass. Will you expedite that process? Will you work with us to protect the community today?

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** I want to be clear, Mr. Speaker. I do expect that the human rights commission will ensure that communities are safe. But we were just in this House

yesterday speaking about some of the failings in the criminal justice system across this country. I think that we would all agree that our criminal justice system has to do a better job of ensuring that all people are safe. We saw just yesterday this very same member try to water down a motion that would have done just that.

So I say very clearly to the member opposite that we are going to continue to do everything in our power to make sure the people of the province of Ontario are safe. We're going to continue to work with the minister of multiculturalism, the Ministry of the Solicitor General, the Minister of Education.

At the same time, you could also help, by ensuring that when we bring forward legislation or when we encourage the federal government to bring forward legislation that protects not only this very important community, but all of the people of this country—stop watering it down. Don't say one thing here and do another thing when it comes time to vote to keep our communities safe.

## PUBLIC TRANSIT

**Mr. Billy Pang:** My question is to the Associate Minister of Transportation.

The people of my riding of Markham–Unionville rely on our transit networks to ensure they are connected to Toronto and the GTA. While they might not live in Toronto's downtown core, many individuals and families still wish to access major sights and attractions through a convenient and affordable transit system.

As families continue to experience the impact of global economic challenges and rising costs, they remain mindful of how best to manage their expenses. That's why our government must create opportunities to make everyday life more affordable for individuals and families.

Can the Associate Minister of Transportation please share with the House what our government is doing to make it more convenient to take transit and visit the latest attractions?

**Hon. Stan Cho:** That's a great question coming out of Markham–Unionville this morning, from the great member who works tirelessly for his constituents. Thank you.

Speaker, I am happy to tell that member that we are delivering for hard-working Ontarians and making it more affordable when they want to go out and have a little fun with their families. Presto Perks is what I'm talking about—leaving more cash in people's pockets, thanks to our work. You know that kids already ride free on GO. Presto cardholders can save up to 20% on admission to the Hockey Hall of Fame, where you can see the new cup with the Leafs engraved in it after this year; the Ontario Science Centre; the Royal Ontario Museum; and also next week's Princess Auto Players' Championship at the Mattamy Athletic Centre.

What's more, through Presto, TFC fans can commute to BMO Field and save 20% off their ticket prices while they cheer on the boys in red throughout the 2023 season.

Speaker, with Presto Perks, we're putting more money back into families' pockets, and that includes when they want to have some fun.

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

**Mr. Billy Pang:** Thank you to the associate minister for his great response. This is good news for individuals and families who will benefit just that much more with the extra savings.

However, making life affordable needs to look beyond initiatives that can help people save money at events and attractions. Our government needs to focus, as well, on broader issues, including the affordability of transit.

Unlike the previous Liberal government—where affordable public transit was not a priority—our government is paying attention to the needs of GO Transit riders.

Can the associate minister please elaborate on how our government is delivering greater transit affordability?

**Hon. Stan Cho:** The member is bang on: Affordability is an issue, and that comes to transit, as well.

That's why Metrolinx has not raised their fare prices in four years, and we continue to make fares more affordable. Riders continue to benefit, especially from the stellar GO affordability pilot we introduced last year, which gives a 50% reimbursement to applicable riders in Peel region.

We're also delivering for hard-working students. We nearly doubled the post-secondary student discount and youth discount for those aged 13 to 19 to 40% off fares, off GO and UP Express.

That's not all. We eliminated the double fares across the GTHA when you're connecting from your local transit agency to the GO network, and as announced in the budget just a few short weeks ago, that's going to include the TTC by the end of the year—really good news. Imagine, you can go from Barrie, take Barrie Transit to Union Station, and connect to the TTC to visit your friend in Liberty Village, for just the price of a GO fare.

We're making it more affordable to take transit.

#### PAY EQUITY

**MPP Jill Andrew:** My question is to the Premier.

According to the Ontario Equal Pay Coalition, Equal Pay Day today symbolizes how far into the next year most women must work in order to have earned what most men had earned in the previous year. In other words, women are disproportionately working for free and are not being paid equal pay for equal work. It's even worse for BIPOC, 2SLGBTQIA+, and women with disabilities, as well as immigrant women.

This Conservative government widened the gender wage gap with their Bill 124 attack against women and other public sector workers.

Will the Premier help close the gender wage gap by repealing Bill 124, stopping its appeal—and while you're at it, activate pay transparency today?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity.

**Hon. Charmaine A. Williams:** Our government is fighting very hard to empower women and to close the gender pay gap by addressing the barriers that make it difficult for women to enter or re-enter and stay in the workforce—addressing things like participation that impact pay equity.

We are seeing more and more women—I'm going across Ontario, and I'm blown away by the amount of women who are leaders in their sectors—leaders and CEOs, women who are in the C-suite. The goal is to get more women in leadership, because these women are hiring more women, because they see the benefits and the value of having women in the workforce.

Mr. Speaker, we're investing significantly to get more women into the skilled trades, a sector that pays well, has great benefits and can provide significant economic empowerment for women for generations.

We take this seriously because we know women play a valuable and important role in growing Ontario's economy.

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

**MPP Jill Andrew:** These women leaders the Conservative government talks about need to get paid, so bring in pay transparency.

Courts ruled Conservative government anti-worker Bill 124 illegal and unconstitutional, yet this Premier still appealed, wasting taxpayers' money—working women's money, health care heroes' money—during an affordability crisis, to bankroll his political power trip. Workers didn't go silently into the night. Women clapped back and stood up against legislated bullying. This weekend, women won. Nurses won a re-opener on Bill 124, which awarded hospital nurses, predominantly women, back pay to recover some of what they've lost. This is a step forward towards closing the gender wage gap.

**1100**

My question is back to the Premier: Will the Premier listen to the courts this time and commit to paying hospital nurses back pay owed? Yes or no?

**Hon. Charmaine A. Williams:** All women in all sectors are valued—and we appreciate and thank everything that they are doing to move our economy and move Ontario forward.

Mr. Speaker, we're seeing more and more women enter the workforce. And isn't that what we want to see—women being in the driver's seat of their economic future and leaders in their field and their sector? Isn't that what we want for all women—to see women like the women up there just powering through and showing that women can be leaders and strong leaders?

That's why our Premier and our government decided to say, "We need a Ministry of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity." We take this seriously. I don't only do this for my daughters, but I do it for all daughters and all women who are coming up in Ontario and all the women in this room. We're seeing the benefits and the value of doing that.

I fully believe that when women succeed, Ontario succeeds.

### CONSUMER PROTECTION

**Mr. Brian Saunderson:** My question is for the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery.

Speaker, buying a new home is a major transaction—and often once in a lifetime—but it should not be a worrisome and stressful experience for individuals and families because they are concerned about the quality of the new home they are purchasing.

Under the previous Liberal government, regulations were lacking to ensure that the interests and needs of new home buyers were protected. Unfortunately, their failure to implement and enforce professional standards in the building industry put many people at unnecessary risk.

Hard-working Ontarians deserve to be treated fairly when making one of the biggest purchases of their lives.

Can the minister please explain how our government is strengthening protections for new home buyers?

**Hon. Kaleed Rasheed:** Thank you to the amazing member from Simcoe–Grey for his question.

I agree with the member that buying a new home can be a complicated and stressful experience for families and individuals across our province.

That is why this government made a commitment to the people of Ontario that we would never stop working to make their lives easier and improve consumer protections across the province.

Speaker, just last week, I joined Minister Clark and Minister Tangri to announce another big step in our work towards fulfilling our consumer protection commitment. We are consulting with consumer groups, home-buying sectors and the public on the cooling-off period for new freehold homes to ensure we are creating the very best protection for Ontarians. We are also exploring input on requiring that purchasers of all new homes receive legal advice on their purchase agreements to ensure that no one in our province gets ripped off by bad—

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

**Mr. Brian Saunderson:** Thank you to the hard-working minister for that response. I'm very pleased to hear that our government is implementing measures to improve and raise standards for the home-building industry in Ontario.

The constituents in my riding of Simcoe–Grey have expressed concern about the potential cooling-off period and that it could lead to more new home project cancellations by builders and vendors. There is a lot that can happen between the time a buyer signs an agreement of purchase and sale and when they get their keys to their new home, as we have seen over the last 24 months.

Our government must take action to ensure that the consumer protections are increased and that companies that build and sell homes in Ontario are held accountable to ensure that they are acting responsibly and ethically.

Can the minister please elaborate on how this initiative will give new home buyers confidence in the building industry in Ontario?

**Hon. Kaleed Rasheed:** Thank you to the member for the supplementary question.

Under this Premier, we have been very clear that in this province there is a zero-tolerance approach for those who try to make extra money off the backs of new home buyers. That's why my ministry—alongside my great colleague the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing—has added harsher penalties for bad actors in the industry. We have empowered the Home Construction Regulatory Authority, HCRA, and given them the ability to stand up to unethical vendors in the sector. Those attempting to rip off Ontarians now face the prospect of double maximum financial penalties for repeat offenders of the New Home Construction Licensing Act. The risk of permanently losing their builder's licence—and, for the very first time ever, ensuring that instead of profiting, builders who conduct illegal and unethical behaviour will face hundreds of thousand of dollars in fines.

Speaker, rest assured, this government continues and will continue to have the backs of Ontarians, especially when they make one of the biggest purchases of their lives—

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

### PAY EQUITY

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** My question is to the Premier.

Women in female-dominated professions, like midwifery, nursing and developmental services, have been fighting for pay equity for years, under both Liberal and Conservative governments.

In 2018, midwives won a historic ruling from the Human Rights Tribunal that was confirmed last year by the Ontario Court of Appeal, but this government has continued its systemic pay discrimination against midwives by ignoring the order that would see midwives paid fairly for the vital work they do.

Will this government implement the Human Rights Tribunal order, start respecting midwives, and finally pay them what they are worth?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Deputy Premier and Minister of Health.

**Hon. Sylvia Jones:** There is no doubt that the valuable work Ontario midwives do—looking after our individuals who are going through what is, frankly, probably one of the most exciting but scary pieces of their medical career.

I am really proud of the fact that, on March 31, we actually inked a deal with the College of Midwives of Ontario—for a one-year deal that has now been ratified through their association. It is going to see an expansion of midwifery in the province of Ontario so that more women, more individuals, who want to have a midwife be part of their birthing experience can have that in community, closer to home.



It's one of the things we're working on—making sure that people get access to care in their community, closer to home.

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

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** A 1% increase is hardly paying midwives what they are worth.

When women workers like midwives, nurses, educational assistants and ECEs fight for wages that reflect the true value of their work, this government refuses to enact pay transparency, ignores remedy orders, suppresses their wages, fights them in court, or threatens to take away their rights. But women aren't taking it.

I want to give a shout-out to the amazing education workers who forced this government to back down on their use of the “notwithstanding” clause.

Today, on Equal Pay Day, will this government commit to stop attacking women workers and start bringing forward legislation and policies that close the gender wage gap instead of widening it?

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

**Hon. Stephen Lecce:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member opposite for the question.

For education workers in the province of Ontario, we did sign a deal with CUPE which will increase wages by over 4% each and every year over the next four years for them. We think that is a suitable reflection of the good work they do within our schools—overwhelmingly ratified by the union. That will help ECEs as well as EAs and other critical workers in our schools.

In the child care deal which our government signed—a critical way by which we can ensure more labour market participation of women in our economy—we signed a deal that is finally going to make child care affordable, after an increase by 400% under the former Liberals. This program is cutting fees by 50% this year. It's creating 86,000 spaces. It's going to help ensure we have higher labour market participation, so women no longer have to choose between staying at home, raising a child or going to work.

We believe in them, we're investing in them, and we're hiring more of them to ensure families get the supports they need in our economy.

## TOBACCO CONTROL

**Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady:** My question is to the Minister of Finance.

Tobacco is one of the most common, illegally traded goods in the world, and Ontario is ground zero, with sales of illegal product on par with El Salvador.

1110

Illicit tobacco threatens the safety of our communities as profits fuel organized crime involved in drugs, guns and human trafficking. Legitimate businesses suffer, while the government loses out on \$750 million in taxes annually.

Speaker, this government knows where the problem originates, and provinces like BC are unhappy with Ontario as illegal sales in their province skyrocket, even

though they have no producers. I wouldn't be shocked if Ontario is sent invoices for policing and health care costs.

Quebec's model of dealing with contraband tobacco is extraordinary, and Ontario signalled that model would be adopted in the 2019 budget, but the policy was pulled days before print. To the minister: Who or what is the reason the policy was pulled in 2019, and why is it missing again in the 2023 budget?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** To reply, the parliamentary assistant and member for Oakville.

**Mr. Stephen Crawford:** Thank you to the member opposite.

We do take contraband tobacco very seriously. In fact, unregulated tobacco undermines Ontario's tax system. It creates business uncertainty and compromises the health and safety of Ontario families as well as businesses.

We've reviewed recommendations from key stakeholders and the Indigenous facilitators' report on unregulated tobacco. These extensive consultations will inform our approach on addressing tobacco issues in a balanced and sustainable manner. We're also continuing to support existing partnerships with various police services.

Going forward, the government knows that the problems of unregulated tobacco cause the people of Ontario concern. That's why we're taking a comprehensive approach to address this situation.

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

**Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady:** In 2014, the federal government amended the Criminal Code of Canada—Bill C-10—to create a new offence of trafficking in contraband tobacco and to provide for minimum penalties of imprisonment for repeat offenders.

I'm happy the minister brought up unregulated tobacco, because as soon as this government came to power, it actually changed the wording from “contraband” to “unregulated” in the Tobacco Tax Act. How do police and prosecutors apply the law under an ambiguous term like “unregulated”?

Contraband tobacco was such a concern to the federal Conservative government 10 years ago that they amended the Criminal Code, yet this government has made it easier for criminals to work around the law.

Tobacco is referred to on page 184 of the recent budget. It's housekeeping and will do little to curb contraband tobacco.

Can the minister explain why each budget under this government contains the word “unregulated,” as opposed to “contraband,” “illicit” or “illegal”?

**Mr. Stephen Crawford:** Thank you again to the member opposite.

This is something we do take seriously.

In the budget of 2021, the government of Ontario increased funding to the OPP's contraband tobacco enforcement team by \$1.5 million.

We're also collaborating with federal partners on strengthening border enforcement and addressing tobacco smuggling.

And we're enhancing the Ministry of Finance's oversight of raw leaf tobacco through the use of more innovative digital technologies.

But what we would also do is call on the federal government to get bail reform—you did mention people getting out and causing problems again. We are calling on the federal government—we hope the opposition will support us—for immediate bail reform.

## MUSIC INDUSTRY

### SPORTS AND RECREATION FUNDING

**Mr. Rob Flack:** My question is for the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

Ontario's music industry is vital to our province's culture and economy. I think we all know this. This industry drives creative innovation and helps generate employment opportunities throughout.

Individual artists—like my wife and daughter—and groups involved in Ontario's music industry hold a special place in advancing the success of great Canadian music here and, in fact, worldwide.

For example, London, Ontario, has become a hub of Ontario's dynamic music industry where musical talent can perform and thrive.

But Speaker, in order to increase Ontario's profile and prestige on the national and world stage, our government must take the lead in creating more opportunities for emerging artists to record and perform in Ontario.

Can the minister please explain how our government is supporting the development of the music industry in Ontario, especially in communities like Elgin–Middlesex–London?

**Hon. Neil Lumsden:** Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London for all the work that he's doing, and for his family's talents—not necessarily a put-down to you.

Last week, I saw first-hand the city of London's music expo and how integral the music scene is, not only for London, but for Ontario. London has been designated a UNESCO City of Music—the first Canadian city to be designated that, and only the fourth in North America, a tremendous accomplishment.

Each year, our government invests millions of dollars in the industry through the Ontario Music Investment Fund.

Ontario's music scene is really booming, and it really has become part of tourism.

I had the opportunity in my visit to London on Friday to spend some time not only with the mayor, but to sit in at a round table with all the members of the chambers of commerce.

I'd like to suggest, to use a music analogy, that three-part harmony is a little bit of tourism, culture and sport.

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

**Mr. Rob Flack:** Thank you to the minister for hosting a great reception last night, celebrating Tennis Canada and our success at the Davis Cup. Well done.

