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Mercredi
26 avril 2023

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 26 April 2023

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 26 avril 2023

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

YOUR HEALTH ACT, 2023

LOI DE 2023

CONCERNANT VOTRE SANTÉ

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 6, 2023, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

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

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: I must say that I stand in front of you, Speaker, with very mixed emotions this morning. Part of me is really angry that this bill is going through. Part of me is really anxious; I have anxiety about this bill going through.

You see, Speaker, Bill 60 is laser-focused, very powerful, and it serves one purpose. The purpose is to bring in investor-owned corporations to provide what forever has been provided by our not-for-profit hospitals. Why am I so anxious and angry about this? Because we are being witness, all 124 of us, to the destruction of medicare, a program that defines us as Canadians, as Ontarians, where we know that the care we need will be based on our needs, not on our ability to pay. Once Bill 60 becomes reality in Ontario, all of this will change, Speaker, and it will change for the worse.

You see, health care is a relationship that happens between somebody who needs care and the health care providers who provide that care. There is a very strong trust relationship that needs to take place between those two human beings in order for quality care to take place. Often, your health care providers—your nurses, your physician, your physiotherapist—will ask you to do things that you don't really want to do, will ask you to do things that could be painful in the short term but are aimed at improving your health in the long term. All of this can take place because there's trust.

This trust relationship will change forever once there is a for-profit motive in there. You see, Speaker, what we have right now in Ontario are publicly owned facilities. If you think of a community health centre or a public health

unit, those are publicly owned facilities. They provide care; they are not-for-profit.

We have privately owned, not-for-profit facilities. Most hospitals in Ontario are set out under this model.

Then, a lot of people know the physician-owned small business. Most physicians are a small business. They provide care, but because you have this caring relationship between the owner of the small business—the physician—and its patients, the system works.

What we don't have very much of at all in Ontario, but what Bill 60 will bring us, is what we call investor-owned corporations. So, a corporation will invest to build a surgical suite. Those are not cheap, Speaker. We are talking investing millions of dollars to build a surgical suite so that hip and knee surgeries can take place in that surgical suite. The only reason those investors are investing those millions of dollars in surgical suites is not because they want your knee pain to go away; it's because they want to make money. And this changes everything.

We are all human beings. When you will be asked to do something by an investor-owned corporation that owns the surgical suite, you will start to double-guess yourself: "Are they asking me to do this because they'll make more money? Or are they asking me to do this because it's good for me?" And the minute this doubt comes into our minds—because we are all human beings, when we don't know, we always imagine the worst; this is the way human beings think—then the opportunity to have top-quality care goes out the window, not to mention everything else that could go wrong.

So, am I against community-based surgical suites? Absolutely not. I mean, look at what Sunnybrook has done. They have built in the community an OR suite that provides hip and knee surgeries. They are able to do those surgeries 30% faster and 40% cheaper than in their hospital. They provide outpatient care, that is, you come in in the morning, you have your surgery, you go out at night—no need for a hospital admission. They do the same type of surgery in the hospitals. It's more expensive and a little bit more timely, but I'll come back to that.

0910

The difference here is that it is owned by a not-for-profit hospital. It is staffed by physicians who work not only in the community-based surgical suite; they also work in the hospital. Because sometimes, although you will try to select, and there are selection criteria that we use—most hospitals use a set of four. They are new criteria. You can divide them in nine, but I won't go into the details. You select patients who you think are able to have the surgery done in the morning or afternoon and go home at night.

But for anybody who has worked in health care, there's the theory and then there's the practice. Somebody who you thought would do really, really good suddenly codes on the OR table and needs to be admitted into the hospital.

At Sunnybrook, there's no issue. The surgeon who was there when things went wrong will follow you back into the hospital. You will be transferred to the hospital, admitted and looked after. Everything goes smoothly.

The people who work in the community-based surgical suites run by the hospital are the same OR nurses and technicians who work in the hospital also. They see not only the cases that are deemed lower-risk that can be done on an outpatient basis; they also work in the hospital and see people with complex, multiple co-morbidity factors who still need the surgery but it becomes a whole lot more complicated because of their health status.

Not all of us have the same health status. Many people have multiple chronic diseases that make it harder to provide what would be qualified as a simple surgery. It's not that simple, depending on who you're providing that to.

This model I fully support. You can look at what London has done. My colleague right here could tell you a whole lot more about it, being from London himself. London bought a building across the street from the hospital, set it up as a community-based outpatient surgical centre and operates it pretty much the same way. They operate it where if it's somebody that they feel can have their surgery and be discharged the same day, they will be cared for in the outpatient surgical suite that it owns. But again, it is owned by a not-for-profit hospital. It is staffed by people who handle both: the people who are healthy enough to be seen and discharged the same day as well as the people with the multiple co-morbidities, who need to be seen in the hospital.

If something goes wrong—we always hope it doesn't; I don't wish harm upon anybody, but it happens—the continuity of care is there. The same surgeon who looked after you when things went wrong will continue to look after you to make sure that you get back to health and back to the outcomes that were expected out of that surgery—same thing with the rest of the surgical team that provided you with that care. That makes a whole lot of difference.

You all know that many hospitals right now have hundreds of vacancies on their websites. Go on the Ottawa Hospital: The last thing I counted was over 575 vacancies. Go on any hospital in Toronto, London, Sudbury—it doesn't matter where you go, there are multiple vacancies.

When you have those investor-owned corporations investing millions of dollars to build those surgical suites because they want to make money, then there's a good chance that they will take even more of those exhausted, overworked, overstressed hospital workers and bring them into those investor-owned surgical suites.

Why, Speaker? Well when you work in a hospital, a hospital runs 24/7. They run on evening shifts and on night shifts. They run on the weekends. They run on the statutory holidays. It doesn't matter that it is Christmas and it's your son's—none of that matters. You work in a hospital,

you will be scheduled and you will have to work shift work: weekends, night shifts, statutory holidays.

You go work in an investor-owned surgical suite that exists to make money, you don't have to provide care 24/7. You will get a Monday-to-Friday job, 9 to 5.

Think about it, Speaker. You have a choice to work in a hospital, where the cases are more complex, require a whole lot more thinking and care, and things don't always go well. You have to work day shifts, afternoon shifts, night shifts. You have to work Saturday, Sunday, statutory holidays. Or you can work Monday to Friday, 9 to 5, looking after the healthy and the wealthy in an investor-owned corporate surgical suite.

We're all human beings. People like to be home with their kids at night. People like to have the weekends off to enjoy their lives and their friends. People like to be home on Christmas morning or Eid or whatever other holidays that you celebrate with your families and friends. It is a whole lot more difficult to do this when you work in a hospital than when you work in an investor-owned corporation whose sole, number one priority is to make money.

This is what is about to change in Ontario. Ontario has over 700 independent health facilities. That's how we call them right now; they'll be changing the name apparently. Most of the independent health facilities that we have are X-ray—quite a few sleep labs. You will remember the audit that the Auditor General has done that showed that the sleep labs in our hospitals work pretty good. You have sleep apnea or something, you will be tested in the sleep lab in the hospital and be treated.

But the ones that are owned and run in the community, the ones that are privately owned—the Auditor General showed us that a physician who owned a sleep lab referred every single one of his patients to the sleep lab and most of them twice. There were no valid medical reasons for every single patient of a physician to be sent to a sleep lab, except that he owned it and makes more money when there are more patients coming through. I could go on about the oversight of the private clinics, and I will in a few minutes, but it's pretty weak, Speaker.

We already know that in the 700 or so independent health facilities that exist in Ontario, the great majority, 98% of them, are for-profit, that whenever there is an opportunity to make more money, they take it.

When we look at who is waiting to build those surgical suites, I could name a few. Clearpoint Health Network certainly cannot wait for Bill 60 to pass. They already have spotted out a few places in Toronto where they want to set up those for-profit surgical suites, because they know that they will make money.

But I want you to look at some of the side-effects of this. The first one is the draining of staff away from our not-for-profit hospitals who look after everyone, no matter your complexity, no matter how many co-morbidities you have. Some of those staff will go to the for-profit surgical suites.

I've already said why: We are human beings. They're offering you a Monday-to-Friday, 9-to-5 job, probably will pay more, and you don't have to do night shifts

anymore. You don't have to look after the complex cases anymore. It's a money-making proposition that very many people will be interested in.

0920

You have to look at what that will mean. Does that mean that the 575 vacancies in the Ottawa Hospital will stay there or grow? Does that mean that the vacancies in London Health Sciences or UHN—University Health Network—or Health Sciences North, or in Sault Ste. Marie, will grow bigger?

Many of those specialists—the anaesthetists, the orthopaedic surgeons etc.—who will be needed to do those surgeries right now volunteer to do locums in northern Ontario. That is, all hip and knee surgeries are based on a quota. It's called paid-per-procedure—whatever; it doesn't matter—every hospital gets allocated a certain number of hips and knees. So the surgeons divide them amongst themselves—I'll make this up: “You are given 230 hip and knee surgeries for the year.” Once the 230 surgeries are done, there is no more money to do hip and knee surgeries. You're done.

Many of those surgeons then volunteer to come to northern Ontario. They do what we call locum. I can tell you right now that in Sault Ste. Marie, the Sault Area Hospital has lost their anaesthetist, the locum that used to come up. Why? Because they are working with some companies down south who are getting ready to set up those for-profit surgical suites. Once the private surgical suites are there and the government is giving them plenty of cases to keep them busy, then the surgeons, the anaesthetists who used to come to northern Ontario to do locum, because their share had been used, won't be coming to northern Ontario. Every single hospital in northern Ontario works really hard—time, effort and energy—to recruit and retain health specialists to staff our hospitals. All of this will become really hard, Speaker. All of this will become harder, because once they have used their—I made up the 230; some of them have 500, some of them have 100; it all varies—paper procedure number of cases in their hospital, they don't need to come to northern Ontario anymore. They can just go to the investor-owned corporations that operate the surgical suites and they can do all of the surgeries that they want because the government is very generous.

We have seen what has just happened with cataract surgeries, where the three for-profit corporations were given thousands more payments for cataract surgery. But I can tell you that in Sudbury the hospital does very few cataract surgeries in March because the payments go from April 1 to March 31. They don't follow January 1. They go April 1 to March 31. So once the money is gone, then nothing happens until April 1, till the money starts to flow again. But not for the for-profit. They were given thousands of cataract surgery money to do the exact same thing that could have been done in our hospital, but that money was not available to our hospital. It was only available to the for-profit corporations.

Those are decisions that this government is making because they are laser-focused on bringing forward private

investor-owned corporations to Ontario. Don't get me wrong, there are many, many wealthy corporations that just can't wait, but I'm trying to explain to all of us the impact it will have.

We have First Nations people from Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug and all through Treaty 7 that are at Queen's Park right now. Bringing health care services to fly-in, remote First Nations is not easy. Recruitment of staff is something that is really, really demanding, difficult but important.

We are just making that job 10 times more difficult than it was before, because the pool of locums—that is the term that we use for people who work in Ontario, usually in southern Ontario, and come to northern Ontario. They will come for a week at a time or two weeks at a time. Some nurses come for months at a time. They come and work in northern Ontario and then they go back to their day job in southern Ontario.

We call those locums. They are paid to do locum services. But once the demand comes from the investor-owned corporations for those same people with the same skills to stay down south, then we know that there will be an impact on all of the good people who have flown in from Treaty 7 right now who are at Queen's Park and who want equity of access to health care services.

Will we be doing double lung transplants at Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug? No. But do they deserve to have access to primary care? Do they deserve to have equitable access to our health care system? Yes, absolutely. But none of that is possible if there are no health care workers, if there are no physicians, if there are no nurses, if there are no physiotherapists, occupational therapists, speech language pathologists, audiologists. The list goes on. This worries me.

Then, we have to talk about—I'll stick with my example: The Ministry of Health allocated 150,000 cataract surgeries to the for-profit cataract provider. They are paying them \$605 per surgery. I'm strong in math; that's a \$90-million industry just for cataract surgery that has been done. You can all see that if the government just created a \$90-million industry just for the cataract surgeries that they have recently allocated to the for-profit, it could motivate people to go into this industry. Speaker, \$90 million is a fair chunk of change, if you ask me—a whole lot of money that the government is willing to spend.

The government doesn't spend that amount of money when the cataract surgery is done in a hospital. A hospital that wants to build a surgical suite will have to raise money, so they will have to collect donations from a ton of people. The good people of Ontario have always supported our hospitals, so they were able to put in place infrastructure to do cataract surgery or hip and knee surgery or buy a new MRI. In my community, a PET scanner took a very long time to raise the money. Thank you so much to Sam Brumo's family for leading that money-raising adventure, I will call it. It was tough.

But the for-profits don't have to do any of that. The for-profits get paid by the government what is called a fee for using their infrastructure. The hospital doesn't get that. The hospital has to fundraise. The hospital has to find

donations. But if you are a for-profit, you get paid. You get reimbursed for the infrastructure that we are using.

You see the difference, Speaker? The hospital has to fundraise to purchase a new MRI. The for-profit puts the money upfront, and then the government pays them back a facility fee every single time somebody uses that infrastructure. That infrastructure will be paid for by taxpayers many times over, because this is where a lot of their profit will come from. But a hospital doesn't have access to any of this. A hospital—a not-for-profit hospital—has to fundraise to do the same thing.

0930

The same goes on for any other surgery. A hip surgery costs, in general in Ontario, \$12,223. Try to find a corporate, investor-owned corporation that will do a hip surgery for \$12,000. It is impossible. You are looking at double that; \$25,000 at the minimum. Why, Speaker? Why is it that we don't give our hospitals the money they need to do more hips and knees?

I can tell you that at Health Sciences North, the hospital in Sudbury, the hospital built 17 brand new ORs when the new tower was built, but it's only funded for 14 of them. So you have state-of-the-art technology sitting there that has never opened, never been used. Do we need the for-profit corporations to build more infrastructure, to build more surgical suites? Absolutely not. We have them sitting empty in every single one of our hospitals. Every hospital that provides surgery in Ontario has downtime. The Auditor General went through and did her analysis and showed that the vast majority of them do surgeries from 7 until 4. They don't do surgeries at night. There are days that they don't do surgeries at all. There are weekends where they don't do surgeries at all; that it sits empty. Why? Because they don't have the money. Remember, paid per procedure. Once the number of procedures that the government has paid for ends, it ends. Yet the for-profits got more. Why weren't those surgeries sent?

I would say, within the health care sector, everybody agrees that if you—you as in the government—were to pay to keep existing OR infrastructure that we already own, that we've already paid for, that are in our hospitals, operating an average of two hours more a day, the wait-lists would go away. Let that sink in. We have 200,000 people right now in Ontario waiting for surgery. They're waiting in pain; sometimes they're waiting a really long time to get the surgeries they need. If the government were to fund the existing infrastructure to stay open two hours a day more, we would get rid of the wait times.

Do we really need those investor-owned corporations? The answer is clear: We do not. We have the infrastructure that is needed to provide the surgical, the diagnostic imaging that needs to happen. What we haven't got is a government willing to fund the not-for-profit hospitals. The number of companies lining up to make a profit is kind of sickening. But that's not all. They're not only there to make money. Not only do they make money on the infrastructure fees that they're allowed to charge, that hospitals are not allowed to charge, but most of them make money because there's a greater risk to patient safety. Why? Because they will hire people—first of all, a lower

number of staff to do the same procedures than what you would see in a hospital, and second, the qualifications of those staff won't be the same.

First, they only take the healthy and the wealthy. If you have diabetes, if you have a heart condition, or God forbid, you have a mental health or an addiction problem? Forget it. The investor-owned surgical suites, those corporations don't want to have anything to do with you because you may actually require care: "Go to the hospital; they will look after you." They want the healthy and the wealthy.

If you are fortunate enough to have passed the bar of being healthy and wealthy enough to go in the for-profits, the risks are real. The risk to patient safety is real; it has been well documented. We can look—not only the risk of harm—that is, the surgery does not turn out—but the risk of death is also very real. Why? Because the number of staff and the people who are there do not have the skills.

This brings me to schedule 2 of the bill, which will allow physicians and nurses who are not members of the college of nurses and who are not members of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario to call themselves physicians or call themselves nurses. Right now in Ontario, if somebody calls themselves a nurse, you know for a fact that she is registered with the College of Nurses of Ontario. She has the training, the skills and the ongoing ability to be able to provide nursing care. But with schedule 2, Ontario will allow people who are not registered with the College of Nurses of Ontario—who have not been checked for the education they received, the training they know or the skills they know—to call themselves nurses. I will go out on a limb but I feel pretty secure that not too many hospitals will hire those, but the investor-owned corporations, who run those surgical suites, will be more than happy to hire them. Why? Because they will pay them less. Why? Because they will make more money off the back of paying their employees less. This is part of how they make money.

But how they make most of their money is by upselling, that is, to offer people a service that is "not covered by OHIP." I put it in quotes because there is sometimes a very, very narrow definition as to what is covered by OHIP and what is not.

Again, remember, Speaker, I opened up talking about trust. In order for you to receive quality care, you need to have trust in the providers in front of you. When the provider in front of you, who is about to put a laser to your eye, tells you that he prefers to use this lens and this lens is not covered by OHIP, and this lens costs sometimes \$500, sometimes \$1,200, sometimes \$2,000, who are you to argue? He prefers to use that lens. He's about to put a laser to my eye. Do I really want to argue and say, "I would prefer you use the one that's covered by OHIP"? Who the hell would have a conversation like that? It does not happen. The power imbalance between the health professional, who knows what they are doing, and the patient who needs care makes that kind of conversation absolutely impossible. But it happens; it happens every day.

I am sure all of us have had conversations with some of our constituents who come to see us with bills and say, "You know, it cost me \$2,500 to have my cataract surgery.

I don't really have the money to pay for that \$2,500, but there must be a government program to help with this. It's a surgery. Surgeries are covered in Ontario." Then you have to explain to them that, no, they don't.

In my neck of the woods, cataract surgery can be done in a hospital or in the ophthalmologist's private clinic. The wait-list at the hospital is very long. Remember, those 1,500 cataract procedures that went to the for-profit company? None of them came up north. None of them came to Health Sciences North, so the number of cataract surgeries is very limited. There's a long wait-list. But you can go to the ophthalmologist and have the same surgery done, except that in his office, he only does certain procedures that are not covered by OHIP. So now you have a choice. You can be given a fixed date to have your cataract surgery done. You will have to pay for a lens that is not covered by OHIP, for a measurement that is not covered by OHIP, but you'll get it done within a couple of weeks. Or you can be put on the hospital wait-list, where you have a good chance of having your surgical date bumped down the road and not knowing when it will happen for months and months.

0940

I live in northern Ontario. There is no public transit where I live. You need to have a driver's licence and you need to drive, or you need to have somebody to drive you.

So you have an opportunity to keep your driver's licence and have the surgery done on a fixed time frame if you buy a service that is not covered by OHIP. Or you can lose your driver's licence because your vision has deteriorated and have a date in the future at a hospital to have a surgery covered by OHIP, and we don't really know when that surgery is going to take place. What do you figure people will do?

I had a lady who shared this exact story that I just told you. Here is where it gets interesting: "If I had it performed in the office, I would be scheduled for a committed date and time frame. My other option was in the hospital, but I had to be aware that my appointment could be rescheduled due to hospital surgical rooms becoming unavailable. As we would be travelling, we would have no idea of rescheduling until we travelled the three hours"—because in northern Ontario the distances are long—"plus the cost of a stay overnight, unable to cancel our room because it is no longer needed. Having to take time off work was also a factor in considering. We were offered ... lenses at an increased price of \$2,300 per eye, a firm date and a set operation time versus a soft hospital date and a government-supplied lens that had to be replaced within a shorter period of time. Any time you have a surgery that is a risk to failure, so everything had to be factored in."

Then she went on to share with me the choices that she had to make regarding the lens that she wanted, and one part that was interesting was the method of payments. She could pay with cash, debit, bank draft, Visa or Mastercard. If she chose to pay with the first three methods—cash, debit or bank draft—it was free, but if she used her Visa or Mastercard, because she didn't happen to have \$2,300 hanging around, then she was charged an extra \$25 for using a credit card.

All of this is happening right here, right now in Ontario, and all of this is about to increase exponentially.

I wanted to share some of those examples regarding cataract surgery because this is where most of the private surgical suites exist right now, but under Bill 60, expect many, many more. Those are not going to be available for people in northern and rural Ontario. Those are going to be in big centres where there is a lot of money to be made.

I want to share the story of a woman in Ottawa diagnosed with breast cancer and needing to have surgery done. She went to the Ottawa Hospital and was told of the long, long wait-list to have cancer surgery done. The Ottawa Hospital does not meet the deadline set for quality care—it only meets the deadline set for quality care in 13% of the cases, and 87% of these women do not get their breast cancer surgery done in a time that is safe for them to do so. So she decided to have the same procedure done at a private clinic, paying \$50,000 to have that done. But you see, Speaker, there were other hospitals within Ottawa, within the same radius of driving from Ottawa to Montreal, where she had the surgery done, or driving from Ottawa to Kingston or to other hospitals, that had much shorter wait-lists, well within the recommended guidelines, that would have been completely free. But she didn't know about that. She did not know about that because Ontario does not have a common wait-time strategy.

We do measure. We know the wait times for each and every one of the surgeons, for each and every one of the surgeries. It is being measured, but it is not being shared. So her family physician—he or she, I have no idea—did what he or she does: He referred her to an oncologist who he knew was a good surgical oncologist to follow her for her breast cancer, not knowing that this oncologist's wait time is way beyond what is recommended and not knowing that at another hospital, there was another surgical oncologist who could have done the same procedures, paid for by OHIP, in an acceptable amount of time.

There are still women in Ottawa right now who have seen the long wait-lists, who have seen that if you go to the Montreal investor-owned clinic, you can have the procedures done in the right amount of time. I don't blame them. You are faced with a cancer diagnosis. You are told that you need to have the surgery done. You are told that, to maximize your health and life, you need to have it done within a certain amount of time, but that the surgeon that you've been referred to has no hope of seeing you, so they look elsewhere.

Why is it that Ontario has not put a centralized wait time so everybody can go online and see this? British Columbia did it. Other provinces have done it. We have the information. We don't make that information available or accessible. Why not? Why not? These women in Ottawa who are being diagnosed with sometimes stage 3 or stage 4 breast cancer, who need surgery in a very short period of time, would like to know that there is another surgeon who provides this service not far from where they live.

In British Columbia, the statistics are clear: Of all of the surgeries—because they have them all public; you can go on their website right now and see how long you would

wait for this surgeon or that surgeon, for the same surgery—50% of the people selected surgeons that they knew and that they liked, 23% of the people selected the first available surgeon, and the rest of them selected the surgeon that was closest to their home. There's nothing wrong with that. It certainly did not hurt the health care system in any way, shape or form, but it sure helped redistribute the workload among specialists who could provide that surgery.

I can tell the women in Ottawa that there are hospitals and there are surgeons that have way shorter wait-lists. Unfortunately, the government of Ontario won't make that information available to you, but we should. Right now you will have to pick up the phone and wait on the line—because doctors' offices always take a long time to pick up—to ask every single surgeon who is qualified to do that surgery how long their wait-list is. Really, Speaker? This is 2023? We would rather have a woman worried about her life paying \$50,000 for a private surgery than make that information that we already collect available to her? What kind of government does that? Who does that? This is part of the anger and anxiety that I talked about when I started my speech. I don't understand the decisions that are made.

A single wait-list would go a long way. In British Columbia, you click on the surgery you need, you say the geographical area you're interested in, and you see how long it is. I can just about guarantee you that this woman in Ottawa, had she had this information available to her—she didn't choose to go to Montreal because she wanted to support the private, for-profit corporations there; she went to Montreal because she wanted care in a timely basis. Care in a timely basis was available to her in Ontario, but she had no way to access that information. All of this could change.

0950

I see that I only have 14 minutes left.

You can see that this bill is really focused. It really targets one thing: make it easier for investor-owned corporations to make money off the backs of sick people.

When Bill 60 came to committee, we had many, many people who wanted to present. The opportunity to present was quite limited, but some people managed to come and talk to us. Many more sent us comments in writing. They all wanted change, from the Ontario Health Coalition, who made very good comments that they wanted that gone, to Dr. Agarwal—I hope I pronounced his name properly—who made it clear that if we're going to go down this path, it has to be physician-owned, because a physician is bound by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario which will look at what the physicians are doing to make sure that they always put the good of their patients at the forefront.

We had the Health Profession Regulators of Ontario who came to us. The Health Profession Regulators of Ontario are 27 colleges for health professionals existing in Ontario. Everybody who wants to practise in Ontario has to belong to a college. This has been there for one reason. Every college, the College of Physicians and Surgeons, the College of Nurses, the College of Physiotherapists—they exist for one reason: It's to protect the public.

The Health Profession Regulators of Ontario, which represents all 27 colleges, came to do a deputation and made it clear that they don't agree with schedule 2, where people who are not registered with their college would be allowed to work in Ontario. They said if we're going to allow a nurse from Alberta or British Columbia to come and work in Ontario, give them a time frame where they have to register with the college in Ontario so that the college in Ontario can check that they are in good standing. They came and they gave us how long it takes for a nurse, a dental surgeon, a pharmacist, a massage therapist—they went through the whole line. The longest it takes if you come to Ontario—we'll say you're a physician. You're a physician or a nurse in British Columbia or Alberta. You want to come and work in Ontario. If you give the college in Ontario the permission to connect with the college in the province where you are registered now, the longest it would take them is less than two weeks to do. Where it takes longer is when the person does not grant the permission to connect with the college where they are registered now.

The Health Profession Regulators of Ontario made it really clear that they are worried that the people who do not give the college in Ontario the right to connect with the college in the province where they are working right now—it's because they're in trouble with their college. They have done something that is being investigated by the college. They're in trouble. They are at risk of losing their licence in their province of origin, and they are coming to Ontario because in Ontario you won't have to be a member of the college of physicians, surgeons, nurses, physiotherapists—you name it. You will be allowed to call yourself a physician, to call yourself a nurse and not be a member of the college.

They are really worried. I tried—our entire team tried—really hard to make amendments to that part of the bill. First, I put in, "Let's give them four weeks." Then I put in another amendment: "Let's give them two months." Then another amendment: "Let's give them three months to register." The government voted all of that down. So right now, we have no deadline for those nurses, physicians, physios, OTs, speech pathologists—you name it—who come from other provinces to work in Ontario before they need to join the college. You will remember, the health colleges exist for one reason: to protect the public. And they do a good job of it. They are worried, and so am I.

Many others came to present. Kevin Smith, the president and chief executive officer of University Health Network, came and talked to us. The Ontario Nurses' Association came and talked to us. The Ontario Association of Clinic Endoscopists came and talked to us—many more; the Toronto Centre for Medical Imaging.

Kevin Smith is the president of the University Health Network, a not-for-profit hospital. I can tell you that anybody from hospitals who came to talk to us all said the same thing: There has to be a strong link between the community outpatient surgery that everybody supports and the local hospital, because we all know that some patients will need care. Not every surgery goes according to plan. Some of them will need to be admitted into a hospital. You have

to make sure that it is a surgeon who has working privileges in a hospital. Otherwise, who will admit that patient? You will send him in the middle of a surgery through EMS into the waiting room of an emergency room? This is a recipe for disaster. It's a nightmare.

The physicians who will work in community clinics need to have privileges in a hospital. Hospital CEO after hospital CEO came and told us that, how important it is. They talked about the model that already exists, the model that they would love to have if only the money was available for an amount of time that makes it feasible. To be told in January that you could open up a surgical centre and the money will run out on March 31 is not a recipe for success. We don't put those tight deadlines on the for-profit health care providers, but we put them on our hospitals. This is the narrative of this government, who wants investor-owned corporations to own hospital suites, to own surgical suites.

The list went on. We had the Toronto Centre for Medical Imaging that came. Not only will we have investor-owned corporations to do surgeries, they will also do medical imaging. The same thing is there: They need to be connected to our hospitals. You don't go have an MRI done or a CAT scan or a PET scan done because all is well. Your physician sends you for diagnostic imaging because something is not right with you and follow-up will need to be there, and they need to be connected.

The NDP put forward 74 recommendations. Those 74 recommendations were all based on a body of evidence that was either presented to us or that was submitted to us—as in, all of us, because through Bill 60, we all got a chance to see them. All 74 of those recommendations were voted down, but I thought that I would share some of them with you.

1000

From the Indigenous Primary Health Care Council that came to see us, they talked very clearly about how the danger of the poor access to care for Indigenous people right here, right now in Ontario is going to get worse once those investor-owned private clinics are up and running. They know full well that none of them are going to set up shop in a remote First Nation. Their access to care will diminish.