Cultural, sporting and tourism events are all critical to the success of local businesses throughout this province.

Just recently, London hosted the 2023 Tim Hortons Brier, and it was a massive success. This event brought thousands of people to Budweiser Gardens in London's downtown core, including my family and friends, along with the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, along with the Minister of Colleges and Universities. It was great to have them there. Local businesses were brimming with patrons. In fact, there were lineups out the door. London tourism officials said they have received tremendous feedback from local business establishments, as well as Curling Canada. Successful events such as this underline the importance of sport to communities across this province.

Can the minister please explain how this government is supporting local communities to expand tourism, cultural and sporting activities?

**Hon. Neil Lumsden:** Again, thank you for the question.

Music, culture and—notice I didn't say “tourism and culture” this time—and sport are linked together. I think we all know that through sport at all ages—the culture part of music, the culture part of sport and, really, the culture part of tourism tie together nicely, and the impact that it has on local communities, as London is finding out, is second to none. I found that out in my meeting with the chamber of commerce and with the mayor. Their strategies, their plans, what they're working with, what they have is second to none, and they deserve an awful lot of credit.

But the other part of the sports side and hosting—we have to remember the impact of sport on our communities. Let's not forget what tourism does and sport does when we move into a community and have, let's say, a few hockey tournaments of 100-plus teams. Restaurants and hotels are full, but more importantly, we're helping build young leaders through sport. We take that very seriously—our Premier does, and I do. Our next—

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

## CHILD CARE

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** My question is to the Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity.

Ontario is facing serious understaffing in child care, directly related to the low wages of this women-led sector. The Association of Early Childhood Educators and the YMCA came to pre-budget consultations to tell the government that these workers need and deserve decent wages with benefits and pensions.

If this government was truly committed to closing the wage gap, if this government actually valued the work of these early educators, they would compensate them fairly.

So, Speaker, my question, on Equal Pay Day: Will the government commit today to increasing wages for Ontario's child care workers?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Minister of Education.

**Hon. Stephen Lecce:** I can assure the member that the answer is yes. We're going to continue to increase wages each and every year, in the course of this agreement with the federal government, by at least one dollar per hour every year, rising to \$25. I accept and I hear clearly from operators, from staff and, of course, members opposite and members of our government who want to see wages increase so that we retain these critical workers, which are a prerequisite of economic growth.

We need a strong, dependable, affordable child care system in all communities, small and large. It's why we're expanding spaces. It's why we've announced a significant reduction in fees for families. And, yes, it's why we're actually consulting with the sector to understand what exactly to do further, in addition to the federal deal, to increase wages and lift up the opportunities within that sector.

We're going to continue to listen, continue to increase the wages and be there for the workers who make the difference for our kids.

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

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** Speaker, I have to say, on Equal Pay Day, women-led workers deserve a much better answer than that from the Minister of Education, because pay equity is not just about the money that's coming into women's pockets; it's also about the money going out.

1120

One of the most significant costs for women in this province is child care. Ontarians have been promised over and over again \$10-a-day child care, but this government is still failing to deliver. Women paying their bills at the end of each month know that nothing has changed, even though you signed this federal deal months and months and months ago.

Will this government finally make your investments needed to deliver \$10-a-day child care for women, for families and for children in this province?

**Hon. Stephen Lecce:** I'm not sure the members of the NDP can take yes for an answer. I have confirmed that, in absolute terms, wages will increase every single year—over the course of this year—to a minimum floor of \$25 per hour.

I acknowledge that there is more to do, which is why we're working together with the minister of social and economic opportunities for women to ensure we greater retain those workers and attract more of them, because we're going to need them, because we're creating 86,000 more additional spaces as we reduce fees by 50%, on average—\$8,000 to \$12,000 per child, per year.

Mr. Speaker, our consultation will conclude. We'll produce a plan and provide a sense of hope to these workers, who we value and we thank each and every day by increasing their wages and giving them more incentives to stay, to work, and to make a difference in the lives of young people in Ontario.

## BAIL REFORM

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier.

There is no doubt that the increase in violent crime in the past number of years is disturbing. There are too many stories of those accused of violent crime being let out of jail right away, only to offend again—women killed by their partners, police officers ambushed, children killed while waiting for the subway, and too many more.

The Standing Committee on Justice Policy made five recommendations to the government for provincial action on bail reform. Other than writing a letter to the Prime Minister, when will this government make progress on the actions recommended by the justice policy committee to strengthen bail reform in Ontario?

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

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** He's quite right; the Premier was the one who led the charge across the country to ensure that the federal government took action on bail reform. This is, of course, as I said, across the country—whether it was an NDP Premier in British Columbia or a Liberal Premier in Newfoundland and Labrador. It was this Premier who put it back on the national agenda.

Having said that, the member is correct; the Standing Committee on Justice Policy tabled a unanimous report in this Legislature. Of course, we are going to be taking action on those parts of the report that are under provincial responsibility.

Just yesterday, we also had a motion in this House, which I thought was a very deliberately simple motion, to call on the federal government to put repeat violent offenders in jail, to keep them in jail, and to take action on that. It should have been unanimously supported, but it wasn't, because the NDP, supported by the Liberals, tried to water down that motion so that we could continue to evaluate programs.

We're done evaluating programs. We're taking action, thanks to the leadership—

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

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** I, too, support federal legislation to strengthen bail reform, but I also support the province taking action that's within its power.

In late 2016, courthouses in two locations in the province started using judges to sit in bail courts instead of justices of the peace. This pilot project ended in 2019, after this government was elected. Judges have years of formal legal training and experience. By all accounts, both from police associations and from defence associations, this pilot project was successful, yet the minister has yet to produce, or at least publish, a report into the pilot program.

The chief of Toronto Police has called for judges to take over bail hearings for firearms offences and, I presume, other violent offences.

The Standing Committee on Justice Policy recommended expanding this pilot program, to ensure that bail

hearings for the most violent of crimes are heard by trained judges. This government has the power to do this today. Mr. Speaker, when will they use it to strengthen bail hearings here in Ontario?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The Attorney General.

**Hon. Doug Downey:** I'm glad the Liberals have changed their minds and decided to support us on bail—and ask the federal government to do that. I would ask that the NDP change their minds and support us on bail, as well. But here's the one thing they have in common: They want us to interfere with how judges do their duty. I heard it yesterday from the member in the NDP. And today, this member wants me to interfere with how judges do their business.

I just can't understand—well, I do understand why they're over there. They don't understand the fundamental divide of how we do justice in this province.

We need to do better. We need to do more. We've already started. We ask you to join us.

#### MINING INDUSTRY

**Mr. Will Bouma:** My question is for the Minister of Mines. Under the strong leadership of our government, this Premier and our minister, our province now has a robust Critical Minerals Strategy. This strategy is helping to build economic development opportunities with Indigenous partners through a range of programs that support skills training and business and economic development.

For our government to be a world leader in critical mineral production, we must partner with local communities and recognize and respect their valuable contributions in order to achieve shared success.

Can the minister please speak to the measures our government is undertaking to strengthen relationships with leaders in northern and Indigenous communities regarding priority projects?

**Hon. George Pirie:** Thanks for the question from the honourable member across from Brantford—Brant.

I want to talk specifically about one project and one First Nation: TTN. They're a First Nation that is just north of Timmins. They have partnered with Canada Nickel, and it's a very interesting cobalt-nickel project—the mineral that it's hosted with is serpentine. Serpentine absorbs CO<sub>2</sub>. The First Nation is the owner of the transmission line that will carry the power to that project. They own that transmission line. The chief is Bruce Archibald. His sister is RoseAnne Archibald—and I'm sure everybody knows who RoseAnne is. She told us last week, prior to this development—before supporting this development, the employment rate was 85%. Now it's below the national average—

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Thank you very much. It's time for the supplementary.

**Mr. Will Bouma:** Thank you to the minister for his response. It is encouraging to hear about the progress that is under way at northern and Indigenous communities as a result of constructive meetings with local leaders.

While opposition members would rather criticize and complain, our government is working tirelessly to lay the foundation for agreements that benefit the north and all of Ontario.

The mining industry in Ontario already generates more than \$10 billion in annual mineral production and supports 75,000 direct and indirect jobs in our province. Our government must continue making the necessary investments in this rapidly developing industry to ensure that northern and Indigenous communities are not left behind.

Can the minister please explain how our government is making the most of the present opportunities to become a world leader in responsibly sourced critical minerals?

**Hon. George Pirie:** Thank you again for the question. Urgency is the key, and our government is acting accordingly. To capitalize on this vast economic opportunity that will benefit generations of Canadians and Ontarians, we must act.

Thanks to the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade's efforts, we are securing unprecedented investments on the other end of the supply chain. We are matching those efforts through our proposed legislation, the Building More Mines Act, which, if passed, would save companies time and money. It will increase business certainty. It will promote investment in Ontario's mining sector so we can continue to be a responsible producer of critical minerals to power the global EV revolution.

President Biden just told the House of Commons he believes “we have an incredible opportunity to work together so Canada and the United States can source and supply here in North America everything we need for reliable and resilient supply chains.”

We encourage the members opposite to act with urgency and vote with us on this important piece of legislation.

#### INFRASTRUCTURE À LARGE BANDE BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE

**M. Guy Bourgouin:** Ma question est pour le premier ministre. Plusieurs de nos régions n'ont toujours pas accès aux services à large bande et d'autres ont des réseaux faibles et interrompus. Ceci a un impact significatif à plusieurs niveaux :

- les commerces avec les ventes en ligne;
- ceci affecte les études des enfants—le manque de sessions virtuelles ou d'outils de recherche; et
- les problèmes d'attraction et de rétention des travailleurs et des familles dans le Nord.

C'est difficile en tant que représentant d'aller faire des cliniques et aider les gens puisqu'on n'a pas toujours accès au service.

1130

Ma question : le dernier rapport du Bureau de la responsabilité financière démontre seulement 1,6 % de ces allocations ont été dépensées. Est-ce que vous proposez encore des promesses vides ou bien allez-vous finalement respecter vos promesses d'investissement pour le Nord?

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

**Hon. Kinga Surma:** Thank you very much to the member opposite.

Our government truly recognizes how important access to high-speed Internet is, no matter where you live in the province of Ontario. I think we can all agree that COVID has certainly changed things and made it a necessity in terms of being able to educate your child, being able to contact your doctor and/or work from home, which is why our government is investing \$4 billion to make sure that every single premises in the province of Ontario is connected by the end of 2025.

I would just remind the member opposite that this is the most ambitious high-speed Internet broadband program in the country.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Supplementary? The member for Nickel Belt.

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** Ma question est pour le premier ministre.

In my riding, many people and businesses are relying on slow, unreliable, expensive Internet. I have met with every Internet provider; none of them is interested in setting up in Nickel Belt. There is no money to be made. You can pay for all the infrastructure, they're not coming. So we use phone lines with a five-megabit download and a two-megabit upload. How can businesses thrive with this?

The government claims they'll spend billions on broadband, but last year they spent less than 2% of that money. Will the government finally get that money out the door and put in place a government-run system for fast, reliable Internet at a reasonable price?

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Order. The House will come to order.

The Minister of Infrastructure.

**Hon. Kinga Surma:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

We are not only investing \$4 billion—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Stop the clock.

The member asked a question; the minister wants to reply. I need to be able to hear the minister's reply. I ask the House to come to order.

Please restart the clock.

Minister of Infrastructure.

**Hon. Kinga Surma:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Again, I will repeat: An investment of \$4 billion is a historic financial investment in the province of Ontario.

We have also taken the initiative to present legislation in this House to expedite the delivery of broadband, high-speed Internet projects across this province, and we are consistently interacting with Internet service providers that have participated, be it in our application-based programming, our partnership with the federal government, or our reverse option to make sure that even the

toughest, hardest-to-reach places are invested in. We will get everyone connected.

## SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

**M<sup>me</sup> Dawn Gallagher Murphy:** Ma question s'adresse à la ministre des Affaires francophones. Avec plus de 620 000 francophones et 1,5 million de locuteurs, l'Ontario a la plus grande communauté francophone au Canada à l'extérieur du Québec.

L'amélioration de l'accès à des services en français de qualité dans divers secteurs est d'une importance vitale. Le vendredi passé, un nouveau règlement sur l'offre active est entré en vigueur dans le cadre de la modernisation de la Loi sur les services en français. La ministre peut-elle dire à la Chambre comment ce nouveau règlement affectera les services en français en Ontario?

**L'hon. Caroline Mulroney:** Je remercie ma collègue pour sa question.

Comme vous le savez, notre gouvernement est le premier à avoir modernisé la Loi sur les services en français en plus de 35 ans, ce qui démontre notre engagement à améliorer l'accès à des services de qualité en français pour la communauté francophone de l'Ontario.

La Loi sur les services en français modernisée a mené à la création d'un nouveau règlement détaillant neuf mesures concrètes que les organismes assujettis à la loi doivent mettre en place pour assurer une offre active de services en français. Ces mesures incluent les salutations « Hello, bonjour » et la signalisation bien visible en français. Cela fait en sorte qu'il incombe aux organismes assujettis à la loi de proposer activement les services en français et non à la personne francophone de les demander.

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

**M<sup>me</sup> Dawn Gallagher Murphy:** Merci à la ministre pour sa réponse. Il est encourageant d'entendre comment notre gouvernement améliore l'accès à des services de qualité en français. Par cette initiative, non seulement nous facilitons l'accès des francophones aux services dans leur première langue, mais nous augmentons également le nombre de travailleurs qualifiés francophones et bilingues.

La communauté francophone de l'Ontario mérite un environnement propice à son épanouissement afin qu'elle puisse continuer à participer activement à la prospérité de la province.

Monsieur le Président, la ministre peut-elle nous en dire plus sur le nouveau règlement et qui est assujetti aux mesures?

**L'hon. Caroline Mulroney:** L'offre active signifie rendre les services en français disponibles dès le premier contact entre le citoyen et le prestataire chargé de livrer des services au nom du gouvernement. Les instances visées par la Loi sur les services en français sont assujetties à ce nouveau règlement, et cela inclut tous les ministères, ainsi que les organismes désignés et les institutions de la législature.

Je suis très heureuse du progrès important que nous avons accompli et de la continuité de ce travail si essentiel

pour la vitalité de la communauté francophone de l'Ontario.

Quoique l'offre active ait été explicitement mentionnée dans la loi depuis un an déjà, les neuf nouvelles mesures clarifient les exigences minimales requises pour assurer une mise en œuvre réussie de ce principe important.

#### PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

**Mr. Terence Kernaghan:** My question is to the Premier. My constituent Matt's Christmas holidays were destroyed by one short sentence: "You may have ALS." Ontario has medication to slow paralysis and extend Matt's ability to use his hands to eat, and to hug his children, to use his legs to walk outside and dance with his soulmate, Cathy, and his throat to swallow and to say, "I love you." Albriozza could lengthen Matt's life by 10 months, but only 7% of ALS patients are eligible. The personal costs are enormous. ALS is the bankruptcy disease.

Can you imagine, Speaker? Right now, Matt's only option is to put his family in debt to stay alive—because for the other drug, Ontario's EAP deems him "too far gone" to provide medication.

Will this government do the right thing, fund Albriozza, and extend Matt's precious time with his family?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Minister of Health.

**Hon. Sylvia Jones:** The member opposite raises a really important issue that we deal with on a daily basis in the Ministry of Health. As new interventions—whether they are medication or treatments—become available, of course the Ministry of Health and our government want to provide those as quickly as possible to individuals in Ontario.

I have to say, I was really proud of the fact that as soon as Trikafta was available for children and youth suffering with CF, it was actually the Ontario government that was the first to list it. We've done the same thing very recently with Luxturna for rare inherited vision loss, and we now have that on the drug formulary.

We continue to work with the pCPA as they negotiate drug prices, and we put those on the formulary as soon as we can—because we know what kind of life-saving intervention these mean for the people of Ontario.

#### VISITORS

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Point of order: the member for London West.

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** I'd like to recognize my two very hard-working staff who are here today from London West: Janan Dean and Leah Cartan. Welcome to Queen's Park.

#### HOUSE SITTINGS

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 9(g), the Clerk has received written notice from the government House leader indicating that a temporary change in the weekly meeting

schedule of the House is required and, therefore, the afternoon routine on Wednesday, April 5, 2023, shall commence at 1 p.m.

#### NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I also beg to inform the House that the adjournment debate standing in the name of the member for Ottawa South scheduled for today has been withdrawn. Consequently, the adjournment debate will not be held today.

There being no further business this morning, this House stands in recess until 3 p.m.

*The House recessed from 1140 to 1500.*

#### INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

##### KEEPING 2SLGBTQI+ COMMUNITIES SAFE ACT, 2023 LOI DE 2023 SUR LA SÉCURITÉ DES COMMUNAUTÉS 2SLGBTQI+

MPP Wong-Tam moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 94, An Act to enact the 2SLGBTQI+ Community Safety Zones Act, 2023 and to establish the Ontario 2SLGBTQI+ Safety Advisory Committee / Projet de loi 94, Loi visant à édicter la Loi de 2023 sur les zones sécurisées pour la communauté 2SLGBTQI+ et à créer le Comité consultatif pour la sécurité des personnes 2SLGBTQI+ en Ontario.

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

*First reading agreed to.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I'd like to invite the member to explain their bill.

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** The bill has two schedules, so please bear with me.

Schedule 1 enacts the 2SLGBTQI+ Community Safety Zones Act, 2023. The act provides that the Attorney General may designate 2SLGBTQI+ community safety zones. The act prohibits persons from performing an act of intimidation within 100 metres of the boundary of a property that is designated as a 2SLGBTQI+ community safety zone. Every person who contravenes the prohibition is guilty of an offence and is liable on conviction to a fine of not more than \$25,000.

Schedule 2: This schedule enacts the Ontario 2SLGBTQI+ Safety Advisory Committee Act, 2023, which provides for the establishment and composition of an Ontario 2SLGBTQI+ safety advisory committee. The act requires the Ontario 2SLGBTQI+ safety advisory committee to make recommendations with respect to various matters relating to improving the safety and preventing hate crimes and hate-motivated incidents against two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex

and additional sexually and gender-diverse people in Ontario. The act also requires an annual report setting out the findings and recommendations of the Ontario 2SLGBTQI+ safety advisory committee.

MAKING THE PATIENT OMBUDSMAN  
AN OFFICER OF THE ASSEMBLY  
ACT, 2023

LOI DE 2023 VISANT À FAIRE  
DE L'OMBUDSMAN DES PATIENTS  
UN HAUT FONCTIONNAIRE  
DE L'ASSEMBLÉE

Mr. Fraser moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 95, An Act to amend the Excellent Care for All Act, 2010 with respect to the patient ombudsman / Projet de loi 95, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2010 sur l'excellence des soins pour tous en ce qui concerne l'ombudsman des patients.

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

*First reading agreed to.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** And would the member care to briefly explain his bill?

**Mr. John Fraser:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, I would. The bill amends the Excellent Care for All Act, 2010, to make the Patient Ombudsman an officer of the assembly. It also provides that the current ombudsman remains in that role until their appointment ends or it is revoked.

I think that since health care is of such critical importance, not only to the people we represent but in this assembly, we should have an ombudsman who reports on behalf of Ontarians to us here so we can make the best decisions possible.

MINISTRY OF CORRECTIONAL  
SERVICES AMENDMENT ACT  
(PAROLE), 2023

LOI DE 2023 MODIFIANT LA LOI  
SUR LE MINISTÈRE DES SERVICES  
CORRECTIONNELS (LIBÉRATIONS  
CONDITIONNELLES)

Ms. Scott moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 96, An Act to amend the Ministry of Correctional Services Act / Projet de loi 96, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le ministère des Services correctionnels.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

*First reading agreed to.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I'll invite the member to briefly explain her bill.

**Ms. Laurie Scott:** I'd like to say that this bill is also co-sponsored by the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, Mr. Yakabuski.

This bill provides that if an inmate who committed sexual or domestic violence is released on parole, the board shall consider the appropriateness of electronic

monitoring and may impose conditions with respect to electronic monitoring.

PETITIONS

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

**MPP Lise Vaugeois:** A petition to raise social assistance rates:

“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” Ontario Works “and \$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 small budget increase of 5% for ODSP still leaves these citizens well below the poverty line, both they and those receiving the frozen OW rates are struggling to live in this time of alarming inflation;

“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 fully support this petition, will affix my signature and give it to Artur.

MISSING PERSONS

**Miss Monique Taylor:** I have a petition titled “Vulnerable Persons Alert.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas there is a gap in our current emergency alert system that needs to be addressed;

“Whereas a vulnerable persons alert would help ensure the safety of our loved ones in a situation where time is critical;

“Whereas several municipal councils, including, Brighton, Midland, Bonfield township, Cobourg and Mississauga and several others, have passed resolutions calling for a new emergency alert to protect our loved ones;

“Whereas over 90,000 people have signed an online petition calling for a ‘Draven Alert’ and over 6,000 people have signed an online petition calling for ‘Love’s Law’, for vulnerable people who go missing;

“Whereas this new alert would be an additional tool in the tool box for police forces to use to locate missing, vulnerable people locally and regionally;

“Whereas this bill is a common-sense proposal and non-partisan in nature, to help missing vulnerable persons find their way safely home;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Support and pass Bill 74, Missing Persons Amendment Act, 2023.”

I wholeheartedly support this, will affix my name to it and give it to page Stefan to bring to the Clerk.

1510

#### HEALTH CARE

**Mr. Terence Kernaghan:** It’s my honour to present a petition entitled “Health Care: Not for Sale.” It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontarians should get health care based on need—not the size of your wallet;

“Whereas Premier Doug Ford and Health Minister Sylvia Jones say they’re planning to privatize parts of health care;

“Whereas privatization will bleed nurses, doctors and PSWs out of our public hospitals, making the health care crisis worse;

“Whereas privatization always ends with patients getting a bill;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately stop all plans to further privatize Ontario’s health care system, and fix the crisis in health care by:

“—repealing Bill 124 and recruiting, retaining and respecting doctors, nurses and PSWs with better pay and better working conditions;

“—licensing tens of thousands of internationally educated nurses and other health care professionals already in Ontario, who wait years and pay thousands to have their credentials certified;

“—10 employer-paid sick days;

“—making education and training free or low-cost for nurses, doctors and other health care professionals;

“—incentivizing doctors and nurses to choose to live and work in northern Ontario;

“—funding hospitals to have enough nurses on every shift, on every ward.”

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

#### ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

**MPP Jill Andrew:** This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario entitled “Support Gender-Affirming Health Care.

“Whereas two-spirit, transgender, non-binary, gender-diverse, and intersex communities face significant challenges to accessing health care services that are friendly, competent, and affirming in Ontario;

“Whereas everyone deserves access to health care, and they shouldn’t have to fight for it, shouldn’t have to wait for it, and should never receive less care or support because of who they are;

“Whereas gender-affirming care is life-saving care;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support the reintroduction of a private member’s bill to create an inclusive and representative committee to advise the Ministry of Health on how to realize accessible and equitable access to and coverage for gender-affirming health care in Ontario.”

I absolutely support this petition. I have affixed my signature and will hand it to Savannah for the table.

#### MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

**Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady:** I have a petition regarding conscience protection for medical professionals.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas medical assistance in dying (MAID) is increasingly controversial as it expands to more Canadians; and

“Whereas many medical professionals in Ontario have sincere conscientious objections to participating in providing medical assistance in dying for professional, ethical or religious reasons; and

“Whereas the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario forces medical professionals to provide an effective referral in cases of conscientious objection; and

“Whereas this policy has the potential to push medical professionals out of Ontario’s already short-staffed health care system; and

“Whereas violating freedom of conscience harms a person’s professional and personal integrity; and

“Whereas during the 2018 Ontario provincial election, the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario promised to legislate conscience protection;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Legislate conscience protection for medical professionals who object to participating in providing medical assistance in dying, whether directly, or indirectly through effective referrals, and actively support the charter-protected right of freedom of conscience.”

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

#### EDUCATION FUNDING

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly from the Elementary Teachers of Toronto.

“Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario from the Elementary Teachers of Toronto to Stop the Cuts and Invest in the Schools our Students Deserve.

“Whereas the Ford government cut funding to our schools by \$800 per student during the pandemic period, and plans to cut an additional \$6 billion to our schools over the next six years;

“Whereas these massive cuts have resulted in larger class sizes, reduced special education and mental health supports and resources for our students, and neglected and unsafe buildings;

“Whereas the Financial Accountability Office reported a \$2.1-billion surplus in 2021-22, and surpluses growing to \$8.5 billion in 2027-28, demonstrating there is more



than enough money to fund a robust public education system;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

—immediately reverse the cuts to our schools;

—fix the inadequate education funding formula;

—provide schools the funding to ensure the supports necessary to address the impacts of the pandemic on our students;

—make the needed investments to provide smaller class sizes, increased levels of staffing to support our students’ special education, mental health, English language learner and wraparound supports needs, and safe and healthy buildings and classrooms.”

I fully support this petition. I’m going to sign it along with all of these constituents and give it to Mikaeel to take to the table.

#### HEALTH CARE

**Mr. Sam Oosterhoff:** I have the privilege to introduce into the chamber today a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

“Whereas to address the current staffing shortages in the health care sector, the Ontario government has proposed an investment of \$200 million in 2023-24 to address immediate staffing shortages; and

“Whereas to grow the workforce for years to come, this includes:

—offering up to 6,000 health care students training opportunities to work in hospitals providing care and gaining practical experience as they continue their education through the Enhanced Extern Program. This program has offered these opportunities to over 5,000 health care students; and

—supporting up to 3,150 internationally educated nurses to become accredited nurses in Ontario through the Supervised Practice Experience Partnership Program; and

“Whereas more than 2,000 internationally educated nurses have enrolled in this program and over 1,300 of them are already fully registered and practising in Ontario; and

“Whereas Ontario is continuing to hire more health care workers to ensure everyone can see a trained professional when they need to; and

“Whereas key new investments in” the 2023-24 budget “to build the health care workforce include:

—\$22 million to hire up to 200 hospital preceptors to provide mentorship;

—\$15 million to keep 100 mid-to-late career nurses in the workforce; and

—\$4.3 million to help at least 50 internationally trained physicians get licensed in Ontario;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To urge all members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support the passage of the Ontario budget bill, Bill 85, Building a Stronger Ontario.”

Speaker, I have to say that I fully support this petition. I will be affixing my signature to it here, and I will be giving it to page Keya to bring to the table.

#### ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Support Gender-Affirming Health Care.

“Whereas two-spirit, transgender, non-binary, gender-diverse, and intersex communities face significant challenges to accessing health care services that are friendly, competent, and affirming in Ontario;

“Whereas everyone deserves access to health care, and they shouldn’t have to fight for it, shouldn’t have to wait for it, and should never receive less care or support because of who they are;

“Whereas gender-affirming” health “care is life-saving” health “care;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support the reintroduction of a private member’s bill to create an inclusive and representative committee to advise the Ministry of Health on how to realize accessible and equitable access to and coverage for gender-affirming health care in Ontario.”

I will proudly affix my signature to this petition and return it to the table with page Jonas.

#### ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Support Gender-Affirming Health Care.

“Whereas two-spirit, transgender, non-binary, gender-diverse, and intersex communities face significant challenges to accessing health care services that are friendly, competent, and affirming in Ontario;

“Whereas everyone deserves access to health care, and they shouldn’t have to fight for it, shouldn’t have to wait for it, and should never receive less care or support because of who they are;

“Whereas gender-affirming care is life-saving care;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support the reintroduction of a private member’s bill to create an inclusive and representative committee to advise the Ministry of Health on how to realize accessible and equitable access to and coverage for gender-affirming health care in Ontario.”

I am proud to put my name to this. I will give it to Claire to take to the table.

1520

#### ORDERS OF THE DAY

##### 2023 ONTARIO BUDGET

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 4, 2023, on the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

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

**Hon. Victor Fedeli:** I'm going to talk for the next 20 minutes about the budget because this is one of our documents and one of our efforts that is really going to propel Ontario through 2023 and into the future. All you have to do is look to the past to know exactly where the future is going to take us, and this bill addresses everything that we need to get us through this year.

I want to look back to some time ago when former Premier Wynne was on a stage with former CEO of Fiat Chrysler, Sergio Marchionne. Now, his exact words when the Premier asked him about expanding Chrysler in Ontario, he looked very quizzically at her and his exact words to her were: "This is not what I would call the cheapest jurisdiction." He said to her, "You need to create the conditions to be competitive." Speaker, I would attest that that is exactly what was done in the past, and that's exactly what the Ontario Made Manufacturing Investment Tax Credit that is in this budget will do for the future.

Speaker, when you look again to the past, you can see what happens when you don't do things like the Ontario Made Manufacturing Investment Tax Credit, investing in Futurpreneur, investing in places like Invest Ottawa and others.

The previous Liberal government, in their thankfully final report on the economy, threw in the towel on manufacturing and threw in the towel on Ontario. I'm quoting again from their final report on the economy: "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 the service-sector industries."

Instead of fixing the problems that they created, they threw in the towel. They just gave up. They gave up on Ontario. They gave up on manufacturing. They certainly gave up on northern Ontario. We know that.

We were elected in 2018, and one of the very first instructions from Premier Ford to our entire caucus was that we've got to listen to what happened in the past, learn why 300,000 manufacturing jobs fled Ontario, why manufacturers fled Ontario and listen to what they've asked. They asked us to lower the cost of doing business. That's exactly what we did, and that's exactly what this budget will do through the Ontario Made Manufacturing Investment Tax Credit.

The Premier visited places like Ford, GM, Stellantis, Honda and Toyota, as well as companies in the tech sector, as well as companies in the pharma sector, and all of them said the same thing: "The cost of doing business in Ontario is too high. You've got to bring in some relief. You've got to lower the burden. You've got to lower the taxes in Ontario." The very first thing that was done was the WSIB, Workplace Safety and Insurance Board. Some people would call it workers' compensation. That was reduced by 50%. There was so much money in reserves bundled in there by the previous government, taking it from the businesses and piling it into reserves that not only were so overstuffed, they far surpassed any financial

requirements, they far surpassed any moral requirements to keep that much money. So that was cut by 50%. That was \$2.5 billion annually in the cost of premiums saved by businesses without touching the benefits even a fraction. That \$2.5 billion—the 50% cut—was only the beginning. From there, something called an accelerated capital cost allowance—that's a really fancy way of saying that you can take your equipment and write off the cost of that equipment in-year. That's a really novel thing to do in North America. Businesses, instead of writing their equipment off over years, can write it off in the same year. That saves businesses a billion dollars a year.

Then the red tape reduction bills began, a series of eight or nine of them now, that saved hundreds of millions of dollars every single year. All the taxes that the previous Liberal government had planned for January 1, all of those hundreds of millions of dollars of tax increases that were to come in on January 1, 2019, we wiped all of those off—gone. Hundreds of millions of dollars did not come on the tax rolls of these businesses on January 1.

The hydro mess that the Liberals created: We also immediately reduced industrial and commercial rates by 15%. You take that combination of capital cost allowance, WSIB, red tape, hydro, taxes: All of these things together at the time lowered the cost of doing business in Ontario by \$7 billion each and every single year.

Speaker, you would say, as some have said, "Well, what did the government do? They lost \$7 billion each year in revenue. How do you continue governing with that much loss of revenue?"

We've always said from the very beginning that lower taxes create jobs and create higher revenue. And nothing proved it more than the budget that came out last week, where we saw that now the annual total of savings is \$8 billion—\$8 billion in savings every year. What did that do, Speaker? Exactly what it was set out to do: 600,000 new jobs were created in the province of Ontario. That exactly is the result that you would anticipate—one of the two results you would anticipate.

Some 300,000 jobs were created before the pandemic; 300,000 jobs were created since the pandemic. Our government, with these changes—\$8 billion a year in savings—created the conditions for those companies to create all of those jobs. Eighty-five thousand new businesses opened in the province of Ontario last year. Again, why? You've got a lower cost of doing business.

Again, \$8 billion—yes, lower revenue to the province. How did that get made up? Higher employment—600,000 new jobs. Revenue to the government was \$154 billion the year we were elected. This budget shows the revenue to the government is now \$204 billion, a \$50-billion increase, because lower taxes create higher revenue. That's what's happened here in the province of Ontario.