The definition of what they call an integrated community health service, which is a private, for-profit, investor-owned surgical suite—well, I can tell you that the Association of Family Health Teams, the association of family physicians, the Alliance for Healthier Communities, the Indigenous Primary Health Care Council, the Nurse Practitioner-Led Clinic Association and a long list of other ones asked that they be not-for-profit and that they be linked to an existing not-for-profit hospital. The Canadian Doctors for Medicare; the Canadian Federation of University Women of Ontario; the OMA, the Ontario Medical Association, all talked about the importance of having physician-owned—if you're going to go down the private, don't let the investor-owned corporations own those facilities, because we all know—the body of evidence from across the world is very clear—there will be extra

fees, which means barriers to care for a lot of people. There will be more mortality and poor care, and there will be more people waiting in our not-for-profit system because of it.

The system will be licensed through a person within the ministry, so if there is a request or proposal, the association of family physicians, the Alliance for Healthier Communities, the Indigenous Primary Health Care Council, the Nurse Practitioner-Led Clinic Association all want to have quality advisers. If we are going to have community-based surgical suites, you need to develop a program to make sure that there's accountability for the quality of the care that is provided.

I see that I've run out of time.

I want each and every one of you to realize that medicare is a program that you, your family, your neighbours, your friends have counted on for—most of us, for our entire lives. It was brought forward in the early 1960s. Medicare guarantees that the care you receive is based on needs, not on ability to pay. Bill 60 will change all of this for the worse, and forever. Once investor-owned corporations start to do outpatient surgeries, we will never be able to go back. They will charge extra fees. They all do. There are a ton of loopholes that allow them to do this. These extra fees will mean that some people will decide not to have their surgery because they can't afford the extra fees.

Those clinics will mean that a lot of health care professionals who will be working there won't be working in our hospitals. The crisis we have at Sault Area Hospital right now, who cannot have an anaesthetist, you will see it throughout. Sault Ste. Marie is not the only one; Manitoulin Health Centre has the same, every hospital in the north. All of those recruitment issues in northern and rural Ontario will get worse. The wait time for each and every one of us who needs care based on needs, not on ability to pay, will get worse.

Vote down Bill 60. You have an opportunity to save medicare. Don't let it go by.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Questions?

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: Thank you to the member from Nickel Belt for her presentation. However, through Bill 60, the integrated community health services centres will now be connected with local hospitals and Ontario Health. They will also have to post any uninsured charges both online and in person. Contrary to what the member from Nickel Belt was saying, if there were any extra charges, they would be posted and mentioned in person. This being the case, patients cannot be denied access to treatment if they don't purchase uninsured services.

My question is to the member. We've heard from Ontarians. They want care closer to home. They want a better quality of life. I have to ask the member, will you support expanding access to care closer to home?

M^{me} France Gélinas: We already have. I have the Kensington Eye Institute not-for-profit. I have Dr. Sorgini. They already post their charges, and the charges vary quite a bit from one to the next. What costs \$200 at Kensington costs \$250 with Dr. Sorgini, and the list goes on.

It's not because the extra fees are being posted that the relationship between the person who provides the care and the person who receives the care changes. The health providers have all the power. If, in order to have the surgery done on a fixed date, you need to buy one of those products, you will, because you don't want to lose your driver's licence. You don't want to have to travel three times to Sudbury to have your surgery cancelled.

No, I will never support extra fees. Hospitals don't charge extra fees. Care is based on need, not ability to pay.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank the member from Nickel Belt for her excellent presentation about how it is wise and fiscally prudent to invest in community-based surgical centres. Not only did she highlight the safety and the continuity of care but also the better health outcomes. I would also like to thank the member for recognizing the great work of Dr. Abdel-Rahman Lawendy, the chief medical director of the Nazem Kadri Surgical Centre at London Health Sciences Centre.

Standard operating rooms are required for complex care, where there are six staff per room. They require a full set of sterilized instruments. It costs on average \$469 per day, whereas these other ambulatory centres cost \$172 per day. It's 36% of the cost.

This government's ideological adherence to the for-profit model—I wanted to ask the member, who is this government listening to, if it's not listening to patients?

M^{me} France Gélinas: You can go to the Information and Privacy Commissioner and see who is lobbying right now. I've named some of them. Certainly, Clearpoint Health Network is really interested in opening up investor-owned corporations, but there are many, basically, big health care providers in the States who are biting at the bits to come to Ontario. They're already scoping out where they would like their clinic to be. They're already starting to look at purchasing real estate in Ontario, because there's a ton of money to be made.

Those people—you go on the website; they are here to lobby the government. They are lobbying me also, so I have no doubt that they are lobbying the government, and the government is listening. There are a lot of people closely tied to the Conservative government who stand to benefit by millions of dollars once Bill 60 goes forward, on the backs of sick people.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I have to ask the member: When I talk to people in my riding—I talk to people all across the province. What they tell me is that what we have a huge problem in Ontario with is access to care, access to surgeries. We are making unprecedented investments in nurses, a higher number of people into the system than ever before, building new medical schools. Everything we do in Bill 60 is about ensuring that there is more access to these surgeries, all paid for by your OHIP card.

1010

I would ask the member—and I understand it's difficult for her to retreat from her own philosophy and theology

when it comes to public versus private. But can you not at least admit that what we're doing in Bill 60 is going to lead to reduced wait times for surgeries here in the province of Ontario?

M^{me} France Gélinas: The body of evidence throughout the world is very strong and solid. I would encourage the member to read from Canadian physicians for medicare. They have a four-page—so it's very easy to read. I can guarantee you that bringing in for-profit does not decrease wait times. It's the opposite, because the for-profit only can make profit out of the healthy and the wealthy. As soon as you have a comorbidity—remember when we debated about chronic diseases? Most people over 45 have a chronic condition, which means that they will not qualify for healthy and wealthy, where you make a lot of money. They will still be on the wait-list for a hospital, and those wait-lists will grow exponentially. Do you think that 200,000 Ontarians waiting for care is long? Wait to see what happens once the for-profits come in. Go have a look at what happened in Australia. Go have a look at what happened in the UK when the Conservative government did the exact same thing you're doing now. Their wait-lists grew. Many of them are backtracking right now.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Mr. Chris Glover: I want to thank the member from Nickel Belt for your comments today and for being, like all of the members of the NDP, a true champion of public health care in Canada.

I have a friend from the United States. She used to practise medicine in Boston. Now, she's practising in Toronto. She says that Americans pay twice as much per capita for health care, and yet 50 million do not have access to health insurance. She says it's because they've got a private, for-profit delivery system and private insurance.

You are describing this Bill 60 as the death knell for public health care in Canada. Why would this government kill such a great program that provides access to health care for everyone in Canada?

M^{me} France Gélinas: The question is very simple. There is a lot of money to be made in health care. When somebody is sick, nothing else matters. You heard the story of the woman in Ottawa being diagnosed with breast cancer who spent \$50,000. Not too many people have \$50,000 hanging around, but when your life is in the balance, you will go into debt, and you will do whatever you can to try to get the care you need.

There are a ton of investor-owned corporations who know that there are enough loopholes to be able to make millions, hundreds of millions, if not billions of dollars off the backs of sick people in Ontario. They are the ones lobbying for Bill 60 to go through. They are the ones who will benefit from Bill 60, and they are the ones that have the ears of this Conservative government. They are willing to listen to them at the expense of destroying a program that defines us, where care is based on need, not ability to pay.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Mr. Ross Romano: I listened to the member opposite. I had the opportunity to sit on that side of the floor for one year after I was elected in 2017. I sat on the same side of the floor as that member opposite, and I remember for that year her speaking about the Liberal government and their cuts to health care. We remember that there were eight consecutive years under the Liberal reign of not a single increase to budgets, 0% across the board, for eight years in a row, and that member opposite still voted with the Liberals' budget year after year after year when she had the opportunity to shut them down.

So my question is, why did you support the Liberals when they were going after health care?

M^{me} France Gélinas: The member is partly correct: The base budgets for hospital services were frozen by the Liberal governments for eight years in a row, and that brought us to where we are now. Were there long waitlists before this government came into power? Yes, there were. But under their leadership, the wait has skyrocketed; it went up exponentially.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Thank you.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

YOM HA'ATZMAUT

Mrs. Robin Martin: Today is Yom Ha'atzmaut, also known as Israeli Independence Day. A national holiday in Israel, Yom Ha'atzmaut celebrates the country's declaration of independence on May 14, 1948.

The origin of Yom Ha'atzmaut can be traced to the early 20th century, when Jewish leaders advocated for the establishment of a Jewish homeland. Today, Israelis and members of the Jewish community in my riding of Eglinton–Lawrence and across Ontario celebrate Yom Ha'atzmaut with various activities, including parades, barbecues, concerts and dancing. Some of these events include the Schwartz/Reisman Centre JCC's Blue and White party, which will feature delicious catering, cocktails and music performers. Families can also attend the Beth Tzedec Congregation's Israel Creativity Fair to celebrate Israel's ingenuity and engage in hands-on, family-friendly activities. For young adults, Hillel Ontario and StandWithUs Canada are hosting Israel at 75 club night, complete with pizza and disco music.

In the 75 years since its founding, Israel has accomplished many notable achievements in science, technology, culture and other areas. It's home to a thriving technology sector and several innovative start-ups. As a leader in Jewish education, Israel has also strengthened Jewish identity and continues to improve Jews' connection to Israel throughout the world.

On this day of celebration for the Jewish people and the state of Israel, I wish all Israeli Ontarians and members of the Jewish community joy, security and peace.

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: Some 28,000 members of ACTRA have been unlawfully locked out for a year now by the Institute of Canadian Agencies—advertising agencies who, instead of bargaining in good faith under the National Commercial Agreement, made unacceptable demands such as a 60% cut to wages and an end to retirement contributions and benefits. The NCA used to represent a gold standard for gig workers. Now, there are performers who have not worked for a year. They have lost tens of thousands of dollars in wages. Some cannot manage their health care needs because their health insurance is gone. Some have been forced to leave their field altogether.

At a time when precarious gig work is on the rise, with limited, if any, employment protections, advertising agencies, with the support of their corporate clients and this Conservative government, are undermining workers by using scab replacement workers. Using scab labour prolongs strikes and lockouts instead of encouraging bargaining and allowing for faster resolution of disputes. It pits workers against each other. And we're seeing this happen across Ontario, such as with the salt workers at Windsor Unifor Local 240—workers on strike being undermined through the use of scab labour.

Speaker, workers have a constitutional right to a fair bargaining process, but that can't happen when scab replacement workers are hired. The NDP has tabled the Anti-Scab Labour Act to end the use of scab replacement workers. I call on this government to pass the bill.

WOMEN AS CAREER COACHES EVENT

Ms. Natalie Pierre: Recently in my riding of Burlington, I had the pleasure of attending Halton Industry Education Council's 19th annual Women as Career Coaches mentorship event. This is an annual event that brings together young people and adult mentors for an impactful, inspiring and uplifting evening. Over dinner, youth have the opportunity to engage in informal conversations with mentors and career coaches, as well as listening to a lineup of inspiring speakers.

This year's event featured a panel of successful women sharing their career journeys and advice. Coming from diverse industries, speakers included a film and TV event specialist, a deputy fire chief, a board-certified lactation specialist and one of the only female boilermakers in Ontario. As a career coach, mentors shared their experiences and advice with a group of young women who are contemplating their future careers and their next moves. These conversations help young people to think about their future differently.

That evening, I met a young apprentice electrician named Allie, who had just landed an interview for her dream job. Over the next couple of days, Allie and I worked together to help her prepare. Allie informed me that the interview went very well and thanked me for the help.

Women as Career Coaches is a valuable resource for young women, providing them with the opportunity to

make connections, ask questions and learn from other women who helped to pave the way.

1020

ONTARIO PLACE

Ms. Jessica Bell: Not once in my entire time in office has a resident called me up and said Toronto is in desperate need of an expensive and exclusive spa. Yet this government is moving ahead with signing a secret 95-year deal with an Austrian company to turn Ontario Place into an expensive mega-spa with a massive underground car-park that taxpayers are paying for.

Now, I hear the minister opposite say that no one is going there: "I drive by it frequently, and it's not enjoyed." The million people who visit Ontario Place do not see it that way, Minister.

Ontario Place is a park where people can go outside, visit friends, feel the breeze of Lake Ontario, play with kids, walk our dogs, enjoy the sunset for free in a part of the city where most people don't have a backyard. They live in condos and apartments, and Ontario Place has become their oasis.

I see people being so angry about this issue because it touches this larger core, which is that this government is making sweetheart backroom deals with foreign companies that leave Ontarians worse off, and that is a real issue here. I believe Ontario Place should be a place for everyone to enjoy, a revitalized public park that families, young people, seniors and residents can enjoy.

I want to say thank you to all the residents who are organizing on this issue, including Ontario Place for All. We are on your side.

KHALSA AID

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: Khalsa Aid is a non-profit, humanitarian organization that provides support for individuals in need all over the world. Khalsa Aid is built on a strong belief in Sikh principles, and their work is by no means restricted to the Sikh community. Khalsa Aid became the first-ever cross-border international humanitarian aid organization based on Sikh principles.

Khalsa Aid has done amazing work with a number of communities to help those in need. Recently, Khalsa Aid Canada held a food drive and they were able to raise over 35,000 meals that were distributed to local food banks within the GTA.

Speaker, this is an immense contribution, and I would like to appreciate and recognize Khalsa Aid Canada's sizable impact within the community. I would also like to recognize all of those who participated in the food drive and contributed to making a difference within their community, whether it be through donating food, volunteering or raising awareness. Your commitment and devotion to helping those in need is truly inspiring.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT SERVICES

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Sometimes when MPPs talk about health care and long-term care, they miss the great work being done in the community support services sector.

People want to age at home, and community support services help meet that need. Caregivers risk burnout and financial burden without these services. Some may even feel pressure to quit their job to look after a loved one. No one should feel forced to make this choice.

Community support services are cost-effective, personalized and help free up beds in hospitals and long-term care. Recently, I had the opportunity to meet with the Alzheimer Society, Cheshire Independent Living Services, St. Joe's hospice and many more. Users of these services see a 43% decrease in avoidable ER visits. In addition, when community support services are available, hospital stay lengths are decreased more than 30%. Care at home costs \$42 a day while long-term care is \$126; in hospitals, at least \$842. Saving \$800 per day is pretty cost-effective. It's literally 5% of the cost.

However, like other parts of our health care system, lack of funding means service reductions and staff are continually asked to do more with less. This sector, primarily made up of women, faces a variety of struggles, including the inability to hire and retain staff.

Ontarians want to be supported at home. I call upon this government to make the necessary investments in community support services so that people can stay where their heart is: at home with loved ones.

SERVICES POUR L'AUTISME

M. Stéphane Sarrazin: Le mois d'avril, qui est le mois de l'autisme, tire à sa fin. J'aimerais reconnaître quelques organismes et personnes de ma circonscription pour leur dévouement à améliorer la vie de plusieurs personnes qui vivent avec le spectre de l'autisme.

Merci au Regroupement Autisme Prescott-Russell et à ses membres pour leur travail incroyable. Non seulement ils organisent de super activités pour les jeunes; ils sensibilisent les gens et nous aident tous à en apprendre plus au sujet des personnes aux prises avec le spectre de l'autisme. J'aimerais aussi remercier tout le personnel des classes de TSA de toutes les écoles de ma circonscription. Ma conjointe a eu la chance de travailler avec certains d'entre eux et avec les élèves. Elle me mentionnait souvent comment ces gens font une différence dans la vie de ces enfants.

Je salue aussi un jeune homme âgé de 31 ans, Marc-Antoine Gagnier, considéré comme une personnalité publique pour la communauté de ces personnes atteintes du spectre de l'autisme. Marc-Antoine est également bien connu au village d'Embrun pour son implication à la littérature et la radio. Il s'est même présenté comme candidat en politique à trois reprises. Il fait du bénévolat à la radio communautaire bilingue de CJRO Radio. Il a sa propre émission de radio, style talk-show, qui s'appelle Gagnier aime se jaser, où j'ai eu la chance moi-même de passer en entrevue.

Je tiens à féliciter toutes ces personnes pour leur excellent travail.

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Speaker, it is estimated that approximately 1.8 million Ontarians do not have a family doctor—that means 1.8 million Ontarians without access to a primary care physician who has built a relationship with them, who understands their needs, and who can provide the consistent care that helps catch illnesses early and avoid serious illnesses. This unacceptable situation leads to inadequate health care for all Ontarians.

We need more family doctors, but attracting medical students to family medicine is becoming increasingly difficult. Family doctors are heavily overworked, burdened with way too many patients and out-of-date systems that result in mountains of paperwork.

Dr. Alykhan Abdulla is a local doctor in the Ottawa area. He works tirelessly to serve the thousands of patients he is responsible for. He says the administrative burden on him and his team is huge, occupying a third of his time. That's 33% fewer patients with access to care every day.

By taking measures to reduce the administrative burden on our family physicians, this government can dramatically increase the time available for doctors to do what they were trained to do: provide care to patients. This would reduce the burden on family physicians, help attract and retain more family doctors, and allow more Ontarians to access the care they deserve.

SANDRA CLANCY

Mr. Dave Smith: Today I'm bringing some bittersweet news from Peterborough. A good friend of mine has decided to hang up the laces, so to speak. She has been an exemplary public servant in Peterborough for close to 40 years. This Friday, April 28, will be the final day at city hall for Peterborough's chief administrative officer, Sandra Clancy.

As a resident of the city, I had worked with Sandra on a number of different initiatives long before I was the MPP. I suppose with almost 40 years devoted to Peterborough, there are a lot of people she has worked with.

Sandra was born and raised in Peterborough and started working for the city in 1985. Some might say she wasn't able to hang on to a job, because throughout her time, she has been the chief accountant, financial manager, treasurer, corporate services director and CAO.

She worked during a few challenging times: the great flood of 2004 and, of course, COVID-19. Although she has faced her challenges, she has remained dedicated to the people of Peterborough.

Speaker, for me, she has been a great resource. All throughout my time as the MPP, I've been able to reach out and discuss whatever the issue of the day was and know that Sandra was working with me to resolve it.

Sandra, I'm going to miss you, but I know that you're only a phone call away. You've told me that you're looking forward to spending more time with your kids during your retirement. So please enjoy your retirement.

ASSOCIATION OF CHINESE CANADIAN
ENTREPRENEURS AWARDS

Mrs. Daisy Wai: I believe that the success of our local entrepreneurs is crucial to strengthening the competitiveness of Ontario's businesses in the global market and will promote economic growth and prosperity for all Ontarians.

That is why I rise to support the Association of Chinese Canadian Entrepreneurs, ACCE, and their mission in recognizing the successes and contributions of Chinese Canadian entrepreneurs. The 26th awards gala was held last week, when nine businesses were recognized.

1030

Over the years, many of Ontario's celebrities, including Adrienne Clarkson, Vivienne Poy, Michael Lee-Chin and Jean Lumb, received awards for their lifetime achievements. I had the honour to receive their Best Community Service Award in 2003.

Speaker, I believe that community service is an essential part of being an entrepreneur, and I'm committed to working with ACCE to promote corporate social responsibility and encourage community and environmental stewardship in Ontario's business community.

Once again, congratulations to all the award recipients and nominees, and thank you to ACCE for their important work.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: I have the honour today to introduce chiefs and community members: from Apitipi Anicinapek Nation, Chief June Black; from Constance Lake First Nation, Chief Ramona Sutherland; from Aroland First Nation, Councillor Mark Bell; from Attawapiskat First Nation, Chief Sylvia Koostachin-Metatawabini and her community members; and the legal team for Treaty 9 First Nations, Kate Kempton and Tara McDonald of Woodward and Co.

Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Robin Martin: I have the honour today to introduce today's page captain Claire Cross, from my riding of Eglinton–Lawrence's Blessed Sacrament school. Her family is also here: her parents, Annamaria and David, and their son Andrew, who will likely be a page in the future, because the other son, William, was a page in 2016. I'm looking forward to having a nice chat with them.

Mr. John Fraser: I'd like to welcome again our friend Michau Van Speyk, who is here today at Queen's Park to join us again.

Ms. Laura Smith: I am so honoured that my constituency assistant, Timothy Boudoumit, is attending here with us. Timothy has been with us for quite a while, and he's such a smart and engaged individual. He's going to be leaving us to do research studies at the American University in Lebanon. I'm proud to say that I've known him since he was 10 years old on the soccer field.

Thank you and welcome, Timothy Boudoumit.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Introduction of visitors: the member for Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you very much, Speaker. It was good to see you this morning at the University of Waterloo breakfast reception. I just wanted to thank all my colleagues for attending. Vivek Goel was here with his research team, and they were highlighting the importance of commercializing research for our economy and our health care system. It was an amazing event.

Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Meegwetch, Speaker. *Remarks in Anishiniimowin.* Good morning. We would like to welcome the leadership and community members of Treaty 9, who are visiting here today: from Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug, Chief Donny Morris and Jacob Ostaman; from Eabametoong First Nation, Chief Solomon Atlookan, Councillor Charlie O'Keese and their staff; from Neskantaga First Nation, former Chief Peter Moonias, former Chief Wayne Moonias, Councillor Kelvin Moonias and Dayna Scott; from the traditional territories of these lands, the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation, Chief Stacey Laforme—meegwetch for joining us; from Mushkegowuk Council, Grand Chief Alison Linklater and her staff; and from Nishnawbe Aski Nation, Deputy Grand Chief Victor Linklater.

Welcome to our House. Meegwetch.

QUESTION PERIOD

FIRST NATIONS CONSULTATION

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Speaker, my question is for the Premier. We understand clearly that Ontario is working to push mining processes, mining access roads through the Ring of Fire area, and has done much of this work while First Nations have been struggling through the pandemic and weren't even able to even host meetings to understand how to participate.

My question is, is Ontario prepared to agree that all proposed mines in the Ring of Fire region will be designated to need provincial comprehensive EAs, and actually involve the nations who will be impacted?

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

Hon. Greg Rickford: I want to thank the honourable member for his question and welcome his guests to this place today.

Mr. Speaker, that's precisely what we're doing. We take our responsibilities through section 35 of the charter very seriously. They're affirmed, and they necessarily involve consultation and engagement with Indigenous communities across all of Ontario, in fact. That's why, for example, with the Far North Act, we heard the communities loud and clear, through one of the most extensive consultations for the Far North Act. That was modernized with my colleague at the time, Minister Yakabuski as he was, and

reflected a consensus-based model on all aspects and any aspects of development in the Treaty 9 area consumed or subsumed by the Nishnawbe-Aski Nation. We will continue to act in that fashion.

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

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Last week, this same minister said, when he answered one of my questions, that duty to consult First Nations in Ontario is not law.

Despite the pro-mining posturing, this government hasn't actually set up any real progress in the Ring of Fire. First Nations and mining companies know that nothing is happening there until real partnerships occur.

Will Ontario recognize that it has abused the treaty promises, and that continued efforts by the Premier to bulldoze the north will lead to conflict and stall any real partnerships?

Hon. Greg Rickford: Real partnerships are defined—and some of the leaders are here today, if not all—on various projects across the region, not just in Treaty 9, but in Treaty 5, the part that's in Ontario. These are major legacy infrastructure projects, and they reflect a new opportunity—an opportunity for the government to work closely with Indigenous leaders through their economic development corporations, through their political leadership, to ensure that they have the kind of infrastructure they need, the tools that their young people need and want; things like road access, other forms of energy.

There are leaders here who represent communities that are still deriving their electricity from diesel. I can't help but think that the honourable member stands against that. The Watay Power connection and other legacy pieces of infrastructure, including companies owned and operated by Indigenous people, stand ready to supply good, clean energy to those northern communities, roads to improve their health, social and economic access to programming. That's what this government does best and that's what we'll continue to work on.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Final supplementary?

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: This government abandoned the dialogue on shared decision-making that was under way years ago and that is at the heart of the treaty promise to work together and share the land. Right now, that is not happening.

Will Ontario commit to negotiating in good faith with the First Nations and Canada to develop a new decision-making regime for the north that can actually encourage some development by ensuring First Nations have real authority to say yes or no to major developments in their homelands?

1040

Interjections.

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

Minister.

Hon. Greg Rickford: The good news, Mr. Speaker, is that's actually what's happening on the ground. As I mentioned earlier, some of the leaders that are here today

and some of the projects that we've been working on, some of the major milestones in child welfare—I see my long-standing friend and the leader of Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug here today. These reflect the willingness of this government, the desire to work together on legacy pieces of infrastructure, economic development opportunities and social and health programming that improve the fortunes of these communities.

With respect to any development, the Minister of the Environment, for example, the Minister of Mines—we've all gathered together to ensure that the government's priorities are to support the priorities of the Indigenous communities in and around major resource projects and that the legacy requirements to support them are really about the enhancements to those communities: new forms of energy, no to diesel, yes to clean energy supply, yes to better access to health and social programs in some of our isolated communities who still don't have access to those kinds—

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

The next question.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Doly Begum: My question is to the Premier. The Eglinton LRT has been under construction for 12 years. It has also spiralled beyond its estimated cost, from the original \$5 billion to nearly \$13 billion, and it's likely to rise as well. While the consultants building this project keep racking up the bill, we get faulty LRT platforms—in fact, stations that are broken up and taken away in dump trucks.

Taxpayers whose hard-earned dollars are funding this project, long-suffering residents and businesses that actually went bankrupt and had to close down are all looking for answers. They want transparency.

My question to the Premier is, how much more money, how much more of people's hard-earned dollars, will your government waste?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Associate Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Stan Cho: This government shares the frustrations of those residents and businesses that have been affected by this project, which was, of course, started by the Liberals. We're going to do it better. We're going to make sure we finish the job and learn from their mistakes. In fact, Speaker, that's the very first thing we did in 2018 by introducing the Building Transit Faster Act, which said, "Let's simplify the process."

I'll give you one example, Speaker. The reason there's years of delay into this process is that every time you wanted to break ground on a station, you needed to get a different permit for every station down the line. We streamlined that so that one permit would actually clear the process and get it done faster. That's how the Eglinton West extension is more than 50% dug, a month ahead of schedule, on the record transit expansion this government is introducing.

We wish we could turn back time and fix the Liberals' mistakes from the beginning, but we can't do that. What we can do is learn from them and make sure we do it better moving forward. That's exactly what we're going to do. Record transit is coming to the great people of Toronto and this province.

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

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: Back to the minister: After over a decade of construction, with numerous delays and billions of dollars overbudget, this government said that the Crosstown was finally going to open in 2023—this year. Now, when the project is supposed to be near completion, it is troubling to see newly built, never-used stations being ripped out with absolutely no information.

Minister, people across Toronto are wondering, what is going on with the Eglinton Crosstown LRT project? Will it ever open?

Hon. Stan Cho: The member asked for information. We're happy to provide that.

This government is not only building record transit; we want to make sure that we open it safely. We all see what happens when you rush transit projects to open, like in the case of the Ottawa LRT. I'm sure the member from Orléans would have a lot to say about that and how not to actually open transit. That's why we're taking our time.

The Sloane platform was made out of a section of concrete that was identified through a strict and rigorous process as not up to the standard that was ready to introduce transit for people to make it safe to ride.

Speaker, this government is not only going to build that record transit, we're going to make sure we do it right so that it's safe and it's enjoyed by generations to come. We know hundreds of thousands of people are moving here every year. We're increasing the subway grid by 50%, investing more dollars than any government has ever done. That includes the opposition, who supported the Liberals while for decades they simply did nothing to build transit or connect the grid. We're getting it done for commuters in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The final supplementary? The member for Ottawa South.

Mr. Joel Harden: Back to the Premier: We've talked to the neighbours around the Sloane station of the Eglinton LRT. Do you know what they tell us, Speaker? There's a smell coming from that station, and it's not construction dust. The smell is corruption. So what about some specific questions?

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

Mr. Joel Harden: Withdraw.

What about some specific questions? What about Brian Guest, the disgraced consultant who helped build the Ottawa LRT, who this government fired in January? The Minister of Transportation promised this House there would be an investigation into Mr. Guest? Well, I've FOI-ed it, Speaker. There has been no investigation into Brian Guest.

The costs keep getting racked up, so the question we need to have answered in this House is, how many more consultants like Mr. Guest are going to get rich while

Crosstown costs go through the roof? How many more deficient projects are they going to build? And more importantly, Speaker, will this government today, as it did when we demanded it from Ottawa, declare a public inquiry into this mess? Simple answer to the question: yes or no?

Hon. Stan Cho: Wow, the irony from the fiscally conservative New Democrats of Ontario this morning, standing up when the cameras are on and pretending to be the defenders of transit when, for decades, they supported the Liberals when they did absolutely nothing to expand the grid or to improve rider experience.

In fact, when the cameras were off—not only did they say that they supported transit when they were on, they actually voted against the Building Transit Faster Act. They said no to the Eglinton West extension. They said no to the Yonge North extension. They said no to the fine people of Scarborough and the Sheppard East extension. And, Speaker, they said no to the Ontario Line. They said no to transit that runs through their own ridings, and now they say no to modernizing transit and to expanding the grid. They say no to more fare options. Speaker, this is a party of no when it comes to transit. This government is getting it done for commuters in Ontario.