More of that is coming. You've got the Ontario Made Manufacturing Investment Tax Credit. That brand new tax credit is going to lower the cost of investing in Ontario for local manufacturers who want to grow their business, want to expand their business, just like the WSIB, \$2.5 billion in savings; just like the capital cost allowance—in fact,

this one is very similar to that—that saved a billion dollars. This is going to save \$780 million for businesses to be able to reinvest that money in their companies, just like they did the last four years, where they hired 600,000 workers.

This is exactly what works. This is the formula for success for Ontario. This is going to provide a 10% refundable corporate income tax credit on the investments in buildings and machinery and equipment, all to use in advanced manufacturing and processing, all to build the things we need in Ontario, all of the reshoring that has gone on in the province of Ontario—I've talked about it before, a great company down in Windsor that makes Pine-Sol. Pine-Sol was never made here in Ontario. It has been reshored from the States into Canada, and who doesn't love Pine-Sol? It's now made here in Ontario, along with dozens and dozens and dozens of other companies that are making products in Ontario for the very first time. Why? Because we've lowered the cost of business. We've made it attractive to them. This Ontario Made Manufacturing Investment Tax Credit is the next step. That's the next piece of the puzzle to lure even more companies here to work in Ontario and to hire our families.

**1530**

If there was any doubt that there was any issue with this at all, think again. We'll go back to where we were in 2019. Reuters news agency announced that \$300 billion was going to be spent on electric vehicles, electric vehicle batteries and parts—\$300 billion. Of that \$300 billion, not one penny was earmarked for Canada or Ontario. Not one cent under the previous government was earmarked here. They'd given up. They threw in the towel. They gave up on manufacturing, turned manufacturers away, raised the price of hydro, raised taxes, raised all the costs of doing business and sent people fleeing. With \$300 billion at stake, we got zero.

In a very short period of time after implementing the things that we talked about—things like this Ontario-made investment tax credit that's coming, if passed—we now saw \$17 billion in announcements made by all of these auto companies in 24 months, and that is before the Volkswagen announcement that was made only a few weeks ago. We'll learn more about that in the coming weeks as they are here to make their announcements, and we'll learn just how vast the plant that they plan is and how vast their investment will be, Speaker—without that: \$17 billion. And that has prompted Bloomberg, another one of our media agencies, to rank Canada as second in their annual global battery supply chain ranking. We went from zero to second place in the world; first in North America, ahead of the US, incidentally.

We also heard from Site Selection magazine, the very company, the very groups that find sites like Ontario for all of these global companies, whether it's in pharma, whether it's in tech, whether it's in auto—the site selectors gave Ontario the number one ranking. Ontario has been ranked as the most competitive province in the nation. We are the leader. We're leading the nation in job creation; we're leading the nation in site selection. On virtually

every economic metric you can find, we are number one. Ontario is leading that pack every day of the week.

I've said this in this Legislature before, but I do want to repeat it: Every single day of every single week, Premier Ford gets what we like to call his one-a-day vitamin. We send him a text with the name of a company, the city they're locating in, how many millions they're investing, how many employees they're hiring and whether we have any skin in the game. I bring that up again because nothing has changed. Every day—every single day—the Premier receives that note, because the economy in Ontario is robust. We have the same concerns that we see around the world, but we've been powering through it with announcement after announcement after announcement after announcement of companies that are investing here because they look at Ontario.

We've travelled to several countries in the last while attracting these businesses here, like Volkswagen, and they all have told us two things. The very first thing when we sit down with the executives, no matter which country we've been in or no matter what company we visited in that country—they tell us the same two things. It's really interesting to hear this. The first thing they tell us is that they look in this very troubled world that is coming off a pandemic for the last couple of years, and they look at Russia's illegal war in Ukraine, they look at the elephant in the room of China and all of the turmoil that the world is going through and all of these tough economic decisions that have to be made. They tell us, to a company—they look to Ontario as a sea of calm. They say, "You are stable. You're a reliable partner. We know what we're going to get. We're putting our money with you." All of them have said that to us.

The second part of what they're saying is that Ontario is a safe place. It's a safe place for their executives. It's a safe place for their employees. It's a safe place for their families to be. It's universal that they're doing this, and that is also why they're coming here.

You need the fundamentals in place. You need to have a skilled workforce. They like our 65,000 STEM grads we have. Every single year, we're producing 65,000 science and technology and engineering and math graduates.

We have a tremendous life science ecosystem here: all of the companies that are making medical technologies, making pharmaceuticals. It is a huge life sciences sector. We've had \$3 billion in new life science investments in the last couple of years.

They love our tech sector. I think for four or five days in a row the notes that I sent to the Premier were of brand new tech companies who are investing hundreds of millions of dollars here in Ontario. Look at Nokia: only a few months ago, \$340 million invested in Ottawa. Telus: \$23 billion invested in Ontario, 9,500 new employees coming to Ontario with that company alone.

Now, the Ontario Made Manufacturing Investment Tax Credit is the newest piece, the newest tool that we have in our tool box. We will now add this to the long litany of things where we talk to companies about how we lowered the cost of doing business by \$7 billion. Well, it's now \$8

billion. When we put this Ontario Made Manufacturing Investment Tax Credit—we talk about 600,000 new employees. That number will grow too, because these companies are going to hire people.

There are a couple of other things that are exciting as well. In Ottawa, we've seen a real investment in the tech sector. If you look between 2016 and 2021, in San Francisco, they added 14,000 employees in those five years in the tech sector, brought them up to about 380,000 employees in Silicon Valley. But if you look between Toronto and Waterloo, we've added in the same period 88,000 new tech employees, just from Toronto to Waterloo. That brings us up to about 315,000, just between Toronto and Waterloo. We grew 350% faster than Silicon Valley in the last five years.

Speaker, if you add Ottawa, there are 555 tech companies in Kanata alone. There are 80,000—

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** I apologize. I need to interrupt the minister.

Pursuant to standing order 61(d), I am now required to put the question.

On March 23, 2023, Mr. Bethlenfalvy moved, seconded by Mr. Ford, Etobicoke North, that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion, please say “aye.”

All those opposed to the motion, please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

**Interjection:** On division.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Carried on division? I declare the motion carried on division.

It is therefore resolved that the House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

*Motion agreed to.*

1540

ARTGEM GRANITE AND MARBLE INC.  
ACT, 2023

Mr. Pang moved second reading of the following bill:  
Bill Pr12, An Act to revive Artgem Granite and Marble Inc.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

*Second reading agreed to.*

ARTGEM GRANITE AND MARBLE INC.  
ACT, 2023

Mr. Pang moved third reading of the following bill:  
Bill Pr12, An Act to revive Artgem Granite and Marble Inc.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** 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.*

1753461 ONTARIO LTD. ACT, 2023

Mr. Vanthof moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr14, An Act to revive 1753461 Ontario Ltd.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

*Second reading agreed to.*

1753461 ONTARIO LTD. ACT, 2023

Mr. Vanthof moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr14, An Act to revive 1753461 Ontario Ltd.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** 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.*

816537 ONTARIO INC. ACT, 2023

Ms. Pierre moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr15, An Act to revive 816537 Ontario Inc.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

*Second reading agreed to.*

816537 ONTARIO INC. ACT, 2023

Ms. Pierre moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr15, An Act to revive 816537 Ontario Inc.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** 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.*

FLIGHT LEVEL CANADA INC. ACT, 2023

Ms. Pierre moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr16, An Act to revive Flight Level Canada Inc.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

*Second reading agreed to.*

FLIGHT LEVEL CANADA INC. ACT, 2023

Ms. Pierre moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr16, An Act to revive Flight Level Canada Inc.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** 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.*

## BAIL REFORM

RÉFORME DE LA MISE EN LIBERTÉ SOUS  
CAUTION

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 3, 2023, on the amendment to the amendment to the motion for an address regarding bail reform.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Further debate?

**Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta:** I'm pleased to rise today in support of government notice of motion 13.

As a member of the Standing Committee on Justice Policy, I had the opportunity to listen in on many testimonials from stakeholders on both sides of this issue. I have to say, I could not help but be offended and hurt on behalf of families who have lost loved ones as a result of our lax bail system when some presenters called these deaths “exceptions” or “singular occurrences” and suggested that the bail status quo is already too onerous and suggested that the 13 Premiers of this country got it all wrong and, in fact, we should be reforming the bail system in the other direction. Speaker, I could not help but be shocked by those testimonies, and thankfully they were in the minority. The vast majority of stakeholders and presenters agreed that when it comes to our bail system, the status quo is not working.

I want to take a moment now to honour the life of a young man lost in the line of duty whose death was felt deeply by my community—the Polish Canadian community. I'm referring, of course, to the senseless murder of 28-year-old OPP Constable Grzegorz Pierzchala.

“Witold Dzielski, Poland's ambassador to Canada, said Pierzchala was a part of a long history of Polish Canadians serving their country and community.”

His sister “Justyna said Greg loved art, dancing, gardening and spending time at Algonquin Park, in nature.”

She said, “He had his priorities straight.... His health, his faith, his education, his work, and above all, his family.”

She also said that her brother was “so much more than just a police officer.

“He was always curious and wanted to learn as much as he possibly could.... He loved art. It was a pain to go to museums with him because he could stare at a single painting all day. He would tell me about his plans to dedicate a whole room in his future house where he could go and stare at artwork after a long day....”

He was an accomplished athlete. When he was hired, it was noted he had a second-degree black belt in Okinawan karate. In high school in Barrie, he participated in soccer, swimming, wrestling, rowing and track and field. He also competed in varsity wrestling and was an Academic All-Canadian. He was also fluent in Polish.

Speaker, this was a young, bright light, a man of faith, a man of honour stolen from his family and from all of us—his community, his province and his country—way too soon. His death was not a singular occurrence or an exception. The devastation of his murder will be felt for a long time.

So let's talk about the accused in this case. The accused had a conviction and prison sentence for armed robbery, a life ban on possessing a firearm and an outstanding assault and weapons charge. Should this individual have been granted bail and released from prison? All these crimes, transgressions and extreme violations of our laws, yet the individual was let out on bail and, while out on bail, committed a deadly crime. This accused went on to shoot and kill Constable Pierzchala, who was responding to what appeared to be a routine roadside check near Hagersville, Ontario, on his very first day after passing his 10-month probationary period.

Can you imagine, Speaker, what this young man must have been feeling, responding to his very first call? Adrenaline rush? Excitement? Stress? Fear? I guess we will never know.

Constable Pierzchala was the fourth Ontario officer to be killed in the line of duty during the closing months of 2022. We are now up to eight officers senselessly murdered since September 2022: Sergeant Maureen Breau, Sûreté du Québec; Constable Travis Jordan, Edmonton police; Constable Brett Ryan, Edmonton police; Constable Grzegorz Pierzchala, Ontario Provincial Police; Constable Shaelyn Yang, RCMP; Constable Devon Northrup, South Simcoe police; Constable Morgan Russell, South Simcoe police; and Constable Andrew Hong, Toronto police—not exceptions, not singular occurrences.

**1550**

We must not only honour their memory, we must do everything in our power to prevent future murders of our men and women in uniform. As the Premier said, these officers were ambushed and targeted just for wearing a uniform.

Constable Andrew Hong went to get a coffee at a Tim Hortons and was murdered in cold blood.

In March of 2007, the suspect in this particular case was placed in the national flagging system as a high risk to reoffend. He was previously convicted of possessing weapons, property crime and drug trafficking.

On September 12, 2022, at 4:25 p.m., Peel police issued an emergency alert, saying they were searching for an active shooter, armed and dangerous and driving a stolen black Jeep Cherokee. I remember receiving this alert and being horrified. I first called my mom to ensure she was home and safe. Then I called my staff to tell them to lock the office doors and not to go outside. My beloved city of Mississauga, an active shooter situation—what is going on? What is happening?

As I was making these calls, Constable Andrew Hong was ambushed and murdered just because he was wearing a uniform. Two others were shot dead and three others were wounded.

Speaker, the realization that it could have been anyone—my mom, one of my team members, my friends, any of my constituents or even me—who just happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time, buying a coffee at Tim Hortons, is not only a chilling one, it is a devastating one.

The Premier promised the widows and loved ones of these officers, with whom he met, that he will not rest until

the federal government does the right thing and fixes Canada's broken bail system. We will continue this fight until the problem is fixed.

Crimes committed by individuals who are out on bail indicate how badly bail reform is needed in our province.

Le commissaire de la Police provinciale de l'Ontario, Thomas Carrique, a décrit le meurtre de l'agent Pierzchala comme un crime évitable et s'est déclaré scandalisé par le fait qu'une personne ayant un tel passé criminel ait pu bénéficier d'une mise en liberté sous caution. Le commissaire Carrique sait que quelque chose doit changer, la famille de l'agent Pierzchala sait que quelque chose doit changer, et les innombrables victimes d'actes criminels qui ont souffert du système de mise en liberté sous caution savent que quelque chose doit changer, et notre gouvernement est à leur écoute.

Ontario Provincial Police have highlighted how tragic incidents, like Constable Pierzchala's death, have an immense impact on both officer morale and the ability of the police service to recruit new officers. According to the OPP commissioner, these incidents are taking a devastating toll on the psychological well-being of officers. "The current situation has created the most challenging time in my 33-year history with recruiting police officers," said the OPP commissioner.

The president of the Police Association of Ontario also addressed the issue of police morale by saying our front-line officers are being ambushed as a result of the inadequate bail system. They're "tired" and "frustrated.... The four officers who were killed in Ontario in the last four months were all ambushed. They were killed because they were wearing a uniform, and they were specifically targeted."

We must do everything in our power to reform our bail system, to protect our men and women in uniform and the public at large. May their deaths not be in vain. May they rest in peace.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Further debate?

**Mr. Brian Riddell:** It's an honour for me to rise in this House today to support this important motion calling on the federal government to immediately implement bail reform.

Every morning, we wake up to headlines telling us about violent crimes that are being committed in our cities and towns across our province. These crimes are devastating for families and communities, and we must act to stop them now.

The region of Waterloo, which includes my riding of Cambridge, is not immune to this violence. Last week, it was reported that a 17-year-old youth from Cambridge was charged, having a loaded machine gun with two clips and a silencer, and drugs were discovered in a bag that was left on a Grand River Transit bus. The youth was charged with six counts of possession for purpose of trafficking, careless use of a firearm, possession of a weapon for a dangerous purpose, carrying a concealed weapon, unauthorized possession of a firearm, failing to comply with a sentence order and possession of a weapon contrary to

an order. The list of charges against this youth go on and on, and the fact that a loaded machine gun was being carried on a public transit bus is unsettling and a danger to the public at large. Women with young children, students and seniors use public transport every day and deserve to be safe as they go about their lives.

Just yesterday, minutes from my home, three male suspects carrying a firearm robbed a jewellery store in the middle of the afternoon. The store employee sustained minor physical injuries, but the trauma of being robbed at gunpoint will be long-lasting. This robbery occurred in a busy plaza where many of my constit people were shopping for Easter gifts.

These violent acts of crime that put so many people at risk of harm are unacceptable. We must act to ensure we're all safe when we leave our homes.

On March 27 and again on April 1, police were called to reports of armed robberies at convenience stores in my riding. Again, the suspects in these crimes were armed with knives and were a threat to store employees, customers and other citizens in the area.

As we all know too well, first responders are not immune to the dangers posed by violent criminals. Last winter, two Waterloo regional police officers were stabbed, and two others were injured in what the media describes as a "dramatic takedown" in downtown Galt. In this case, police officers were responding to a single-vehicle collision, which is a typical call in the day for a police officer, but this would not be a typical accident investigation. The officers were stabbed during the attempt to arrest the suspect. Both officers suffered serious injuries and were hospitalized. These officers demonstrated courage and bravery, and they apprehended the individual, who posed a great threat not only to the officers but also to the community.

As I mentioned, these officers were injured in downtown Galt. This area is a tourist attraction for us, a place I frequent for coffee, haircuts and an area where I chose to locate my constit office. It boasts the Grand River, wonderful architecture and is a popular destination for TV and movie industries.

Last summer, mere steps from my office, a 27-year-old man was stabbed outside of a business. His injuries were so severe he required treatment in an out-of-region hospital. I want this to stop. When I grew up in Cambridge, we had none of this, and it's just gone absolutely insane. It's disturbing to me and many people who live in my riding when violent crime is happening right on their doorstep.