FIRST NATIONS CONSULTATION

Mr. Guy Bourgoin: Today, several Treaty 9 First Nations and their law firm are here to announce their legal case to end unilateral crown decisions. For years they have been ignored, denied their decision-making rights, and they've had enough. It is imperative for this government to respect Treaty 9 and start working with and alongside First Nations to ensure growth and prosperity like the rest of the province.

To the Premier: Will this government ensure pre-informed consent for equal opportunity and collaboration at the decision-making level going forward with all First Nations?

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

Hon. Greg Rickford: I won't talk to matters that are before the courts, but I will discuss Kenogamisis's economic development corporation, the Wabun Tribal Council, Five Nations Energy, Taykwa Tagamou Nation Economic Development. These are just a few of the examples of communities that work in the Treaty 9 area. They're economic development companies owned and operated in whole or in part by Indigenous business leaders who are transforming and see the opportunity to ensure that Indigenous communities, particularly those most remote and isolated, have access to the kind of infrastructure many people across Ontario have taken for granted. They're interested in consensus and economic opportunity to improve the economic prosperity of the members of their communities and to grow their businesses, Mr. Speaker. That's what we can rally behind all day.

1050

I know that the Indigenous leaders support that kind of growth and development, and we're going to continue to

work together, Mr. Speaker, with common interests and consensus at the heart and soul—

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

The supplementary question.

Mr. Guy Bourgoin: Wake up, Premier. These First Nations are suing your government. The First Nations are here and they are saying this government is not collaborating. We've seen it time and time again: Attawapiskat extension to full reserve: The community cannot expand because they're landlocked—think about this—on their traditional territories; boil-water advisories for 30 years, and it's still happening; Kashechewan relocation: Not even the road built, and nothing has moved forward, and yet again they're being evacuated; and not to mention: the opioid crisis, the lack of health services, housing, and much more that First Nations are facing.

I ask again, will this government respect First Nations rights and get consent?

Interjections.

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

Minister?

Hon. Greg Rickford: Had that question flowed a little more smoothly, Mr. Speaker, it would be easier to unpack.

First of all, let's just talk about the relocation of Kashechewan, Mr. Speaker. We were pleased, obviously, to sign an agreement a couple of years ago to move forward on that. Unfortunately, it has faced some delays, and we're hopeful that two communities that have a vested interest in that—Kashechewan, in moving, and Fort Albany, its neighbour—will come to some consensus around how and when that will take place so that we can do the appropriate assessments and move that forward.

But otherwise, Mr. Speaker, we're going to continue to focus on the economic development projects that we hear from community members and Indigenous business leaders who want to transform the region to ensure that their communities, and ensure that their businesses, thrive, that young people have a job and a line of sight. We're going to support the training. We're doing that all across northern Ontario, and I look forward to the opportunity to work with those communities on specific projects—

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

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Rob Flack: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade.

Interruption.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Take a seat.

We can't tolerate outbursts from the galleries.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. Restart the clock.

The member for Elgin–Middlesex–London had the floor.

Mr. Rob Flack: My question is to the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade. Thanks to this government's efforts, Ontario is ushering in the

next boom of its auto manufacturing sector, which will be a continued catalyst for economic growth and development for decades and decades to come. Ontario auto is back, Speaker, and the latest Volkswagen investment is set to revitalize an entire region.

Speaker, in addition to the local benefits, will the minister please tell us what this means for businesses and workers across the entire supply chain?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Volkswagen's \$7-billion investment will solidify a brighter future for tens of thousands of auto workers. Over 3,000 direct and 30,000 indirect jobs will be created in total. Major suppliers will be required to produce products that we're unfamiliar with in Ontario: cathode, anode, separators, copper foil, lithium hydroxide. These are all billion-dollar companies that will land in Ontario.

We're headed back to Germany to plan a series of supplier days, where we're going to match Volkswagen with other Ontario companies. This will solidify Ontario's position not only as the EV centre, but also as the best place in the world to do business, to invest, to live and to grow.

Speaker, we are building an EV sector that will continue to create good-paying jobs for generations.

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

Mr. Rob Flack: Thank you to the minister for his detailed response. Investments like Volkswagen's follow on the government's success in attracting a string of landmark auto manufacturing investments. Much like how Volkswagen will transform Elgin County, St. Thomas and London for years and years to come, Ford, Honda, GM, NextStar, Umicore, Stellantis and Magna will do very much the same.

Speaker, will the minister explain why in the last two and a half years, we've been able to see these transformative investments pouring into our province, culminating in the Volkswagen investment?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Since taking office in 2018, we have reduced the cost of doing business in Ontario by \$8 billion annually. With our 2019 Driving Prosperity plan, we committed to building the cars of the future here. Our plan outlined an entire EV value chain from critical minerals in the north to the manufacturing might in the south, a future where we produce clean steel, batteries, parts, connected and autonomous engineering, cars of the future and recycling of the finished batteries. That was our plan.

That future, Speaker, is now: \$25 billion in auto investments in just 2.5 years. That's the story of Ontario. That story will continue with Ontario as the global leader in the EV supply chain.

INFRASTRUCTURE RENEWAL

Ms. Jennifer K. French: My question is to the Premier. This Premier and Minister of Infrastructure are painting the Ontario Science Centre as a teardown, but it isn't. They've seen record attendance. I encourage folks

and families to visit them and explore and enjoy their brilliant exhibits.

What is true is that capital repairs and building renewal are years behind. And, fun fact: According to the Ontario Science Centre's 2022-23 business plan, Infrastructure Ontario is technically the science centre's landlord. The minister says the science centre is falling apart. However, the business plans say nothing of the sort. What the Ontario Science Centre needs is for the government to cough up the needed funds and make the repairs.

My question to this minister is, will she keep withholding the funding needed or pay up?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

To reply, the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

Hon. Neil Lumsden: Thanks for my mild support around me at the table here.

It's a great question. I appreciate it because I also know you understand the tourism piece when we're talking about Ontario Place and specifically the science centre—but but a broader picture of what's going to happen.

A good analogy may be an old car that still runs and does awfully well. Gas mileage is not great, but after a while, you have to find a new one. You've had great memories, it can still work, but you have an opportunity to get a newer model, something special, something that is more efficient, something that will carry more people.

When we talk about the movement of the science centre, we talk about an opportunity and, I paraphrase our Premier, a world-class destination. We're talking about tourism. We want people to come into Ontario, because as they're coming in, they stop and buy gas, they buy lunch. They'll spend longer and greater periods of time in the city around what's going to be built because it will be world-class, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Again, hopefully to the Premier: According to the science centre's 2019-20 business plan, the 10-year deferred maintenance costs were \$147.5 million—\$147.5 million is real money, but it is far less than the cost of the Premier's proposed parking garage at Ontario Place.

The minister no doubt realizes that being a better landlord and doing the necessary repairs would be far less costly than building a whole new science centre. Unless the minister is planning to shrink the science centre, the minister knows she can't rebuild a new one for less than the cost of repairs and knows that there isn't money in the budget for this.

So my question is, what is the Premier's actual plan for the Ontario Science Centre and what is it going to cost Ontario?

1100

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

Hon. Doug Ford: Mr. Speaker, we're going to revitalize Ontario Place. We're going to have a world-

class destination. We're going to have the science centre, state of the art, worldwide.

The students up there have never experienced Ontario Place because the Liberals and the NDP—you closed it for what, 12 years now? There's weeds growing up; it's decrepit. We're going to build a great Live Nation amphitheatre. We're going to make sure that the science centre is there—world-class, 300,000 square feet with exhibits. We're going to make sure that Therme—wouldn't you love to go to a water park at Ontario Place, have fun? There's going to be public space; there's going to be green space all throughout there. We're a government that gets it done. You guys talk; we make it happen. That's the difference.

Interjections.

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

I'll remind the members to make their comments through the Chair.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. We have a member who is anxiously awaiting the opportunity to ask a question. Order.

Start the clock. The member for Peterborough–Kawartha.

INDIGENOUS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Dave Smith: My question is for the Minister of Northern Development and Indigenous Affairs. The previous Liberal government drove jobs out of our province and failed to unlock Ontario's full economic potential. The negative results of their destructive economic policies left many behind, including those particularly in rural, remote and Indigenous communities across northern Ontario.

In contrast, our government must be focused on solutions so that Ontarians have an opportunity to participate in our growing economy. Many Indigenous businesses are already operating across the north, and there are many more opportunities to create and expand businesses. It's vital that our government continues to work with Indigenous partners to make targeted investments that will help Indigenous entrepreneurs and businesses to thrive. Speaker, can the minister please explain what actions our government is taking to increase economic prosperity in partnership with Indigenous communities?

Hon. Greg Rickford: I've already cited a few examples of some economic development corporations acting on behalf of the collective interests of partner First Nations, Mr. Speaker, but it's, in fact, not limited to northern Ontario. My colleague the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade last week, with the Premier and the Prime Minister of Canada, highlighted a world-scale, world-class announcement that's going to involve the participation of a treaty council in that corridor that's excited about the opportunity to participate, whether it's developing energy infrastructure or corridor infrastructure in general—other businesses in the supply chain.

My colleague the Minister of Energy and I had participated in an exercise with the Six Nations of the Grand River Development Corp. on battery storage. These are all examples of large-scale infrastructure projects that go to the heart and soul of Ontario's capacity for economic development, and they're partly or wholly owned—

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

Supplementary question?

Mr. Dave Smith: Speaker, through you, thank you to the minister for his response. It demonstrates just a few examples of our government's commitment to reconciliation and creating opportunities to strengthen relationships with Indigenous partners.

Businesses are only one part of a vibrant economy, though. There are many other ways to amplify prosperity and build a stronger Ontario. Individuals, families, businesses and communities can all succeed when they have the tools, training and supports they need. Investments that help build capacity will go a long way in promoting long-term economic growth. Speaker, can the minister please explain how our government is supporting growth and prosperity for Indigenous communities?

Hon. Greg Rickford: Under the leadership of our Premier, we sat down with Chiefs of Ontario Regional Chief Glen Hare and his economic development team, and we accepted at face value their amazing proposal to do supply chain mapping, to provide loan and grant combinations for Indigenous-owned and -operated businesses to move forward on a host of exciting proposals that cover the province of Ontario.

Last week, coming closer to home, out in Kenora—Rainy River, the Niiwin Wendaanimok corporation, largely responsible for most of the work that's going on to twin the Trans-Canada Highway, had the full support of this government as we move forward on training 50 more young people to build our highways.

The same opportunity exists into the corridor to prosperity: An opportunity in the central part of northern Ontario to ensure that they have road access to better programming and services, good-paying jobs for Indigenous young people. That's what we hear on the ground, and that's what we're responding to in consensus and full partnership with Indigenous business leaders and political leaders.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Chris Glover: My question is to the Premier. My best friend lives in Minden, Ontario. In February, he was in a head-on collision and the worst injuries were suffered by his wife. She had many broken bones and whiplash. My friend, his wife and his mother were all rushed to Minden emergency room in separate ambulances. They said the first responders and the hospital staff were fantastic, but last week they found out that this government is closing Minden's emergency room on June 1. Haliburton, the next nearest hospital, would have been 45 minutes away.

Will this government stop the closure of the Minden ER so that the people of Minden have access to life-saving emergency services?

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

Hon. Sylvia Jones: I'm glad the member opposite's best friend and his family members had excellent service. It is a story, frankly, that I hear regularly when people have to access health care services in the province of Ontario.

Ontario Health has been—we have been in discussions with them and I have been assured that the Haliburton Highlands Health Services board has approached this decision in the best interests of community. This is a decision made by the hospital with the support of the hospital board. It is independent of any decisions we make at the ministry level.

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

Mr. Chris Glover: I don't know how closing down an emergency room can be in the best interests of a community.

Again to the Premier: Haliburton Highlands Health Services said that the Minden ER closure was due to a shortage of nursing and medical staff. For the past five years, this government has been fuelling the staffing shortage and creating a crisis in Ontario's public health system in order to privatize it. They could address the staffing shortage by repealing Bill 124. They could stop promoting private, for-profit clinics that are draining health care staff from public hospitals, and they could support public, not-for-profit hospitals like the one in Minden.

Will this government admit that the Minden emergency room and the people of Minden are victims of its quest to create a crisis and privatize public health care in Ontario?

Interjections.

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

Minister of Health.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Absolutely not. The Haliburton Highlands Health Services budget has actually increased by over 11% since 2018.

But I want to remind the member opposite that these are decisions made by a volunteer community member board that lives in the community and is looking out for the best interests of those communities. For the member opposite to suggest that he knows better than the volunteer-based board, than the CEO, than the individuals who work in that facility, is patently false.

I want to remind the member that the actual member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock has been in close contact with the board and the CEO through this entire process, and I remind the member that this is a local decision they have made in the best interests to serve their community in the long term.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. Ted Hsu: Yesterday, this government announced free tuition at the Ontario Police College. That's great, but what about all the other jobs in the economy where we lack skilled workers? Why isn't there a plan?

The collapse of Laurentian University warned us about the fragile finances of colleges and universities. Now, Guelph is suddenly pausing 16 programs. A student who was expecting to study medical physics in the fall cannot—medical physics, the people who run the big machines in hospitals.

Why isn't there a plan for education? Is there no plan even in the secret mandate letters? Look at our electricity system: years lost because this government cut conservation, renewable energy and delayed investing in storage, all while we knew since 2017 that demand was going to increase. Their natural gas plant idea will collide with the federal government's plan to fight climate change with clean electricity incentives and regulations. Why isn't there a real climate plan?

1110

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: I actually appreciate the question from the honourable member because it was literally a calling card for every single failed policy that brought this province to its knees under the previous Liberal government. Every single thing he talked about, actually, we had to reverse so that we could bring back thousands of jobs. The policies of the previous Liberal government created an energy crisis in the province that cost manufacturers hundreds of millions of dollars and cost homeowners. They had to make a decision between heating and eating. We saw students fleeing the province of Ontario; we saw opportunity fleeing the province of Ontario. They did literally nothing to combat our—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I apologize to the government House leader. The member for Ottawa South must come to order. I can't hear the government House leader.

The government House leader has the floor.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Mr. Speaker, I'd almost like to seek unanimous consent of the entire House so that he could ask that question again so that the people of the province of Ontario can remember why, after two elections, they are still only at eight people over there.

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

Mr. Ted Hsu: Speaker, does this government really plan? Last night, the Norwich township council passed motions having the effect of banning Progress Pride flags on municipal property and rejecting Pride Month. Is it discrimination? Well, this government has allowed a backlog of two years to accumulate at the Human Rights Tribunal.

It waited for a crisis and waited for thousands of small landlords and tenants to be hurt before putting—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. I apologize now to the member for Kingston and the Islands, who I can't hear. I would ask the government side to come to order.

Restart the clock. The member for Kingston and the Islands has the floor.

Mr. Ted Hsu: It waited for a crisis and waited for thousands of small landlords and tenants to be hurt before putting adequate resources into the Landlord and Tenant Board. Is there a plan for the justice system?

The government has said it was triple-checking the business case for tearing down and moving the Science Centre. Then it said there was no business case to release. Then it said the site could be used for other purposes.

This government is shooting from the hip. With the help of a developer, they have a plan for Ontario Place, but there's no plan for Ontario. Who's in charge?

Hon. Paul Calandra: I'll tell you who's in charge, Mr. Speaker. I'll tell you who's in charge. It's the Premier of the province of Ontario who has brought back thousands of jobs to the province of Ontario. That's who's in charge. It was this Premier who finally put the Liberals out of their misery and restored hope and opportunity to the province of Ontario.

You remember. You tried to build transit but couldn't get it done. This Premier was in office for a couple of months and built the biggest transit infrastructure program in the history of the country.

You also remember, you tried to build long-term care and you didn't get it done, but it was this Premier who said, "We have to end hallway health care; we're going to build 60,000 new and upgraded long-term-care beds."

You also remember that manufacturers were leaving in droves. It was this Premier, with this economic development minister, who brought back \$25 billion worth of investments in the auto sector when you were saying we had to transition to a service economy.

It was this Premier who brought back the energy sector—

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. The government side come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Ottawa South come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

I think there's a point that needs to be clarified. For a supplementary question to be valid, it has to have some relationship to the original question—the same subject—and follow and flow from the original question and the original response from the government. But the Speaker has to be able to hear the member who is asking the question to ascertain whether or not it does follow and flow. So I would ask the indulgence of the House to assist me in this regard.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We have a member who is awaiting the opportunity to ask a question.

We'll start the clock. The member for Chatham-Kent-Leamington.

SCHOOL SAFETY

Mr. Trevor Jones: My question is to the Minister of Education. The classroom must always be a safe place for students to focus on the necessary life, job and critical thinking skills that they need to succeed. Students and staff in Ontario's schools need to know that when they go to school, they will be free from physical harm. Students and staff should never be afraid to go to school, and parents much be assured that their children are safe and secure in our schools. In order to do this, our province needs to invest in schools and partner closely with community organizations that will support our young people in their everyday lives.

Can the minister please explain what actions our government is taking to protect the safety and well-being of both our students and our staff?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I want to thank the member from Chatham-Kent-Leamington for his service as an officer and someone who wore the uniform, keeping families safe in this province. And while we stand with the member from Chatham-Kent-Leamington, we stand with all law enforcement, ensuring children and communities are safe from the rise of violent crime in this country.

Mr. Speaker, we just announced on Monday an additional \$23-million investment specifically to combat crime as well as violence and bullying happening within our school system. Part of that is a partnership with the Pinball Clemons Foundation extended to many school boards across Ontario, designed specifically to offer counselling, leadership and career development for kids at risk.

We announced a 38% expansion of the Focus on Youth program: 28,000 kids are benefiting. This is an investment across school boards to encourage them to get access to jobs and mentorship development.

We have also announced a partnership with Sheldon Kennedy's Respect Group to help counter bullying in schools—and, most importantly, anchored by a \$100-million investment in mental health, a 500% increase from the former Liberals. This is going to help keep kids safe right across Ontario.

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

Mr. Trevor Jones: It's very encouraging that our government is taking decisive measures to promote safety in our schools. Each generation of students faces their own challenges, inside and outside the classroom. Physical and online bullying affects students in every part of our province, and the negative effects of bullying can impact students for a lifetime. Students must be protected and supported beyond their classrooms and school property. Our government must take action to address these serious issues that many children will, sadly, encounter. Ontario must have a plan to combat this severe issue and keep our students safe.

Can the minister please explain what our government is doing to ensure the safety of students inside the classroom and beyond it?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Thank you very much to the member for this important question. The first is a zero-

tolerance approach we took in the Better Schools and Student Outcomes Act, where we, through legislation, ensure that any educator that is convicted of a crime—a very serious crime—with respect to sexual exploitation of a child receives a lifetime ban. They will never be able to teach in the province of Ontario.

We have also required every educator to have fulfilled sexual abuse prevention training this past September. That extended to all teachers and all early childhood educators—the first province to do so.

We were the first province to mandate that every school has an anti-sex-trafficking plan to counter the rise of trafficking, particularly in the province up the 400-series highways. It's so prevalent in our communities.

We're the first province to have mandated within the curriculum learning specific to cyber bullying, to privacy, to healthy relationships and to consent. This is important as we build a young generation of kids who understand how they, themselves, can be part of the solution of deterring crime.

We're all in this together. We are committed to working with everyone—the College of Teachers, the faculties, unions and boards—to make sure schools are safe for kids in Ontario.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le premier ministre. We heard what happened at Minden hospital. Now let's go to Carleton Place hospital, where the local hospital was forced to close its emergency department overnight because there weren't enough staff to keep it open. A week before, it was its sister hospital that was closed overnight due to staff shortages—its third closure in as many months.

1120

Ontario had exactly one—one—unplanned emergency room closure in the last 15 years, but in the last year alone we've now had 160—160—emergency room closures in a single year. This isn't normal, Speaker, and we should not pretend that it is. What new measure will the Premier take today to stop the closure of emergency rooms across our province?

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

Hon. Sylvia Jones: One of the really important measures that is embedded in Bill 60 and the Your Health document, which I hope the member will seriously consider supporting, because it is an as-of-right program that ensures individual clinicians who are practising in any other Canadian jurisdiction can come to Ontario and immediately start working here in Ontario, in communities. That is one very specific example where we have been able to work with the College of Nurses of Ontario to make sure that people who have trained in other jurisdictions are able to quickly get their qualifications assessed and approved if appropriate.

Another important initiative: The Minister of Colleges and Universities has really been a true leader in the learn-

and-stay program, where we are able to provide tuition and cover books for students who want to practise as nurses and other critical care health care providers. We've had a historic number of students apply for those programs, because they want to participate.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

M^{me} France Gélinas: A hundred and sixty emergency room closures in one year under this minister's watch.

Let's go to Chesley. In Chesley right now, if a child requires care on a Saturday, they are out of luck. Their local emergency room is now closed evenings and weekends due to staff shortages. People there are worried that this is a sign that the end is near for this hospital. The member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound said that he wants Chesley hospital to return to full service. But after 10 years on the job, it does not look good, Speaker. Would the Premier agree the people of Chesley deserve a full-time emergency room? What will the government do to keep the emergency rooms open in our province?

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

Hon. Sylvia Jones: When the member highlights the challenges of making sure that we have sufficient HHR, health human resources, she doesn't also acknowledge the important work and the ability to support those changes, whether it is the as-of-right, ensuring individuals who want to come to Ontario can start practising immediately; whether it is the expansion of the undergraduate and postgraduate positions in post-secondary, an expansion that—frankly, if I could turn back time, we wouldn't have had the Liberals or the NDP, when they were in government, actually tightening up and removing those residency spots and those post-graduate positions.

We are making the investments, whether it is in education, whether it is in capital builds, whether it is ensuring that we have as many people as possible who wish to practise in the province of Ontario with have right and ability to do so.

NORTHERN HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. Michael Mantha: My question is to the Minister of Health. People across Algoma-Manitoulin are struggling to access health care. My office is often hearing from individuals and families who are having to wait two, three, four or more years to be matched with a family doctor through Health Care Connect. The Ontario college of physicians reported in February that 2.2-million Ontarians are currently without a family doctor. Rural and northern communities are especially struggling to ensure residents have access to a physician and primary care.

In pre-budget consultations this year, Dr. Stephen Cooper from Manitoulin Island told this government that northern Ontario is facing a shortfall of 350 family doctors and specialists. Dr. Cooper said in his submission, "It is hard to overstate the consequences for access to care if this trend continues."

Speaker, what is this government's plan to stop the growing shortage of health care professionals in the north?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: The member opposite raises a very important question.

I was so pleased earlier this year, through the investments of the Ministry of Finance, to be able to announce the Blind River Huron Shores Family Health Team in the northeast—of an additional \$1.1 million. This will ensure that they have the ability to hire two new full-time nurse practitioners, two service workers, two new registered nurses, one RPN, one full-time physiotherapist, a system navigator—all that will support over 5,000 orphaned, unattached patients along the North Shore corridor.

These are the investments that our government is making to ensure that communities across Ontario have access to health care close to home.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Mantha: Back to the Minister of Health: In order to recruit and retain doctors in rural and northern communities, this government needs to ensure that a full continuum of care continues and exists across the north.

Dr. Chantelle Wilson from Manitoulin Island reached out to my office recently about the struggles she is facing practising in small communities on western Manitoulin. She said, “My area has not had access to a home care nurse for two weeks. Dressing changes, etc., are coming to my office, adding to my already overflowing plate. I feel that providing care to western Manitoulin, including 45 in-patients at the local nursing home, will not be sustainable in the not-so-distant future.”

Speaker, physicians are trying their best to service their communities, but without help from this government, they are burning out and are being left no choice but to close their practices.

Will this minister and this government immediately introduce measures to recruit and retain health care professionals in northern Ontario before more physicians are forced to leave?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Something that would be of particular interest to this member is an investment that the Minister of Colleges and Universities and health have made. At the Northern Ontario School of Medicine, we will in fact have an additional 14 undergraduate positions and 22 postgraduate positions. Those are some of the concrete examples of how we are ensuring that people have community and access. The other, of course, is the as-of-right, so that individuals who wish to practise and live in a beautiful part of Ontario have that ability if they are currently in another Canadian jurisdiction. They can come immediately with a job offer and start working, without having to wait for those long licensure pieces. It’s important work, and it’s work that we’re very proud to be able to do as we continue to expand and shore up our health human resources.

ANIMAL PROTECTION

Mr. Brian Riddell: My question is for the Solicitor General.

People in my riding and in the province are very concerned about the safety and welfare of animals. Through

media reports, we hear about situations of neglect and cruelty, such as inhumane conditions where animals are kept in cramped enclosures, and animals that are in distress because they don’t have the basics like food and water. Other circumstances where animals can be abused include the mistreatment of wildlife, and animals that are used for entertainment purposes.

Abuse, neglect and cruelty towards any animal cannot be tolerated. The people of our province expect our government to ensure that Ontario animals are protected and treated in a humane manner.

Can the Solicitor General please explain how our government is keeping animals safe in our province?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: I want to thank my great friend, our colleague from Cambridge.

Many of us here in this chamber and in the galleries have pets that are part of our families. In our family, we have Hal the rabbit, who’s 10.

After years of neglect from the previous government, our government passed the Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act, or the PAWS Act. I want to give a special shout-out to our great member from Etobicoke–Lake-shore, who is a great champion and advocate for this. A first of its kind, the PAWS Act has established a robust, transparent and accountable organization staffed by over 100 qualified and passionate inspectors. Our animal welfare legislation has one of the most severe punishments in the country.

1130

Mr. Speaker, over the years, our inspectors have rescued thousands of animals and levied thousands of orders and charges against abusers because people in Ontario care. With your help, we will always make Ontario a better place for our pets.

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

Mr. Brian Riddell: It is reassuring and encouraging to hear about the additional powers that have come from provincial animal welfare legislation that will ensure that animals and wildlife are protected. However, the residents of Cambridge, like many others across the province, are interested in what additional measures our government will undertake to provide even greater protection for animals. It is important that our government continues to evaluate the effectiveness of current legislation and takes action to strengthen laws that will increase compliance and enforcement.

Speaker, can the Solicitor General please elaborate on how our government is ensuring animal welfare protection is enforced?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: Again, I thank the member from Cambridge for this important question. Mr. Speaker, I’m very happy to share the good news that in our Strengthening Safety and Modernizing Justice Act that I just introduced yesterday, our legislation is moving forward in proposing amendments to the Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act that will address additional compliance and enforcement.

We've consulted with the College of Veterinarians of Ontario and other experts in the field to make sure that we provide strong protection for our animals. This includes enhancing inspector powers and permitting them to immediately remove an animal if it is in critical condition or distress. We're continuing to strengthen compliance and enforcement. We will always keep our animals safe.

HOMELESSNESS

Ms. Jessica Bell: My question is to the Premier. Residents yesterday were shocked to learn that Ottawa is receiving only \$845,100 of the \$200 million Ontario is giving municipalities to tackle the homelessness crisis. Ontario's second-largest city, home to a million people, facing one of the biggest homelessness crises it has ever faced, is receiving only enough money to build two affordable homes.

Curiously, at the same time, the minister's own riding received triple what Ottawa got, with less than a fifth of the population. Something seems off. Minister, can you provide a full account of where your government's affordable housing funding is going and why?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Steve Clark: I'd be happy to, Speaker. It's interesting that this member asked the question when the person who sits beside her, when he was a regional councillor, asked the same thing that the Auditor General asked, and that was to fix the broken formula from the previous government.

In a 2021 value-for-money audit—you can read it right here—it talks about the inequity of that program. We had Mayor Sutcliffe and officials from Ottawa here. We explained the situation to them. But we are responding directly to the 2021 Auditor General's report, where it said for funding equity.

You know who you need to ask, member? You need to ask the people from Niagara, the people from London, the people from Windsor, who were shortchanged with that previous formula. Ask your colleague.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'll remind the members they can't use props to illustrate their points.

Supplementary question.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Back to the minister: The minister should read the Auditor General's report, because in that report, the Auditor General said this government has no plan to end homelessness. Every city and every town in Ontario is facing a housing affordability crisis and a homelessness crisis, which is why it is shocking that this government is cutting funding to affordable housing. It is why it is shocking that this government is banning municipalities from using and collecting development fees for affordable housing projects.

Minister, can your government to commit to providing cities with the fair funding they are asking for to build the affordable housing they need?

Hon. Steve Clark: Speaker, you notice how she wiggled away from the Auditor General's report and the city of Ottawa? I'm going to go back to it.

The updated formula was developed based on the feedback from the Auditor General and municipal stakeholders. The updated model takes into consideration a community's share of homelessness, supportive housing units, low-income households, households in deep core housing need as defined by CMHC, and Indigenous and youth populations.

We are not going to facilitate a funding formula that was outlined in the Auditor General's report that forgets about communities, like those in Niagara, like those in London, like those in Windsor. We're not going to do that. We're going to respond to the Auditor General's report and have a fair funding formula that treats all of Ontario with fairness and equity.

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Mr. Brian Riddell: My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. The agri-food sector contributes over \$47 billion to Ontario's GDP—an amazing number. That is, in part, because of the thousands of agri-food businesses across the province and in my riding that produce high-quality products made right here in Ontario. Businesses like From Farm to Table Canada and Grand River Foods bring world-renowned products to market, meeting the demands of a growing population and an international market.

Can the minister explain how our government will continue to expand opportunities for the agri-food businesses in my riding?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I do appreciate the question from the member from Cambridge because our government has set out ambitious growth targets for our agri-food sector through our Grow Ontario Strategy. In that strategy, we have committed to growing Ontario's agri-food markets and exports by 8% annually by 2030, and I'm pleased to say that we have already taken steps to accomplish just that.

Last week, we announced our Grow Ontario Market Initiative, and while I was at the Earlton Farm Show, I want to share with you that an astute person said, "If you don't lock in the sale, nothing else matters. You need good marketing initiatives to secure that sale." That's what we are doing, Speaker. We're introducing a \$6-million Grow Ontario Market Initiative program through the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership.

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

Mr. Brian Riddell: Thank you, Minister, for your response. That is great news for the agri-food sector, and according to OMAFRA data, that is great news for over 600 agri-food businesses in my riding that continue to build a strong Ontario economy.

As we've seen over the last few years, accessing new markets is essential for a business to prosper and grow. Can the minister explain how the Grow Ontario Market

Initiative will help agri-food businesses reach these new markets?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: The potential for growth in Ontario's agri-food sector is absolutely tremendous, and our government, through the leadership of Premier Ford and our entire caucus, are showing our commitment to making sure businesses have the support they need because we want them to be even more competitive, not only domestically here in Canada but around the world.

Through the Grow Ontario Market Initiative, eligible businesses can receive up to a 50% cost share for their eligible costs in terms of ramping up their marketing initiatives, and that translates into up to \$60,000 in funding. We're also putting out supports for our industry organizations as well, and if they have eligible projects, they could receive up to \$125,000.

We're committed to building Ontario, and it's through Ontario's agri-food sector and the building of our marketing initiatives that we are going to absolutely prevail and show the rest of the world—

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

The next question.

ÉDUCATION EN FRANÇAIS

FRENCH-LANGUAGE EDUCATION

M^{me} Chandra Pasma: La pénurie des enseignantes et enseignants dans le système d'éducation de langue française met la qualité de l'enseignement en français en Ontario en péril, mais ce gouvernement ne fait pas grand-chose pour l'adresser. Les parents sont alarmés par cette pénurie grandissante, les jeunes sont anxieux et il y a des écoles qui sont en danger de fermer à cause du manque d'enseignants. Il y a des enfants francophones qui ont neuf enseignants dans une seule année scolaire. Ils font les devoirs demandés par l'enseignant et arrivent en classe pour trouver qu'il y a un tout nouveau enseignant qui veut quelque chose complètement différent. Ce n'est pas juste, et ça ne devrait pas continuer comme ça.

Mais deux ans après que le ministre de l'Éducation a annoncé sa stratégie, le problème s'empire. Au lieu de se contenter de paroles vides, est-ce que le ministre peut agir, et agir tout de suite?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I want to thank the member opposite for this question. I'm very pleased to confirm that French-language education funding in Ontario is at the highest levels in Ontario history. In addition to that, we introduced legislation in the Better Schools and Student Outcomes Act that is specifically responding to the need to certify French educators quicker. I hope the members opposite will put ideology aside and vote for quicker processing times of new French teachers.

In addition, in that very bill, we allow French educators based on what's called an experience certificate, to allow more individuals mid-career with professional competence working with kids in the French language to work within our schools—a request of school boards to help

ensure we attract more. We announced a joint French-education recruitment program with education unions, with federations, school boards and the French community itself to recruit French educators. We announced \$13 million more to do it. I am proud that we've recruited more French-language educators as a result of that, with a commitment to do much, much more for French schools in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time we have for question period today.

MEMBER'S BIRTHDAY

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member for Algoma–Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Sometimes you have to take things into your own hands. On behalf of my entire corner, I'd like to wish the good member of Algoma–Manitoulin a happy 55th birthday.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'll need to consult with the table to see if that was a valid point of order.

FLAG-RAISING CEREMONY

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member for Thornhill.

Ms. Laura Smith: I would like to invite members to join myself and members from York Centre, Eglinton–Lawrence, King–Vaughan and others as we proudly raise the flag of Israel. This year we celebrate Yom Ha'atzmaut, Israel's 75th year as an independent state. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): There being no further business at this time, this House stands in recess until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1142 to 1300.

PETITIONS

LAND USE PLANNING

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's my pleasure to introduce this petition for the first time in Ontario's Legislature. It's entitled "Say No to Urban Sprawl in Waterloo Region."

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario,

"Whereas the government is overriding and rewriting local official plans to move urban boundaries and violate the countryside line by opening up previously protected lands to development;

"Whereas green spaces and farmland are what we rely on to grow our food, support natural habitats, prevent flooding, and mitigate future climate incidents;

"Whereas the government's Housing Affordability Task Force found there are plenty of places to build homes without destroying the greenbelt, and a recent report from the Alliance for a Liveable Ontario says Waterloo region has the capacity to build 230,000 new housing units within the current area boundary;

“Whereas there is a lack of comprehensive research or analysis on the aquifer in Waterloo region and how unanticipated” growth and “sprawl will affect source water protection;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately stop all plans to force sprawl in Waterloo region by reversing the recently announced changes to the regional official plan amendment.”

It is my pleasure to present this petition. I fully support it, will affix my signature and give it to page Maya.

ÉDUCATION EN FRANÇAIS

M^{me} France Gélinas: J’aimerais remercier Erick Brunet de Blezard Valley dans mon comté pour cette pétition.

« Soutenez le système d’éducation francophone en Ontario. »

« Attendu que les enfants francophones ont un droit constitutionnel à une éducation de haute qualité, financée par les fonds publics, dans leur propre langue;

« Attendu que l’augmentation des inscriptions dans le système d’éducation en langue française signifie que plus de 1 000 nouveaux enseignants et enseignantes de langue française sont nécessaires chaque année pour les cinq prochaines années;

« Attendu que les changements apportés au modèle de financement du gouvernement provincial pour la formation des enseignantes et enseignants de langue française signifient que l’Ontario n’en forme que 500 par an;

« Attendu que le nombre de personnes qui enseignent sans certification complète dans le système d’éducation en langue française a augmenté de plus de 450 % au cours de la dernière décennie; »

Ils et elles demandent « à l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario de fournir immédiatement le financement demandé par le rapport du groupe de travail sur la pénurie des enseignantes et des enseignants dans le système d’éducation en langue française de l’Ontario et de travailler avec des partenaires pour mettre pleinement en oeuvre les recommandations. »

J’appuie cette pétition, monsieur le Président. Je vais la signer et je demande à Nicholas de l’amener à la table des greffiers.

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: Thank you for the lovely privilege to table this petition today on behalf of the residents of Barrie–Innisfil. I’d like to table:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the federal government is increasing the escalated carbon tax by 14%, on April 1, 2023;

“Whereas carbon tax cost increase will put more pressure on consumers who are already struggling with inflation;

“Whereas we call on the federal government to stop the carbon tax, which is a tax hike that Ontarians and Canadians cannot afford;

“Whereas the government of Ontario is helping to reduce the cost of living by keeping taxes low, freezing and eliminating licence plate renewal fees and scrapping the requirement to have licence plate stickers for passenger vehicle, light-duty trucks, motorcycles and mopeds and building on these measures in Bill 85, Building a Strong Ontario Act (Budget Measures), 2023, the government continues to help Ontarians with the cost of living;

“Whereas we call on the Ontario government to urge the federal government to halt the carbon tax increase, that will raise the cost of everything;

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

“To support the passage of Bill 85, Building a Strong Ontario Act (Budget Measures), 2023.”

I will affix my signature and pass it to the page.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Bhutila Karpoche: I’d like to thank the residents of Parkdale–High Park who recently attended our transit safety town hall and signed this petition titled “Fund the TTC.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas former Premier Mike Harris and his” Conservative “government cancelled provincial funding of 50% of the TTC’s net operating costs over 20 years ago, downloading these costs to Toronto ... and transit riders;

“Whereas subsequent successive Ontario provincial governments have maintained this underfunding;

“Whereas the TTC is the least subsidized public transit system in North America;

“Whereas this underfunding, for over two decades, has resulted in reduced TTC services, inadequate staffing, and an inability to expand public transit services in line with population growth;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately restore the provincial funding of 50% of the TTC’s net operating costs.”

I fully support this petition and will affix my signature to it.

SCHOOL BOARDS

Mr. Dave Smith: I have a petition from a constituent in my riding.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas parents expect that school board trustees and staff be qualified, accountable and focused on putting forward a plan to boost student achievement; and

“Whereas Ontario’s education system should offer the full accountability, transparency and responsiveness expected by families to prepare students for the jobs of tomorrow; and

“Whereas currently, Ontario’s 72 school boards set their own priorities, creating inconsistencies in student outcomes across the education system; and

“Whereas training for school board officials, including trustees and directors of education, to ensure they are unified in their respective roles to help students build skills they need to succeed; and

“Whereas a trustee dispute mechanism should be put in place, saving precious time and countless taxpayer dollars by building a provincially appointed roster of qualified integrity commissioners to quickly and effectively adjudicate the disputes;

“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 Bill 98, the Better Schools and Student Outcomes Act, 2023.”

I agree with this petition, will sign my name to it, give it to page Kate to take to the table.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Chris Glover: This petition is submitted by the Ryerson Community School, the school where I first taught as a teacher back in 1989.

“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, will affix my signature and pass it to page Dominic to take to the table.

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TAXATION

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: It is an honour and a privilege to rise today and present this petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

“Whereas the federal government is increasing the escalated carbon tax by 14% on April 1, 2023;

“Whereas carbon tax cost increase will put more pressure on consumers who are already struggling with inflation;

“Whereas we call on the federal government to stop the carbon tax, which is a tax hike that Ontarians and Canadians cannot afford;

“Whereas the government of Ontario is helping to reduce the cost of living by keeping taxes low, freezing and eliminating licence plate renewal fees and scrapping the requirement to have licence plate stickers for passenger vehicle, light-duty trucks, motorcycles and mopeds and building on these measures in Bill 85, Building a Strong Ontario Act (Budget Measures), 2023, the government continues to help Ontarians with the cost of living;

“Whereas we call on the Ontario government to urge the federal government to halt the carbon tax increase, that will raise the cost of everything;

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

“To support the passage of Bill 85, Building a Strong Ontario Act (Budget Measures), 2023.”

I see signatures here, Speaker. I will also be adding my signature to this petition because I fully support this petition. I will be passing the petition over to page Kundanika, who will bring it to the table.

SOINS DE SANTÉ

M. Guy Bourgouin: Il me fait plaisir de lire une pétition, qui a été signée par M^{me} Diane Bannister de Kapuskasing, intitulée « Soins de santé : pas à vendre.

« À l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario :

« Alors que les Ontariennes et les Ontariens devraient obtenir des soins de santé en fonction de leurs besoins—et non de la taille de leur portefeuille;

« Alors que le premier ministre, Doug Ford, et la ministre de la Santé, Sylvia Jones, ont déclaré qu’ils prévoyaient privatiser certaines parties des soins de santé;

« Alors que la privatisation poussera les infirmières, les médecins et les PSSP hors de nos hôpitaux publics, aggravant ainsi la crise des soins de santé;

« Alors que la privatisation se termine toujours avec une facture pour les patients;

« Par conséquent, nous, soussignés, demandons à l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario d’arrêter immédiatement tous les plans visant à privatiser davantage le système de soins de santé de l’Ontario et de résoudre la crise des soins de santé en :

« —abrogeant la loi 124 et recrutant, retenant et respectant les médecins, les infirmières et les PSSP avec de meilleurs salaires et conditions de travail;

« —certifiant les titres de compétences de dizaines de milliers d’infirmières et d’autres professionnels de la santé formés à l’étranger déjà en Ontario, qui attendent des années et paient des milliers de dollars pour être autorisés à travailler;

« —rendant l'éducation et la formation gratuites ou peu coûteuses pour les infirmières, les médecins et les autres professionnels de la santé;

« —incitant les médecins et les infirmières à choisir de vivre et travailler dans le nord de l'Ontario;

« —finançant les hôpitaux pour qu'ils aient suffisamment d'infirmières à chaque quart de travail, dans chaque département. »

Il me fait plaisir de signer cette pétition que je supporte et de la donner à Lazo pour qu'il l'amène à la table des greffiers.

POLICE SERVICES

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: This petition is titled "In Support of Ontario Getting More Boots on the Ground by Making it Easier to Recruit and Train Police Officers.

"To the Solicitor General:

"Whereas the government of Ontario is committed to ensuring the safety of Ontarians and Ontario communities; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario is committed to supporting our hard-working women and men in blue, who put their lives on the line every day, and police forces across the province of Ontario to keep our communities safe;

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

"To support Bill 102 and ensure its passage to ensure the following:

"(1) Make it easier for police services across the province to recruit and train more police officers by removing tuition fees for the basic constable training program at the Ontario Police College (OPC) and immediately expand the number of recruits that can be trained each year;

"(2) To expand the basic constable training program at the Ontario Police College immediately to accommodate an additional 70 recruits per cohort from 480 to 550;

"(3) Starting in 2024 to expand the basic constable training program to four cohorts per year instead of three;

"(4) Additionally, to support recruitment efforts at a time when local police officers have signalled challenges in doing so to introduce legislation that, if passed, will eliminate the post-secondary education requirement to become a police officer as set out in the Community Safety and Policing Act and, if passed, this act would amend the CPSA to provide that a secondary school diploma or equivalent is sufficient education for the purposes of being appointed as a police officer; and

"(5) To make the elimination of the tuition fee for the basic constable training program at the Ontario Police College retroactive to January 1, 2023, and that recruits who paid for their 12-week basic constable training earlier this year to be reimbursed."

I proudly affix my signature to this petition and I will be giving it to page Nicholas.

VISITORS

Ms. Laura Smith: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member for Thornhill.

Ms. Laura Smith: I appreciate the opportunity to do this. I was remiss and late but I want to introduce members of our Thornhill riding: David Rotenberg, Avi Grinberg, Moshe David and Jacob Keslassy; also, members of the Shomrim safety patrol in Thornhill and the GTA. Thank you very much, gentlemen, for joining us.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

STRENGTHENING SAFETY AND MODERNIZING JUSTICE ACT, 2023

LOI DE 2023 SUR LE RENFORCEMENT DE LA SÉCURITÉ ET LA MODERNISATION DE LA JUSTICE

Mr. Kerzner moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 102, An Act to amend various Acts relating to the justice system, fire protection and prevention and animal welfare / Projet de loi 102, Loi modifiant diverses lois relatives au système judiciaire, à la prévention et à la protection contre l'incendie ainsi qu'au bien-être des animaux.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I look to the Solicitor General to lead off the debate, if he chooses to do so.

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: I will be splitting my time with the Attorney General, the member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore, the member from Sarnia–Lambton and the member from Simcoe–Grey.

It's my pleasure to rise in the House today to open debate on Bill 102, the proposed Strengthening Safety and Modernizing Justice Act, 2023. Our government knows that a safe Ontario is a strong Ontario. With this legislation our government is taking action to keep Ontario safe today, tomorrow and for future generations. We're providing those on the forefront of community safety with the legislative and administrative support they need to deliver the highest-quality services across the province.

I've said this before: Some things have to matter. The rule of law must matter and public safety must matter. That's exactly what this bill is about. In my generation there has never been a government that has cared more about our public safety than our government, under the leadership of our Premier. Public safety will always be a top priority for this government. This week we've demonstrated that again. I want to thank the Premier for his leadership.

Just yesterday we joined leaders at the Toronto Police College to announce our government's latest investment in our public safety. Our government is providing free tuition to new recruits completing basic constable training

at the Ontario Police College. At the same time, we're expanding future cohorts to train even more cadets and strengthen our police services across the province.

The future of public safety is bright. But that being said, we have a lot of work ahead of us. Ontarians and all Canadians are concerned by the violent crimes and the illegal use of firearms. Mr. Speaker, we'll continue to partner with the federal government on these concerns and urge them to act within their areas of jurisdiction to secure our borders and safeguard our communities.

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I've said this before in the House, as I've travelled—I've travelled with the member from Sarnia–Lambton right to the shores of the St. Clair River. I've travelled up in Thunder Bay. I've travelled to Sault Ste. Marie. I've travelled towards the Ottawa and eastern Ontario areas. I've seen the borders for myself. We need the federal government to act, and we will do so with co-operation.

Mr. Speaker, public safety will always be a top priority for Ontario and for this government, and we won't wait and we won't sit by. We are being proactive, purposeful and precise, taking clear action so we can target crime and keep our communities safe. This is why we're taking firm action to improve safety by introducing this legislation that, if passed, would transform policing and community safety by:

- introducing amendments to the Community Safety and Policing Act, 2019, and bringing it into force;
- updating other critical pieces of public safety legislation like the PAWS Act and the Coroners Act; and
- supporting the modernization of the justice system.

I'll spend a few minutes as I go forward and talk a little more in depth about it. There are many pieces to the proposed bill involving both the Ministry of the Solicitor General and the Ministry of the Attorney General. The Attorney General will outline elements of this proposed legislation to modernize the justice system, such as freeing up court resources to deal with serious criminal and backlogged cases. I will focus my remarks—along with our amazing parliamentary assistants, the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore and the member from Sarnia–Lambton—on the law enforcement and community safety components of this bill. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, they are not only amazing representatives to this House, but absolutely committed to keeping Ontarians safe.

Mr. Speaker, I've said in this House before that our most fundamental responsibility as elected representatives is to uphold the safety of our communities. With this debate on the legislation, all members of this House have the opportunity to honour the commitment that we made to the people of Ontario—and it's so simple: keeping Ontario safe. I've said this in reply to questions in this House: We have an inherent right to live safely in our communities. And I'll tell you why: because when we have a safe community, we have absolutely everything. We have a place to raise our children. We have a place to play at the park. We have a place to shop. We have a place to pray. Our communities are absolutely everything, and

the safety of those communities is something that we can't take for granted.

In order to keep Ontario safe, we count on the courageous people in our communities who choose to cross the line, who choose a career in public safety, who choose to put service over self. These are our police officers, our firefighters, our 911 call operators—they're amazing—correctional officers, probation and parole officers, animal welfare inspectors and so many more. They are incredible people who keep us safe every day, and our government is proud of them.

Monsieur le Président, ce sont des gens formidables qui nous protègent au quotidien. Nous sommes fiers de soutenir tous ceux qui assurent la sécurité de l'Ontario, tous les jours.

Ontario owes so much to the front-line heroes who have dedicated their lives to keeping our communities safe. Let's reflect on their work. I'm thinking of the police officers who are responsible for law enforcement and crime prevention, the firefighters who combat smoke and flame and respond to medical emergencies, animal welfare inspectors who investigate animals that are neglected or in distress and alleviate their suffering, and the coroners, unsung heroes of community safety, whose investigations into the unexpected, non-natural or unexplained deaths may prevent further deaths. This is just to name a few. Here in this House, we can make a difference, and in fact, our community heroes choose to have our backs.

For the people who have our backs each day, we must continue to have their backs as well. That's what this legislation is all about, and that's what this debate is about in the House today. To all who serve, our message is clear and simple: Your government, under Premier Ford, supports you now and always, 100%.

This legislation presents all of us, on all sides of the House, an opportunity to uphold our community safety, our most fundamental duty. We're responsible for the legislative framework that enables our heroes to perform their jobs to the greatest ability. Sometimes these frameworks need updating, and to meet the changing expectations of the public, we close legislative gaps that have opened with the passage of time and we make operational improvements and drive modernization.

The goal of the proposed Strengthening Safety and Modernizing Justice Act, 2023, is to build safer communities by transforming policing and other community safety and justice legislation. First and foremost, Madam Speaker, we will introduce legislative amendments that, if passed, will support bringing the Community Safety and Policing Act, 2019, into force and deliver on our government's promise for modernized policing legislation that enables efficient and accountable policing services to the public.

The Community Safety and Policing Act, 2019: Members know and will recall that this act that was passed in 2019 followed an extensive engagement with policing, community and Indigenous partners. Our government has led this modernization from the start, and it listened carefully to our public safety and community partners in

the development and the implementation. The CSPA will be the main legislative platform for policing modernization in the province. It will replace the current Police Services Act—which, by the way, came into enactment in the early 1990s—and will make significant changes to Ontario's legislative framework for policing. This will be accomplished through stronger governance and oversight of policing. Madam Speaker, it's time.

The CSPA will also support culturally responsive and equitable policing in First Nations, and enable First Nations to opt in to the provincial legislative framework for policing for the very first time.

Since 2019, the Ministry of the Solicitor General has engaged in further stakeholder consultation and administrative, police and legal reviews of the statute, and identified the need for policy and technical refinements to the CSPA to support regulation development required to bring it into force. Key stakeholders and First Nations communities who have been heavily engaged in the development of the CSPA since 2019 are eager to bring this into force. They are also expecting an adequate window between the time we announce when the act will come into force and the date it actually comes into force. This will allow for a smoother transition.

We are entering the home stretch. As I've said, all around the province, we are entering the home stretch. We're at the bottom of the ninth inning, and we want to see everything wrapped up, enacted, proclaimed as soon as possible. The amendments in the proposed Strengthening Safety and Modernizing Justice Act, 2023, are critical and operationally important to bring the CSPA into force and to create a policing framework that respects front-line officers, strengthens public confidence in police services and delivers quality and efficient policing and police oversight. The proposed statute amendments are essential to bringing the CSPA into force.

I want to talk a bit about the oversight and governance, because it is, again, not a complicated thing:

- adding one or more vice-chairs to the future Ontario police arbitration and adjudication commission, to improve the governance of that agency;

- adjusting the Ontario Provincial Police detachment board provisions to allow flexibility by enabling the minister to make certain regulations related to detachment boards;

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- removing statutory requirements regarding the OPP governance advisory council to enable greater flexibility to better reflect the Solicitor General's advisory needs in relation to the OPP policies; and

- requiring municipalities and the province to actively promote vacancies on police service boards to ensure police service boards are representative of the communities they serve, and this is very important.

I want to also talk about labour arbitration. We want to remove police services as a party to the arbitration regarding a police association's duty to fairly represent its members, and we want to clarify the responsibilities for

costs associated with municipal police service board disputes to align with the current arbitration practice.

I want to talk about police recognition and education. By expanding the issuing of a King's Commission to municipal and First Nations officers—it's about time—under the existing Police Services Act, the Lieutenant Governor in Council can be the only one to commission officers from the Ontario Provincial Police.

I want to clarify about the CSPA—this would include removing the CSPA provisions relating to the handling of personal information that are inconsistent with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, and adding a regulation-making authority in the statute that requires rules relating to data integration to be set out in the regulation. Madam Speaker, while the primary driver of this proposed bill is to introduce legislative amendments that are important before we bring the CSPA into force, there are other amendments to the CSPA that, if passed, would modernize and improve the effectiveness of those statutes.

I want to talk briefly about the Provincial Animal Welfare Services—PAWS—Act. The PAWS Act came into force in 2020, and I recognize and acknowledge the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore for her passion on this particular piece of legislation. I'm proud, we're proud, our government is proud that we've implemented the most comprehensive animal welfare legislation anywhere cross Canada. Here, again, Ontario has led in some of the toughest penalties and fines for those who mistreat our animals.

As honourable members know animal welfare services operates within the Ministry of the Solicitor General and is responsible for enforcing the PAWS Act. The animal welfare services has its own chief animal welfare inspector and a clear governance and oversight framework. Government enforcement of the PAWS Act is working successfully, Madam Speaker. The proposed amendments are intended to address operational challenges which would strengthen compliance and improve operational efficiency.

I want to talk again briefly about the Coroners Act. The Office of the Chief Coroner and the Ontario Forensic Pathology Service have the authority to retain and store tissue samples and body fluids obtained during a post-mortem examination. The act identifies the type of specimens that can be stored and retained.

The discovery of the structure and function of DNA—which turned 70 this month—can tell us a lot. Madam Speaker, I know a little bit about this. This is about our future and what can be uncovered as science continuously unfolds. The Coroners Act never contemplated the retention of materials for purposes beyond the needs of a coroner's investigation, and it did not anticipate the advancement in medical science. That's why the proposed amendments will help us align with the future of medical science.

The Fire Protection and Prevention Act establishes the legislative framework for delivery of fire protection services across Ontario which includes the rights of entry

in emergencies and in fire investigations. Amendments to this act would close gaps in the current legislation as it relates to cost recovery and would promote operational efficiencies for the Fire Safety Commission. The proposed amendments would allow for more than one deputy fire marshal and would support more efficient operations by ensuring someone is always available to execute the duties of the fire marshal. This is really a common-sense thing.

The proposed Strengthening Safety and Modernizing Justice Act clears a path to enforce the Community Policing and Safety Act. It creates an opportunity to modernize several elements of other community safety and justice legislation across the Ministry of the Solicitor General and the Ministry of the Attorney General, and it proposes legislation to keep generations of Ontarians safe today, tomorrow and well into the future.

As I conclude, I want to conclude on a message of hope. As Solicitor General, nothing has been more impactful for me in this honour of a lifetime—an honour that I have said many times is just beyond something I could have ever imagined—to sit in this Legislature as the 1,947th member since Confederation, but I've had the honour of going to the Ontario Police College three times since I've been Solicitor General and, each time, to see the look in the eyes of the cadets graduating—and many members in this House can speak to graduates they knew from their community, from their own families. It's a once-in-a-lifetime experience to see for yourself, to see the optimism in their eyes, to see the hope and promise that they bring to our public safety.

Madam Speaker, we're in great hands with the people graduating. They believe in our province and in our future. Ils croient en notre province et en notre avenir.

Today's announcement is about optimism. It's about recognizing that our best days lie ahead, and inspired by our front-line heroes, let us share in that belief. Let us look boldly towards the future of Ontario—a safe future for Ontario for all.

I've said this before, but it's a line that hits home for me, Madam Speaker—and I've said it here; absolutely I've said it here—our province is so big; it's bigger than all of us; it's more important than any one of us individually. Ontario was here long before us and those who may have settled here from our own families a long time ago, and it will be here long after us.

I encourage all members here in this House to support the legislation. Madam Speaker, let's keep Ontario safe.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): I recognize the Attorney General.

Hon. Doug Downey: I'm pleased to stand in the House today for second reading of the Strengthening Safety and Modernizing Justice Act, 2023. If passed, the bill would introduce a suite of important new legislative changes to improve community safety and to build upon our previous efforts to transform the justice system.

But before I begin, I'd like to take a moment to thank my excellent colleague the Solicitor General along with his team and ministry staff, for introducing this important

legislation as a bundle. I'd also like to thank the stakeholders and the justice partners whose input and perspectives have been key in the development of this bill.

The Solicitor General has spoken about the evolving nature of public safety and crime in Ontario, something we're all very concerned with, and people's expectations of how we do justice and how things are changing. They want to see a legal system that works better, that works the way they expect it to—fewer delays, fewer obstacles—but of course as much as we have in this bill, there is more to do and we'll continue to work for more change.

The changes we're proposing today, though, in addition to enhancing the safety of communities, will continue to drive this transformation with sensible and responsive legislative improvements. These changes will clarify processes in the courts and the way we deliver certain services.

I want to take a moment here to reflect on the idea of safe communities. When we speak about safe communities in Ontario, it applies to everyone, especially the most vulnerable of our community members. It includes those who are most affected by the root causes of violence and crime, such as victims and their family members. I would like to speak in more detail about one of our proposed changes.

If passed, the change would support survivors of intimate partner violence and sexual assault throughout their involvement with the justice system and help them feel safer during the very challenging process. Madam Speaker, it takes strength and it takes courage to confront intimate partner violence. There are devastating impacts to victims, families and their communities. In my work as Attorney General, I've met many victims and many survivors, as well as their loved ones and the front-line workers who support them. Some of these individuals have faced challenges in ensuring the courts understand the risks and warning signs of intimate partner violence and its after-effects.

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Within this space, the federal government recently passed legislation enhancing the judicial education provisions under the Judges Act to encourage training on sexual assault for federally appointed judges.

Additionally, there is a private member's bill, currently, passed unanimously by the House of Commons, and it's in the Senate, referring to the need for judicial education on intimate partner violence and sexual assault. This bill was spearheaded by the mother and the stepfather—I'd like to introduce Dr. Kagan and her husband, Philip. Without them—I'm very emotional. This is a very, very important piece of the bill. In 2020, young Keira was found dead with her father following an access visit. It's so important that we acknowledge this tragic story and take action.

That's what we're doing today. We're taking action. We're proposing changes to the Courts of Justice Act and the Justices of the Peace Act today. The changes, if passed, will support education and training on gender-based and intimate partner violence for provincially appointed

judges and justices of the peace, and they would ensure a consistent approach to the way judges are educated about these types of violence and its impacts on their loved ones and their surrounding communities.