According to a recent news report, Stats Canada data shows that people in Waterloo region are reporting more crimes and worse crimes to police. Reports of robberies, assault, harassment, threats have more than doubled in the region since 2014. Behind each of these reports to the police are victims, people whose lives might never be the same.

Another news outlet reported that in 2020, for the third consecutive year, the violent crimes severity index in Kitchener-Waterloo and Cambridge made a dramatic leap over the previous year.

Madam Speaker, the status quo is failing us and our families. Current bail rules in our country are allowing repeat and violent offenders to recommit serious crimes. It is unacceptable that more and more innocent people are being put in harm's way. How many families need to suffer needlessly when we can take back our neighbourhoods and our communities?

It never used to be like this. It was safe for a teen to walk downtown or go to school. It was safe for a senior to walk his dog in a park and it was safe for a new mom to take her baby to the mall. It was also safe for the police officer to wish his or her family a good day as they headed out the door to go to work in the morning, confident they'll return at the end of the day of their shift.

**1600**

Today, we remember the officers in recent months who have lost their lives while protecting their communities. My person across the bench here mentioned the names of these constables. It just breaks my heart that this is what is happening in our province. These brave officers have been committing to serve and protect the people of communities. They paid the ultimate price and we must always honour and remember them. They are heroes for life.

We also remember Ontarians with names like Vanessa and Gabriel who were murdered while using the TTC. Our thoughts are with their families and loved ones.

Madam Speaker, our government has to take action to do everything we can to protect innocent people from becoming victims of repeat violent offenders. Bail reform is needed, and we need it now.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Further debate?

**Mr. Brian Saunderson:** It's my pleasure to rise to speak on behalf of the constituents of Simcoe–Grey on this important motion calling on the federal government to immediately reform the Criminal Code of Canada and strengthen Canada's bail system to better protect the public and our front-line law enforcement officers.

Those who are repeat violent offenders charged with violent firearms-related offences pose a very real threat to our communities and they need to be kept off the streets—period. In the context of this discussion, that starts with meaningful action and changes to the Criminal Code, an area largely within the jurisdiction of the federal government.

Yesterday in discussion on this motion, we heard comments from across the floor that this motion is largely symbolic, and I reject that proposition, Madam Speaker. We have seen that this is not a new issue. While it is becoming increasingly critical over recent times, in the last eight months in Canada, we have lost eight officers in the line of duty, four of whom died in Ontario. Since 1990, statistics were that we generally lost less than one OPP constable or one law enforcement officer in the line of duty year over year across Canada. We have seen, in this past year, that we have not just a slight blip but a major increase.

But this is also a discussion about public safety. As my friend the member from Cambridge said in his comments,

we are seeing public safety threatened, with names like Vanessa and Gabriel, young people with their lives ahead of them whose lives were cut short by needless and arbitrary violence, often at the hands of individuals who, for example, in the case of Gabriel, was wanted for violation of probation and parole terms in Newfoundland and had been wanted for a period of approximately six months.

We are here today discussing what largely has brought this motion into focus. It was the tragic death of Constable Grzegorz Pierzchala on December 27 in the line of duty on his first day as a full-fledged officer of the OPP, having passed his probation period. While making what should have been a routine traffic assist call, he was shot, and a young and promising career was cut short needlessly. The individual who has been charged with his murder was out on bail for violent offences, out on bail for assault of a police officer, out on bail for offences involving firearms and, in fact, had breached his terms of bail, had cut off his electronic GPS bracelet and had been off the charts for over four months. At the time of Constable Pierzchala's shooting, this individual had been on the streets for four months in breach of his terms for bail.

I echo the outrage of police commissioner Thomas Carrique, who said that not only was his death tragic, but it was doubly tragic because it was needless and it was preventable. That is what is bringing us here today to speak to this motion and the need for change in the bail reform system.

Premier Ford took the action on January 13 of writing to the Prime Minister seeking changes to the bail system and changes to the Criminal Code system to expand the reverse onus provisions that would require an accused to show why they should be released on bail in very certain and specific circumstances, such as violent crimes, intimate partner violence and crimes involving weapons, and particularly guns. That letter was signed by all of the Premiers of the provinces and territories of this country coast to coast to coast, and we heard yesterday how unique that is, how universal the outrage of that event was and how dire the need for change is in that area.

This was not the first call. In October 2022, Minister Lametti met with the provincial counterparts and Solicitors General to discuss bail reform. It has been on the radar, and there has been no action. Even most recently, Minister Lametti, from the federal Liberal government, said that he believes our bail system “is strong and sound” but is always “open to suggestions.” I'm going to suggest that that comment that was made in March of this year is so disconnected from what we are seeing in our communities, in our streets, from law enforcement to civilian safety, that this motion is much-needed to provide the impetus for Minister Lametti to take these calls seriously. We need action; we need changes.

I was a member of the Standing Committee on Justice Policy, and I was there for the vote on MPP Jones's motion that we study bail reform and report back to this House. I can say that throughout the witnesses over the time that we heard—and this was timely. If we consider that Constable Pierzchala died on December 27 and that motion was

brought on January 18, and this committee sat through January hearing evidence, and we heard evidence from over 30 witnesses—a few were written submissions, but most attended in person. You can find the witness list on page 29 of the report to this House. It's an exhaustive list. It contains law enforcement, senior captains and commissioners. It contains witnesses from the Elizabeth Fry Society, the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, the Canadian Mental Health Association, the Canadian Prison Law Association, Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, the Criminal Lawyers' Association, the Federation of Ontario Law Associations, and the Institute of Criminology and Criminal Justice. It was a very extensive and thorough hearing because this is an issue that this House and this committee took very, very seriously.

The discussion that came up on many occasions was whether we were broadening the net for bail restrictions or whether we were trying to focus in. What we heard through the evidence that was elicited through the hearings was that there are 2% to 3% of the criminal population, those hardened criminals, who will commit violent offences no matter what the circumstances are. It is this 2% to 3% that we are trying to target. I will talk later in my comments about some of the statistics we heard during those hearings, but it was very compelling, and it was very clear that there is a very small and hardened core of our criminal population who would seem beyond dissuasion, to the extent that, while being out on bail for one offence, potentially a violent offence involving a gun, they will do it again.

#### 1610

We heard instances in Ontario that were referred to by my colleague opposite in his comments yesterday, that there are instances in Toronto of about 60% of those who reoffended while out on bail once and then twice would actually commit a third offence involving a firearm and a violent offence. That is simply unacceptable.

We are not broadening the net in this exercise. We are trying to focus in, with a laser focus on making sure that we can identify who those potential offenders are and make sure that when we get to the bail process, we are putting forward the best case.

Also, we are asking the federal government to make sure that they expand the reverse onus provisions to cover those types of offences so that those individuals will come to their bail hearing not with a presumption that they are going to get out on bail—unless the crown can prove otherwise under the three principles, under the ladder principle and the *R. v. Antic* decision—but that they must prove to the satisfaction of the court why they do not pose a threat.

If you have committed a violent offence with a firearm or violent intimate partner battery, it seems to me that the balance needs to shift so it is the individual accused that has to show why they pose no threat to the public, as opposed to the current system, where the crown must establish why it is this person poses a threat to public or why potentially their granting bail may bring our justice system into disrepute.

This is what this motion is about. It is a very narrow motion, but it is one of the important recommendations that this standing committee made. There were 12 recommendations made in this report, seven of which apply to the federal government and five of which are for consideration by the provincial government. This particular reverse onus provision is one of the recommendations, and it is this recommendation that is the thrust of this motion.

What this motion being brought forward by our Solicitor General asks the federal government to do is to make changes to the Criminal Code to expand and enhance the reverse onus provisions so that people charged with these types of offences will not be released on the street unless they can establish why it is that they do not pose a threat to public safety or to the administration of justice in our province.

To the comments that we heard from the members opposite yesterday, my point is that this motion is asking for a very narrow, defined remedy that only the federal government can provide and that we think this is a necessary step that should be done immediately.

Constable Pierzchala died on December 27 of last year. I have to say, I was at his funeral in the Sadlon Arena in Barrie, and it was a very sombre and powerful event with thousands of law enforcement personnel and civic mourners from across Ontario. I would like to say that this is the type of event that we hope we only have to attend once.

However, it was my second attendance at the Sadlon Arena for a funeral for front-line law enforcement officers who died in the line of duty. In October of last year, two South Simcoe police officers, Constable Devon Northrup and Constable Morgan Russell, were both ambushed on a domestic disturbance call and died in the line of duty. That's two funerals too many of this type.

We also have heard of the threat and risk of harm to our population, our residents across Ontario, as depicted by the stories of Vanessa and Gabriel most recently in the subway station in Toronto.

I would like to use some of my time this afternoon to talk about what we heard from the police chiefs and senior police officers we heard from during the course of the hearings at the justice policy standing committee on bail reform.

We heard, as I said, Commissioner Carrique's comments that the death of Constable Pierzchala was tragic and needless because it was preventable and avoidable, and that his death, in Commissioner Carrique's opinion, was not an isolated incident, but rather the consequences of a dysfunctional bail system. Commissioner Carrique further testified that it's not rare to see violent offenders with a history of crime continue to break the law while on bail.

As I said before, this is not coming on the radar, from the police chief's perspective, just because of recent events. Commissioner Carrique testified that the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police identified this issue almost 15 years ago and called on the federal government to strengthen bail and sentencing laws back then. And we



know from the discussion we've heard in this House that the federal Bill C-75, in fact, eroded our bail system and has led and contributed to where we find ourselves today.

The data we saw and heard at the Standing Committee on Justice Policy indicated that in 2021 and 2022, 587 repeat violent offenders who were free on bail committed bail violations that resulted in 1,675 charges for failing to comply. Of those 587 violent offenders, 464 were involved in serious violent crimes while out on bail and 56 of these serious violent crimes involved a firearm.

We also heard from Chief Demkiw from the Toronto police force that in Toronto, they actually were arresting individuals who were out on bail for violent offences, not on one, but on two occasions and were committing a third offence. Speaker, that's unacceptable. We have to find a way to tighten the net—not broaden the net, but tighten the net to make sure that these 2% to 3% of our criminal population are held in remand pending their trials.

We also heard the impact on our police force from what has been termed a catch-and-release approach to bail. We heard from John Cerasuolo, president of the Ontario Provincial Police Association, who read a statement from a retired officer:

“Catch and release is a very appropriate phrase describing what is happening out there. Over the many years, many of my officers have complained bitterly to me about having to apprehend the same criminals time after time when the criminals were once again released, rather than being held in custody until their charges were dealt with.”

The president of the Police Association of Ontario, Mark Baxter, shared his frustrations with the catch-and-release approach to bail by saying the following:

“Our members are frustrated to work within a system that is not prioritizing community safety. They are frustrated by apprehending a known offender one day and being called on their next shift to the same place, for the same reason, to arrest the same person.... Too often, with each release, the offender's behaviour has worsened, and their negative choices emboldened, until the day comes that the individual becomes violent, or more violent, and the result is that someone in our community is injured or killed.”

Jon Reid, the president of the Toronto Police Association, was quoted saying his members of the association are “beyond frustrated” with the catch-and-release approach to bail and said the following:

“If our bail system is designed and/or interpreted to justify releasing individuals into these circumstances, what message does this send to the community that they're serving? The simple answer is this: It sends the wrong message to the people who protect our communities and those who seek to live in a peaceful and just society. It erodes confidence in the administration of justice.”

Speaker, our role in this House as legislators is to strike that correct balance to make sure that our public is protected, their safety is respected and that we arm our police officers, our front-line police enforcement, law enforcement personnel, with the appropriate tools to make sure that they can do their job, which is to serve and protect.

**1620**

We know that we have the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in our country, and we understand the balancing act that requires. But with all that we have seen in the past five years, with the calls going back to 2015, with the most recent events, eight police deaths in the line of duty in the last 10 months across Canada, four of those in Ontario—we've seen violent crimes and deaths amongst our civic population, the population that we are elected here to represent, and we need to make sure that we have the tools in place for our law enforcement and for our courts to make sure that our public is protected, while respecting the rights of the accused.

We believe that a requirement for change is necessary at the federal level to change the provisions of the Criminal Code to expand the reverse onus provisions so that bail will be granted to those who have earned it or deserve it, and that is to be determined in the circumstances. We need to arm our front-line crown prosecutors with the tools to make the best arguments to protect our residents. We have lost too many lives needlessly in this province, both in front-line law enforcement and among civilians. It's time to act.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Further debate?

**Mr. Ross Romano:** I'm honoured to be able to speak to this today. Many in this House who have been around here for a little bit would know that in my prior career, I practised law and spent a lot of time practising specifically criminal law. In fact, back in 2005, after being called to the bar, my first-ever position as a lawyer was as a staff duty counsel at Sault Ste. Marie courthouse, and I held that job for just shy of two years. I represented, from Monday to Friday, every single morning, every individual in bail court as the staff duty counsel. Every offender who got arrested and ended up in custody would be brought before the justice of the peace that following morning. I would speak to that individual and try to assist in the bail process.

My next position was as a crown attorney, and I spent a lot of time in the bail courts as well, but for that year I spent my time trying to have individuals held where it was in the interest of justice to do so. So I feel that I can come into this conversation with a bit of a different lens, having experienced bail with a very significant volume of cases, and certainly an appreciation of the process. I think one of the great challenges that I've seen specifically in the debate of this motion is that these are sometimes difficult legal concepts. Without having a great background in terminology like reverse onus; crown onus; primary, secondary, tertiary grounds for detention; and judicial interim release proceedings, sometimes things can get a little bit confusing.

I feel like, as members who have been elected by our communities representing specific political parties, sometimes we come into this arena—in fact, most times—and we're wearing our jerseys, if you will. We take approaches for lots of different reasons. And when we have opportunities—and I have seen it; it's a beautiful thing in this House when it does happen, when everybody

can join hands together, and agree that we park politics. We park our politics because there is a common goal that we're all after. I certainly have been an individual who has worn the stripes, and we all have. But I genuinely do believe, Madam Speaker, that this motion, this particular subject matter, is not a political one. This is really a tremendous—I hear the comments being made in the room, and I genuinely, for whatever it's worth, with the greatest respect, don't agree. I believe that this is not a political matter. When you look at what has happened in our judicial interim release provisions, specifically over the course of the last few years since Bill C-75 was enacted by the federal government back in 2018, what were already very difficult grounds to hold an offender in custody from a crown's perspective—what was already hard became tremendously harder.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Ross Romano:** I find it very, very concerning that the member opposite is heckling at a time like this as opposed to perhaps trying to listen. But that is the way this arena can be, and I can respect that at the end of the day and everybody is entitled to their opinion. But if you look—

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** Point of order.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** I'm sorry to interrupt. I have a point of order.

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** I just want to be clear that, on this side of the House, we are paying attention. The conversation that the member is referring to is just a conversation we're having about the bill, so I just want to make that clear. Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** The member for Sault Ste. Marie can continue.

**Mr. Ross Romano:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The bail provisions we have under section 515 of the Criminal Code outline the whole process of how an individual who appears before the courts can be released. And when you hear the term “crown onus,” virtually every offence—not all—is a crown onus situation, which means it is up to the crown in that particular instance to justify why the accused should be detained in custody. It is not up to the accused to demonstrate why they should be released. That's what the reverse onus provisions are. If an accused comes before the court on a crown onus situation, which again is the vast majority of the cases, the justice of the peace, based on the written form of the law, must release the accused unless the crown has demonstrated that there are serious concerns on three grounds: primary, secondary and tertiary grounds.

Primary grounds are: Is there a concern that this person is not going to come back to court? One of the main things evaluated in that case is, do they have a fixed address in the community? Do they actually live there? Do they have roots?

The secondary grounds are the most common grounds where an offender is detained, and that is whether or not it is more likely the offender would commit another offence. Under those provisions of the Criminal Code, that is where usually you would see a detention and a justice of the

peace, or a judge, in certain cases of capital offences or murder, must give a written decision that outlines why that person would be detained if there was to be a detention, because it is subject to a bail review process. That is at the Superior Court of Justice level.

I can tell you, Madam Speaker, from probably thousands of bail hearings I conducted from both sides of the dais that every—“every” is a bad way to put that; that's an unfair statement. The vast majority of those cases where there was a detention order made, the detention was premised on secondary grounds, meaning risk of re-offense.