There are similar calls to action taking place close to home for some, closer to home for others.

In August 2019, Ontario's chief coroner announced an inquest into the circumstances surrounding the deaths of Carol Culleton, Anastasia Kuzyk and Nathalie Warmerdam. These three women were murdered by an individual whose name I will not mention—a former intimate partner—on September 22, 2015, in the great riding of my friend John Yakabuski. The scope of the coroner's inquest addressed gender-based violence, intimate partner violence and femicide in rural communities, including police policies and practices as well as policies and practices in the justice system. On June 28, 2022, a total of 86 jury recommendations were presented. These included providing more trauma-informed training and education for all justice system employees who work with intimate partner violence survivors and perpetrators. As a government, we are taking time to carefully review and consider all recommendations in order to provide a whole-of-government response and to ensure meaningful steps can be identified and taken to address these important issues.

The changes we are proposing today are one of many steps forward. By enhancing judicial education about the nature and consequences of gender-based violence, we are continuing to build public trust in our justice system. And, in turn, these changes build upon the good work our government has done so far in developing programs and education to support victims and survivors as they seek access to justice and look for pathways to healing.

Aside from these changes, our work supporting victims of crime also includes promoting continued education for crown attorneys. My ministry's criminal law division currently offers several courses for crowns during the summer, including a week-long intimate partner and family violence course. The division has also launched an intimate partner violence education page as part of its electronic library, to provide crowns with easy access to all related resources and information about legal developments.

There are also opportunities for continuing education, with a conference focusing on intimate partner and domestic violence every few years for crowns and victims across government. Among other issues, this conference focuses on the effective prosecution and management of IPV cases, and enhancing the support provided to IPV victims and survivors. The 2023 IPV co-leads conference will be held later this year and will focus on many of the training areas identified by the Renfrew county inquest jury recommendations.

Madam Speaker, I want to underscore here the type of education we are proposing as part of the legislation we are debating today. It will fall under the purview of the independence of the judiciary, but we will work with them and we will let them lead to a better outcome. And this

must remain the case, given their independence. But I think we've struck a good balance with these changes. If passed, they will help victims and survivors have confidence and trust in the justice system while maintaining that crucial independence. We'll continue to enhance victims services, training and supports through our Victim/Witness Assistance Program and through other programs that we maintain both within my ministry and in other ministries.

So, Madam Speaker, I just want to take a moment again to thank Dr. Kagan and her husband, Philip, for the great work they've done to make this possible. Thank you for your leadership.

Thank you. Merci. Meegwetch. I'll now cede to the parliamentary assistant to the Solicitor General.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): I recognize the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

Ms. Christine Hogarth: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's always nice to see you in the chair. What a great day to debate Bill 102.

Our safety for our community, for our families is so important. Our Solicitor General and our Premier have been at the forefront of this, and I just want to applaud their work to make sure we're keeping Ontario safe.

As I said, it is my pleasure to rise in the House today to provide additional details to Bill 102, the government's proposed Strengthening Safety and Modernizing Justice Act, 2023. Our Premier, our government and our caucus believe that the most fundamental responsibility that we have is to keep the people of Ontario safe. Safety is our springboard to attracting jobs, to improving educational outcomes, to making Ontario a province where opportunity continues to thrive.

Ontario isn't immune to the reality across Canada and around the world. Increases in serious violent crimes, repeat offences and complex cases such as mental health and addictions continue to be a concern. Our response is targeted, tactical and true to our values.

I am proud to stand in this House as parliamentary assistant to the Solicitor General and the MPP for Etobicoke–Lakeshore. I am proud to stand here to express my strong support of Bill 102, the Strengthening Safety and Modernizing Justice Act.

When I did a survey in my riding just recently, the number one issue was health care, but very close was crime in our community. So for the people of Etobicoke–Lakeshore, I want you to know we've heard you, and we are acting.

As colleagues will know, as parliamentary assistant I have been particularly focused on protecting victims of intimate partner violence, domestic violence and upholding the welfare of animals. As you know, I am a mom of two fur babies, Bruce and Edward—I thought I'd get their names out there and in Hansard. That's why I'm particularly proud to support this bill: because it calls for increased training for judges to recognize situations of domestic abuse, particularly where child welfare may be at risk.

I want to applaud my colleague from Oakville North–Burlington for her private member's motion in support of

this initiative, which initially came forward as Keira's Law—and I know her family is here today.

When children are not safe, it is our duty to step up and protect them. The Strengthening Safety and Modernizing Justice Act adds that much-needed protection. It does so by making amendments to the Courts of Justice Act and the Justices of the Peace Act to provide the necessary education to ensure our courts understand the risk of gender-based violence. Gender-based violence affects children, their families and the broader community. Today we are continuing to take a stand, and this legislation will make a difference.

Bill 102 does more to protect our communities and recognize the heroes who keep us safe. It does so by starting to put the amendments in place in order to bring the Community Safety and Policing Act, 2019, into force. Ontario's Police Services Act has not been comprehensively updated in over 30 years. The previous Liberal government had 15 of those years to make the needed updates, and they did not. It is our government, under this Premier and this Solicitor General, that is getting it done.

The Community Safety and Policing Act, 2019, represents a generational opportunity to build on the trust between police and the public by treating police with fairness and by enhancing oversight and improving governance, training and transparency. Once in force, the CSPA will:

- empower the new Inspector General of Policing to ensure adequate and effective policing with broadened authority to safeguard compliance with the act;

- require all police service board members to complete training on the roles and responsibilities of the board and its members before exercising their powers and executing their duties;

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- require all police officers, special constables, service board members, oversight inspectors and investigators to complete training related to human rights, systemic racism, and the rights and cultures of Indigenous peoples;

- create fairer processes for police and greater transparency by requiring greater independence of adjudicators for certain disciplinary matters;

- improve public confidence by including a more accessible model for police oversight, providing the public with a one-window approach to filing complaints related to policing; and

- provide First Nations with the ability to opt in to Ontario's policing legislation.

Madam Speaker, none of this can happen without the passing of these amendments that were proposed in this act that we're discussing today, and I encourage all members of the House to join us in supporting this legislation.

I want to speak further on one of the proposals, the expansion of the Ontario Civilian Police Commission—it's also called the OCPC, because we in government love acronyms—and its authority after the CSPA comes into force. This is a significant step in making our policing system more accountable. The civilian oversight offered

through the commission is a valuable tool to ensure public transparency. Policing is changing and the public has different expectations about how police conduct themselves. These measures will ensure the commission will continue to act after the CSPA is in force in relation to its adjudicative functions, such as the completion of hearings and appeals.

The proposed amendment will allow the OCPC to continue to act in relation to its other functions if prescribed in regulation. Those functions might include investigating allegations of board member misconduct, a function the Inspector General of Policing will assume under the CSPA. It is important work that must be part of a seamless transition to the CSPA—and I think that's it for acronyms.

Another grouping of the proposed amendments includes changes to provisions relating to recognition and education of police officers. This includes allowing municipal and First Nations officers to be eligible to obtain a King's Commission on the same terms as an OPP officer. It also includes changes relating to police officer education requirements that, if passed, would provide that a secondary school diploma or equivalent is sufficient education for the purpose of being appointed as a police officer, thereby reducing barriers for those seeking a very rewarding career in policing.

Madam Speaker, I'd be remiss if I didn't touch on the animal welfare piece, the PAWS Act. This is something I've been particularly proud of. I've been involved with the government's work under former Solicitor General MPP Jones since its passing in 2019. Animal welfare is a priority for this government, and I want those watching to know that it is a priority not just for this government, but particularly for me. We were very proud to bring forward some of the toughest penalties in Canada when it comes to animal abuse, and I think we can all applaud that measure here, because our animals have no political stripe and they have no voice, so we're here to speak for them.

The PAWS Act was welcomed by many animal commodity groups and farm organizations, as it brought with it an updated, more uniform approach to delivering animal welfare enforcement in Ontario. We will be continuing consultations on the PAWS Act to ensure that we cross all sectors, and this includes our farmers and our animal welfare advocates.

Some of the proposed amendments to the Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act, 2019, in this legislation will be:

- improved recovery for costs incurred to provide care for animals in distress that have been removed by animal welfare services;

- clarified Animal Care Review Board processes; and

- narrowed gaps related to AWS inspector authorities and strengthened protections for animals.

Speaker, I'm going to highlight several of the amendments. A statement of account is issued to an animal owner or custodian when animals are removed by animal welfare services and costs of care for the animals are incurred. The proposed amendments include specifying the types of

costs incurred by animal welfare services that are recoverable through a statement of account.

The second proposed amendment would permit the immediate removal of an animal if it is in critical distress. I know many have called the minister's office requesting this amendment, so I'm really pleased to see it in this legislation. This will address a gap in the current legislation, where animals in need of immediate intervention to prevent serious injury or death may be removed immediately from the owner's or custodian's care. I know there are many advocates out there who are applauding that initiative.

A third proposed amendment would create a requirement for owners or custodians to inform animal welfare services when ownership or custodianship of an animal changes in cases where there is already a compliance order outstanding.

The ministry has consulted with some stakeholders on these proposed amendments. Many other stakeholders and the public will also be able to comment on the proposals through Ontario's regulatory registry. I'm sure that will be on everybody's website so we can provide comment and feedback.

Our government is committed to building a safe community through policing legislation that enables efficient and accountable policing services to the public and continues to be responsive to Ontarians' public safety needs. We owe our gratitude to everyone who helps keep us safe: our police officers, our firefighters, our 911 call operators, our correctional officers, our animal inspectors, our paramedics and many others. Passing the proposed Strengthening Safety and Modernizing Justice Act, 2023, ensures that we continue our progress toward safer communities across Ontario. Madam Speaker, people watching, everyone in the Legislature: Let's keep Ontario safe.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): I recognize the member from Sarnia–Lambton.

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a pleasure to rise in the House today, as it always is, to speak to any matter that affects the province of Ontario and its people, and, of course, the people in my riding of Sarnia–Lambton. I want to, first of all, commend the Solicitor General and the Attorney General for their remarks in tending this legislation, and of course my fellow PA from Etobicoke–Lakeshore for her great remarks. As we all know in this House, she's a great advocate for replacing the PAWS Act. I know she's got a great affinity for animals. She mentioned Bruce and—

Ms. Christine Hogarth: Edward.

Mr. Robert Bailey: —Edward. How could I forget Bruce and Edward?

Ms. Christine Hogarth: My rescues.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I also know she's a great advocate with a number of people in this House on both sides for reductions in intimate partner violence in any way we can. I applaud that. I'm very interested in that myself as well. It's an issue that has come up in my office a number of times back in Sarnia–Lambton. Unfortunately, we're not

immune to that either. We live on the border and we have issues—whether it's human trafficking or other issues, those things lead to issues in the riding as well. Intimate partner violence is just another source of that.

With that, as the Solicitor General and the Attorney General noted, the primary driver of this proposed Strengthening Safety and Modernizing Justice Act, 2023, is to introduce legislative amendments necessary to bring the CSPA into force.

I'd like to go through the proposed amendments to other community safety legislation that would modernize and improve the effectiveness of those statutes, specifically, the amendments to the Coroners Act and also the Fire Protection and Prevention Act. Under the Coroners Act, coroners and pathologists already have the authority, under regulation 180 of the Coroners Act, to retain and store tissue samples and bodily fluids obtained during a post-mortem examination undertaken by a pathologist or other examinations undertaken by coroners. The act did not contemplate the retention of DNA materials for purposes beyond the needs of a coroner's investigation when the act was first written. Nor did it anticipate medical advances that could lead to the need to retain tissue samples for other purposes, like DNA testing, in the future.

The proposed amendment would enable those regulations to govern the collection, retention, storage and disposal of the tissue samples by the office of the coroner and the Ontario Forensic Pathology Service for purposes that may go beyond the immediate needs of the coroner's investigation.

1400

The Fire Protection and Prevention Act, otherwise known as the FPPA, creates the framework for fire protection in Ontario, including municipal responsibilities for fire protection services and cost recovery of the same. Currently, there are gaps that exist within the FPPA's cost recovery provisions related to immediate authorizations to close. In addition, language in the current FPPA allows for only one deputy fire marshal, when demands of the Office of the Fire Marshal call for multiple deputies. I think the Solicitor General touched on that in his remarks.

The proposed amendments support municipal and provincial cost recovery, allow for the appointment of multiple deputy fire marshals and support efficient tribunal operations.

Specifically, a proposed amendment would close gaps in the FPPA's cost-recovery provisions by allowing municipalities and the province to use property liens and the Provincial Land Tax Act, 2006, respectively, in order to recover costs in authorization to close cases.

The amendments would also allow the Fire Safety Commission, otherwise known as the FSC, to consider whether costs were associated with the immediate authorization to close related actions when considering appeals to orders to pay costs.

A second proposed amendment, if passed, would allow for more than one deputy fire marshal, so that the duties of the fire marshal can continue to be executed when the fire

marshal and another deputy fire marshal are unavailable due to other work assignments.

In addition, a third proposed amendment would strengthen efficiencies at the FSC. The FSC, the Fire Safety Commission, is an independent, quasi-judicial agency that resolves disputes and conducts hearings regarding fire safety matters, including orders made by inspectors or the fire marshal for repairs, alterations or installations to a building, structure or premises. I'm going through that, actually, at this time, Madam Speaker. This brings to mind, we've had a number of dwelling—multiple dwelling fires in Sarnia-Lambton. I've got residents who are out of that residence because they were judged unsafe to return till there were repairs made. So this would speak to that directly.

The proposed amendment would strengthen efficiencies by extending the time to appeal an order beyond the current 30-day period due to exceptional circumstances, and eliminate the three-member quorum requirements so that appeals before the commission can be heard by a single member. With the number of appeals that are going on, it's hard to get a quorum of three members, so this would be a really big improvement.

Madam Speaker, protecting animals in distress, leveraging emerging science to improve the death investigation system and improving the administrative essentials of fire safety and fire prevention are critical components of Ontario's public safety framework.

Taken together, the proposed amendments in Bill 102 are the basis to drive forward modernization of community safety, make operational improvements where needed and continue to be flexible and responsive to the safety concerns of a broad range of stakeholders.

As the Solicitor General and our Attorney General alluded to earlier, Premier Ford and this government see the importance of this—we move safely on this and other matters under community safety.

I ask all of the honourable members to take all of this into consideration and support the proposed Strengthening Safety and Modernizing Justice Act, 2023.

With that, Madam Speaker, I'll yield the floor.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): The member from Simcoe-Grey.

Mr. Brian Saunderson: Thank you to my colleagues for their comments prior to mine. I want to thank, particularly, the Attorney General and the Solicitor General for their tireless work and dedication to improving our justice system and making Ontario safer.

I'm pleased to rise this afternoon, on behalf of the residents of Simcoe-Grey, to speak to second reading of the Strengthening Safety and Modernizing Justice Act, 2023. Crime is on the rise in Ontario and across Canada, and we know this based on firm data. That's why our government is taking action to train and attract new recruits, breaking down financial barriers and getting more front-line officers onto our streets. I am pleased to speak to the impacts of Bill 102 on our justice system and how, if passed, it will make Ontario a safer place for Ontarians.

Madam Speaker, as part of this bill the Ministry of the Attorney General is proposing a change to the Provincial Offences Act, or the POA, that will help clarify the existing process in the courts when the Provincial Offences Act proceedings are being judicially reviewed. The proposed amendment would make it clear that it is court staff and not judicial officers who file the judicial review application materials with the courts. I want to be clear: This particular change that we're introducing is an administrative one and won't affect any existing judicial review processes before the courts currently.

Along this theme, I would like to discuss some important work this government is doing with the municipal courts. This work includes amendments to allow greater use of technology to deliver justice systems remotely, such as allowing attendance at POA proceedings by audio and video links. Other changes include the authority for provincial offences officers to serve part III summonses on individuals within the province by registered mail, courier or email. Although this is administrative, it will do much to speed up and expedite the processes. Service of a summons on a recipient's lawyer or paralegal with their advance consent will now be permitted.

We continue to support our municipal partners in the efforts to enforce and collect outstanding Provincial Offences Act fines. We have implemented numerous initiatives to help assist our municipal partners with the collection of these outstanding fines, including improvements to the notice of fine and due date form to encourage defendants to pay their fines on time to avoid additional fees and other penalties, such as a licence suspension.

The Attorney General is also working in collaboration with Bill 177's municipal working group to implement other reforms to further modernize Provincial Offences Act processes, including implementing other fine enforcement initiatives.

These are just some of the more recent initiatives that the Attorney General has been working on to ensure the municipal court system works swiftly and efficiently to hear so many matters that affect Ontarians daily and to help to clear up the backlog that we have seen collect during the COVID pandemic.

Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to speak about some of the other initiatives the ministry has in the works to move justice forward across our province and to continue to drive change across the system, initiatives that have come to fruition thanks to the ongoing collaboration between all justice sector partners and that support our overarching goals of not only improving processes in the criminal courts system but also that will keep our communities across this province safer for our residents.

The first such initiative is the Criminal Justice Digital Design initiative. Speaker, these changes will help with the ongoing transformation that we are working on in collaboration with our partners across the justice system, from the police to the courts. For several years now the Attorney General has been working with the Solicitor

General to transform Ontario's criminal justice system and enhance public safety in the process. This initiative involves digitizing criminal case records and connecting IT systems so that data flows seamlessly from the police to the prosecution to the courts and, where appropriate, to correctional services.

Already we have implemented a number of processes to help share digital information in an organized, seamless and timely way. Since June 2022, criminal eIntake has been available province-wide. This system allows police and other investigative agencies to electronically send and receive documents and data so that a justice of the peace can consider all the information and allow charges to be laid, where appropriate. This initiative has greatly reduced the time and effort it takes to put information before the courts and has made for a much more seamless and expedited process.

Speaker, there is more. We have also introduced digital evidence management, which makes it possible for police and other agencies to manage, store and share digital investigative or evidentiary files using a consistent set of tools and standards. As of this January, more than 60% of police agencies across Ontario have on-boarded to use this digital system. There is much more work to be done, Speaker, but we have made great strides, and we are committed to continuing that work. The safety and well-being of our communities requires an agile and properly functioning criminal justice system that works efficiently and seamlessly for all Ontarians.

1410

Speaker, as the Attorney General mentioned earlier, a huge part of creating safer communities is standing up for victims of crime, which includes victims of human trafficking. The Ministry of the Attorney General works very closely with the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services on their anti-human trafficking-strategy and violence against women services. More recently, we have implemented a program that provides up to four hours of free, confidential legal advice to eligible survivors of sexual assault across the province. It is available by phone, it is available by video chat, and at any point after a sexual assault has occurred. Survivors of human trafficking can also access free legal support to obtain restraining orders against their trafficker and to get advice about using the civil lawsuit system as a tool to hold their trafficker accountable.

Another critical aspect that we've seen in our criminal justice system across the province and that is a critical priority for our government is combatting gun and gang violence. Speaker, this government is deeply concerned by the spike in gun crime in Ontario and the impact of gun violence in our communities, and as we heard in our recent debate about the bail reform initiative, this is something that's become endemic across the province and is only on the rise.

Since 2018, Ontario has invested approximately \$187 million under the Guns, Gangs and Violence Reduction Strategy, which takes a comprehensive approach to community safety, with initiatives that deliver strong

enforcement and prosecution, proactive gang disruption and intervention, and tailored youth and adult violence prevention. Despite this, gangs in Ontario are growing in strength and expanding across the province. Drug, human and gun trafficking are fuelling gang operations, and gangs continue to recruit at-risk youth and young adults. We are continuously working with municipalities across Ontario to enhance this strategy and are taking critical action to combat gun and gang violence on all fronts.

Madam Speaker, I can speak as a member for eight years of the Collingwood Police Services Board to the impact of this program within our community. We had signed onto that as an enhancement to our OPP contract, and within the first 18 months we had three of the largest drug busts that we had experienced in our community in which large amounts of drugs were seized, large amounts of cash were seized and large amounts of guns.

Speaker, through this work we've learned that law enforcement and prosecution efforts are more effective at reducing violence and increasing public safety when combined with meaningful intervention initiatives.

And this gives me an opportunity to speak about justice centres. We know that the traditional criminal justice system can, in certain circumstances, be limited in how it responds to the complex needs of the communities, the victims and the offenders. Justice centres are taking a transformative approach to community safety by moving certain criminal cases out of the traditional courtroom and into a community setting. Justice centres help provide wraparound supports for accused persons through coordination with on-site social, health, mental health, addictions, employment education and housing providers. That is why, since September 2020, our ministry has launched four justice centre locations. We've launched them in London, Toronto downtown east, Toronto north-west and Kenora.

The Kenora centre is the most recent and was launched in February of this year, and I had the great pleasure of going up to Kenora, Mr. Rickford's riding, with the Attorney General for the opening of that justice centre. It is a groundbreaking initiative; in fact, the first of its kind in northern Ontario. It was developed, designed and delivered in collaboration with local organizations, Indigenous leadership and the courts. It was built on lands owned by the local Indigenous bands and is a critical part of our justice program moving forward, not only to address the outcomes of crime but also to look at the underlying causes of crime so that we can prevent recidivism and help to get lives back on track, both for the victims and the offenders. This is an initiative that is truly born from a collective partnership, and it represents a meaningful path forward towards creating safer and healthier communities across this province and in the north.

Madam Speaker, one of the other changes we're looking at making in order to streamline our judicial processes and expedite matters—where appropriate—getting to trial, just to make sure that we separate and stream matters to the appropriate forum. This is why this

government is proposing some changes to how low-value civilian claims are handled in the courts, including Small Claims Court.

We made changes to the claims threshold a number of years ago. The maximum amount of a claim in Small Claims Court is \$35,000, and that is helping to separate them. However, we see in a number of cases certain plaintiffs or defendants trying to pursue a matter under \$35,000 in our Superior Court, which takes up valuable time both for ongoing civil matters, matrimonial matters and criminal matters that properly reside in Superior Court. What we are now doing is preventing any claims under \$35,000 from going to Superior Court and mandating that they go to the appropriate forum, which is Small Claims Court. This will make it faster, easier and more affordable for people and businesses across the province to resolve their disputes in the appropriate forum.

All of the changes I have spoken about and those before me in Bill 102 speak to the importance of the changes in it, how it will streamline our system, how it will make our criminal justice system and our justice system generally more accessible and more expeditious, as well as making Ontario safer for the people of Ontario, no matter where they live, whether that is through support and safety for victims of crime, effective and appropriate responses to perpetrators of crime or reducing the complexity of our justice system.

Madam Speaker, it has been a pleasure today to rise to speak to this matter, and I urge all members of the House to support this worthy act.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Questions?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you very much for the presentation. I will start by saying that we absolutely agree that we need to be supporting all of our front-line heroes. I do have questions about some of the things you could have put in this bill that would have supported them.

But I really do want to focus on the fact that, four years ago, the Office of the Independent Police Review Director, looking into the broken trust report looking into the actions of Thunder Bay Police Service, recommended the province establish a forensic pathology unit in Thunder Bay. It found that a number of autopsies that were conducted in Toronto were having an effect on police investigations, particularly those deaths affecting Indigenous people.

Really, this is an issue of access to justice. Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the Solicitor General: Will this government commit to funding autopsy care in Thunder Bay to restore the faith of Indigenous people in death investigations of their loved ones?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: I want to thank the member. It's something that's very personal to me because when I went to Thunder Bay, I understand that the relationship that the office of the coroner has with the great hospital in Thunder Bay is coming to an end. So we're looking at finding a way to extend this. Yes, you're correct, we want to look for a permanent solution. This is something that my ministry is looking into, and I'm actively pursuing

options. But thank you for the question; it's a great question.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Mrs. Robin Martin: I want to thank the Solicitor General and the Attorney General for bringing forward this bill, which I think has a lot of great stuff in it. I'm particularly excited about the changes to intimate partner violence and judicial education. I just wanted to ask the Attorney General how this will work and how we expect it will make a difference for victims of intimate partner violence.

1420

Hon. Doug Downey: As for the mechanics of this, the way that we envision it working is that, as individuals apply to be a justice of the peace or a judge, they will undertake to take training if appointed so that they then have a legal obligation to follow through and take the training. The training will be designed by the judiciary, as it is now, and I do have to say that the Ontario Court of Justice does have a quite good program in this regard. But we want to make sure that all individuals who become judges and justices of the peace take the training so that they are equipped with the knowledge and the experience, the lived experience of others, so that they can better adjudicate our communities and make sure that they are reflected in the important parts of those that come before them and the lived experience of those individuals.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: In this bill, there is a change which effectively ends the OPP Governance Advisory Council, which was set up to ensure that needs and priorities of various populations in Ontario are served by the OPP. When our researchers dug in, we couldn't see any reason for the elimination of this council, given that having input on those issues would be to the advantage of the people of this province.

Can one of the speakers today tell us why this council is being taken away?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: I want to thank the member for the question. One of the things we're doing that I think is very good for the local municipalities is to have them have greater representation on the OPP police detachment boards. The contemplation is that the government will have 20% representation and the municipalities that make up the composition of the detachment boards will have the other 80%. This will give a lot of input to the local municipality to offer the council as a detachment board would.

This is the direction that I think will help the municipalities.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: I would like to thank the great collaboration between the Ministry of the Attorney General and the Office of the Solicitor General for coming up with these much-needed amendments.

My question is to the Solicitor General: What changes are being made related to defining an emergency for chiefs of police and the Solicitor General?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: I just want to say to the member, the chiefs of police play an integral role in keeping our communities safe. One of the highlights of my time thus far in office is getting to know so many of the chiefs of police. Wherever I go, I make a point after I meet them to stay in touch with them.

I just want to say in response that the chiefs of police are heroes to their communities and represent the communities—and to be a leadership figure to everyone that serves in their police service. So I just wanted to comment slightly differently to the question, but acknowledge the importance that the chiefs of police play in public safety throughout our province.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Miss Monique Taylor: I have to say, I was pleased to see Keira's Law enveloped into this bill because, as the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore would agree, when children are not safe, it is our duty to do something about it.

Would the members opposite not agree it's the same thing with vulnerable people who go missing and that this would have been a prime opportunity to add vulnerable missing people into legislation and that the government had the ability to do so?

I'd love to hear from the Solicitor General his thoughts on Bill 74 and the Missing Persons Amendment Act.

Ms. Christine Hogarth: As we know, later on today we'll be debating something similar about missing and vulnerable people, who are extremely important to this government. We believe all people deserve to be safe in their homes and in their communities. We do have vulnerable people out there, seniors and young people.

Right now, we have an Amber Alert program for missing young people. Certain criteria are sent into the police and an alarm goes off. We've all received the Amber Alert.

We are certainly looking at your bill, Bill 74, and that's something that we're going to bring to committee to discuss. But I also look forward to the MPP from Sarnia–Lambton's debate this evening.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Mrs. Daisy Wai: This question is addressed to the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore. I know that you are an animal lover. How do the proposed amendments related to the Animal Care Review Board balance the enforcement powers to strengthen protections for animals while affording flexibility to owner-custodians?

Ms. Christine Hogarth: I just want to thank the member from Richmond Hill for that question, as you are right. We are going to be strengthening our PAWS Act, making sure that we have our inspectors in place. I think one of the pieces that was missing from the PAWS Act—anytime we bring in legislation, we do find things that you need to tweak, and we will continue to consult on the

PAWS Act. It was the piece of who pays, and how do you get your money back. We want to make sure that loophole was filled in to make sure that that was solved.

But the other piece is removal of animals. We heard this from numerous stakeholders out there. Lynn, if you're watching, we've heard you, and Donna as well. We hear all the time that there was a loophole that didn't allow people to take animals away in dangerous situations. We want to make sure that our animals feel safe and are safe. If you see an animal in distress, the first thing you should do is call the PAWS hotline, making sure that an inspector goes out to deal with the situation immediately.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Quick question, quick response.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: My question to the Solicitor General: I listened carefully to your hour lead, and I agree with you that we owe so much—your words—to the people who keep us safe, the people on the front line. You referenced firefighters. I know that I brought up in the House the other day a firefighter from Welland, Captain Craig Bowman, who now has esophageal cancer, and he is palliative. He's being denied presumptive coverage by WSIB because rather than 25 years, he has only been a front-line hero for 22.5 years.

What will this bill do for Captain Craig and his family?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: I just want to say our government has led the way to move forward on presumptive illnesses, and we did this. I can't speak to the exact matter that you have spoken to, but we've moved forward on it. I think one of the things—and it was very well received by the associations as well. It's something that is ongoing—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Thank you.

Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to be able to rise in the House and today on Bill 102, An Act to amend various Acts relating to the justice system, fire protection and prevention and animal welfare, as the critic for the Solicitor General. I think the one thing I'd like to open with: The Official Opposition, under Marit Stiles, and I think the government as well, all want to improve community safety. We perhaps have different visions of how to do that, but we all want to do that.

Before I go through the bill, I want to lay out a few facts. This is a technical bill, and it makes some important, relevant changes. It was introduced, I believe, yesterday. I'm not complaining. These are the facts for us, so we live with the facts. But it was introduced yesterday. It's technical. The Solicitor General's lead and the government's lead was an hour ago. I listened intently. I like to listen to what people are talking about—people who have had time to study it; people who have made changes they feel are relevant, have had their ministries look into it.

1430

It's our job to give credible critique. Quite frankly, it's impossible to give credible critique on 12 hours' notice, so it's going to be a very high overview of this bill.

Both the Solicitor General and the Attorney General—I've dealt with them many times, and they are thoughtful people, but the way that this bill has been presented to the people's House is not thoughtful at all.

There have been other bills where at least the lead, the hour from the government, is done on a different day, so that gives you some time to actually listen to what the ministers say and think of tough questions. It's our job to look for problems, because, as the parliamentary assistant said, no legislation is perfect, and if we can help find something, that's a benefit to Ontarians.

The way that this bill is being put through the House—we will likely vote on second reading tomorrow—is not a benefit to Ontarians. It's not using this House and the official opposition at their full potential. I can understand that the government perhaps doesn't want us to do our job—and we will do our job despite the roadblocks that the government is seemingly trying to put in front of us. I don't believe that the members sitting here, regardless of side, want to do that, because deep down, we all want the best for Ontarians. But that's actually not how this bill is being presented.

There are many people and many organizations that are impacted by this bill—all Ontarians, but many individual organizations. We've reached out. They don't even have time to call us back. So I don't know how much consultation the government has done with some of these organizations, but they haven't allowed the official opposition the benefit of that, or Ontarians.

There's a reason we have an owl and an eagle on two sides of this House—especially on technical bills, on issues that impact everyone, on policing, on fire safety.

I'm going to talk a little bit later on the PAWS Act. We all voted in favour. All the livestock groups voted in favour. There are issues with the PAWS Act. They're not reflected in these changes. Why not?

So that's what I'd like to open with—that in this Legislature, the government could do a lot better at how it actually puts bills forward. I think you would find that the Legislature would be less fractious if that was actually the case. When the government puts bills forward under such short notice that it is physically not possible to actually contact stakeholders and have them turn around and tell us what their issues are with a bill, you think that somebody is trying to hide something. I'm not sure that's the case, but you're always looking for that, and perhaps for no reason.

If I go to buy something from a business and the push is really hard—"You've got to sign now"—I often walk away; I just don't trust it. That's the same feeling I'm getting. "We hope that the opposition fully supports this." We have not had 24 hours to look at it. I wouldn't buy a used car from somebody with that pitch. That's a problem. But with this bill, it's a big problem.

Anyway, let's go talk about the bill and talk about the issues surrounding the bill. I'm going to try to follow the schedules as they're presented in the bill. The first part of the bill, schedule 1, talks about community safety and policing. I think we all want to see safe communities. We

also want to have—I think everyone wants police officers to be safe as well. They play a critical role in our society. They don't play the only role in community safety, but they play a critical role.

I think everyone knows this: I often tell personal stories in this House as a way—well, to fill up the hour. I tell it like it is, okay? But I have a reason to tell them too: There's usually a moral at the end of the story.

Everyone knows I was involved in this big issue locally, and we did some things that I probably wouldn't do now. One time, I organized a protest, and we blocked the train for two hours. We let the police know before we did it, and 80 tractors—we parked our tractors on the tracks in my hometown. It was very tense, not with the local police, but it was a big issue in our area at the time, and there were tactical police officers. I don't know what their exact term is, but there were tactical police officers, a lot of them.

Mr. Dave Smith: It's starting to sound like a Bruce Springsteen song here.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes.

We told the police that we would go on the tracks at 10 and we would leave at 12, nothing would be damaged. We were making a point. But we were on with heavy equipment. We weren't wrecking anything, but we were on with tractors and front-end loaders. We were there, and we weren't moving.

The tactical police took a very aggressive approach, at which point we mounted our tractors, and we were going to get equally as aggressive. The first person on that line of tractors—and yes, I'm going to say his name in the House; he deserves to be recognized for this—was Louis Ethier, one of my best friends. He had a 100-horsepower John Deere with prongs on it. The tactical police was yelling at him to get off the tracks, and he said, "Okay, I'll get off the tracks, but if I do, I'm going to put that cop car on top of that cop car."

We all started walking back towards the tractors. That's the only time in my whole activist political career I was truly frightened, because it was going to happen.

A local police officer, who knew the people, who knew the tension, stepped in front of the tactical police officer. He yelled, "John, you said from 10 to 12. Does that deal still hold?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Down," and we all stood down.

That police officer—he's retired now, Mr. Fisher—stopped a catastrophe, because he knew. He knew his local people, he knew—and it became somewhat of a party after that.

I've said it in the House before: I got charged for that, paid a penalty for it, because I organized it. But I want to make a point: That police officer knew how to de-escalate. He knew.

1440

Interjection: Great story.

Mr. John Vanthof: There's a second part to that story. Actually, a few months ago, I was on Bear Island. Bear Island is an Indigenous community in my riding on Lake Temagami—beautiful community. They hold a justice day for their young people. They have justices of the peace

who come from Bear Island. They have a couple of conservation officers who come from Bear Island and they have an Indigenous unit of the OPP. They were there to show young Indigenous people what opportunities there are in the justice system, to work in the justice system so that they can be better represented because they work in the justice system. It is a great day.

I was sitting there with an OPP officer and he said, "Hey, you're John Vanthof." I said, "Yes, I'm the MPP." He said, "No, I remember you from before." I said, "Really?" He said, "The day you guys blocked the train." I said, "You were there?" He said, "Yes, I was there." I said, "Well, I don't remember you. Wait a second. You weren't one of the gun-yelling guys in the back?" And he said, "Yes, I was. But we learned a lot that day."

Interjection: No kidding.

Mr. John Vanthof: Right? And we had a really great conversation about how it takes a special type of person—and I couldn't be a policeman or a policewoman. I couldn't. It takes a special demeanour to be able to de-escalate. And you have to know who you're dealing with, what you're dealing with.

But you also have to have community support. Not only does the community have to have support, but so do the police. So there's a shortage. I'm going to continue the story, a local story—oh, I'm getting a note. They're telling me to change subjects.

Mr. Dave Smith: Don't admit you were arrested.

Mr. John Vanthof: I was never arrested.

In my riding, in Timiskaming–Cochrane, we have lost one police detachment in Matheson and it looks like we're going to lose another in Noëlville. I'm a rural guy and I don't pretend to understand everything that happens in urban. I don't understand. But a lot of people in urban settings don't understand rural. And when we lose a police detachment, we lose access, potentially, to—when there is an issue, when you call 911—and not everyone in my riding can call 911. There are parts of my riding where 911 doesn't exist. Can you believe that? There are populated parts of my riding where 911 doesn't exist. People from southern Ontario are moving into my riding thinking that they can call 911. That's something that we could maybe address.

In Noëlville, where they're trying to save their detachment, thousands of people have signed a petition to save it because the OPP are their only 24-hour—you need to have a police officer if something goes wrong in the country; they're the only people that are there. So we feel it when there's not enough police officers. We feel it.

The thing that surprises me a little bit—not surprises me, but one of the things the government is talking about here is that they're making a few changes to bring more police into the system. Now, there are a couple of issues there. How are we going to ensure that those police end up where they're needed? That's a legitimate issue because it's hard to recruit professionals in rural parts of the province—any type of professional. That's an issue.

The government seems to be focusing on recruiting new, but not focusing as much on why police are leaving,

why they are not staying. In the OPP, for example, constables on long-term leave with PTSD made up 33% of the vacancies in Ontario. So I think police officers need help too. If you're going to recruit more police officers, and if you're going to make changes to make recruiting easier, the government needs to take into account how to make sure that those police officers can deal with the stresses they're going to be put under because—I don't pretend to be a scientist; I'm not. Everybody here knows what I am. I'm a farmer. But if a police officer is under stress and he or she is dealing with things slightly beyond their control, things could go wrong. They're dealing with people who are also under stress. So making changes to make it easier to become a police officer without changing the training and support that police officers have available to help them do their job is not a recipe for success. If you're going to keep recruiting and keep losing them at 30%, you need to invest in people who are going to do their job in the best way possible.

We want to invest in Constable Fisher. There's a very good chance that if Constable Fisher hadn't stepped in, I wouldn't be standing here, because I probably wouldn't have been eligible to be an MPP. I owe a debt to Constable Fisher. Constable Fisher was a great police officer. Actually, I think all the police who were there that day were trained and were good at what they did. But the tactical team, at that time, wasn't there to de-escalate; they were there to control, and they didn't realize that the people they were sent to control were as powerful as they were and maybe more determined. Constable Fisher realized that. Constable Fisher had the trust of his people, but he also had our trust.

Those are the people we need as police. Those are the police officers I talk to. Those are the people that we have, in the vast majority of cases. But when I talk to police officers, they get frustrated when the government doesn't—how am I going to word this? With how things have changed, you see so many people who feel they have no more hope, so many people who are homeless, so many people who feel dejected and who end up breaking our laws, but they're just going to break them again. As a professional trying to do their job, that has got to be incredibly frustrating.

1450

So police officers can do the job they need to do—we do need police—we also have to look at what's causing the issues that are making some types of crime rise. Some of those issues are societal. We can't look at the policing individually, and we can't look at the societal individually. We have to look at it together. I'm not sure that this bill, the policing part, actually looks at this.

I'm not going to focus on this at all, but I would be remiss if I didn't mention it: There has been a change here that a police officer only has to have a secondary school diploma. I think many police forces have their own criteria. A police officer, to be an effective police officer, needs a level of education, yes, but needs a level of life experience to understand what their true role is.

I hope it's not the government's idea that—the Premier, I believe, in the press, said that this is going to create a pipeline of police. I disagree with the Premier, obviously, on many issues. I don't want a pipeline of police. I want—we want an adequate number of police officers who are well trained, who understand what they have to face. They have to face incredible issues and have the communal support so that they can direct people who they deal with on a regular basis, that they have the community support so that those people can be helped.

It's a sad, sad state in our province that for people with mental health issues, their first point of contact is the police. Now, if their first point of contact was the police and, actually, then there was a wraparound that the police could direct them to, to actually help them, it wouldn't be a sad statistic. But that's not the case. So then they have repeated contact with the police, and that frustrates the police, creates bad outcomes. It's not just frustrating for the people, but it's tragic, very tragic.

I might go back to that later, but there are a few things I would also like to touch on. I'm not going to touch much on the coroners part or on the courts of justice.

The training for judges, justices, justices of the peace: That's good. Everyone in the justice system should have a high level of training so they understand the issues that they're dealing with. I would say that that also includes police. The two don't seem to fit together, that while we will, according to this legislation, whether it's the government's meaning or not, lower the educational standards for police, but education for judges—and education for judges and justices of the peace is incredibly important. I'm not trying to minimize that at all, Speaker. But it should be important for all people in the justice system because those people have the responsibility and the power to impact people's lives more, almost, than anyone else. So I'm not going to focus a lot on that, but increased training so we don't get tragic outcomes—we are all human, we all make mistakes, but the more training we can have, the better off we are.

I'm going to come back to that too, but there's one that I would like to talk about—the PAWS Act. Everyone in this House voted for the PAWS Act. Animal welfare is very important. I don't think you're going to find anyone sitting here who wants animals to be abused. I think we can be fairly safe on that. But—and I hesitate with this; I'm not taking this lightly—there's a difference between a pet and livestock. There's no successful farmer who mistreats their livestock. It doesn't work like that, because if they're not healthy and happy, they're not flourishing, and it's not worth getting up in the morning if they're not healthy and happy.

But the PAWS Act—and there's a case I'm going to talk about. The livestock organizations are all in favour—again, because farmers do not want to have animals abused, but the PAWS inspectors have the ability to change people's lives as well. Now the parliamentary assistant alluded to—I'm not sure if she was talking about the same issue—who pays? When an animal is deemed that there's an issue and the inspector says that animal has

to be removed, who pays for the care and control of that animal? That should be the liability of the owner, but there has been a case where the animals were completely healthy but the inspector deemed—it was a beef herd—that there was too much debris in the yard. The animals were completely healthy and they were removed and placed under supervision, and the bill was sent to the farmer. The bill was some \$400,000. It would have been much better if they had just said, "Sell them." They were healthy; sell them.

The farmer took it to the tribunal and he won. The bill was reduced to \$14,000, which is much more, for lack of a better word, sane in commercial—the government's appealing it. I can't talk about the appeal. Neither can the government. That's their line. But in that case, if this happens, then the PAWS Act destroyed that farm, and the animals were healthy. There's no argument about the health of the animals.

1500

Agricultural organizations are concerned. Farmers are concerned. I've talked to a few farmers, talked to a few organizations who didn't know there were changes to the PAWS Act coming. They would have liked to know. When this bill goes to committee, hopefully they will accept some amendments or the government proposes amendments themselves, because that is a flaw in the PAWS Act.

No one should have the right to abuse an animal—no one. But when the animals are healthy, then we also have to look at common sense. Common sense would dictate that, okay, perhaps the owner isn't capable of taking care of these animals, so perhaps there's some way to help the owner sell the animals as opposed to boarding them and having a bill for far more than the animals are ever worth. That's an issue.

It might only be one issue, but it's an issue. I'd like to read into the record, if I can just—bear with me, Speaker. It's legal now to use—

M^{me} France Gélinas: Your phone?

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes, it's legal now. I can use it now. News flash: This is the first time I've ever done this.

This is a news article: "Tribunal judgement saves farmer from almost \$400,000 bill after beef animals removed for no reason.

"The 77-year-old" farmer "must pay only \$14,276 of the \$391,196 sought by Provincial Animal Welfare Services ... when its officers seized his healthy beef herd before Christmas and held them at expensive foster farms for months." Again, this is a news article. I wasn't there; I'm just going by the news.

"PAWS rounded up and removed 101 ... Angus-cross beef cattle December 16, after he failed to comply with orders to clean up 'hazardous debris' on parts of the 200-acre property where the animals roamed. Two animals were injured badly enough to be put down during the chaotic roundup involving the use of ATVs, and a contractor ended up in a Toronto hospital with serious injuries."

That wasn't the farmer who did that; that was PAWS. I think, now that we're looking at PAWS, we need to look at how PAWS actually interacts. I take the parliamentary assistant at her word. When you create something, nothing is perfect. You need to look at how to make it better.

We all want to protect. We all have our favourite animals. The Solicitor General has got a rabbit; I have a dog.

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: I know. Hal the rabbit. I listen intently. Despite our differences, this is a pretty great place if we actually listen to each other.

But the difference is how to deal with an individual animal or how to deal with a herd. The animals were healthy. They weren't healthy after the roundup, and neither were some of the people involved in the roundup. Again, the government, from what I understand, is appealing that. In the PAWS Act, perhaps that's one of the amendments. But we always need to look at the cause.

I don't want to leave the impression—and I've repeated it several times—that anyone in the official opposition or anyone in the agricultural community is okay with the abuse of animals—at no time. We have no problem with, if it's identified that you have to act and you have to act quickly.

Speaking of quickly—and better minds than mine might know this better—if you are charged under the PAWS Act, you have five days to appeal. For a farmer, who could be very good at his job—it's an allegation—five days in May is different than five days in November, because agriculture is very seasonal.

I'm not trying to disparage anyone. I don't know any PAWS inspectors. I'm sure that they're good at their job. But it's so varied.

When it used to be under the SPCA—I don't know if I've told this story before in the Legislature, but I'm going to tell it.

Hon. Todd Smith: I remember your yak story—protect the yak.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes, that was when I was first here. The yak was an endangered species and still is.

We had a dairy farm, and my wife had a little store across the road. We had a horse across from the store. It looked kind of cute. When people came to the store, they looked at it. The SPCA inspector at the time came to my wife's store one day. She was a regular customer, a very nice person. And I'll make this really clear: It's the wife's horse. I don't like horses, and they don't like me. Horses are pretty good judges of character.

Hon. Todd Smith: They don't like you much either.

Mr. John Vanthof: I said that. I tell it like it is. They don't like me either. I don't leave much to be hidden.

The horse was lying sprawled out in the field. That's how horses sleep sometimes. The inspector looked at my wife and said, "Oh, my God, that horse is dead." She got really upset. And then Ria went, "Velvet," and she went like this, and the horse got up and came to her.

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: It wasn't dead. It looked dead to that inspector.

I shouldn't say this, but honestly, it wouldn't have bothered me. I didn't love the horse. I love my wife. I didn't love my wife's horse. I have no affinity for horses.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: It's cows.

Mr. John Vanthof: I like cows.

Interjections.

Mr. John Vanthof: Oh, man. Do you know what? If you guys keep it up, I'm going to have to go back to using notes, and that's pretty brutal.

That inspector was probably very well trained at many things, but she didn't recognize that. And I often think about that, because a PAWS inspector has a lot of power. If a PAWS inspector doesn't know something, then that five days might not be enough.

1510

There are very few other appeal processes where you only have five days. Now, I understand—I'm guessing why that five days is there is that if the animal is in crisis or near-crisis, you don't want to give a 30-day period. I understand that. But there are all kinds of issues. Another one, anecdotally: The inspector didn't know how to work the water bowl, so the animal didn't have access to water. That's not as silly as it sounds, because some of that stuff is very complicated. Like, I can't use a cash machine. But when a person of power and who needs to have that power—we're not disputing that that person needs to have that ability. But there needs to be some kind of appeal process, and it needs to be reasonable.

I think that's something that has to be looked at if the government is now opening up the PAWS Act. Every piece of legislation, you should be able to open it up, and make it better. So if we're going to open up the PAWS Act, let's make it better. Let's protect animals, but let's make sure it actually works on the farm.

The livestock organizations all signed on. Many of them have their own internal processes, their own inspection systems, because they want to make sure that when they sell a product—I know a lot about dairy. When they ensure that the milk that you buy is produced by healthy animals that are housed in well-maintained facilities and that they have access to everything they need, Dairy Farmers of Ontario ensures that, but Dairy Farmers of Ontario also signed on to PAWS, to make sure that if there is any question that a third party can go in and say, "No, no. Okay," that third party has to be reasonably appealable.

Now we're going to go back—

M^{me} France Gélinas: If we see cows outside in the winter, are they safe?

Mr. John Vanthof: Cows outside in the winter?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Yes, like, when it's really cold.

Mr. John Vanthof: There have actually been complaints about that. Some types of cattle are better in the winter. Thank you for that heckle, that very friendly heckle, because it gives me—

M^{me} France Gélinas: Sorry.

Mr. John Vanthof: Cattle have very weak respiratory systems, so the biggest problem with housing cattle—one of the biggest problems—is pneumonia. That’s why, if you look at barns where cattle are housed inside, they’ve got very intricate systems of ventilation.

Cattle, especially dairy cattle, work hard. They work, right? Producing milk is hard. But for cows outside—so beef cows, who have thicker coats and who are used to it—it’s actually as healthy or healthier outside. As long as they eat more. It takes more energy to be outside. It’s better if they have protection, if you have protection from the wind. It’s a lot like us: If you’re ice-fishing in a tent or if you’re ice-fishing—

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: No, no. But there’s nothing wrong, if you’re doing it correctly, to have cows outside.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Even when it’s really cold?

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes. On our farm, we had dairy cows inside and beef cows outside. The beef cows have a windbreak, and the dairy cows were inside. But the dairy cows, if the temperature—sometimes the temperature changes really drastically. My ventilation system wasn’t as high-tech as some, and if the temperature changed really drastically, let’s say minus-five to plus-15 overnight—that hardly ever happens, but sometimes you get it and you would have problems with pneumonia with the dairy cows inside. But you’d never have a problem outside. Some people know sheep; I know cows.

But that’s why I’m kind of out of my element talking about some of these issues, like policing, because I don’t know policing. I have an idea of what police officers face because I’ve seen some of the things they’ve faced. I’ve been involved. Police officers are unique: You’re either really happy to see them or not happy at all, right? And, tragically, in some cases, they never know what their next call is. They never know, right? And we have had tragic cases; tragedies have happened. They have an incredibly stressful job.

Anything that we can do to help them help us is good. But simply more faster, when we’re losing 30% due to PTSD? We need to look at what’s going on.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Noëlville.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes, I’ve talked about Noëlville. I’ve talked about Matheson. There are thousands of signatures to keep the Noëlville police detachment. Matheson didn’t even have time for signatures. It was just, boom, closed.

Policing is totally different, I think, in the city and in the country, but we need to make sure that they have access to the continuing training programs. We need to make sure that they are supported, but we can’t look—and this bears repeating, because I’ve got 11 minutes: We can’t look at it in isolation. You can’t just police yourself out of a problem. Even police will tell you that. You can’t just police yourself out of a problem, because your underlying problems continue to get bigger and you continually need to bolster your enforcement, and the same people keep getting recycled, recycled, recycled. That’s not a long-term solution. It’s not.

We need to look at what’s happening in our society, what’s causing some of the underlying issues and, yes, we need to make sure that there are enough police officers that are trained, supported, and that the justice system supports them and that the justice system—this bill speaks to it, partly, that in the justice system, the people, the judges, the justices of the peace are well trained. But also there has to be enough of them that we don’t have people languishing in provincial jails.

I toured the Monteith correctional facility a couple of times in my riding. And, I believe, the last time I toured it, 70% of the people in that correctional facility had never been tried for anything. They’re just waiting. Now, we have issues, and this House has discussed it, about violent offenders who have a high chance of—there’s a word for it—recidivism. So we need to concentrate on them, but we also need to deal with and help the people who have fallen in trouble with our system but really could be helped if they had access to justice in a more reasonable time.

1520

I don’t often talk about Indigenous issues because I am not Indigenous. I have no lived experience. One of my colleagues is; I’ve learned so much from the member from Kiiwetinoong. But there is something that happens often in our ridings. If someone from one of the communities on the coast falls on the wrong side of the law, they go to Monteith. The courthouse is in Cochrane. If they get their day in court, and if they are found to be not guilty, they are stuck in Cochrane. They have no way to get back home. They just: “See you.” So they take you from Moosonee or wherever, they take you to Monteith, then you get your day in court and the courtroom doors open and you’ve got no way to get home, and you’ve got no money. And you wonder why we have issues with criminality.

Interjection: And homelessness.

Mr. John Vanthof: And homelessness.

I’ve said this before: The district of Cochrane, the area covered by the Cochrane social services board—so that’s Cochrane, Timmins and the surrounding area, to the coast—has the highest number of homeless people per thousand in the province. The highest in the province. There is still a couple of feet of snow north of Cochrane. It hits minus 40 degrees regularly in Cochrane. It’s a great place to live but it has its issues. We know that; we live in northern Ontario. So we’re wondering why we have issues there. Let’s look at how to fix that and then we’re going to have fewer issues.

Are we going to solve everything? No. We are always going to need well-trained law enforcement; that’s a fact of life. That’s one of the things about a civil society: You need people to enforce rules and regulations when some people aren’t civil. But it is also the role of civil society, the role of our government, to actually look at the underlying issues, identify them, and try to deal with them.

I’ve had this job for 12 years. I can remember, when I got here, being homeless was a Toronto thing. It was a big-city thing—and it’s never acceptable. I’m not saying it’s ever acceptable, but it was kind of: “Oh, there’s a homeless person there.” But now, there are encampments.

The highest level of homelessness in the province is in Cochrane, and we just keep going on like there's nothing wrong. We talk about spending millions here and we're spending millions there, but I don't see it on the street.

I do see that the use of food banks is going up exponentially. That tells me that what the government is talking about and what's really happening are two different things. There are two Ontarios. It's almost like there's corporate Ontario and the rest of us.

I'm veering off the bill, Speaker. I'm going to veer back because I'm self-correcting here. I'm one of those people who doesn't really need enforcement; I self-correct.

I was coming to the theme of, again, you can't simply enforce yourself out of a problem, because when you try and do that, you're just pushing the problem onto someone else. And, without proper community support, one of the groups you're forcing the problem onto is our justice system, our police officers, our court system—and it's being overwhelmed now. We need to look at having trained officers on the ground. We need all those things, but we have to also look at the underlying cost. We need to look at that.

I'm going to close on this issue: We need to have people in place who understand local conditions. That's why people in the country instinctively know that when you lose detachments, when you lose—it's not that the OPP is not going to try and do their job. That's not the case. But you're going to lose your local connection to the community. In my case, Officer Fisher might not have done that. We would have made a lot more news coverage. The only reason that happened is because Officer Fisher was around. He was at local sports events. He knew us, and I think—I've never asked him this, and I never asked his permission to use his name either, so I might be in big trouble. I'm sure it might have been frowned upon when he did that, when he went and stepped in, but he trusted his gut because he knew us. It's really important that we don't forget that and don't think that we can control everything from far away.

When the Solicitor General talked in one of the questions about the changes to police boards, that might be a good thing to have them more local. Hopefully, we'll have some time when this comes to third reading—that we can be a lot more technical. I said it was going to be a pretty high overview on this, because this is what you get in under 24 hours. You get a few good stories. But it's an issue, an issue that hopefully we can correct here.

In closing, I'd like to thank you very much for your indulgence, Speaker, for your occasional smile and for allowing me to speak.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Questions?

Mr. Ross Romano: Thank you to the member. I always enjoy hearing his dissertations and form.

I loved listening to your presentation honestly, to the member, and to be able to start off with some words and then move into a personal story felt like a lawyer delivering a summation in court—and then end it with the punctuation starting with the story of Officer Fisher.

I think that, definitely as a northerner, certainly some of the farming stories, I can relate, and as well in terms of some of those northern issues and some of those things that are germane to us all. We all know why we're here, and I don't think anybody ever questions the motives of any of us. We all want to do right by our constituents. We all want to do right by our province. We all want to do right by our country.

My question to the member would be, will you trust your gut, the way Officer Fisher did, and trust that we are here to do the right thing?

Mr. John Vanthof: That was a very good question, kind of a trick question. Now, I could talk for 20 minutes or 20 seconds. I'm going to just answer that I trusted Officer Fisher.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

1530

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Speaker, through you: This bill creates an advisory council for the provincial police. I know many front-line workers who carry a heavy burden from their experience on the job, police officers especially. Police are responding to situations that are increasingly difficult, like mental health crises. Can you expand on why investing in those training pieces that consider the community and involve the community is so vital?

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you very much for that question. I alluded to it in my remarks that 30% of vacancies are caused by long-term leaves for PTSD. That's an example of the stress that officers face, but it's also a warning flag that there needs to be more support so officers can face the issues that they are forced to deal with on a regular basis and are forced to deal with on our behalf.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Madam Speaker, it's always a pleasure to listen to my colleague. He always has very, very interesting speeches, and I love listening to his stories about how he was a dairy farmer and all that. I just want to thank the member for his comments.

Madam Speaker, one thing that we're doing with this piece of legislation is—it's comprehensive legislation that's focused on making Ontario safer in all aspects: policing, fire prevention and protection, justice and animal welfare. My question is, will the member and will the opposition support our government's multi-faceted approach to keeping our province safe?

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you very much for that question. It is a complex, multi-faceted piece of legislation which we have had under 24 hours to see. Quite frankly, we don't know yet. I'm being upfront. You need the time to actually look at it and not just use your gut reaction that it might not be a great piece of legislation. Maybe it is. But the fact that we've had no time to actually study it realistically makes it difficult to answer that question.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Mr. Jeff Burch: Thank you to our House leader for his comments. Safety looks different in different parts of the province. Being from a northern riding, I wonder if my colleague can tell us a little about what the policing needs are in northern Ontario, which can be very different. Maybe in some areas of the province, we need far more police; in other areas, it's mental health supports. What do things look like in northern Ontario?

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you very much for that question. No one will disagree with me that we need more police presence in the north. I stand often in this House and talk about tragedies on our highways. There are dangerous drivers who—if there was more police presence, it would make a difference in making our highways safer.

Is it the sole cause? No. But enforcement is part of the safety mechanism. When there's not enough enforcement, and people know there's not enough enforcement, we have the issues that we have.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Mr. Mike Harris: I always love when we have a chance to hear the member from Timiskaming—Cochrane's debate here in the Legislature. I do like the fact that he brings a real-world perspective to some of this, being a farmer and having worked in that industry for many years prior to getting into politics.

I do want to touch on PAWS a little bit. I know that was something that you covered quite a bit in your debate. One of the pieces of this bill is to allow the crown to recoup costs for veterinary services that are incurred while an animal is under their care. I just wanted to get a little bit more of your thoughts on that and whether you think that might also have a secondary aspect to it, where it might actually deter people from doing things wrong or not taking proper care of their animals, to know that they would have to pay back those costs.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'd like to thank my colleague for that question. It's a very good question. I think that it should be incumbent on the livestock owner—if PAWS has to come in and an animal is under distress, yes, it should be the livestock owner's or the animal owner's responsibility. The example I was using is these animals weren't under distress. They were completely healthy and then they were quarantined. According to the article, they were healthy and then they were quarantined and then the quarantine costs got crazy. That's what we have to look at. Perhaps the article isn't 100% accurate, but we have to look at how that's done. But should an owner be responsible for making sure their animals are healthy? Yes.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to ask my colleague a question about when the provincial animal welfare service drives around in northern Ontario in the middle of a snowstorm, and it's minus 30, and sees animals outside. Am I the only one who thinks that those cows should be inside in the middle of the winter when it's cold?