Tertiary grounds are a public interest ground, and there was an amendment that one of the members opposite yesterday brought forward and a lot of what was being referenced in that amendment was something that spoke to these tertiary grounds, public interest grounds.

One of the things that, as a little bit of a legal nerd I can be—my community of Sault Ste. Marie has the landmark case for determining tertiary grounds. It was *R. v. David Hall*. I actually spent a lot of time watching that murder trial when I was just a young student and I wanted to become a lawyer. I would go into the courthouse and watch proceedings, and that case was being dealt with at the time. Justice Gladys Pardu of the Ontario Superior Court of Justice, one of Sault Ste. Marie's own, wrote the Superior Court of Justice decision. She is presently a member of the Ontario Court of Appeal, something that in our legal community in Sault Ste. Marie we take great pride in—the only member of our bench who ever went on to the Court of Appeal. She was the one who wrote that decision in David Hall's case. That essentially established that in certain cases, the public interest requires that a person be detained.

**1630**

Now, why do I say all this? What's the point? It's because, as I said earlier, I think it's important that we have some context of what it all means, what we're here really talking about.

These provisions of the Criminal Code—and it is the Criminal Code of Canada. It's right there in the name: “Canada.” It's federal jurisdiction. It's entirely up to the federal government to make changes to the Criminal Code so that we are, as provinces and the courts within these provinces, able to interpret that legislation, that law in order to deal with whatever the issue may be. Of course, right now, we're talking about bail, judicial interim release.

When Bill C-75 was put in place by the federal government back in 2018, they made changes to the provisions of bail whereby they created a much more watered-down version of the code, specifically on that secondary grounds, where most people were captured because of a high propensity of reoffence.

Now, those provisions have been watered down so much so whereby the principle of restraint—a lot of people have referenced the principle of restraint here—says that an accused should almost always be released unless there's clear evidence that they had committed a serious

violent offence or that they would be at risk of committing a serious violent offence.

The “catch and release” verbiage that is now being used is really an accurate depiction, because for a police officer who would at one time arrest an individual—even if it was just a series of repeated property offences, they would often arrest that individual, bring them into custody and bring them to a bail court justice of the peace to make the decision as to what to do with this particular accused. In that setting, that accused would have a lot of work to do in a bail hearing context to establish that they had a plan. A plan could be, “You could release me on the deposit of a large sum of money on my own recognizance, and I forfeit my money if I don’t come back,” or a pledge of a lot of money. The most common thing you’ll see is where a surety is brought before the court. Most of the time, people would bring their mom or their dad, some close loved one, because that loved one has to now establish—because we don’t have that US system here. We don’t have Dog the Bounty Hunter or anything like that. We have sureties. Sureties pledge money before the courts. They make promises. They put plans before the courts, and then a court can determine whether or not, in weighing that plan, to release that accused.

What does it all mean? Under the current provisions of the Criminal Code, that police officer at that first instance, if it’s just a property-related offence and there is no serious violent offender allegations within that particular charge, must release that accused on an undertaking, meaning a promise to come back to court, and maybe an undertaking with conditions—where you’re alleged to have stolen from the mall, therefore you’re not going to be allowed to go back to that mall, or you had a domestic disturbance and you’re not allowed to speak to that individual or go to their residence anymore.

Those were the nature of conditions that now are the most a police officer can do, hence where the terminology “catch and release” comes from. It’s very immediate. It’s not bringing them before a court. Oftentimes, an individual isn’t even making it to a court because the police have no tools left to detain an individual and even bring them before a judge so that that judge or justice of the peace can make the decision. It doesn’t exist anymore.

If you look at what has happened here, this motion—and it’s a motion. Those of us who have served in this House for more than just this past—and quite frankly, even if you’ve been here just since the 2022 election, I still think you’ve had enough exposure at this point. All of us have. Those of us certainly who have been here longer than that can all appreciate that a motion is an action taken by us as elected officials to say something that we believe, to say something that we want to see done. If you look at the specific words used in this motion—and I would like to read it: “This House calls on the federal government to immediately reform the Criminal Code of Canada to address the dangers facing our communities and implement meaningful bail reform to prevent violent and repeat offenders from being released back into our communities.” It’s a sentence that is asking the federal government

to help, to take control of that book that they are responsible for, the Criminal Code of Canada, that governs how judicial interim release happens, and to edit it accordingly so that incidents like the tragic death of Gabriel Magalhaes—it’s not going to be impossible that it would ever happen again, no, but we have to take measures to try. We have to take measures to try to protect people. That is our job. That’s all of our jobs.

If one Premier can call upon all Premiers and get them all to sign a letter in the expedited fashion that was done in this case—again, politics aside, the fact is what we are trying to do with the spirit of these words on this page I just read—the spirit is that we are all joining hands here in this House, we’re putting aside political stripes and we’re calling on the body that is responsible in this case to deal with the particular issue and asking them for help. We’re asking them to do the job that they were elected to do. It’s not politics, in my humble and respectful opinion.

If we don’t take some actions, these types of offences, these extremely egregious, deplorable acts, will continue to escalate, will continue to rise; and they have only done so since 2018. You haven’t seen an increase and a decrease, an increase and a decrease. You’ve seen a consistent increase in the nature of offences that are appearing before our courts. Because it takes a little bit of time—I was having a chat with our chief of police in Sault Ste. Marie, Chief Hugh Stevenson, and you could see that. It’s like a graph just gradually moving up because offenders are starting to understand that they can’t be detained. A lot of offenders are completely appreciating that if I commit an offence of property, and I do it as many times as I want, that police officer can’t do anything about it. He must release me.

They talk, Madam Speaker. Individuals in that world talk a lot. It’s quite incredible. I remember speaking with—especially when I was a duty counsel and I’d speak to every accused, sometimes they could tell me more about provisions of the bail court than I would already know, especially when I was new. They would often be able to give me an education in those early days because they get it. The more and more they come in and out of those courts and they hear what’s happening in the room and they’re talking to the other people in the cells, they come to learn a lot and they come to know what they can get away with. What is imperative is that they know when they’re talking, they’re going to come to realize that things have changed and that their chances of release are going to be minimized, that they’re going to be restricted. And then they’re going to think a little bit differently about certain offences they might commit.

**1640**

The seriousness of a lot of the offences that are occurring today, police officers being ambushed, being murdered, people being killed—the amount of serious violent offences and the increase in them is terrifying, quite frankly. The fact that people are afraid to take public transit, the way things have been happening, it’s certainly something that needs rectification, but there are also offences that a lot of people would still be really happy to

know are not going to be okay either, like property offences. For anybody who's ever had their car broken into so someone could take change out of the vehicle, that's also something that's very, very difficult as well.

But at the end of the day—I have mere seconds to go—I really hope that my words have imparted some kind of demonstration that this isn't about politics. This is about doing the right thing.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Further debate?

**Mr. Terence Kernaghan:** It's an honour for me to rise today to speak on this incredibly important issue. As I begin my remarks, I just want to give my profound thanks to all first responders, all of the people who go bravely into the jaws of hell, go into danger to save us, to protect us and they also seek justice for us.

Before COVID-19, I had the opportunity to take a ride-along in my community with Sergeant Mike Muscat. It was really an eye-opening experience. The date I selected was a Friday. It was also a warm day, and if that weren't enough, Speaker, it was also St. Patrick's Day. So it was an incredibly busy evening for Sergeant Muscat, and I was really so incredibly impressed by his engagement with the community, his level of knowledge, the way in which he saw folks and knew their names. He knew how to respond to them.

But what also struck me at that time was the need for mental health supports within our community. A number of calls that Sergeant Muscat had to handle were ones that were outside of his professional purview, ones where he could assist and do his very best, but ones where we saw that the government needs to step in and make sure that people actually have the supports they need within our communities.

London has also engaged in a brilliant pilot project. It's called COAST. It is a partnership with CMHA Elgin-Middlesex, St. Joseph's Health Care London, Middlesex-London Paramedic Service and London Police Service. Now, this isn't something that has any government funding attached to it whatsoever.

The acronym, COAST, stands for Community Outreach and Support Team. What they do is, they ensure that for mental health calls, there's a social worker, because we know that for many mental health calls, the mere presence and the sight of an officer in uniform can immediately escalate a situation. It's brilliant. It's shown such great promise and it's one that this government, I don't believe, has chosen to fund within its 2023 budget, which is such a shame. Because this is something I've heard from so many of these amazing front-line officers: They need to have those direct mental health supports in the community to support them.

This motion, on its own, is not enough; it's nowhere near enough. Yesterday, the Solicitor General stated that the MPPs' fundamental responsibility is to uphold law and order, but where is the urgency to actively and authentically legitimately address the problem this seeks to solve? In the letter that has often been referred to, with all of the Premiers calling upon the federal government, it

was January 13, but where is the urgency to support the people who are on the front lines?

I worry that this is just a public relations exercise rather than authentically fixing the issues that face our communities, the issues that face our front-line heroes and the issues that face our justice system. The bail system, we can agree, is broken. But this, I don't believe, is the way in which to fix it. The motion itself is vague and it doesn't make any specific recommendations or address the real scope of the problem.

The Standing Committee on Justice Policy had just two days of hearings. I would posit that this motion does not encompass all of the recommendations that the committee heard. The government heard evidence that many people are being detained, awaiting trial. They have been accused of crimes principally related to mental health, addictions and poverty. In these cases, the root causes are not being addressed by the criminal justice system, and quite frankly, they're often made worse, they're exacerbated by more time spent in custody.

There have been long-standing calls for bail reform from a wide variety of stakeholders. Many of them work within the criminal justice system and they also work with survivors of gender-based violence. Some of the concerns include that the system is unable to adequately monitor people who pose a threat, particularly against their former intimate partners.

I want to also enter into the record some of the Conservative opposition's words—they had 15 years in opposition, as you know, Speaker, and they made certain commitments that they have, I would say, failed to have achieved during the last five years of their being in government.

A Conservative member said—and this was on March 29, 2018, shortly before the election—“Liberal probation and parole policies prohibit officers from conducting compliance checks and monitoring their offenders' adherence to probation and conditional sentence orders in the community.” And went on to say that the Ministry of the Solicitor General “says that the police are responsible for performing P&P compliance checks.” The “report clearly confirmed that the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police do not agree that it is their responsibility to do that.” And the member asked, “Honestly, who is monitoring and who is performing compliance checks on the nearly 45,000 criminals who reside in our communities? Who is watching?” The member also called for 300 more probation and parole officers to support community safety. Has this government done that?

I also want to talk about the excessive, incredibly difficult delays that people wait to have a bail hearing. It results in unnecessarily long and unreasonable detention sentences for those people who have not even been convicted of a crime.

Daniel Goldbloom from the Ontario Bar Association referred to a case called Simonelli. In this case, there were dozens of serious firearms and organized crime charges. These were thrown out. The trial never happened because of the delays in getting a bail hearing. That is on this

government's watch. They did not attack organized crime, such as they would claim. They did not attack these people who are dangerous in our society, because the system that they support, that they are supposed to fund, is not functioning properly.

My question is, how can this government talk about the sacrifice of our amazing front-line heroes and do so little to actually support them? With us on the side of the official opposition, we want to see immediate action to make sure that there are adequate resources for criminal prosecutors to ensure that everyone gets a bail hearing in a timely fashion. Make the justice system work well.

We want to make sure there's more funding for legal aid—funding that this government cut, hurting the most marginalized people, people who can least afford to have their justice be denied to them. This government has made sure that that happened. We also want to make sure that resources are being allocated to take on the most dangerous offenders, and we also want to make sure that we're not criminalizing people because of their mental health, because of poverty and because they're struggling with addiction.

**1650**

Now, Speaker, I also wanted to point out that this government is looking at this in a very simplistic way. They're not looking at the complexity of the system itself. They're making this gesture. I think we can all agree that the bail system is not functional; however, they're not providing the resources that are necessary to make sure that justice is being served.

I wanted to also point out that we had stakeholders who were not being represented properly. Members on the justice committee did not have the opportunity to hear from any judges, any justices of the peace, and they did not ask to hear from any crown attorneys. How can this government say that it's listening to the front line when it's not listening to the breadth and the important voices within our justice system? They were listening to simply the voices that they wanted to, but they weren't even listening well to them.

The Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, one of the groups that was selected to present to the justice committee said—pardon me, the Toronto Police Association. I apologize. They said, “There's no time or resources for proactive initiatives.... There's no time or resources to seek out those who fail to appear.” What the Toronto Police Association was calling for was investments in people—investments that this government has chosen not to make. We have this gesture of this motion, but we don't see the actual resources that we need.

They go on to say, “Police have a responsibility—in fact, it is their most important responsibility—to maintain public safety,” but “it is not their responsibility to shoulder this alone.” It's part of a very dynamic system which has many parts which work in harmony, which work together, parts that this government has chosen not to fund and has weakened, quite frankly, by their lack of funding.

The police association also goes on to say—and I would say, Speaker, that front-line officers know the system well.

They see it every single day. So I hope that even though this government did not listen to them at committee, they'll listen to them now, because also, their recommendations are thoughtful and they consider other parts of the justice system: “In discussing this, I would be remiss in failing to mention our other justice partners and stakeholders and the resourcing that they require. It is not lost on me, nor our members, that our assistant crown attorneys are also overworked, overburdened and require more resources. Also, our colleagues in probation and parole are overworked and require more resources. These are all important investments in public safety.”

The Congress of Aboriginal Peoples also told the committee, “According to the Department of Justice study, the vast majority of individuals—over 80%—released on bail never break the conditions of their release. Of those who violate those conditions, 98% are administrative issues ... the solution is to address the poverty and service failures that cause crime in the first place.”

In my community, we have read tragic reports in our local paper several times a year about deaths that have happened at the Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre. There in fact have been 21 inmate deaths at EMDC since 2009. This has been brought to this government's and the past government's attention again and again and again, but they refuse to act. In the most recent case, Jamie Briggs, who was 44, was found dead at EMDC only a week after his arrest. He never even made it to his bail hearing. Families, lawyers representing the deceased, coroners' reports, the head of the Ontario Human Rights Commission and Aboriginal Legal Services have all recommended that the facility be shut down and replaced with a more modern facility to prevent further deaths.

The jail was built in the 1970s, when it was built for 150 inmates. But Speaker, it was built for 150; it now has well over 450 inmates. Worse yet, the design of the prison is not conducive to the level of monitoring that is necessary. The corrections officers are placed in an area where they can't directly see the cells. It's a powder keg, and it has been for years. This government seeks to ignore it.

London lawyer Kevin Egan, who has represented many of the families who have called upon the government for justice and for action, has said that this is a system that is bound to fail. Also, Kevin Egan said, “The deaths are occurring at a greater frequency than the coroner can accommodate.” There are times in the past where three men were crowded into two-person cells and five into three-person cells, inmates sleeping on their floor with their heads in the toilets.

Corrections officers also have an incredibly important and difficult role. At EMDC, over the years, the overcrowding has resulted in the removal of staff areas. I can't imagine that job, because in an area that has been known to be a powder keg, an area that's difficult to supervise and an area that is overcrowded—they used to have a gym, because I'm sure during their day, it would be incredibly stressful and they would need to blow off a little steam; they would be able to go to the gym. That was taken away

to incarcerate yet more people. Corrections officers are doing their very best, but this government is not supporting them.

I want to ask as well, when this motion passes, and if the federal government actually does something, what's the solution for EMDC? Will the government be creating a new facility, an upgraded facility? Will this government step up for the corrections officers and the inmates at EMDC to make sure that they are in a suitable location? I remain doubtful, because we see gestures like this, yet we don't see actual, substantive change.

Some of my questions remain unanswered. Where are the supports that front-line people have asked for? Why is this government so reluctant to provide them? Criminal defence lawyers have told this government that one of the biggest problems causing delays in our court system is the number of defendants appearing in courts who don't have legal representation. Judges often have to pull them aside and provide them with the very basic training that they need, and that takes time. That takes away from justice.