If the inspector doesn't know any better—I listened to your speech—what will happen to all of the dairy farmers who safely let their animals go outside if the inspector is like me and didn't know that cows could go outside in the winter?

Mr. John Vanthof: I thank my colleague for that question. I would hope, and I believe this to be the case, that in the vast majority of cases, if a PAWS inspector—or if someone calls and reports that they should come look—they would go to that farm and make sure that those animals had adequate food of good quality, access to water, access to minerals, access to a windbreak, and then they're fine outside. If they don't have access to those things, that's an issue and that would be a judgment call from the inspector. That's why you need to have inspectors who know and are well versed in what it takes to care for an animal. It's not one size fits all.

Also, there are some breeds that don't do well outside and there are some breeds that don't do well inside. You need to know that. It's part of their job.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further debate?

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: Speaker, I rise today to join the debate on Bill 102, the Strengthening Safety and Modernizing Justice Act, 2023, and I am sharing my time with the member from Kitchener South—Hespeler.

This bill aims to modernize community safety and justice systems and build safer communities by transforming policing and other community safety and justice legislation, freeing up court resources for more serious and backlogged cases, and responding to current and emerging challenges. If passed, this bill would be one of the final steps to bringing the Community Safety and Policing Act, 2019, into force with its regulations, which will replace the current Police Services Act.

Speaker, Ontario and other jurisdictions have seen recent increases in violent crime and repeat offences. Since 2014, we have seen a 9% increase in crime, a 20% increase in violent crime, and a 129% increase in the illegal use of firearms in Ontario. Sadly, we have also seen the alarming rate of domestic abuse and violence against women and children grow. Our justice system must be able to address these societal issues so people feel safe in their homes and in our communities.

As the Solicitor General stated, to uphold our community safety is our most fundamental duty.

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Today, the focus of my remarks will be on the changes being proposed in schedule 3 of the Courts of Justice Act and schedule 5 of the Justices of the Peace Act. The Chief Justice will be authorized to establish courses for newly appointed judges and for the continuing education of judges. And the Associate Chief Justice Co-ordinator of Justices of the Peace will be authorized to establish courses for newly appointed justices of the peace and for the continuing education of justices of the peace which will address sexual assault law; intimate partner violence; coercive control in intimate partner and family relationships; and social context, which includes systemic racism

and systemic discrimination. In order to qualify for appointment as a new provincial judge or a justice of the peace, an individual must give an undertaking to participate in this training. To ensure accountability, the Chief Justice and Associate Chief Justice are to consult with stakeholders, which may include survivors of sexual assault and survivors of intimate partner violence, including Indigenous representatives. And to ensure transparency, no later than February 28 each year, the Chief Justice and the Associate Chief Justice shall provide a report to the Attorney General setting out the courses covered and the number of judges and justices of the peace who attended each course. The report will be tabled in the Legislative Assembly by the Attorney General. These amendments will go a long way to addressing a glaring gap in our Family Court system.

We are here today in large part due to the tireless efforts of Dr. Jennifer Kagan and her spouse, Philip Viater, who made it their life's work to raise awareness of intimate partner violence and coercive control, and to advocate for protection of victims escaping abusive relationships.

And I do want to recognize that Dr. Kagan and Mr. Viater are with us here today. Thank you.

When I introduced my motion in the Legislature last November, I shared the tragic story of Dr. Kagan and her daughter Keira, who were victims of intimate partner violence and coercive control by her ex-husband. Though she had left him years earlier, Dr. Kagan worried about the safety of her daughter Keira during his unsupervised visits. She said that the abuse did not stop with separation; it only got worse, and Keira was used as a tool to get claws into her. Dr. Kagan went to the courts seeking protection for Keira and expressed concerns about her ex-husband's violent behaviour and abuse. She was told by one judge that domestic violence is not relevant to parenting and as a result he was going to ignore it. On February 9, 2020, Keira and her father were found dead at the base of a cliff at Rattlesnake Point Conservation Area in Halton region.

The numbers are alarming. In Canada, a woman is murdered every 2.5 days—ranging from 144 to 178 murders each year between 2015 and 2019. And in 2021, the rate of femicide was trending even higher. Speaker, 44% of women in Canada have experienced some form of violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime. And ending the relationship does not end a woman's risk of death, as 20% to 22% of intimate partner femicides were perpetrated by estranged spouses within the first 18 months of separation. Of the women murdered, 50% were killed by an intimate partner and 26% by a family member. Women account for 80% of reported incidents of intimate partner violence, which affects all ages, races, ethnicities and socio-economic strata. Young women are, in fact, at highest risk, as are immigrants, refugees, Indigenous people, and those living with disabilities.

In my own community, Halton Women's Place took in 2,200 crisis calls in 2021. Over the same period, Halton police responded to 3,500 intimate partner violence-related calls, laid 2,000 charges and made almost 900 arrests.

The Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses published a report on femicide. From November 26, 2021, to November 25, 2022, 52 women in Ontario died as a result of femicide. According to a report of the Canadian Domestic Homicide Prevention Initiative, it indicated that from 2010 to 2019, 9% of all domestic homicide victims were in fact children. They were killed in the context of domestic violence.

This month, Bill C-233, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the Judges Act (violence against an intimate partner), has just passed the Senate of Canada. This bill is commonly referred to as Keira's Law. In the third reading of this bill, Senator Pierre Dalphond recognized that federally appointed judges are only one component of the legal system, and to a certain extent, a minor part of it, and that domestic violence is an issue often dealt with by police officers, social workers, family therapists, provincial judges and crown prosecutors, all regulated by provincial laws.

This is what we are doing here today. The bill represents a critical step forward in ensuring that our justice system can better protect victims of intimate partner violence and hold perpetrators accountable for their actions. By requiring judicial education on coercive control and intimate partner violence for provincially appointed judges and justices of the peace, we can ensure that they have the knowledge needed to appropriately understand the complexities of these cases and ensure that victims and their children receive the support and justice they deserve.

The tragic death of Keira Kagan is a heartbreaking reminder of the devastating impact that intimate partner violence and coercive control can have on women and children. While we cannot undo the loss of Keira's life, we can honour her memory by taking these historic measures to prevent similar tragedies from occurring in the future. This will be Keira's legacy.

This bill is also a testament to the tireless advocacy of Dr. Kagan and all survivors, their families and community-based organizations who have worked to bring attention to the urgent need for training in intimate partner violence and coercive control. I want to thank the Attorney General and the Solicitor General for supporting my motion on the need for training of judges, justices of the peace and other legal professionals in the Ontario Family Court system on intimate partner violence and coercive control. I want to thank them for listening to the voices of survivors of sexual assault, survivors of intimate partner violence and the many organizations in our communities who support those survivors. We all acknowledge these changes are a vital first step and will help keep women and children fleeing abuse safe.

I would like to close with a couple of messages I received about our bill, and they go as follows:

"This groundbreaking law will save lives of women and children, and an abusive partner is an abusive parent, full stop."

"Praying that this will move forward swiftly and effectively in Keira's honour, saving other families the devastation of preventable harm and death."

As members of this House, we can lead on how our society and province treat women and children, and so I ask all members to vote with the government and pass this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you.

I recognize the member from Kitchener South–Hespeler.

Ms. Jess Dixon: Thank you, Speaker. It's an honour to speak after the member from Oakville North–Burlington. Her advocacy on this matter has been incredible. As a member of the private members' bills committee, I was present when she presented about this issue and she presented with a great deal of passion and dedication. I want to thank her for being so dogged in her advocacy in making sure that we're aware of this.

Applause.

Ms. Jess Dixon: Yes, please do. What I want to talk about a little bit is—I'm going to pick up on her statement about this training for judicial officers and those in the justice system, and do a little bit of what I can to address those who feel that it may go too far and those who feel that it doesn't go far enough and, ultimately, why this is a well-balanced, important and valuable piece of this legislation.

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For some who aren't as familiar with the role of the judiciary or criminal justice, there may be a concern that this does not go far enough. Why is it not a mandate for specific training? Why are we not intervening in what that training would look like? Those kinds of concerns. And obviously I understand those concerns. We have very, very powerful examples of when notice of these important issues has not been taken. However, what we need to respect and what this legislation absolutely does respect is the role of judicial independence. It's absolutely vital that, in our system in Ontario, in Canada as a whole, our judiciary be able to make decisions which are, to some extent, conscience-motivated, but ultimately based on the law, and make those decisions without fear of censure by a hysterical public or by the trends of political favour. It's an incredibly important part of our judicial system and one of the most dramatic differences, frankly, between us and our neighbours to the south and across the border and something that I still believe is incredibly important.

Again, this is why we need to make sure that we are maintaining this. This training will be developed by the judiciary itself, so you don't want to, for example, have an excessive reliance on social science theories as versus social science data. I believe that, in the way that this is worded and by leaving it to the judiciary, we will be able to have them strike an appropriate balance between providing that type of relevant data and lived experience as versus, as I said, that political trend or social science trend that can be damaging, and that is why we have judicial independence as such an important part of our system in the first place.

However, as I said, there are, again, those who may feel that this goes too far as versus not going far enough.

Again, I'm very confident that this government understands the role of judicial independence, and I said that this is why it's been worded as such. However, in, for example, a criminal case—or really any case before a judge, but I'm more comfortable with the criminal realm—one of the absolute key rules of evidence in a trial or a proceeding is that you can't bring anything before the court that isn't brought out through evidence. So the fact that there may be a great deal of data or trends about domestic violence, family violence, coercive control, that type of thing, as a crown attorney, the crown is not permitted to simply make submissions to a justice that that is the case. You are not permitted to provide academic materials or articles in order to support that position. The only way that you can do it is by having an expert in the field actually in court to testify and be cross-examined and, perhaps, introduce it that way.

This is a huge burden on the system. It's, frankly, impossible for the most part to find somebody that's able to do that. It's also completely beyond the powers of the system when we're talking about, for example, the bail stage. Having anybody able to testify at the bail stage about some of these matters would be very challenging. And, again, this isn't about in any way forcing the judiciary to be swayed one way or the other. This is about trying to make up for some of the gaps in lived experience that they have.

I can speak very directly and personally about what that can look like. I said this before and, again, I won't be naming any names, but I have experienced a justice of the peace that, as a result of the Antic ruling, in any domestic violence, even choking, would not award a no-weapons condition as part of the release terms because he said that hands were not weapons and was adamant about that.

In another case there used to be—well, there still is—a mandatory minimum for human trafficking. That's been ruled unconstitutional a number of times. I was involved in a case where the judge, again, found that it was unconstitutional and went dramatically below the two-year mandatory minimum. In that case, it was a human trafficking case with an extremely violent habitual offender who had been charged and convicted of this type of offence before. He targeted a young woman who was a crystal meth addict. He took her car and her bank cards and her driver's licence. He brought her to a hotel, and he posted photos of her on back pages. Over the course of the next 24, 30 hours or so, he had about, I think, 25 men visit her in succession. There were times when he was not at the hotel, when he had left, and he never assaulted her himself.

The judge in that situation, in ruling that a two-year mandatory minimum would be cruel and unusual punishment, pointed out in his written reasons that at the end of the day the girl in question, the victim, was able to leave. He wasn't there. There wasn't a guard on the door. She was able to leave. And then he went on to comment that, well, because she was able to leave, she didn't have to be subjected to this unimaginable night of sexual torture and assault, and because this specific accused had not in fact himself raised a hand to her that he had not perpetrated

violence on her directly, basically leading up to the decision that, in the scheme of human trafficking, this was more minimal in nature and that, as I said, the two-year mandatory minimum was unconstitutional.

Again, as a crown in that case—you would have to bring an expert in in order to actually testify about the experience of a victim of human trafficking. But unfortunately, as we have all heard, human trafficking, domestic violence, intimate violence continue to be a rampant problem throughout the province of Ontario, and, frankly, our system would crumble if that was a requirement for all cases.

So, what this requirement does is it essentially, I think, flags to the judiciary that we as the representatives of the public, the elected members of the public, feel that this is a significant issue that we would like them to be better informed about, and then when it comes time for them to rule on the merits of the case or make a decision in bail, that that element of conscience and lived experience that judges bring to all of their decisions also includes some of that information that, absent exposure, would not be available to some of our judiciary otherwise.

In summation, I think this is incredibly valuable legislation and it perfectly balances the competing interests here.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): I recognize the member from London North Centre for questions.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank the member from Oakville North–Burlington as well as the member from Kitchener South–Hespeler for their presentation.

I'd also like to thank Dr. Jennifer Kagan-Viater and Philip Viater for their attendance today.

I'm glad to hear this Legislature acknowledge that domestic violence is relevant to parenting. In the bill, education and training of new and existing judges and justices of the peace is welcome, especially on intimate partner violence as well as coercive control.

My question is to the member from Kitchener South–Hespeler: Could you please describe for me whether or not there will be an evaluation process for this training? Training by itself is not enough. Will these justices be evaluated, and what is the process if one were to fail this training?

Ms. Jess Dixon: My understanding of how this is to be rolled out—as I said, judicial independence remains an absolutely essential feature of Canadian justice and not something that should be trifled with, altered, treated with any less than the seriousness that it requires. This training is to be developed by the judiciary. I can say, as somebody who has a great deal of experience with a number of members of our bench, both justices of the peace and judges, the vast majority are extremely caring individuals who already take a lot of this concern on their own initiative. The concept of an evaluation—again, I believe that would remain with the judiciary.

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However, the idea here is not that we are attempting to force anybody to ascribe to a specific social theory, but simply that we expand some of that lived experience and

that conscience that may otherwise be lacking, simply because of having had dramatically less exposure and experience with this.

In answer to your question, I think it will be left to the judiciary again.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Further questions?

Mr. Robert Bailey: I had a couple of other questions that I wanted to ask, but after listening to the member from Kitchener South–Hespeler, I have to ask, first of all, is there a judicial review in a case like that, where the crown could appeal the judgment of that judge? He obviously—I'm assuming it's a "he;" I shouldn't. That justice would be subject to—that they could review that on appeal? Are they still on the bench?

Ms. Jess Dixon: They are. It's quite difficult. Again, there are good reasons for it to be difficult, because that's what that judicial independence is, in that we're not supposed to have the mob rule of the public making these decisions.

But again, the issue there is that it's difficult to appeal because it's not exactly a mistake in law or in fact. There's criminal legislation that specifically prohibits justices and judges from making certain inferences. In sexual assault cases, for example, past sexual history you can't ask about. You can't draw an inference about a delay between an assault and actually reporting that assault as the likelihood that the assault happened. That's enshrined in statute.

But no, something like this is quite difficult to appeal because in some ways, the reasons given are almost an obiter. Again, this is why I think this idea of training is important, and also simply the message that it sends, because our judges are not elected, which is a good thing. But because our judges are not elected and we are, we are the voice of the people. As the voice of the people, this is us flagging this as an issue and saying, "Please pay attention to this and understand it in making your decisions."

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Question? The member from St. Catharines.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Thank you, Speaker. Through you to the member from Kitchener South–Hespeler: Retaining our front line is important. Health care, policing—across the board, they need to see that we support them. But it is also true that we should be supporting them with tools to do those things.

This bill has left two unaddressed recommendations from the Renfrew county inquest that would have done that, like creating a record of past IPV—inter-partner violent abuse—that is accessible to all police services and considering disclosure of a partner's history to help avoid inter-partner violence in the first place, like the bill I tabled in 2018 called Clare's Law.

Do you see those empowerment tools as a way to help police feel safer on the job, help prevent future conflict? And if so, why were they not included in the act that is designed to help retain and recruit police officers?

Ms. Jess Dixon: When you talk about records, that would already be available to police. It's also for the most

part available to the crown. When I do a criminal record check within our own records or within SCOPE for example, I can see not only all of the convictions on the person's record; I can see all of the withdrawn charges, the peace bonds. Through SCOPE, which is not a police resource; this is a crown resource—basically, it has gone back now 12-plus years—I can see the actual histories of every accused.

When a person in Ontario is charged with a domestic violence offence, the police complete the ODARA report, but also what they do for bail and going forward is literally every single occurrence report that we can find that exists about that person being involved in a domestic incident if they are charged with domestic assault is included in the prosecution package, which we can actually see. So we are doing a lot of that.

When it comes to Clare's Law, frankly, I support the concept behind it. It's not likely to be found constitutional by the Supreme Court, to be perfectly honest, but that's a discussion for a different time and a different jurisdiction.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I want to thank the member for her speech. I could tell from her voice how important this subject is to her and how passionate she is about it, especially when it comes to some of the modernizations within the Courts of Justice Act, especially given that my colleague is a former crown attorney. I just wanted to see if the member could maybe speak a little bit about her experience as a crown attorney and how this piece of legislation is going to make some positive impacts in the community and why we should all support the bill. Personally, I am proud to support this legislation. I know my colleague is as well, and I hope that everyone in the House supports this important legislation. Thank you.

Ms. Jess Dixon: This again goes back a little bit to what I was speaking about, about judicial notice, that nothing could be brought before the court if it's not brought forward in evidence via live testimony, basically. There are very strong limits, again for good reason, placed on the concept of judicial notice, which is essentially a fact that is considered so widely known that a judge can take it into account without evidence actually being provided. These are things, for example, like the location of a city.

Obviously in this case, we are maintaining judicial independence. We are not going so far as to say these theories are absolutely the case, but what we are talking about here is making sure that we are filling in some of the gaps of experience so that in making decisions in these cases, there's a little bit of a space between judicial notice and simply being aware of a trend, because, as I said, otherwise we are entirely limited to actually bringing in live testimony and evidence, which creates a very significant burden, so this really helps inform our judges.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

M^{me} France Gélinas: The title of the bill is "strengthening safety." I can tell you that for the people I represent, whether it is in French River, Markstay-Warren,

St. Charles, Killarney, Britt-Byng Inlet, as well as the First Nations of Dokis and Henvey Inlet, they all depend on the OPP detachment in Noëlville. The OPP detachment in Noëlville is in great danger of being closed under your government any day now. It makes the people of all of those communities very nervous.

How can you reassure them that when you bring forward bills that talk about strengthening safety—they all feel that having a detachment where the OPP officers who work there know them, have patrolled the area, brings higher safety. You talk about strengthening safety. How do you link that up with closing a detachment in a rural northern area?

Ms. Jess Dixon: I can't speak specifically to the details of your detachment, but my comment on that would be that this government has taken concerns of police seriously. We listen to police. There was an announcement yesterday about some recruitment initiatives in order to encourage more people to apply. The truth is that the officers I know, the officers I am friends with, are burnt out; they're exhausted, they're stressed. You can do a difficult job when you go there every day and feel like you're making a difference. There aren't enough of them.

We've talked today about community safety, community policing, which is an incredibly important aspect. However, you need people in order to do that. My answer to that would be, frankly, for the NDP and the member to be loud and vocal in their support of our police officers because, ultimately, having them feel like they're doing a job that is valued in society will help with our recruitment, whereas if we vilify them, I wouldn't want to join the police either.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): The member from Oshawa.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I am pleased to be able to stand here on behalf of my community of Oshawa and on behalf of the NDP to debate this piece of legislation, Bill 102, which is entitled Strengthening Safety and Modernizing Justice Act.

Disappointingly, I haven't had the time I would like to delve into this and connect with community because, as happens with this government, this was tabled only yesterday and here we find ourselves how many hours later debating. Speaker, I will do my best to draw from the conversations and the information I have gathered through the years, and I'm going to be going back to some oldies but goodies when it comes to reports and sharing what I can.

But I will say to the folks at home, and I will say to the community groups and people interested in this bill and in community safety generally, that they can always go onto the Ontario Legislature website, that they can look at this particular bill and sign up to be notified when and if it goes to committee so that they can be notified and bring voice.

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Now, this is a really quick process. We're debating it this afternoon, all through the night, probably, and then it's likely to pass tomorrow. So it's quick and dirty and really fast, and it's disappointing, because I think when it comes

to the safety and justice that people are desperate for across communities, it warrants a longer runway and it warrants a longer and more involved conversation, certainly accountability and transparency. And a couple of minutes to read the bill isn't too much to ask, but here we are.

Speaker, I have had the opportunity in the almost nine years that I have been doing this job to serve as the opposition NDP critic on various files. At one point I had the opportunity to serve as the critic for community safety and correctional services. I was in over my head from day one and loved it. I loved the work that I did in that portfolio. I took it upon myself to be a thorn in the side, frankly, of maybe the corrections ministry. I would just show up at the various jails and probation and parole offices. It was 17 of the jails in the province of Ontario that I knocked on the door of and said, "Hi, I'm here." They said, "Come back another day." And I said, "No, I don't have to," and I didn't. I got the tour that ministers historically had not gotten, because when they know that ministers are coming, they would like to roll out the red carpet and paint the walls and transfer some inmates and maybe change things.

I will say that I have appreciated that the Solicitor General has actually raised that issue and discussed that in this House, about showing up and putting eyes on these spaces, maybe without the parade, and I think that's the way to see it. The way to see it is to actually listen to the front lines, learn from them, see it for ourselves. I would encourage all members: You have the right to just show up at the jail, preferably the front door—

Interjections.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Well, yes, that's a different headline.

I would say to call the local union ahead of time. Call that local union, talk to the health and safety folks, know what you're going to see and go and learn.

So I'm drawing from various personal experiences. I also was very fortunate growing up. Two of my uncles are now retired police officers and have worked in northern and remote areas in various provinces. One of them was very involved in the Torch Run and connecting police with community. I am glad to have learned a bit from them by osmosis. But also, I grew up in a community that was maybe not typical for many folks in Ontario. I grew up in different places, with my dad's job. I'm not from Oshawa—but I got there as soon as I could—but small-town Ontario, where it was local police that did bike safety things on the weekend, and that was something that I remember doing. Those are good examples of community policing. I was a little girl who grew up and thought if I got in trouble, I would go to the police.

There are a lot of people in this province who do not feel that way. We as a province and we as lawmakers in this room have a lot of work to do, as we've talked about, in how people see the police, how the police interact, the tools that they have or that they don't have and, I will say, the tools and resources that the police have been asking for, for a long time. Since I was first elected until now, we've heard from police about the need for specific training as they are recognizing the need themselves.

I remember talking to—it was actually an interim chief in Durham. We were talking about homelessness. We were talking about the challenges faced by folks in our community, and I remember that—and this is not a direct quote, but the spirit of what he said was: As a lot of people are concerned and complaining about the homeless population that are visible, the interim chief had said that we can move them, like we can have them push their shopping cart down the road, but we cannot house them. We cannot give them what they need. And what they were doing—and now this is me—what the folks are doing in downtown Oshawa that are washing their clothes in the fountain, they're trying to get by. They don't have a place to live, right? For the people who are constantly interacting with other law enforcement or community agencies, who are struggling maybe with addictions, often with mental health, often with a combination of both, they don't have a hope in heck if we don't care about them. If these are underserved folks, we as a province and you as a government need to be investing in the services that people are clamouring for—transitional housing, affordable housing, just the very basics. We're talking about food bank use increasing. These are people who have needs, but there's a lot of desperation that goes with that.

What I was starting to say about having served as the critic for community safety and correctional services, as it was named at the time, it was both my responsibility and my privilege to get to know the local police officers, the local police associations, the provincial police association and to have an understanding. Not everybody gets to hear the ugly side of day in and day out. I want to stand here and make it very clear that I respect and appreciate the work done by uniformed officers, by civilian officers, by those folks who work in policing, whether it's in the nitty-gritty—I'm going to say—nerdy side of the science and forensics who are doing really neat stuff that maybe we see on TV, or the folks who are going into those hotels and are a kind face in Durham region. We have a coalition which I'll talk about later supporting those who are victims of human trafficking. The police go in as part of a coalition, and they are working directly with people being trafficked. For those who are getting in the car or walking the beat, we've got a lot of struggle in Oshawa as many of our communities do, and I want to thank them for their service and I want to thank them for the work that they do.

Some of what I have heard not too long ago when I have met, as we all do, with our local police associations and with officers, there are a lot of staffing problems. I don't think anyone in this room doesn't understand that. There are retention problems. There are a lot of officers that are struggling with PTSD. There are a lot of folks who are not getting what they need to return to work, perhaps in a different role, that were needing a more robust plan with earlier interventions.

When it comes to the officers actually out in the community, they're getting stuck sometimes in hospitals. That ambulance off-load challenge that we all talk about, we know that we run out of ambulances because there isn't the staffing, there isn't the space, there isn't the support

that we need in the hospitals. Well, the police officers are finding the same thing. When they are going to a hospital with someone in their care or with them that they have to stay with until that person has been received or admitted at the hospital, until they can leave, they have to sit there, and it can be hours. That is taking officers off the road, and it's also a struggle for that individual often dealing with mental health to be sitting in that hallway in public basically, right?

There are better ways of doing things. If the government were really looking at strategies to deal with the mess in hospitals, that's also a piece of this. I hope that the government is listening to the experience of the front-line officers and pulling out some other pieces and how it connects more broadly, like I said, with health care in that regard.

Something else that we had heard from police in our community—staffing problems in the 911 centre. These are folks that are behind the scenes literally answering the phone when we call in an emergency. It is traumatizing. I have heard that they drive to work and sit in the parking lot and cry because the weight of going into work is too much.

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When folks are struggling in all nooks and crannies of law enforcement, how are we supporting them? What is it that that support looks like? We've got a lot of the—I'm going to say veterans—experienced police, who have learned a lot along the way, who have seen a lot, more than I can possibly imagine, and they are leaving. They're taking commuted value and they're leaving.

So we do recognize that we've got to have strategies for recruiting and retaining, but while we recognize that as a priority, we also have to have a really good plan for what that looks like to ensure that the officers coming in have what they need to be successful and have what they need so that the other officers that they're working with are able to work with them and everyone is safe.

I went back in time because, like I said, this bill just dropped yesterday and, surprise, we're debating it today and tonight and done tomorrow—quick as they can get it done, let's get 'er done. I went back to some older reports; like I said, an oldie but a goodie. This is from Police Encounters with People in Crisis. It was a 2014 report, a Judge Iacobucci report recommendation. This was to the Toronto Police Service. I'm going to read just a few of them because when we're talking about staffing and the recruiting of officers, we're talking about what police forces need and can look like.

One of the recommendations, recommendation number 7, selection of police officers—this was about recruit attributes. The recommendation is that “the TPS,” the Toronto Police Service, “give preference or significant weight to applicants who have:

“(a) Community service: engaged in significant community service, to demonstrate community-mindedness and the adoption of a community service mentality. Community service with exposure to people in crisis should be valued;

“(b) Mental health involvement: past involvement related to the mental health community, be it direct personal experience with a family member, work in a hospital, community service or other contributions; and

“(c) Higher education: completed a post-secondary university degree or substantially equivalent education.”

At the time, the TPS said that they concur, that they will “continue to actively recruit the best available applicants who have community service, mental health involvement and higher education. Typically, 80% of recruits hired by the service hold post-secondary school education credentials.”

They go on to talk about “specific educational programs that teach skills which enable a compassionate response to people in crisis, such as nursing, social work and programs related to mental illness.” This is what they were recommending in terms of recruiting and selecting police officers.

Also, it says, “Recommendation” that “TPS direct its employment unit to hire classes of new constables that, on the whole, demonstrate diversity of educational background, specialization, skills and life experience, in addition to other metrics of diversity.”

It was interesting actually, Speaker, to look at the Toronto Police Service and their comments on these recommendations. I wanted both sides of it, and they concur. Interestingly, at this time—this is 2014 so, yes, it goes back a bit, and they said:

“Of the 226 recruits hired in 2014, 86.7% have a post-secondary school education, 55.3% speak a language other than English, and 28.8% speak two or more languages other than English. In the January 2015 graduation class, three members held doctorates, one in the field of health science.

“Selection processes now probe for those characteristics through documentation, credentials, references and interviews.”

It's been an interesting read to look at the recommendations from various reports. I think we know that they all are sort of saying the same thing, that it matters; when a police officer is interfacing with an unknown situation, when they are interfacing with someone struggling with mental health needs, that you want officers to have the training, life experiences they had pointed out, diversity of background and relatability—all of those things are optimal. So if we're moving towards not having that, I would really encourage this government to make sure that they are investing in training that stays in this area, that looks at mental health training for officers.

But, also, a big part of the recommendations in this report but in others—and again, this was from Police Encounters with People in Crisis. A lot of the recommendations are about supporting the police and their mental health. An officer who responds to four baby deaths in a career—what does that do to someone? And if we are not supporting those officers or if the psychological pieces don't fit anymore, and that officer is expected to just keep going, and there isn't that layered support, early intervention all the way along, a check-in, if they are able

to be brought back to serve—because that’s a big part of identity for anyone who puts on a uniform. There’s an identity piece there. Is an officer going to—I’m going to be flippant here—put up their hand and say, “I’m not okay,” when it risks their uniform, when it means that they can’t be a police officer anymore? I don’t know.

So working with police and figuring out what it looks like for that officer, who says, “I need support. I need help. I’m not okay, and I am not safe to go out into the community in the state that I’m in”—or, excuse me, to have someone else assess that. Is there a place for them in policing, and what could that look like? These are things that we hear from the front lines, we hear from police. Nobody in the community wants an officer who is unwell to show up at an emergency.

Speaker, I am going to take a moment in this last second to say that I have here the Durham region’s human trafficking model. I’ve shared this almost entirely in this House before. I’m on the record about human trafficking, and I’m very pleased that I participated in a ride-along with members from the human trafficking coalition as well as the human trafficking division, the officers in Durham region. It’s really a remarkable strategy that they’re implementing. It really is a remarkable set-up in terms of that collaborative approach.

I went on a ride-along with the officers. I got to see behind the ugly, ugly, ugly scenes of human trafficking, to some extent. I got to go into a situation with a worker from a women’s shelter who works together with police. I got to go in with Karly Church, who is just a tremendous resource in this province. She’s a human trafficking crisis intervention counsellor. I think she is, if not the first, one of the originals to really have a huge impact. And we—it was together with the police, but we supported that survivor in a way that made them not only feel safe but has increased the number of times that a human trafficking victim will testify or will give information, because it is working with community agencies that support them.

So, in this bill, it deals with the judiciary in schedule 3. Much of what we have heard is that judges and folks in the judicial system are slow to understand this. When it was first new, it was a mess, and it continues to need work. I’m glad to see that there is specific training that will continue to be developed for those folks, and there’s of course work to be done.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Questions?

Mr. Robert Bailey: It’s a pleasure to be here this afternoon again.

I listened intently to the member from Oshawa. We’ve got a couple of things in common; she might not think so. But I also served as the critic in opposition to the Solicitor General. I think it was called public safety then. I had an opportunity to tour a number of institutions and of course meet with police officers.

Just about the experience level—I listened to CFRB earlier this morning. Former commissioner Chris Lewis was on there. He explained his thoughts on lowering the educational requirements. He thinks it won’t be an issue.

And I notice we have quotes here. I’m going to try to read it here with my bifocals. Chief Nishan Duraiappah, president of the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police—“We need support for police officers in Toronto and across this province.”

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“Whether it’s the years of anti-police rhetoric, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic or the recent increase in violence against police officers, we are not getting the numbers we need.”

“We think that this is one way to get more recruits from the community. We support these changes in our recruiting office.”

I’d like the member to comment on that.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: There are a lot of ways to reduce barriers when it comes to education.

Interestingly, I’m holding a report about OSAP, and yours is the government that switched from provincial grants to loans. We went from 95% when you took office—the number of grants—and now it’s only 80%; 20% are loans. We’re seeing more people have bad debt; they can’t pay it back. People can’t afford to get the education.

I understand that we’re dealing with staffing shortages. But also, let’s open up access to education, broadly, because some of what I read in terms of the recommendations is that that diversity of experience in education—folks who come from compassionate fields, whether they be in nursing or whatever, are valued in policing. It’s a direction that you should be focusing on. But when no one can afford to get into post-secondary education, we’re going to find ourselves in a mess across the board.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Mr. Jeff Burch: I appreciated my colleague from Oshawa’s comments, especially her comments about her experiences riding along in a police cruiser and her passion for the issue of human trafficking. I wonder if she wants to expand a little bit on what we’d like to see in legislation to address human trafficking.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: That’s such a big question, and I will do my best in under a minute.

Survivors’ debt is a piece—that’s a recommendation, to forgive that.

Survivors should be given an option to give testimonies not necessarily in a court.

There are other opportunities here, other places—victim service offices across the province.

Mandatory prevention curriculum in middle schools and high schools—we’re seeing that those early interventions in education are critical.

Police and children’s aid units with specialization in human trafficking, with mandatory training in understanding bias, anti-oppressive practice, anti-racism and trauma-informed care—that’s just the basics.

We have to think about human trafficking in the context of human rights. We also have to consider that people who are targeted are predominantly racialized and Indigenous.

And I think, in the context of this bill, looking at the judiciary, there's a lot of education that has to happen. Is this confinement? Is this kidnapping? Is this prostitution? Judges have no idea, in many cases, if they haven't encountered it before. Education is key.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Thank you to the member from Oshawa. Thank you very much for your compassion and your concern about the different officers and how they're suffering from PTSD. I shared that emotion at one point. I think this is why we are having this special act to strengthen safety and modernize justice. Part of it is that, yes, we will continue to care and show our support for our officers, and at the same time we're also hiring new and more officers right now.

But I would like to ask, even more so—this bill includes that we have immediate action to strengthen our bail system—is it important for us to include it in this act, in order to keep the violent offenders off of the streets?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I didn't see the bail system stuff in this act—so we've had how many hours with it? If the member can tell me where it is in here, I'd be interested. I know that we had some conversation about bail reform—I think it's an important conversation to have—but I didn't see it in this bill.

You had started your question about PTSD and officers. There's a lot of stress and challenges with the return to work. This government has invested in OPP mental health services. But I want to challenge the government, because smaller municipalities who can't afford to provide certain supports—where is the help for them? There has to be a strategy. If we're going to support mental health needs, then we have to support mental health needs for everyone.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further question?

MPP Jamie West: Thank you to the member from Oshawa. During her debate and during responses, Speaker, she talked about how little time we've had to look at this bill. It has been a trend for the government where they table bills in the afternoon and then we begin debating the very next day on them. Tonight we'll be sitting late, possibly to midnight, talking about this bill.

It's ironic, because yesterday, I was sitting here and we were debating Bill 69 and talking about consultation. Time and time again, the Conservative Party kept telling me how great consultation was, how effective consultation was, but we can't do it even in this House, let alone outside of the House. So could the member just expand on how more effective we could be, as all parties, if we were able to reach out to speak to our constituents and our stakeholders about bills like this instead of having them carpet-bombed on us with no warning.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: You know what? Everything in this space I feel like is by design. When the government members have talked about the positive feedback that they've had in response to this bill, it means they've had the time to share it, shop it around, talk about it. We found out what the bill was yesterday and that it's going to be

debated the next day, all through the night, and then basically passed the next day. I think that is so we can't pick up the phone and call the community agencies or—like, the officers that I've talked to from our local police association, we've have had lots of discussions through the years—good, bad and ugly. But there is a chance for me to call them, and I didn't have that chance because I was up until stupid o'clock reading the bill last night, trying to gather thoughts, and I don't call people at 1 in the morning. But it's waiting to have that feedback, where we should have time for thoughtful input on this bill. If their goal is to make it the best piece of legislation it could be, they should be open to consultation.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Question?

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: Thank you to the member from Oshawa for her speech. I just wanted to point out that the proposed legislation has received approval and support from many policing stakeholders, specifically: "The Toronto Police Association welcomes the Ford government's investment in community safety and policing. The public has lived with the consequences of an inadequate bail system for far too long, and the resources announced today mean our members will be able to focus their efforts on proactively monitoring violent offenders who wreak havoc on our sense of safety," said Jon Reid, president of the Toronto Police Association. "We have long advocated for this support, and we will continue to work with the provincial government on the changes that will keep our communities and our members safe."

Thus, my question to the member from Oshawa: Will you agree with us and support this bill because front-line personnel do keep Ontarians safe, and by supporting the Strengthening Safety and Modernizing Justice Act, as Jon Reid noted, president of the—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Thank you to the member from Newmarket–Aurora.

The member from Oshawa.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: There's nothing about bail in this bill. There isn't. The fact that the government has talked about bail reform—that's a separate issue. But the correctional officers, the probation and parole folks, the police all know that things are broken. There are a lot of warrants that just sit there and nobody is able to go and look for them. We don't have what we need to do that and to keep people safe, so maybe the government would like to focus on that. Maybe in their next bill.

But when any one of us talks to an officer, I would say that they're going to hear that they are frustrated—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Thank you to the member from Oshawa.

Further debate?

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I am pleased to rise in support of this bill, Bill 102, Strengthening Safety and Modernizing Justice Act, 2023, on behalf of the residents of Barrie–Innisfil. Over the course of the past few months, the issue of law and order and justice has been a primary focus of the residents of Barrie–Innisfil, and they have told me time and time again it didn't require striking any sort

of round table or consultation, but simply taking their phone calls, listening to their emails. And now this bill is wholeheartedly supporting much of their concerns.

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It builds on previous actions of our government, and that is to let the residents of Barrie–Innisfil and all Ontarians know that this government has their backs. We will ensure that they are safe. We will have the backs of those law enforcement officers, whether they're the Barrie Police, South Simcoe police, OPP officers or police officers throughout this province so that we're all safe and sound. And those officers who are out and have boots on the ground, they know they have the tools, they have the resources and the next generation of recruits to help them do their jobs.

Speaker, it's no clearer than the statistics that are in front of us today. That is, in Ontario alone, we've seen an increase in serious violent crime and reoffending, especially when it comes to bail compliance. We have an increase in crime of about 9%; violent crime, 20%; the firearm use rate has increased by 129%. Speaker, now more than ever, we do need more boots on the ground. Part of this government's groundbreaking initiative was to encourage more people to join the police forces by not having them have to have the requirement of post-secondary education.

I spoke to a local police officer in Barrie about this. In fact, he serves on the York Regional Police force. His name is Gary Harvey. He's also a local Barrie councillor so he understands the full scope of community safety, both working in the heart of it but also being a public servant in many regards. This is a good example of people who really put duty above self, whether it's serving our council or serving on police forces. He said this is going to provide equal opportunity to so many Ontarians who want to either serve their community or serve their province and be a police officer, but they can't afford the tuition. So now that door is open for them to serve and do it well.

We have so many examples. I know, growing up, my next-door neighbour, Andy Atkinson rose through the ranks of being a York Regional Police officer, and he didn't need to go to university or college for policing. He grew through the ranks and ended up being a homicide detective and did really well, and now he's retired. I really want to thank Andy for all his work. But it's people like that who we really need to count on to keep us safe. It's people like our police chiefs and our deputy police chiefs—and I'd be remiss if I didn't mention that tonight, as we are debating this bill, the South Simcoe police force is celebrating and swearing in their new deputy police chief today. She has 34 years of policing experience in her career, and that is Inspector Sutton. Congratulations, Inspector Sutton, for your great leadership. She has been a mentor in various roles. She really rose through the ranks as well. In 2021, she was an inspector and she has served in various different divisions, including patrol operations, support services, investigative services divisions.

Speaker, she is really breaking glass ceilings here. Inspector Sutton is the first female officer to join the

emergency response unit, also known as ERU. In addition, she worked in the criminal investigations bureau as a sexual assault and child abuse investigator. She is also the first female to hold the rank of inspector at the service. She is a graduate of the Georgian College law and security administration program at the Barrie campus.

Congratulations, Inspector Sutton. We really appreciate you dedicating your career to the South Simcoe police. You, of course, started your policing career in Toronto back in 1988, and now we're so grateful to have you in Innisfil as deputy chief to our great chief at South Simcoe police. Congratulations.

Speaker, in Barrie–Innisfil we're very lucky to be surrounded by so many great individuals who dedicate their time to policing. Again, just two notes that I want to make as we also have new police chiefs coming in. We were able to commemorate and celebrate Police Chief Van Dyke who is now the new South Simcoe police chief, and I want to thank him for answering the call of duty. He served as the incoming chief during a very difficult time in the community of Innisfil when we lost Constable Morgan Russell and we lost Constable Devon Northrup—very dedicated police officers—in the line of duty. I want to thank Police Chief Van Dyke for really providing strong leadership during a very difficult time for the whole community, the whole police force. Again, I want to thank you for dedicating so many years of your service to policing and now stepping up to the plate as police chief.

Likewise in the community of Barrie, we also have a new police chief as well, Chief Rich Johnston. I want to welcome him and thank him for everything that he is doing in Barrie to keep our community safe as well and thank him for all his service and for answering the call of duty for the residents of Barrie.

If you look at local newspaper articles these days and over the past few months—and I was talking about things that residents have talked to me about. The most striking is when you hear back-to-back stories of something like, "Police Arrest Suspect After Vehicle 'Taken at Knife-point.'" This happened just a few days ago: "A 31-year-old man is in custody after the Barrie police responded to a report of a carjacking on Monday morning." They were able to apprehend the individual and the car that was stolen. They were lucky at that point, considering what was involved in terms of a violent instrument.

But then again, we had, just in the summer, a 14-year-old and an 18-year-old who are now charged after attempting a carjacking and a shooting in Barrie. So crime is on the rise, and we definitely need more boots on the ground, and we need more of those officers who answer the call of duty to be able to go to these particular scenes. I'm grateful that we have our great police forces locally that are able to do that, but they need our government and they need a responsible government who is willing to step up to the plate to give the tools to do that.

In this legislation, we talk about many things, some of it being things like technology that's going to help our investigators do things that they need. In fact, this came up a few months ago and also a few days ago, when, despite

a search involving a police drone and a canine unit, investigators said that the suspect had fled, and in the case of my local area, the Barrie police said they were able to identify a suspect following a brief investigation by the service's criminal investigation division, and they were able to use the technology of a drone, but this is again more resources, more boots on the ground and a government that understands that obviously things are advancing. We've been able to help police like the Barrie police through different grants through our government so that they are able to buy that particular technology to help with their forces.

It's stuff like updating our facilities. We talked about justice centres, which are also part of this bill, that are coming across this province, but it complements some of the resources that we already have. In Barrie, we're very lucky we have a really nice facility where people are able to give their disclosure, where feel a bit more safe, and so that victim doesn't have to be re-traumatized because they're in a more sound and respectful setting. That's another good example for us locally.

And, of course, the mental health supports that are needed: We saw when, unfortunately, South Simcoe police did answer the call that of course ended tragically. The individual involved in that particular case, in that call in Alcona, did have a history of mental health issues. So, in that circumstance, if the police officer had a mental health worker with them, could things have been different? We don't know. But in this legislation, we are obviously aware of that and the mental health supports that are needed with our policing and how it will help them.

But it's not only just the resources for policing to make sure all Ontarians feel that they're safe and know that they are safe because the resources are there, the legislation is there to back them up, and we continue with the recruiting, it's also thinking of the other side, and that's the judicial side of the equation. So this bill marries those two very well.

I remember talking to Josephine Fernicola about her issue of being a victim of domestic violence. She's very grateful to see that Keira's Law, which was a motion passed by the member from Oakville, is also codified in this bill. So I want to thank the member from Oakville North-Burlington for her work on Keira's Law, which is built into this bill, which will help many advocates like Josephine. Josephine has become a big advocate because in her personal life, this is something that she experienced.

She sent me her personal statement, and I just wanted to read a few excerpts from it. I met Josephine—actually, I was selling poppies at the local No Frills in Innisfil—and she and her children were selling candies for their local Brownies chapter. At the time, I would have never known she was exposed to domestic violence, and she was going through difficult times. But I saw her a little bit after that, and she came up to me and explained to me what had happened, everything she's been through and how great the help was from the women's and children's shelter in Barrie and how great the resources were to her. But her journey really started back in 2016, when she made a life-changing decision to end a very abusive marriage.

She said to me in her statement that after being together for 12 years and married for nine, she knew she and her five children desperately needed help. She had quite the journey. She said in her statement, "The sad reality is that once you leave, the court system allows the manipulation, control and fear to continue. I was dragged through the court system, leaving me completely depleted ... financially and emotionally."

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Speaker, she ends her statement by saying finally, "On April 19, 2023, 'Kiera's Law' was passed in Ontario. This means that judges will receive education on domestic violence and coercive control in intimate partner and family relationships. Women who have experienced our court system know that changes like these are long overdue."

Again, Speaker, you see that our government is—as we're often talking to many Ontarians, many in our community, we have legislation that we're debating and introducing every day in this Legislature that responds to the needs of everyday Ontarians like Josephine, whose daughter now has a really bright future in front of her, and she has a very strong mom, who was very brave to share her story, to stand up. And now she's a huge local advocate. She goes to the flag-raising to raise awareness about intimate partner violence and, of course, on femicide, which one of my colleagues had spoken about earlier today.

I want to go back to thanking the member from Oakville North-Burlington, because it all started thanks to her motion, which was adopted in this particular bill, so I want to thank her for those efforts and her work on that particular issue.

Speaker, it's not just Josephine. We've seen a lot of groups in Barrie, like OAITH, which has done a lot of work with women fleeing these particular situations. For them to see that this is now a law is a huge game-changer, so I definitely want to thank all the advocates for everything they've done on this part.

Speaker, this bill touches on a lot of different areas. I've only touched on some of them, and certainly there's more to go over, but I think it comes down to one fundamental point, and that is that we need to use every tool we can as a government to tell Ontarians that we are amending the necessary laws or acts or adding to things that we need to create a stronger and safer community for everyone, whether it's the great grants that our Solicitor General is sending out to communities, whether it's faith-based communities—I know a lot of our faith-based communities in Barrie-Innisfil are really grateful to the Solicitor General because they were beneficiaries of those grants, to be able to strengthen up the security efforts. For example, our Chabad in Barrie is very grateful; it's a growing Jewish community and, of course, they're very thankful to the minister for this particular grant.

There's a lot to say about this particular bill, and I just wanted to take the opportunity to say that our community in Barrie-Innisfil has been through quite a lot. I talked about Constable Russell and Constable Northrup. I would

be remiss if I didn't also mention Constable Greg Pierzchala, who was 28. He also grew up in Barrie; he ended up serving in Haldimand county and worked for the OPP there. He was 28 years old, on his first day of service, and unfortunately the first call he received did not go according to anyone's plan on the first day of the job. Unfortunately, he was going out in the good service of his heart. He saw a car that was pulled over on the side of the road and, unfortunately, the folks who were near that vehicle had ulterior motives; one of them was out on bail for serious offences, and they killed the constable. Many of us attended that particular funeral, and that's one life too many lost because of that particular failure in the system.

Again, part of this bill is building on the previous work that our government has done calling on the federal government to strengthen the bail system to stop that revolving door of criminals going out and being able to reoffend and, of course, harm constables like we had with Constable Greg Pierzchala, who obviously died at a very young age and spent his whole young career living up to that moment, whether it was serving in the Canadian Armed Forces, whether it was being a member of the Simcoe-Grey foresters, which is a local regiment in Barrie, in Simcoe county—his dream was to be a police officer, and that dream was cut short. It could have definitely been prevented if we had a strengthened bail system, so one loud and clear message that our government has and I have, too, for the residents of Barrie—Innisfil is, they know that this government stood up very strongly, not only through our own motions in this Legislature—we called for stronger bail provisions—but also talking to our federal counterparts saying that enough is enough, and this revolving door needs to stop. We're hearing in our area various strong examples of why that needs to happen.

And so, this government doesn't take those types of issues lightly, which is why we have the bill before us: To do everything we can, not only to strengthen our policing system and recruit more people into the profession, but also simultaneously strengthen our justice system, as well, at the same time.

Speaker, I think that's a good example of how this government can do many things at once to help the people of Ontario. We can both help them with the ongoing cost of living, and at the same time the rate of crime that is happening on our streets. I think it's clear to everyone that everyone wants to be able to come home knowing that they have a safe community to live in, whether they're walking to get their groceries or taking their kids to soccer practice. Everyone deserves to be in a safe community, but that can't happen without the actual boots on the ground, so I want to commend the leadership of our Premier and, of course, our Solicitor General and our Attorney General for the fact that they had the foresight to make the recent changes that they did, to give more people the opportunity to pursue a great career in policing.

I've met a lot of individuals who've gone through Georgian College, and they really enjoyed the different police foundations courses which led them to their policing, but of course there are others who would love to

enter the profession and have a real passion for it, real community advocates who are out there doing numerous initiatives, but simply maybe—that particular tuition threshold can be sometimes up to \$15,000 or more, and they can't, of course, meet that requirement. Now that will bring a lot of people who have that passion for policing, which will strengthen our communities and make our communities better, because we'll be having people who serve and answer the call of duty, who are passionate for what they do every single day.

Many of us could just turn to police officers we know in our community. I was chatting with the Barrie Police team, and the fact of how they work in every part of the community to be able to help—they're not just there to always be the enforcers; they're also there to be community champions. They're there whether it's Kempenfest during the summer months or whether it's in schools to inspire the next generation of police officers. They're always out there in the community, not only providing that cover of safety, but also that inspiration for individuals who want to go into, again, the call of duty for their community.

The programming these days is just incredible. With Barrie Police, of course, there's a lot of focus on mental health, a lot of focus on how they can help with gender-specific violence. They've even changed their community service vehicle, so that it's more inviting and more pleasant. I know when some people drive by Barrie, they'll see this bright blue and bright green coloured vehicle and they'll say, "Oh, that's an eyesore," but it did its job. It got people's attention, and when that's out in the community, they know that the police presence is there and they can go up and talk to police officers. It's a little more inviting.

And so I want to thank Chief Johnston, because I know we had a discussion about this very recently, and he and his team who obviously came up with that campaign. I'm really excited for everything they have planned this summer in terms of their community involvement, and want to thank them for continuously pushing the envelope in terms of what they're doing in the community. Not only are they answering these calls when we have serious things like a takedown for an auto theft—which was incredible; I want to thank the officers involved in that—but also being out in the community, going above and beyond the call of duty.

With that, Speaker, I'll just wrap up my remarks with a quote from Peter Leon on this particular bill. He's a corporate communications officer with the Barrie Police, and he says, "This bill will provide professional policing in Ontario the resources and the ability to keep our communities safe for years to come and for people considering a career in policing, the opportunity to work in a rewarding, honourable profession that puts community first while assisting and helping those who are victims of crime or in the need of assistance."

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Questions?

MPP Jamie West: Thank you to the member opposite. I enjoyed her speech and the many examples she had of speaking with the police officers of her riding.

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A question I asked earlier today is about how quickly this bill was tabled and brought to debate, and about the opportunity they robbed the NDP of to have those conversations with police officers in our ridings.

All 124 of us represent ridings that are very, very unique. We could really be having a “yes, and” conversation about what happened. I went on a ride-along during the last constituency week with the officers from the Greater Sudbury Police Service. They were talking about the low enrolment and the low interest for police officers—and tuition wasn’t one of the topics that came up. I’m not saying that tuition isn’t a good idea, but what I’m saying is—there was that opportunity where I could share the information that I had received from them or I could ask them, “What do you think about these ideas? Would this help as well?” We are removing that opportunity for members of this House when we push through bills this quickly.

I just wonder if the member opposite has considered what happens when you table bills and debate them this quickly without the opportunity for other members to have time to consult with their ridings as well.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I think our government is clear: We’re taking swift action. We see a problem, and we want to come up with a solution. We talked about bail reform before. We’ve introduced a motion within this Legislature. We have members of this Legislature, like the member for Oakville North–Burlington, like the member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore, who have been working on law-and-order legislation of their own that they’ve introduced in this House. We’re constantly talking to our community members. We’re constantly introducing different kinds of legislation. We’re building on this legislation. We’ve always got our ear to the ground.

And as the Premier says, he’s the biggest advocate for the Ontario Provincial Police; he’s always got the back of our OPP.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further question?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: I’d like to ask my colleague from Barrie–Innisfil, who is extremely concerned with her community in Innisfil and Barrie, what have the chiefs told you? What has Chief Van Dyke told you; what has Chief Johnston of Barrie told you as to how removing the tuition for their ability to send cadets to the Ontario Police College will help their police service?

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: Thank you to the minister for that great question.

If you see the backgrounds of Chief Johnston and Chief Van Dyke, certainly, they’ve pursued a lot more post-secondary education. Chief Johnston is even pursuing a master’s right now at one of the universities in the United Kingdom, online, and he started with a degree in psychology. So I think the reality here is that police officers can come from all different walks of life.

One thing Chief Johnston and Chief Van Dyke say is that they have a huge recruiting challenge. They have the tools within their police force to be able to give the training

necessary. However, they need the people and the bodies to come in through the front door that they can bring up to speed, on the ground, with the experience to get them trained and helping the community, because they can’t afford to wait.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Question?

Mr. Jeff Burch: Thank you to the member from Barrie–Innisfil for her comments.

I appreciate any measure to help recruit police officers, but I’m just wondering—the Premier made a comment that this would open up a pipeline for recruits, and I just don’t see anything in this bill that will do that. I hope that the tuition measure does something. But there are all kinds of policing programs in community colleges across Ontario, and those are the kids who are coming out of high school and wanting to get into policing, and that’s where I think you could really help, at the ground level, with recruitment. The change with post-secondary education—I think the police already can hire people without post-secondary education, and I’m not sure if that’s going to really do much either. So I’m having trouble understanding this pipeline of recruits that it’s going to open up. Maybe she can enlighten me.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I’ll just read a message I got today on this particular piece of legislation from an officer who’s currently serving and really gets how this is going to open up the door for so many. He said, “One thing to highlight is that this will afford those from low-income families to be able to become police officers, as post-secondary education requirements and the OPC \$15,000 tuition are barriers. Officers end up taking out a loan with the police credit union to cover the tuition. It takes them several years to pay it off.” He went on to say, “I paid nothing when I got hired, and there was no post-secondary requirement back then. I was about to start college and work nights at the same time but was hired by York two weeks before school started due to being”—so he was able to start his policing career right away, and it certainly paid dividends to him. He has been in the police force for decades now.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further question?

Mr. Mike Harris: I think the tuition piece is very interesting. Like you, I’m very connected with our policing community in Waterloo region. Waterloo Regional Police Service does a fantastic job, like you said, not only enforcing laws but really becoming part of the community and truly helping people, hopefully before they need to enforce those laws. I think that’s one of the key components of what we’re talking about here today, making sure we do get the right people in position to do the job. That \$15,000 barrier—this is what’s very interesting. A lot of people maybe don’t realize that you have to go to post-secondary education, pay for that, and then there’s the \$15,000 on top of that after, when you go to the Ontario Police College.

Maybe if you wanted to highlight a little bit more about speaking with some of your local officers and some of the other things you’ve heard in relation to opening up those pathways.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: Thank you. Something the member had mentioned is that as much as many of our police forces would love to focus on prevention, there's not enough of them. So for them, anything that will help recruitment will help them in long-term strategies, not only when they have to answer those 911 calls, but also being involved in community on the prevention side and educating, whether it's students or other folks in the community who want to actually take up policing.

This is not just something I hear in my community, but it's something that we hear from places like the president of the Ontario police association. He says that these grants provide the necessary financial resources to support active engagement in monitoring of bail compliance. The ability of police services to utilize these financial resources will be limited by ongoing staff shortages and competing organization priorities. He goes on to say more things, but at the end he's very supportive.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further question?

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Speaker, through you to the member from Barrie–Innisfil: Empowering and supporting education in our courts is very important, but so is understanding the weight and the cost and rewards of those decisions. One of the recommendations from the Renfrew county inquiry was just that, studying judges' decisions in inter-partner-violence-related crises. Both the community and the judicial wing can learn, and that is training.

My question: Why was the recommendation not actioned when amending the Justices of the Peace Act, considering the measures taken to encourage education within the courts?

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I just look at the work a lot of my colleagues here do. One colleague who was in this chamber a little earlier, from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, knows very well what the member who posed the question is talking about and certainly has his own

legislation that he's brought before this House addressing some of those concerns.

In addition, our Attorney General had mentioned some of those concerns in his remarks this morning when he talked about the fact that we can now train provincial judges, we can train our JPs, justices of the peace, with this piece of legislation, thanks to the work of the member from Oakville North–Burlington on the Keira's Law piece. That also builds on some of the work the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore is doing with Clare's Law. There you have it, Speaker. Many members of this Legislature are working towards an improved court system.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Ms. Natalie Pierre: Thank you to the member from Barrie–Innisfil. Ontario and many other jurisdictions have seen recent increases in violent crime and repeat offences, including crimes against women who have been victims of intimate partner violence. I'm wondering if the member can tell us more about how Bill 102 would expand the ability of judges and justices of the peace to consider risk factors before they make their judgments and their decisions.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: Thank you for that question. Of course, we had Keira's mom and stepdad, who are here today, who fought for that particular training to be included with justices of the peace and our provincial judges. Federally, judges are going to be undergoing this training as well.

In that case, as we know, if they knew that that particular member had a history of violence towards his wife, it may also trickle down to the children. That's how we lost Keira, unfortunately, and that is one person too many who could have been prevented from us losing that young girl who had her whole life in front of her, but with this piece of legislation, with the leadership of our Attorney General, we'll be able to prevent those cases in the future.

Report continues in volume B.

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Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
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Grewal, Hardeep Singh (PC)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	
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Harden, Joel (NDP)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
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Saunderson, Brian (PC)	Simcoe—Grey	
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
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Smith, David (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	
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