When unrepresented people arrive at bail court, and their case is not heard, they're returned back to detention, a time-consuming exercise that can occur multiple times. It's a system that this government has really weakened. It can't work more efficiently without adequate staffing and resources for legal aid. But in 2019, this government slashed legal aid funding by almost 30%. Legal Aid Ontario wrote:

"The legal system is less effective when it cannot operate with full efficiency. In a cost-benefit analysis of legal aid by the World Bank, it was found that failing to sufficiently fund legal aid programs does not save money, but rather displaces the cost to other areas of the legal system and increases the time it takes to resolve cases." It's bad business, Speaker. It's a foolish investment, not making those upstream investments and paying yet more later and ending up with a system that doesn't work well.

They go on to say, "Misplaced cost-cutting in one area can lead to more costs in another down the line, as seen with legal aid cuts 'saving' taxpayer money upfront but increases the cost of more self-represented individuals in the system."

**1700**

Justin Piché, who is a professor at the University of Ottawa department of criminology, provided the committee with some helpful figures about how this investment plays out. He cites Irvin Waller whose research indicates that "for every dollar spent upstream on violence prevention, \$7 is saved in policing, court, prison and victim services costs incurred after victimization has happened."

Speaker, on the official opposition side we support bail reform, but we also support it in a holistic way, in a way that makes sense with the system, in a way that we ensure our front-line officers have the supports they need, that corrections officers have the supports they need, that our court system is robust, that legal aid funding is appropriate and that we address the issues that matter the most. We need to make sure that people aren't incarcerated for

reasons beyond their control, such as mental illness, such as poverty, such as substance abuse.

We know that this government's cost-cutting measures—they're penny-wise and pound foolish measures—have resulted in a system that is not working for anyone. They have the opportunity to invest in those supports, to invest in mental health, to invest in truly supportive housing.

As I finish my comments, the city of Kingston has done some wonderful work in that space and they have seen the need to provide wraparound services for supportive housing to make sure that individuals have the mental health supports they need. It cost that city \$18 million in one year, but they've shown such great progress.

I hope this government will see the province not in isolation but as a holistic system where they have to fund things like these to make sure we have a province that we all want to live in.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Further debate?

**Mr. Todd J. McCarthy:** It is an honour to rise in the House this afternoon and join this debate to speak about the importance and the urgency of moving forward with the motion, government order 35. I'm proud to speak as the member for Durham in this regard and to speak in support of the government's motion.

As my colleague the Solicitor General stated in this House, one of our most fundamental responsibilities as members of provincial Parliament is to preserve law and order in our society, and that's because when we have safe communities, we have everything. As a new parliamentarian but also a veteran trial lawyer before our courts, as a citizen, as a family man, Speaker, I wholeheartedly agree with that statement by the Solicitor General. It pains me to say that far too many innocent people have lost their lives at the hands of dangerous, violent criminals who should have been behind bars and not freely roaming our streets.

So I'm proud to stand here with my colleagues and pay tribute to the brave men and women of law enforcement who made the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty to protect all of us and our way of life.

I salute Constable Andrew Hong of the Toronto Police Service, Constable Morgan Russell and Constable Devon Northrup of the South Simcoe Police Service and Constable Greg Pierzchala of the Ontario Provincial Police.

I salute Constable Shaelyn Yang of the RCMP, Constable Travis Jordan and Constable Brett Ryan of the Edmonton Police Service and Maureen Breau of the Sûreté du Québec.

But I also salute the thousands of families and individuals—innocent Canadians who have been victimized by senseless acts of violence because perpetrators were released on bail while awaiting trial. We mourn the loss of all Canadians, of all of our fellow citizens affected by this and are deeply saddened that in recent months our leaders have had to give tribute after tribute to honour our fallen too many times. With each victim, the public is losing confidence in our justice system, a justice system that is meant to protect us.

Speaker, let's be clear what we are voting on. Despite the initial amendment proposed by the member for Toronto Centre, there is government order 35, which states clearly and simply, based on the unanimous resolution from the Standing Committee on Justice Policy: "This House calls on the federal government to immediately reform the Criminal Code of Canada to address the dangers facing our communities and implement meaningful bail reform to prevent violent and repeat offenders from being released back into our communities." And the intent of government order 35 is to protect all Canadians, including the vulnerable Canadians referenced in the amendment proposed by the member for Toronto Centre. It's a redundant amendment, because "all Canadians" includes everybody.

The intent of government order 35 is to protect us all, because everyone who faces a violent offender with a firearm is vulnerable. There is no equality when facing such a criminal. So this is to protect all Canadians who face that. Who will it be next? A member of our own families? One of us in this House? Another police officer? Someone innocently shopping at one of our local plazas? One is too many. One more is too many.

The member for London North Centre speaks about this apparent approach where 20% do reoffend while on bail. That's what he didn't say when he mentioned the 80% who apparently don't. That's what we're talking about, those rare cases. It reminded me to state before this House that I come here as a new parliamentarian, but I also, in my practice as a trial lawyer, acted as duty counsel for our fellow citizens, stood up for those accused of crime, serious crime sometimes, but "accused" because we all know that the charter protects the presumption of innocence. We all know that an accusation is not proof.

But when we look at the charter, consider these sections. Consider section 11(d), which guarantees the presumption of innocence. What sequentially follows is section 11(e) of the charter: No one shall "be denied reasonable bail without just cause." Consider that. That is the right that's guaranteed in the charter. That right is in the context of section 1, which guarantees that right not as an absolute, but as written. As written, it is "reasonable bail without just cause." That is what cannot be denied.

That doesn't mean that everyone gets out. That doesn't mean we ignore the 20% who reoffend violently while out. That doesn't mean they're not presumed innocent until trial, but they will not be allowed to get out before trial, because they are a danger to public safety, because it's not reasonable to allow them out. In fact, it is reasonable, there is just cause, to allow them to be detained. Because section 1, in guaranteeing all rights in the charter, states very clearly, these rights are guaranteed subject to "reasonable limits prescribed by law ... demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society."

If one of our fellow citizens is threatened with violence, all of us are not free. That is why there is a balance in the charter. That is why there is a balance that guarantees reasonable bail, not bail for everyone, not for violent offenders.

The federal Liberal government is largely responsible for this unfortunate situation because it is the federal government that tabled amendments to the Criminal Code—the federal Liberal government supported now by the NDP. The federal Liberal government brought us Bill C-75, amendments to the Criminal Code that watered down the reasonable bail conditions that already existed. The problems that we've faced, the violence that we've faced, the dangers that we face, the loss of life that we've faced is directly attributable to these amendments from five years ago tabled by the federal Liberal government.

**1710**

The solution is there for them to take action to repeal what they brought in, and we urge the NDP, His Majesty's loyal opposition in this House, to support our motion, government order 35, unanimously to send a message to their federal counterparts to stop propping up a Liberal government that won't take action to keep our communities safe and strike the right balance between innocent Canadians, innocent law enforcement officers and the rights of those accused of crime.

Consider what we're voting on. Consider how we can only do so much. We are at this stage because of the leadership of Premier Ford, who galvanized support across the country, leading every other Premier of every other province and territory to urge the federal justice minister, to urge the federal government to act swiftly to stop the senseless violence, the loss of life; to stop the continued undermining of the public's confidence in the administration of justice.

I happened to be taught in my years in law school by Professor Louise Arbour, who went on to be appointed to the High Court of Justice, then the Court of Appeal for Ontario and served so ably as a Supreme Court judge. She told our class in criminal procedure, when the charter was new—and she talked about the administration of justice being brought into disrepute. What does that mean? Well, it means that the charter, of course, in guaranteeing the right to presumption of innocence and reasonable bail, is such that—what happens to the public's confidence when the premise of our system is it's better that 10 guilty people go free than that one innocent person stays behind bars? That is the premise of our system. That's the premise of the presumption of innocence. It's the premise of the right not to be denied reasonable bail, except with just cause. But as Professor Arbour told our class over 30 years ago, what if it's 50 guilty people that go free and reoffend in the process? What if it's 100? What if it's hundreds? The public starts to lose confidence. You can have the principles, but you must address those few violent offenders that have broken the social contract and are undermining the system of justice that we all look to for fairness and balance.

So the member for London North Centre fails, in my respectful submission, in his debate in this House to talk about what a proper balance is. We believe in the presumption of innocence. We believe in reasonable bail. But we don't believe that that is an absolute. We do not believe that violent offenders who have offended previously

should be allowed out while awaiting their trials. It's as simple as that. The evidence is clear that there's a connection between the few persons with that kind of history and the loss of life for our fellow Canadians, for our men and women in law enforcement.

What happens now, and the reason that the confidence of the public has been undermined, is that our current bail rules not only allow repeat and violent offenders to recommit serious offences, but they incentivize individual and organized criminal behaviour, because there is no deterrent, and innocent people are caught in the crossfire. How is the public expected to have any confidence in a justice system where the rights of the accused—violent accused persons, though few as they are; and as few as they are, the carnage and the life-changing outcomes that they bring about. Why are their rights outweighing the rights of families and individuals and law enforcement officers? That's what this motion is about.

Believe me, if we could as a government amend the Criminal Code, we would do it. But the Constitution Act divides responsibilities between two levels of government. Under section 91, only the federal government has jurisdiction over the Criminal Code, so we will take no lessons from the member from London North Centre about what we fail to do. We are doing everything that's possible for a provincial government to take action, but we actually do need to call upon the federal government to do its job, to legislate in its area of jurisdiction, to repeal the mess it started in 2018 and to take further action. And we are being very specific. The Criminal Code bail rules must be amended to create a reverse onus provision for violent offenders who have committed crimes with firearms—accused but presumed innocent, but nevertheless denied bail because there is just cause, because it is reasonable to deny them bail. That's what this is about.

So we call on the federal government to take bold action to address this situation, which will only affect a few violent offenders, whether they act individually or whether they're part of organized crime, to stop them in their tracks, to keep them behind bars to protect the public. That is what we call reasonable limits on charter rights prescribed by law in a free and democratic society, and demonstrably justified as such, because the charter has many rights. It's about balancing those rights. The very first section of the charter says so.

Our motion and our call to the federal government to implement reverse onus for these few violent offenders when they have firearms and are creating imminent risk to the public—our motion calls upon the government to amend the Criminal Code within its constitutional jurisdiction to do something that is constitutional, that is charter-compliant. We are calling upon the federal government not only to actually legislate in their area of Criminal Code jurisdiction but to legislate in compliance with the supreme law of Canada, because the charter itself does not give an absolute right to bail.

That's what the member for London North Centre doesn't seem to understand. There is no absolute right to bail. Specific to violent offenders who put our lives at risk,

they can and must have a reverse onus upon them so that they must show cause why they should be released pending trial. That's the simple amendment. The solution is clear, straightforward and charter-compliant.

Now, many academics, lawyers and police officers have spoken out publicly about this. Many appeared before the committee, and that's why we have a unanimous motion from the committee on justice policy. We know that the statistics—and I hate to talk about statistics, but it's to make this point: that it's only a small number of accused persons who will be affected by this. We know that over the last two years in the city of Toronto, 9% of accused persons already out on bail for firearms offences were rearrested on new firearms-related charges. That equated to 140 people committing new firearms-related offences who should not have been released back into their communities—140 people—but they can do incredible unlimited damage. They can forever end lives; they can forever affect lives—loved ones who will never come home again, be they law enforcement officers or innocent members of the public.

Over the same period, 37% of accused persons charged with shooting-related homicides were out on bail for various offences at the time of the alleged fatal shooting. That equated to 34 people who were out on bail while being involved in a fatal shooting; 15 of those were on bail for a firearms offence. And this is just Toronto, our provincial capital. This is unacceptable. This needs to stop. It is time for the Liberal government in Ottawa, propped up by the NDP, to make the changes to reverse the mistake they made in 2018.

Recently, hundreds of Torontonians took part in a candlelight walk to honour Gabriel, the 16-year-old young man who was fatally stabbed at a Toronto subway station. Like many senseless acts of violence, his is a tragic death and our thoughts are with Gabriel's family and friends. It is egregious that offenders who have a history of violence, a history of using weapons or being charged with weapons offences, loaded illegal firearms—it is egregious that they are given the right to walk free pending trial. Their charter rights can and will be respected by the motion that is before this House and by the amendments that we urge the federal government to act upon.

**1720**

We support the action of the city of Toronto in hiring 200 additional police officers to protect our streets and neighbourhoods, and we've supported the city's police service with over \$250 million in grants since this government took office. So we are doing all we can as a government. The senseless crime that is and has been unleashed in this city and this province cannot go on. The time for action is now.

To address the member for London North Centre further in his debate—because I listened to what he said. I sat and listened quietly and patiently, but he's wrong. I urge his colleagues to reject what he said, join us on this side of the House and unanimously support this motion.

He talks about delays. I appeared before the justice committee of the federal Parliament two years ago as a



barrister and solicitor before I was elected, and I gave them the simple solution to putting a pause on the Jordan decision that would eliminate what results from the so-called delay he speaks about—an easy solution, but again it is for the federal government to do. Federal inaction by the Liberal government, aided and abetted by the federal NDP, must stop. Let's have His Majesty's loyal opposition here, free to do the right thing and to send their own counterparts a message. I urge you, the member for London North Centre and all of the colleagues on the other side, to support this government's motion.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Further debate?

**Mr. Lorne Coe:** I'm pleased to join the debate. I've been sitting here for the last day and a half, listening to the debate very carefully, and I'd like to thank the members on the government side who are here from the committee, MPP Hogarth and MPP Kusendova, and earlier this afternoon—he made a good presentation—was MPP Saunderson.

I join you today, Speaker, as the Chair of the justice policy committee, and I take myself back to the day the committee was considering the recommendations, 12 recommendations in that report I had the pleasure of tabling in the Legislature approximately two weeks ago. At that time, I read out all the names of the members of the committee, including the official opposition and a representative from the independents. In fact, it was the House leader from the opposition.

We went through all the recommendations. Members of the committee spoke to the context of each recommendation and then we voted. All the hands went up on each recommendation, including the official opposition's and the independent's. All hands went up on the 12 recommendations. So here we are today discussing an amendment to the amendment to the motion that the member from Durham put forward, going forward.

The report that I tabled highlighted a number of reforms that needed to take place. The committee heard from a number of witnesses who talked about a number of aspects, including mental health. We can debate that as much as we want; we can debate housing, we can debate other aspects, but clearly the report that was issued approximately two weeks ago by the standing committee was a unanimous report. The committee all put their hands up, including the official opposition and the independent, allowing me, as the Chair of the committee, to bring forward that report. Speaker, it did not contain the motion that was brought forward by the member from Toronto Centre. It did not.

Let's talk about the motion, as the House leader, the Honourable Paul Calandra, did yesterday. I'm going to quote him from Hansard, if I may:

"The amendment" from the member from Toronto Centre "says the following: 'Delete everything after "implement"—so if we had agreed with this motion, we would be deleting 'meaningful bail reform to prevent violent and repeat offenders from being released back into our communities.' The NDP, the official opposition,"—

who supported the report—"want us to delete that. Then they go one step further in also wanting us to delete any message to the federal government through the House and the Senate. They want us to delete that and then replace it with the following: 'meaningful bail reform to more appropriately evaluate'"—stay with me, Speaker—"evaluate."

Who needs to evaluate any more whether a violent repeat offender should be denied bail and left in jail?

All the hands went up. All the recommendations were adopted. "Take the report and report it," which I did—adopted absolutely unanimously.

Speaker, nothing is more important than public safety. We understand that our police services are the front line that keeps Ontario safe. As MPPs, and in my case as a former municipal politician for 13 years, that is the main underpinning of what we do as representatives of our community. Make no mistake, Speaker, on this side of the House, we have one message: We have the backs of everyone who keeps us safe, today and every day, and we will do absolutely everything we need to do to help keep Ontario safe.

Speaker, too many innocent people have lost their lives at the hands of dangerous criminals who should have been behind bars, not on our streets. Led by Premier Ford, all provincial and territorial governments have joined the call of countless law enforcement officials to write a letter asking the federal government to take immediate action to strengthen Canada's bail system to better protect the public and Canada's first responders.

Speaker, OPP Commissioner Carrique appeared before the Standing Committee on Justice Policy which, as I said at the beginning, I chair. He had this to say about bail reform, and he referred to the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, who passed a resolution in 2008 calling on the federal government to strengthen bail laws to protect the public "from those offenders who have clearly demonstrated their unrelenting willingness to engage in criminal behaviour that directly harms our citizens. This resolution called on the federal government to change bail and sentencing laws so chronic offenders are more effectively dealt with by considering their persistent criminal behaviour. As highlighted in the resolution, a minority of offenders commit most of the violent crime in Canada, and yet the dangerous nature of reoffending by these individuals is not adequately recognized in the current bail and sentencing practices. It is not acceptable that there has been no meaningful action taken to address the troubling and dangerous issues raised since 2008, and unfortunately, many innocent people have been victimized since....

"I strongly believe that Canadians deserve to live free from fear and protected from harm experienced at the hands of repeat violent offenders. Change needs to happen."

1730

Change, Speaker, needs to happen.

The commissioner concluded by saying, "As police officers, we understand the risks involved in going to work

each and every day, but we do expect that the judicial and public safety framework will be in place to support us. Our officers and the public they protect deserve nothing less from their judicial system. Our officers, our community members and visitors to our province deserve to be safeguarded against repeat, known and violent offenders who are charged with violent and weapons-related offences while they are awaiting trial.” Our motion does that. We stand behind our police officers today and every day.

We also heard, as my committee members on the government side will attest, from the police associations representing thousands of police officers across the province who expressed their members’ frustration of what they see as a catch-and-release approach to bail.

The president of the Ontario Provincial Police Association read the following excerpt from an email he received from a retired sergeant who worked in northern Ontario, and it’s material to what we’re talking about today:

“Catch and release is a very appropriate phrase describing what is happening” out there.

“Over the many years, many of my officers have complained bitterly to me about having to apprehend the same criminals time after time when the criminals were once again released rather than being held in custody until their charges were dealt with.”

According to the president of the Police Association of Ontario, not only does the catch-and-release approach to bail place inadequate emphasis on protection of the public, it encourages escalating violent behaviour: “Our members are frustrated to work within a system that is not prioritizing community safety. They are frustrated by apprehending a known offender one day and being called on their next shift to the same place, for the same reason, to arrest the same person.... Too often, with each release, the offender’s behaviour is worsened and their negative choices emboldened, until the day comes that the individual becomes violent, or more violent, and the result is that someone in our community is injured or killed.”

Similarly, Speaker, Jon Reid, the president of the Toronto Police Association said that the members of the association are “beyond frustrated.” He related an incident from 2021 in which an armed bank robber seriously injured two plainclothes police officers during the arrest of suspects. One of the accused was released on bail within 24 hours, before both officers were released from hospital.

Commenting on this incident in an op-ed piece, Mr. Reid concluded, “If our bail system is designed and/or interpreted to justify releasing individuals in these circumstances, what message does this send to the community that they’re serving? The simple answer is this: It sends the wrong message to the people who protect our communities and those who seek to live in a peaceful and just society.” This immense and proven threat to public safety will continue to grow out of control without drastic and immediate reform to the Criminal Code of Canada.

Speaker, we’ve seen in communities across Ontario, across Canada, police officers come under threat. But,

Speaker, you’ll know—and I know the committee members from the justice policy committee will attest to this as they speak later this afternoon—it’s not just about police officers. It’s about families, hard-working families here in Ontario. It’s about students. Speaker, I have two universities, Ontario Tech and Trent Durham, and I have a community college, Durham College. It’s about those students. It’s about new Canadians—the new Canadians who have come to the town of Whitby in five new developments. It’s about all kinds of people, Speaker, and what those people want and what families want. They want to live in a safe province of Ontario. They want to live in a safe Canada. That’s what they aspire to. That’s what they deserve.

I want to go back to what the Honourable Paul Calandra had to say on this debate, because I think it’s really material and I think he hit it right on, and I’m going to again repeat some of those aspects:

“The reason we’re having this debate here is to give them assistance in bringing the reforms”—what he was referring to was our police services. They’re bringing the reforms forward. “The reason why we’ve engrossed it to the Parliament, both the House of Commons and the Senate, is because we wanted them to hear a unified voice from the people of the province of Ontario”—I thought we had one. Speaker, I thought we had one. I think our committee members did. Our lead, the MPP from Etobicoke–Lakeshore, MPP Hogarth and I left that committee room thinking we had one—a unified voice. Well, here we are this afternoon, and we’ve taken a day and a half. Where’s the unified voice? Where is it? The hands went up. On every recommendation, the hands went up. The House leader from the official opposition was there. His hand went up all the time, didn’t it?

Here we are today debating an amendment to the amendment that never came up in the committee. How does that happen? How does that help our front-line providers? How does that help them? How does that help hard-working families in Ontario? It doesn’t. Again, I’m back to what the House leader had to say: “By removing and changing it to ‘evaluate,’ we’re in the exact same spot we’ve been in over the last number of years. We have to evaluate everything. What is there to evaluate?” Are we going to tell the OPP commissioner that we have to evaluate after he spent 20 minutes making a deputation? The police chief of the Toronto Police Service, from York—that we have to evaluate? What does that accomplish? Absolutely nothing.

**1740**

You know, I think if I walked the streets in the town of Whitby tonight, the downtown core—they talk about it as the “four corners,” but it’s sort of a gathering centre, right? I think that’s true of most municipalities. If I stopped a couple of people and said, “I want to ask you something, should a repeat violent offender be let out on bail?” I know what they’d tell me real quick: “No, they should not be let out on bail.” That’s what we’ve been talking about. That’s what I thought we had consensus about. Did you not think

that? I sure did. So then we get this amendment out of—I don't know where it came from. It was never discussed for two and a half days; it just appeared.

But I want to be very clear. I want to be absolutely clear, Speaker, as was the honourable Paul Calandra, our House leader, who does an exceptional job. Let me be clear also as the Chair of the justice policy committee—and thank you, Minister Calandra, for that appointment. My committee members here on the government side will be equally clear—some of them are getting ready to speak too. We will absolutely not under any circumstances support the motion that would diminish what the people of this great province want.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Further debate?

**Ms. Donna Skelly:** Speaker, I am so proud to be part of a government that believes in law and order, that believes in creating safe communities for the men and women, the seniors, our youth, so that they can enjoy everything Ontario has to offer. And I am very proud to be able to speak to this motion calling on the federal government to immediately reform the Criminal Code of Canada to address the dangers facing our communities and implement meaningful bail reform to prevent violence and repeat offenders from being released back into our communities.

Madam Speaker, this motion really does hit close to home. It was just two days after Christmas, December 27 last year, that Ontario Provincial Police Constable Pierzchala was shot and killed while responding to what appeared to be a routine roadside check near Hagersville, which is just outside of Hamilton. Constable Pierzchala was 28 years old, and he was the fourth Ontario officer to be killed in the line of duty during the closing months of 2022.

One of the two individuals who was arrested and charged with Constable Pierzchala's murder has a significant history with the criminal justice system and of violent behaviour generally. The history includes a conviction and prison sentence for armed robbery and a lifetime ban on possessing a firearm. It includes outstanding charges for assault and weapons offences committed in 2021, an outstanding arrest warrant issued in September 2022 for failing to make a court appearance. Although bail for the charges laid in 2021 was initially denied, it was granted following a review. The suspect was free on bail at the time of the shooting.

OPP Commissioner Thomas Carrique described Constable Pierzchala's murder as preventable and said he was outraged at the fact that someone with the suspect's history had been able to make bail. The commissioner also said something has to change. Well, on January 18, 2023, the Standing Committee on Justice Policy passed a motion to conduct a study on the reform of Canada's bail system. The committee made two sets of recommendations. It asked the federal government to amend the Criminal Code to strengthen the bail system as it applies to those charged with violent offences or offences in which firearms or

other weapons are involved; and that the provincial government make changes to the administration of the justice system that will improve the functioning of the bail system here in Ontario.

Madam Speaker, all of Ontario's policing leaders are unanimously agreeing that bail reform would save lives. According to OPP Commissioner Thomas Carrique, incidents involving offenders with a history of violence who commit further crimes while on bail are not rare.

As MPPs, one of our most fundamental responsibilities is to preserve law and order in our society, and it is because when we have safe communities, we really do have everything that Ontario has to offer. We have a place to work, and we have a place to play, a place to shop and a place to pray, a place for our kids to grow up and for our seniors to grow old. We have it all.

There has never been a government in the history of this province or this country that has cared as much about public safety as this government, and it really does start at the top. The Premier has made public safety a priority. We can all be proud that our Premier has led the way in this country when it comes to public safety. It was our Premier who joined together with all of his provincial and territorial counterparts to demand bail reform from the federal government. It was this Premier who supported both the Solicitor General and the Attorney General in working with the federal government to improve public safety and implement bail reform—these were key topics at the federal-provincial-territorial meetings both last fall and this past winter—and it is our Premier who knows that a safe Ontario is a strong Ontario.

The fact is, we need the federal government to step up, and that's what this motion is calling for. Our government went to Ottawa to advocate for urgent bail reform. Our government sat down with David Lametti, Canada's Attorney General and Minister of Justice, and Marco Mendicino, Canada's Minister of Public Safety, along with Canada's provincial and territorial justice ministers, and our government demanded change. We underlined the need for the federal government in Ottawa to fix the gaps in the Criminal Code. Now, some of these gaps exist because of the Liberal's Bill C-75, while other gaps are longer-standing issues which must be addressed. The current bail rules in Canada not only allow repeat and violent offenders to recommit serious offences, but they truly incentivize criminal behaviour as there is no deterrent.

Madam Speaker, our government has been asking the Liberal government in Ottawa to strengthen our borders to stop the flow of illegal handguns entering the country. We have also demanded a commitment to long-term, permanent and sustainable funding of the federal Gun and Gang Violence Action Fund. The majority of firearms used in crime are coming from across our porous border. This needs to stop now, and the Liberal government in Ottawa has an opportunity to fix it.

Madam Speaker, this just moved in the Toronto Sun, a story written by Brad Hunter:

“Hamilton” Police “Raise Red Flag over Gun Proliferation....

“Hamilton” police “have arrested and charged two young men in the latest firearms-related incident that has detectives deeply concerned.

“On Saturday, around 10 a.m., officers responded to ... a gun-related incident. Several individuals were present and arrested in the area...

Charged are”—and they name a number.

“They were hit with a slew of gun charges. The arrests come as Steel Town has seen an explosion in gun seizures. Throughout the past weekend,” police “seized 13 guns in several incidents across the city.

“Since the beginning of the year, officers have seized 48 guns from a variety of criminal incidents, five of which were recovered during traffic-related stops. That’s a 77% increase from the same period in 2022.

“We should all be alarmed by these numbers. Thanks to the great work of our officers and the keen eyes of a few citizens, we got 13 guns within a 48-hour period,” said Chief Frank Bergen.

**1750**

“Here are some of the other incidents:

“—On Friday, just after 8:30 a.m., a driver observed a bedside table on the roadside. Underneath the table, there was a loaded handgun.” Police “later seized seven more guns and ammo. A 59-year-old Hamilton man from Hamilton has been charged.

“—On Sunday, just after 2:30 a.m. officers were called to the area of Main St. W. and Queen St. S. for a loaded handgun found in a bar.

“—Later on Sunday just after 1 p.m.,” police “discovered a stopped vehicle in a live lane of traffic and a male slumped over the steering wheel. Officers discovered ammo on the passenger seat and recovered two long guns.”

The bottom line here, Madam Speaker, is we’re seeing illegal guns coming across the border, not only in the GTA, but in Hamilton and right across the province of Ontario. Getting illegal guns off our streets is a top priority, and as we know, the majority of guns used in crime are illegal.

Speaker, the evidence is clear: The status quo is simply not working when it comes to bail rules. Data gathered by the Toronto Police Service highlights both the urgency of the issue, as well as the number of individuals involved. Over the last two years in the city of Toronto, 9% of accused persons already out on bail for firearms offences were rearrested on new firearms-related charges. That equated to 140 people committing new firearms-related offences who shouldn’t have been released back into our community.

Over the same period, 37% of accused persons charged with a shooting-related homicide were out on bail for various offences at the time of the alleged fatal shooting. That equated to 34 people who were out on bail while being involved in a fatal shooting; 15 of those were on bail for a firearms offence. And that is just Toronto.

Speaker, this is unacceptable, and it needs to stop now. Our government demands that the Liberal government in Ottawa own up to their mistakes and make urgent changes to bail rules before more lives are lost. Something has to matter: The rule of law must matter, and our public safety must matter. Our continued advocacy to the federal government, our continued actions to do everything in our province’s power to create a safer society, is the context of the motion before us today. Ontario is taking action in the absence of federal leadership.

Thanks to the leadership of our Premier, we have already made concrete and constructive proposals to the federal government. As we’ve said, a joint letter signed by the Premiers of all 13 provinces and territories, sent on January 13 of this year, stated as follows:

“A reverse onus on bail must be created for the offence of possession of a loaded prohibited or restricted firearm in s. 95 of the Code. A person accused of a s. 95 offence should have to demonstrate why their detention is not justified when they were alleged to have committed an offence where there was imminent risk to the public.... A review of other firearms-related offences is also warranted to determine whether they should also attract a reverse onus on bail.”

As demonstrated in that letter, this is a timely proposal for much-needed bail reform. We would welcome the opportunity to work with Ottawa to get it done.

Speaker, our government is also proactive in introducing programs to reduce recidivism. This government is using the latest research and evidence to design new programs and reintegration approaches, taking advantage of new technologies and rethinking the journey of individuals through the justice system. While inmates are in our custody, we will continue to focus on programming and employment-readiness, while ensuring that their overall health and wellness are addressed, so that individuals successfully reintegrate into the community.

Ontario’s Ministry of the Solicitor General is leading an employment initiative by working with the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development. This is being strengthened through our partnership on the Skills Development Fund to support second chances so that we can increase employment and reduce recidivism. This initiative is a long-term, sustainable initiative.

Madam Speaker, with that, I move that the question now be put.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Ms. Skelly has moved that the question be now put. I’m satisfied that there has been sufficient debate time to allow this question to be put to the House. There has been more than 6.5 hours of debate on this motion, so I’m going to pose the question.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion that the question be now put, please say “aye.”

All those opposed to the motion that the question be now put, please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

*Vote deferred.*

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Orders of the day?

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Madam Speaker, if you seek it, I'm sure you'll find consent to see the clock at 6.

**The Acting Speaker (M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard):** Is there consent to see the clock at 6? Thank you.

*Report continues in volume B.*









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Byers, Rick (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	
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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	
Jama, Sarah (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	
<b>Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC)</b>	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	
<b>Karpoche, Bhutla (NDP)</b>	Parkdale—High Park	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Première vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Ke, Vincent (IND)	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
<b>Kerzner, Hon. / L'hon. Michael S. (PC)</b>	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	
<b>Lecce, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)</b>	King—Vaughan	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Lindo, Laura Mae (NDP)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
<b>Lumsden, Hon. / L'hon. Neil (PC)</b>	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)	Kiwetinoong	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Mantha, Michael (IND)	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	
<b>McNaughton, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (PC)</b>	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
<b>Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)</b>	York—Simcoe	Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Oosterhoff, Sam (PC)	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	

<b>Member and Party / Député(e) et parti</b>	<b>Constituency / Circonscription</b>	<b>Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités</b>
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	
<b>Parsa, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (PC)</b>	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires
Pasma, Chandra (NDP)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	
<b>Piccini, Hon. / L'hon. David (PC)</b>	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs
Pierre, Natalie (PC)	Burlington	
<b>Pirie, Hon. / L'hon. George (PC)</b>	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	
<b>Rasheed, Hon. / L'hon. Kaleed (PC)</b>	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery / Ministre des Services au public et aux entreprises
<b>Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)</b>	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	
<b>Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)</b>	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	
<b>Skelly, Donna (PC)</b>	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	
<b>Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Graydon (PC)</b>	Parry Sound—Muskoka	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
<b>Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)</b>	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
<b>Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)</b>	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
<b>Tangri, Hon. / L'hon. Nina (PC)</b>	Mississauga—Streetsville	Associate Minister of Housing / Ministre associée du Logement
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain / Hamilton-Mountain	
Thanigasalam, Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	
<b>Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)</b>	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
<b>Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)</b>	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	

<b>Member and Party / Député(e) et parti</b>	<b>Constituency / Circonscription</b>	<b>Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités</b>
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
<b>Williams, Hon. / L'hon. Charmaine A. (PC)</b>	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity / Ministre associée des Perspectives sociales et économiques pour les femmes
Wong-Tam, Kristyn (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	
Vacant	Kanata—Carleton	